

Orientação acadêmica no ensino superior: estratégias para conclusão eficaz na Universidade Zambeze-Moçambique¹

Academic guidance in higher education: strategies for effective completion at Zambezi University - Mozambique

Orientación académica en la enseñanza superior: estrategias para una conclusión eficaz en la Universidad del Zambezi - Mozambique

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RESUMO

A orientação acadêmica no Ensino Superior (ES) constitui prática fundamental para o desenvolvimento integral dos discentes, pois ultrapassa a transmissão de conteúdos e favorece autonomia intelectual, pensamento crítico e competências de estudo. O artigo em questão tem como objetivo avaliar a eficácia da metodologia de orientação acadêmica aplicada na Universidade Zambeze (UniZambeze), considerando sua relevância para a conclusão de cursos de graduação e pós-graduação dentro do prazo previsto. O estudo adotou abordagem mista, qualitativa e quantitativa, de caráter interpretativo e descritivo, utilizando questionários estruturados com questões binárias aplicados a 87 participantes, entre discentes de graduação, docentes, mestrandos e doutores. Os resultados evidenciam que a orientação acadêmica contribui significativamente para a organização e superação

¹ This article presents the results of research developed within the scope of Research, Teaching and Outreach, focusing on improving the quality of academic guidance in higher education in Mozambique. The central problem relates to the difficulties faced by students in completing undergraduate and postgraduate programs in a timely manner.

de dificuldades enfrentadas pelos discentes, desempenhando papel relevante em sua trajetória acadêmica. Contudo, foram identificadas fragilidades como acompanhamento irregular, início tardio da pesquisa e ausência de políticas institucionais de incentivo, fatores que comprometem a conclusão dos cursos no tempo adequado. Recomenda-se, portanto, a institucionalização de protocolos mínimos de acompanhamento, reuniões periódicas com *feedback* contínuo, integração da pesquisa desde os primeiros anos da graduação e investimento em formação docente voltada para metodologias de orientação. Conclui-se que, embora valorizada, a orientação acadêmica necessita ser fortalecida e sistematizada para transformar percepções favoráveis em resultados concretos e duradouros. O investimento em políticas institucionais e na capacitação docente é decisivo para garantir maior eficiência e conclusão dos cursos em tempo previsto. Ressalta-se, ainda, a importância da pesquisa no contexto da educação superior, por promover produção de conhecimento, estimular pensamento crítico e fortalecer a capacidade de inovação, contribuindo para o progresso científico, social e econômico do país.

Palavras-chave: Ensino superior; Orientação acadêmica; Universidade Zambeze.

ABSTRACT

Academic guidance in higher education (HE) is a fundamental practice for the integral development of students, as it goes beyond content transmission and favors intellectual autonomy, critical thinking and study skills. The article in question aims to evaluate the effectiveness of the methodology of academic guidance applied at Zambezi University (UniZambeze), considering its relevance for the completion of undergraduate and postgraduate programs within the prescribed deadline. The study adopted a mixed, qualitative and quantitative, interpretative and descriptive approach, using structured questionnaires with binary questions applied to 87 participants, among undergraduate students, faculty, master's students and PhD holders. The results show that academic guidance contributes significantly to the organization and overcoming of difficulties faced by students, playing a relevant role in their academic trajectory. However, weaknesses were identified such as irregular follow-up, late start of the research and absence of institutional policies of encouragement, factors that compromise the completion of the programs at the appropriate time. It is therefore recommended the institutionalization of minimum monitoring protocols, periodic meetings with continuous feedback, integration of research from the first years of graduation and investment in teacher training focused on guidance methodologies. It is concluded that, although valued, academic guidance needs to be strengthened and systemized to transform favorable perceptions into concrete and lasting results. Investment in institutional policies and teacher training is crucial to ensure greater efficiency and completion of programs on time. It is also emphasized the importance of research in the context of higher education, to promote knowledge production, stimulate critical thinking and strengthen the capacity for innovation, contributing to the scientific, social and economic progress of the country.

Keywords: Higher education; Academic guidance; Zambezi University.

RESUMEN

La orientación académica en la Educación Superior (ES) constituye una práctica fundamental para el desarrollo integral de los alumnos, ya que va más allá de la transmisión de contenidos y favorece la autonomía intelectual, el pensamiento crítico y las competencias de estudio. El artículo en cuestión tiene como objetivo evaluar la eficacia de la metodología de orientación académica aplicada en la Universidad del Zambeze (UniZambeze), considerando su relevancia para la finalización de cursos de pregrado y posgrado dentro del plazo previsto. El estudio adoptó enfoque mixto, cualitativo y cuantitativo, de carácter interpretativo y descriptivo, utilizando cuestionarios estructurados con preguntas binarias aplicados a 87 participantes, entre alumnos de pregrado, docentes, mestrandos y doctores. Los resultados evidencian que la orientación académica contribuye significativamente a la organización y superación de dificultades enfrentadas por los estudiantes, desempeñando un papel relevante en su trayectoria académica. Sin embargo, se identificaron debilidades como seguimiento irregular, inicio tardío de la investigación y ausencia de políticas institucionales de incentivo, factores que comprometen la finalización de los cursos en el tiempo adecuado. Se recomienda, por lo tanto, la institucionalización de protocolos mínimos de seguimiento, reuniones periódicas con feedback continuo, integración de la investigación desde los primeros años de la graduación e inversión en formación docente dirigida a metodologías de orientación. Se concluye que, aunque valorada, la orientación académica necesita ser fortalecida y sistematizada para transformar percepciones favorables en resultados concretos y duraderos. La inversión en políticas institucionales y en la capacitación docente es decisiva para garantizar una mayor eficiencia y finalización de los cursos en el tiempo previsto. Se resalta, además, la importancia de la investigación en el contexto de la educación superior, por promover la producción de conocimiento, estimular el pensamiento crítico y fortalecer la capacidad de innovación, contribuyendo al progreso científico, social y económico del país.

Palavras-chave: Educación superior; Orientación académica; Universidad de Zambeze.

Introduction

After independence in 1975, Mozambique has shown significant progress in access to Higher Education (HE), particularly through the expansion of public and private universities in recent decades. This process was driven by the implementation of funding policies and by decentralization, factors that expanded educational opportunities and strengthened the university system in the country (Yotamo; Mindoso, 2021).

The expansion of HE contributes to the training of qualified human resources and to national socioeconomic development. However, despite the progress made,

structural barriers persist that limit the democratization of education. The growing demand for places, driven by the increase in secondary and technical-vocational education graduates, contrasts with the still-limited supply, especially at public universities, recognized for their quality and low cost. This mismatch results in high retention rates and delays in program completion (INE, 2020; Forbes África Lusófona, 2023).

In addition to the imbalance between demand and supply, there is an absence of effective student monitoring policies, which compromises both retention and timely completion. Mutumane; Bila (2025) point out that the lack of structured methodologies undermines the completion of monographs, dissertations and theses, prolonging academic training. This weakness affects both public and private institutions, highlighting the need for more robust and integrated institutional policies.

In this context, academic guidance emerges as a central element in ensuring the proper completion of programs. According to Chibemo; Fernando (2015), vocational and professional guidance still lacks systematic strategies that promote academic autonomy and efficiency. Moreover, this issue is not restricted to the Mozambican context. Similarly, Lusophone countries such as Angola and Brazil face challenges related to academic guidance and effective program completion (Medeiros et al., 2015; Silva et al., 2022; Antunes; Ngando, 2025). In line with these findings, recent reports from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) point to a worrying reality in Brazilian higher education. The document “Education at a Glance 2025: OECD Indicators” reveals that 51% of university students do not complete their undergraduate degree within the expected timeframe, highlighting weaknesses in retention and program completion. Consequently, this problem also extends to postgraduate education, marked by high dropout rates and delays in the completion of dissertations and theses (OECD, 2025b). These factors compromise not only advanced training but also national scientific output.

This scenario highlights the urgency of institutional strategies aimed at continuous monitoring, pedagogical innovation and curricular integration. Thus, it becomes clear that the articulation between guidance policies, innovative

pedagogical practices and efficient institutional management is an essential condition for ensuring quality and timely completion in higher education (Gomes et al., 2020).

In the Mozambican case, HE is regulated by Law No. 1/2023, which structures education into three cycles: bachelor's degree (licenciatura), master's and doctorate. Although the law establishes defined deadlines – three to four years for the undergraduate degree, up to five in engineering programs and six in health sciences; one and a half to two years for the Master's; and three to five years for the doctorate – in practice many students exceed these limits. This discrepancy reveals weaknesses in academic guidance and in the pedagogical supervision of research, as noted by Matiquite (2019). Thus, there is a tension between the regulatory framework, which seeks to ensure efficiency and predictability, and the institutional reality, marked by structural and methodological challenges.

The challenge of consolidating scientific research as a structuring axis of university education directly impacts the timely completion of programs. Nhantumbo (2021) argues that the curriculum should be flexible and responsive to local and global demands, training professionals capable of intervening in different fields. However, Sousa (2025) and Hassane et al. (2025) point to structural and methodological limitations in curricular innovations, reinforcing the need for continuous educational policies and consistent pedagogical guidance. Inspired by the Freirean perspective, according to which “teaching is not transferring knowledge, but creating the possibilities for its own production or construction” (Freire, 1996), academic guidance should be dialogical and participatory, with the teacher acting as a facilitator of students' formative and scientific journey.

Given this scenario, the following research questions are formulated: in what way can the academic guidance methodology contribute to undergraduate and postgraduate students at Zambezi University (Universidade Zambeze – UniZambeze) completing their programs within the established deadline? The motivation for this investigation stems from the observation that a significant number of UniZambeze students and graduates, as well as those from other Mozambican public universities

located in the North, Center and South regions², frequently exceed the regulatory time established for program completion. This scenario highlights the need to understand the factors that contribute to academic delay and to propose strategies that favor timely completion.

The relevance of the study is grounded in the pedagogical experience of the authors, acquired alongside educational managers and in higher education, which confers scientific legitimacy and allows for the proposal of contextualized strategies. Added to this is the scarcity of research on the subject in Mozambique, reinforcing the importance of the investigation not only for the country but also for other members of the Community of Portuguese Language Countries (*Comunidade dos Países de Língua Portuguesa – CPLP*)³. In this sense, the present study assumes particular relevance, as it offers support not only for managers of universities' Pedagogical and Scientific Direction, but also for bodies responsible for quality evaluation, such as the National Council for Higher Education Quality Assessment (*Conselho Nacional de Avaliação da Qualidade do ES – CNAQ*).

Furthermore, the work contributes directly to institutions responsible for formulating and implementing public policies aimed at HE management. In this way, by strengthening teaching, research and outreach practices, it establishes a consistent dialogue with mechanisms for regulating and consolidating academic training, ensuring quality standards that sustain scientific and social development. In this context, the research is framed within the guidelines of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), which constitute an institutional matrix guiding academic practice in HE. In line with this alignment, and

² The main public universities in Mozambique are distributed across the country's three regions. In the North, Universidade Rovuma (UniR) and Universidade Lúrio (UniLúrio) stand out. In the Center, there are Universidade Licungo (UniLicungo), Universidade Púnguè (UniPúnguè) and Universidade Zambeze (UniZambeze). In the South, there are Universidade Save (UniSave), Universidade Pedagógica de Maputo (UPM) and Universidade Eduardo Mondlane (UEM).

³ The countries that have Portuguese as an official language form the Community of Portuguese Language Countries (CPLP). The language, born in Portugal and spread during the colonial period, is present on several continents. Brazil is home to the largest population of speakers, while in Africa Angola, Mozambique, Cape Verde, Guinea-Bissau, São Tomé and Príncipe and Equatorial Guinea stand out. In Asia, Portuguese is official in Timor-Leste and co-official in Macau. Thus, the Lusophone world constitutes a multicultural and transcontinental space that brings different peoples together through the Portuguese language, favoring cultural integration, scientific exchange and academic training.

considering the 2030 Agenda, these guidelines emphasize the need for inclusive educational practices aimed at integral education, highlighting the relevance of institutional policies and pedagogical strategies that favor the effective completion of educational processes (UNESCO, 2016a).

Given this framework, the central objective is to evaluate the effectiveness of the academic guidance methodology applied at UniZambeze, considering its contribution to undergraduate and postgraduate students completing their programs within the expected time. The proposal seeks to consolidate pedagogical monitoring policies, ensure effective faculty performance and contribute to the training of qualified professionals, capable of responding to social and labor market demands, favoring scientific advancement and the country's development.

Methodology and operationalization of the research

The research is based on an interpretative and descriptive paradigm, of a qualitative and quantitative nature, configured as a mixed approach⁴. This methodological choice is justified by the need to evaluate the effectiveness of the academic guidance methodology applied in HE, considering its contribution to undergraduate and postgraduate students completing their programs within the expected time. According to Oliveira (2024), the use of mixed methods broadens the robustness of the investigation, since quantitative techniques can complement the depth of qualitative analysis. In the same direction, Pereira Filho et al. (2026) point out that overcoming the dichotomy between qualitative and quantitative is essential to capture the complexity of educational reality.

The adoption of this mixed approach proves to be of great importance, as it ensures greater validity by combining different data sources and reducing bias; provides a holistic view, allowing an understanding of both subjective aspects, such as meanings, values and practices, and objective aspects, such as indicators and results; favors practical applicability, offering more complete support for public

⁴The interpretative and descriptive character combined with the mixed approach is fundamental, since education constitutes a complex phenomenon that cannot be explained by numbers alone or by narratives alone (Pereira Filho et al., 2026). The integration between methods strengthens the analysis and generates more meaningful results for both educational practice and theory.

policies and pedagogical practices; and confers methodological flexibility, adapting to different educational contexts and problems.

The methodological objectives of the research were defined in three complementary dimensions: exploratory, descriptive and analytical. The exploratory research aimed to provide greater familiarity with the problem; the descriptive sought to describe the characteristics of a given population or phenomenon; and the analytical sought to interpret and explain the data obtained (Gil, 2008). Thus, the specific objectives were: to identify theoretical and practical gaps in higher education (exploratory), to map the perceptions and practices of faculty and students (descriptive) and to interpret emerging patterns to propose improvement strategies (analytical).

The technical procedures involved three main stages: a systematic literature review (Minayo, 2003; Campos et al., 2023), which made it possible to identify the state of the art and ground the research problem; an empirical survey by means of structured questionnaires (Marques; Ribeiro, 2020), applied with binary questions (“Yes” or “No”), reducing ambiguities and allowing systematic coding; and methodological triangulation (Creswell; Creswell, 2018), which ensured scientific validity and robustness of the results by integrating qualitative and quantitative methods.

Regarding the sample, it was composed of 87 participants from UniZambeze, distributed among different academic categories, as shown in Table 1. Among them, 45 undergraduate students in bachelor's degree programs, selected from the three faculties based at the rectory in the city of Beira: Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities (*Faculdade de Ciências Sociais e Humanidades – FCSH*), Faculty of Sciences and Technologies (*Faculdade de Ciências e Tecnologias – FCT*) and Faculty of Law (*Faculdade de Direito – FD*). In each of these faculties, 15 students in their 3rd and 4th years, already graduated, were chosen. Additionally, 18 postgraduate (Master's) students participated in the research, likewise distributed among the three faculties, along with 15 undergraduate and postgraduate faculty members and 9 PhD holders working in postgraduate education.

Table 1 – Categories of Research Participants⁵

No.	Category of participants in the research	No. of participants	% of total
01	Undergraduate students	45	51.7%
02	Undergraduate faculty	15	17.2%
03	Postgraduate students (Master's)	18	20.7%
04	PhD holders teaching in postgraduate education	9	10.4%
Total		87	100%

Source: Prepared by the authors (2025).

The composition reflected the academic diversity of the institution, with faculty members of different levels of experience, six with more than ten years in higher education and the remainder averaging six years. In this context, as Souza Neto; Ayoub (2021) state, teaching experience constitutes accumulated practical knowledge that guides methodological and pedagogical choices. The selection of students in their final years was justified by their academic maturity and critical capacity (Almeida; Soares, 2006b). Although quantitatively limited, the sample proved methodologically adequate, since, according to Schneider (2017) and Faustino (2024), in qualitative research analytical depth should prevail over statistical representativeness.

Therefore, the adoption of a mixed approach proved essential to ensure the scientific robustness of the investigation. The combination of qualitative and quantitative data made it possible not only to understand the depth of faculty and student experiences, but also to establish consistent relationships between contextual variables and pedagogical practices. This methodological integration, as advocated by Creswell; Plano Clark (2018), broadens the validity of the results by articulating different perspectives of analysis, ensuring that the complexity of the educational phenomenon is addressed comprehensively and rigorously.

⁵ The faculty involved have more than 10 years of university experience, ensuring a high level of knowledge and pedagogical practice. In undergraduate education, they consolidate theoretical and methodological foundations, ensuring essential skills for students. In postgraduate education, PhD holders produce and disseminate new knowledge, supervising research that strengthens academic innovation. Thus, the presence of these two groups in the research is justified by the relevance of their complementary roles: while undergraduate faculty sustain the formative base, PhD holders broaden investigative and critical horizons, ensuring quality and effectiveness in the academic trajectory of UniZambeze students.

The study rigorously followed ethical principles, ensuring anonymity, confidentiality and informed consent, since, as Fchssalla (2021) points out, ethics is a structuring element of research. All participants were informed and participated voluntarily, and the study, conducted between March 2024 and November 2025, followed institutional protocols in five main stages, as shown in Table 2.

Table 2 – Stages of the Research Operationalization Methodology

Stages	Research Activities Performed	Results Achieved
1. Literature search and review	Systematic search in academic databases (Scielo, Google Scholar, Redalyc); selection of reference authors; critical reading and thematic annotation.	Consolidation of relevant sources; theoretical and practical contextualization; construction of a robust reference framework; identification of epistemological gaps; clear delimitation of the problem.
2. Application of questionnaires	Development of a structured questionnaire with binary questions; in-person and online application to faculty and students; standardized collection protocol.	Obtaining objective empirical data; mapping of methodological perceptions and practices; generation of graphs and tables; collection of complementary qualitative information.
3. Data collection, analysis and interpretation	Coding of responses (P1 to P7); tabulation in Excel; preparation of graphs and tables; qualitative analysis by emerging categories; triangulation with theoretical data.	Identification of interpretative patterns; in-depth analysis; development of analytical inferences; construction of grounded arguments about the reality of academic guidance.
4. Strategies to improve timely completion	Training and capacity-building of faculty in the pedagogical methodology of academic guidance; curricular integration; encouragement of scientific production; strengthening of student autonomy; promotion of academic internationalization; encouragement of educational innovation.	Definition of institutional strategies to strengthen the guidance culture; promotion of curricular integration and scientific training; encouragement of equity and quality in the academic journey.
5. Final considerations	Synthesis of results; critical analysis of weaknesses and potential; institutional recommendations to consolidate the academic guidance culture.	Evidence of the need for structured continuing education policies; early monitoring; curricular integration of guidance; assurance of greater equity and quality in the academic journey.

Source: Prepared by the authors (2026).

The systematization of the methodological stages ensured the scientific consistency of the investigation and favored the development of critical and analytical skills in the students. The process, by integrating theoretical review, empirical collection and interpretative analysis, ensured the practical applicability of the research. The rigorous structure, composed of interdependent stages, reinforced

scientific validity and contributed to effective academic guidance strategies in HE. Next, the study area is described, contextualizing the institutional setting of the investigation and highlighting the academic, pedagogical and social relevance of UniZambeze.

Description of the study area

The study was conducted at UniZambeze, a public higher education institution located in the city of Beira, Sofala province, Mozambique. The University's headquarters is located at 670 Avenida Alfredo Lawley, in the 7th Bairro of Matacuane, as illustrated in Figure 1, which shows the entrance gate of the Rectory and the partial front view of the FCSH, FCT and FD.

Figure 1 – Entrance gate of the Rectory with partial front view of the FCSH



Source: Personal archive of the study's lead author

On the UniZambeze campus, located in the city of Beira, three main faculties operate. The *Faculdade de Ciências Sociais e Humanas* (FCSH) stands out as a space for interaction between academia, the private sector and public institutions, promoting interdisciplinary dialogue and knowledge production aimed at regional and national development. It offers undergraduate programs in Public Administration, Communication Sciences, Accounting and Finance, Economics, Management and Sociology, as well as postgraduate programs such as the Master's in Financial Administration, the Master's in Business Management (MBA), the Master's in Language, Society and Culture and the Doctorate in the same area.

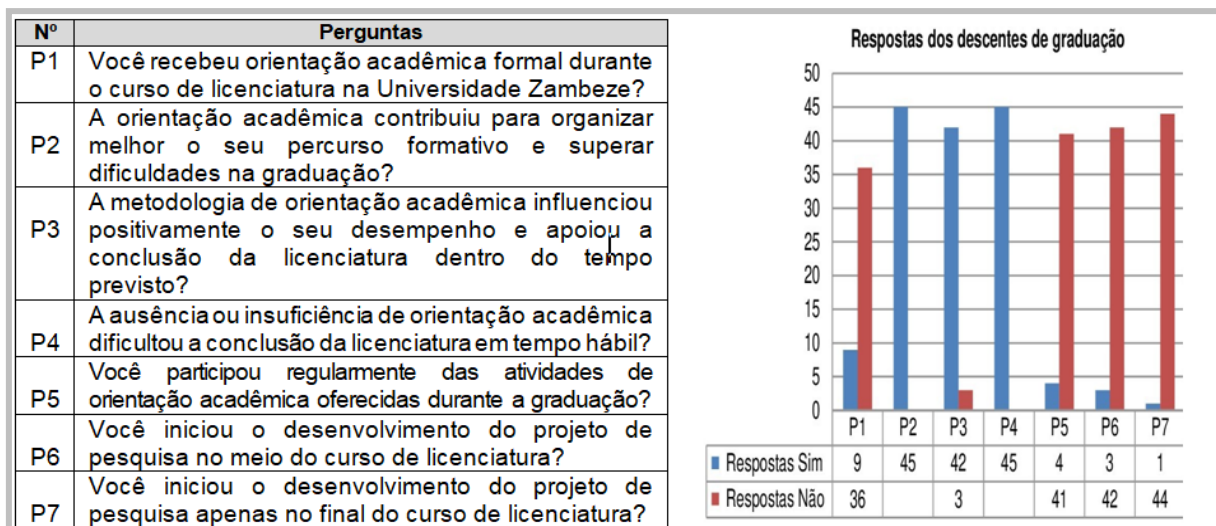
The *Faculdade de Ciências e Tecnologia* (FCT) offers undergraduate programs in Architecture, Actuarial Sciences, Civil Engineering, Electrical Engineering, Computer Engineering, Mechatronics Engineering and Industrial Process Engineering. At the postgraduate level, it offers the Master's in Sustainable Construction, the Master's in Energy Engineering and Management and the Master's in Water Engineering and Management. In turn, the *Faculdade de Direito* (FD) offers a Bachelor's degree in Law (*Licenciatura em Direito*) and a postgraduate Master's program in Judicial Law. UniZambeze's mission is to drive Mozambique's scientific, cultural and socioeconomic progress, training qualified professionals and promoting applied research. Research strengthens critical thinking, supports public policy and consolidates the university as a hub for sustainable and inclusive development, integrating theory and practice and expanding the social impact of scientific production.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results and discussion of the research were built from the analysis of the responses obtained. Figures 2, 3 and 4, which include tables and graphs, present the seven questionnaire questions (P1 to P7), together with the perceptions of undergraduate (Bachelor's) students, postgraduate (Master's) students, faculty and postgraduate PhD holders. With this, the aim was to understand how these different groups assess the effectiveness of the academic guidance methodology in higher education. Based on this diagnosis, it became possible to propose strategies aimed at improving timely completion rates.

Perception of undergraduate students (Bachelor's)

Figure 2 – Questions applied to undergraduate students (Analysis of responses)



Source: Authors (2026).

When analyzing the results and discussion of the responses of undergraduate students, it is observed in P1 – Formal academic guidance received (35.6% Yes; 64.4% No) that most students state they did not receive formal academic guidance during the program. This finding reveals weaknesses in institutional policies aimed at pedagogical monitoring, indicating that existing mechanisms have not managed to reach all students.

The absence reported by 64.4% of students highlights significant gaps in the universalization of this support, which may compromise the quality of training and student retention. According to Santos; Oliveira (2024), academic persistence depends on consistent and accessible institutional practices; when such practices are not comprehensive, equity in the formative journey is compromised. Thus, the results suggest that, although there are institutional initiatives, they are not sufficient to ensure full coverage, making it necessary to strengthen academic guidance strategies that reach all students equitably.

Next, in P2 – Contribution to organizing the formative journey (100% Yes), all students recognize that guidance contributed to organizing their formative journey, confirming its relevance as an instrument of academic structuring. In this sense, Kuh et al. (2011) point out that well-structured guidance policies create conditions that favor student success, corroborating the unanimous perception. Therefore, this result

reinforces that, when present, guidance plays a strategic role in organizing the academic trajectory. Likewise, in P3 – Positive influence on performance (93.3% Yes; 6.7% No), the majority perceived academic gains resulting from guidance, confirming its relevance to performance in coursework. Bastos; Silva (2022) directly relate guidance to improved academic performance. Additionally, Almeida; Soares (2020a) argue that continuous guidance helps overcome academic and personal difficulties. Thus, even amid structural limitations, guidance has a positive impact on academic performance.

On the other hand, in P4 – Absence/insufficiency hindered completion (100% Yes), all respondents acknowledge that the absence or insufficiency of guidance hindered timely completion. This unanimity reveals methodological and structural failures that compromise the effectiveness of the practices adopted. Bastos; Silva (2022) state that insufficient guidance generates delays and increases dropout, which is confirmed in the UniZambeze data. Likewise, Kuh et al. (2011, p. 102) reinforce that “the lack of consistent practices compromises retention and academic success.” Thus, it can be seen that guidance, although valued, was not sufficient to ensure completion within the established deadlines.

In addition, in P5 – Regular participation in activities (8.9% Yes; 91.1% No), the low adherence to activities explains the contradiction between positive perception and practical results. Almeida; Soares (2020a) point out that active participation is essential for the benefits of guidance to translate into concrete results, which did not occur consistently. Consequently, this finding suggests that institutional provision alone is not enough: greater student engagement must be encouraged. Regarding research, in P6 – Start of the research project mid-program (6.7% Yes; 93.3% No), few students began their project midway through the program, compromising the depth of the investigation. Silva et al. (2026) argue that research projects should be integrated from the early stages of training, which did not occur in most cases. Therefore, this late practice limits the consolidation of research skills throughout the undergraduate degree.

Finally, in P7 – Start only at the end of the program (97.8% Yes; 2.2% No), almost all students began their project only at the end of the Bachelor's program,

revealing a structural failure in integrating research into the formative journey. Kuh et al. (2011) point out that research practices should be anticipated to ensure greater consistency and academic impact. However, in various contexts, research is still conceived as a final stage of the training process, rather than as a structuring axis of teacher training. This limited view compromises the integration between research and pedagogical practice, reducing the formative potential of research.

In this scenario, academic guidance in higher education plays a central role, as it constitutes an essential process for the effective completion of studies. As pointed out by Xavier et al. (2024), pedagogical training and capacity-building for faculty, articulated with student academic guidance, should be understood as an experience grounded in the investigation of one's own practice and critical reflection on pedagogical actions. This approach, centered on teachers' experiences, strengthens both professional development and teaching identity, constituting a meaningful space for learning. Thus, the articulation between pedagogical training and academic guidance contributes to the continuous qualification of faculty and to the improvement of students' academic results, consolidating higher education as an environment for reflective construction and transformative practice.

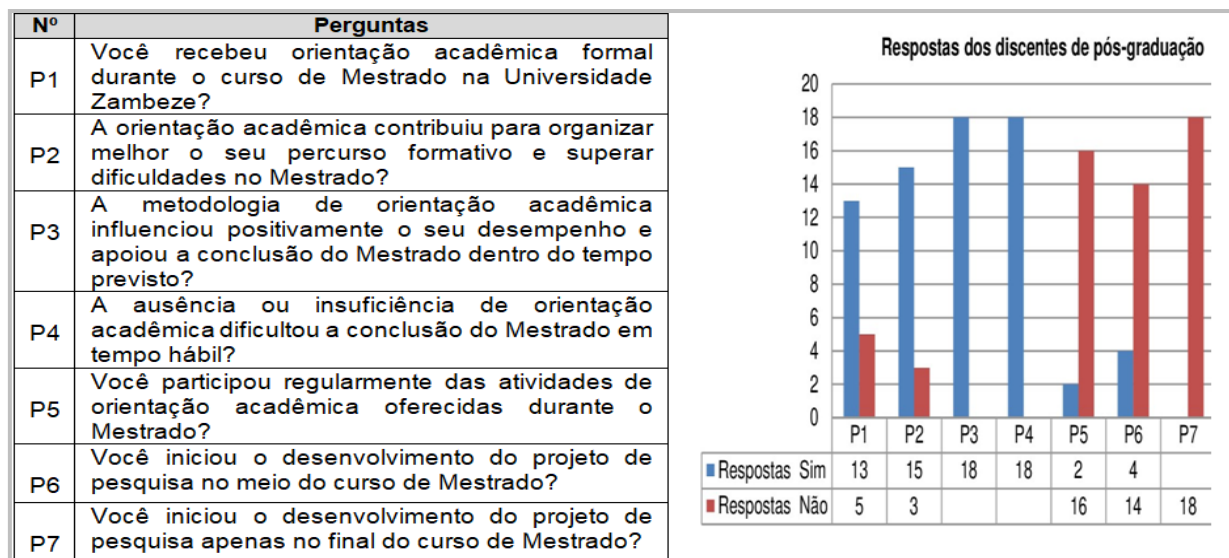
The results analyzed show that academic guidance is essential for structuring the formative journey, overcoming difficulties and raising student performance. However, weaknesses persist: some students did not receive formal guidance, many did not participate regularly, and most began their research only in the final phase of the program. These elements indicate that, although valued, guidance alone does not ensure timely completion or the full quality of training.

In this sense, it becomes necessary to broaden its coverage, revise methodologies and integrate research from the early years of the Bachelor's program. This early integration, in addition to strengthening teacher training, contributes to reducing retention and ensuring greater consistency in academic results (Barros; Moreira, 2019). Therefore, consolidating research as an articulating axis of pedagogical practice and professional training is an essential condition for transforming HE into a space of excellence and innovation. Next, the perception of

postgraduate (Master's) students is highlighted, whose analysis deepens the understanding of the impacts of academic guidance.

Perception of postgraduate students (Master's)

Figure 3 – Questions applied to Master's students (analysis of responses)



Source: Authors (2026).

When analyzing the results and discussion of the responses of postgraduate (Master's) students, it is initially observed in P1 – Formal academic guidance received (27.78% Yes; 72.22% No) that the majority state they did not receive formal academic guidance during the program. This finding reveals institutional weaknesses in the universalization of pedagogical monitoring, indicating that existing policies do not reach all students. Anttila et al. (2024) point out that the frequency and consistency of supervision are decisive for support to be perceived as effective, and the lack of coverage compromises equity in the formative journey.

Next, in P2 – Contribution of guidance to organizing the formative journey (83.33% Yes; 16.67% No), it is found that the majority recognizes that guidance contributed to better organizing their formative journey, reinforcing the importance of supervision as an instrument of academic structuring. However, the minority who did not perceive this contribution suggests that the practice was not homogeneous, which may indicate differences in supervision styles or supervisor availability. In this

sense, Chang et al. (2025) point out that supervisor support is directly related to the development of creativity and the capacity to structure research projects.

On the other hand, in P3 – Sufficiency of guidance for completion within the expected time (100% Yes), all students positively evaluated the guidance received, demonstrating that the support provided was sufficient to ensure completion of the master's degree within the established deadline. This finding confirms the effectiveness of academic supervision, showing that continuous support and alignment between supervisor and supervisee favor consistent achievement of objectives. Structured practices such as systematic monitoring, goal-setting and encouragement of engagement ensure progression and successful completion in postgraduate education. According to Khuram et al. (2023), supportive supervisors directly impact academic productivity when there is continuous engagement and strengthening of students' psychological capital; conversely, the absence of these elements explains negative perceptions of the guidance process.

On the other hand, in P4 – Positive influence of the guidance methodology (100% Yes), all students positively evaluated the guidance methodology, indicating that, when the supervisor-supervisee relationship occurs effectively, it adds methodological and scientific value. This result confirms that good supervision practices, such as structured feedback and goal-setting, are capable of promoting significant advances in research quality, strengthening both scientific rigor and the relevance of the work developed. The results of P3 and P4 demonstrate that structured and methodologically consistent academic supervision ensures both timely program completion and the elevation of the scientific quality of research. Thus, the supervisor's role goes beyond administrative monitoring, becoming essential for students' academic and scientific success.

However, in P5 – Regular participation in guidance activities (11.11% Yes; 88.89% No), it is observed that, despite the positive evaluation of the methodology, the majority did not participate regularly in guidance activities. This contrast suggests that good practice existed but was not systematically accessed. Mofolo (2021) points out that remodeling supervision requires institutionalizing mandatory and systematic practices, ensuring that all students have continuous access to monitoring. In P6 –

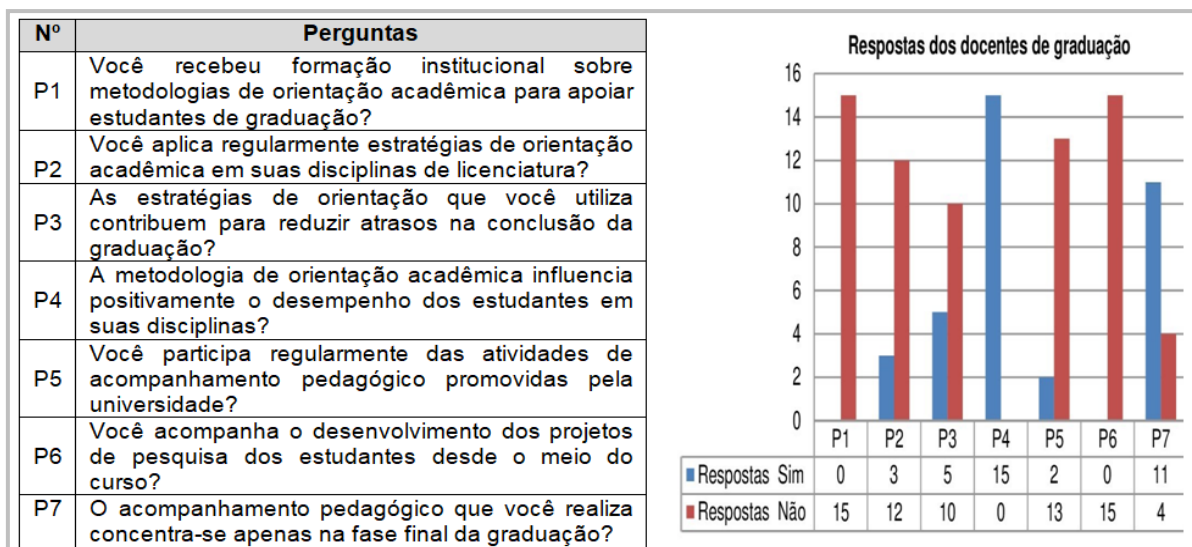
Initial alignment of research to a research line (22.22% Yes; 77.78% No), it is found that few students had their research aligned to a research line from the outset, which compromised the schedule and clarity of objectives. Consequently, the absence of initial direction weakened the academic journey. Khuram et al. (2023) reinforce that initial alignment and the definition of clear goals are fundamental to avoiding delays and rework.

Finally, in P7 – Contribution of initial guidance to defining the topic and research line (0% Yes; 100% No), it is found that no student recognized that initial guidance contributed to clearly defining the topic and research line. This finding confirms that supervision was reactive and late, without offering the necessary support at the most strategic phase of the academic journey. Mpungose et al. (2025) argue that knowledge transfer strategies and supervisor retention are essential to ensure that support is offered from the initial phases of research.

Academic supervision in the master's program at UniZambeze is recognized as useful and methodologically relevant, yet it presents weaknesses that hinder both timely completion and the initial alignment of research. According to Rodrigues (2024), low regular participation in guidance activities compromises its effectiveness, which highlights the need to institutionalize more consistent practices, with clear objectives and systematic monitoring. In this context, the challenge is to transform positive perception into concrete results, through measures such as mandatory initial planning, a minimum meeting schedule, structured feedback, institutional monitoring and faculty training. Next, the perception of faculty who teach undergraduate courses is highlighted, whose analysis complements the understanding of the impacts of academic supervision on professional training.

Perception of faculty who teach undergraduate courses

Figure 4 – Questions applied to undergraduate faculty (analysis of responses)



Source: Authors (2026)

When analyzing the results and discussion of the responses of faculty who teach in the Bachelor's program, a set of weaknesses and contradictions in the practice of academic guidance becomes evident. In P1 – Institutional training on guidance methodologies (0% Yes; 100% No), it is observed that no faculty member received specific institutional training, which reveals a significant gap in institutional policy, since the absence of training compromises the quality of pedagogical monitoring. According to Lopes et al. (2024), continuing education is essential for faculty to develop guidance skills and support academic trajectories equitably. The lack of institutionalized training weakens teaching practice and limits the positive impact of guidance. Moreover, the absence of structured policies means that guidance is treated as an individual responsibility, which compromises equity, since only faculty with prior experience manage to offer adequate support, generating inequalities among students.

Continuing, P2 – Regular application of guidance strategies (20% Yes; 80% No) shows that only a minority regularly applies guidance strategies, which evidences low institutionalization of the practice. Although there is recognition of the importance of guidance, the lack of systematic application compromises its effectiveness. According to Chibemo; Fernando (2015), academic guidance only generates impact when integrated into the curriculum and accompanied by

monitoring policies. Therefore, the low application rate suggests that the practice is still seen as accessory, rather than as a structuring part of teaching. Consequently, even when there is a perception of relevance, institutional mechanisms that encourage and ensure the practice are lacking, reinforcing the idea that guidance is not incorporated into pedagogical planning but depends on the individual initiative of a few faculty members.

In a complementary way, P3 – Contribution of strategies to reducing delays (33.3% Yes; 66.7% No) reveals that a third of faculty perceive that their strategies reduce delays in undergraduate completion, but the majority do not identify this effect. This result shows that, without continuous monitoring, guidance loses its preventive character. According to Silva et al. (2022), early monitoring is decisive for avoiding retention and dropout, as it allows difficulties to be identified before they become barriers to completion. Thus, the limited perception of impact suggests that guidance, when applied, occurs punctually and belatedly, without the capacity to prevent structural problems. This reinforces the need for policies that anticipate monitoring and make it part of the formative journey from the earliest semesters.

On the other hand, P4 – Positive influence of the guidance methodology on performance (100% Yes; 0% No) shows that all faculty recognize that the guidance methodology positively influences student performance, which reinforces the pedagogical value of the practice, even amid implementation difficulties. According to Lopes et al. (2024), guidance strengthens autonomy, engagement and performance, but depends on institutional conditions to be effective. Therefore, the unanimous recognition of effectiveness demonstrates that faculty are clear about its pedagogical potential. However, the absence of structured policies prevents this value from translating into systematic practice, creating a paradox between perception and reality.

Furthermore, P5 – Participation in pedagogical monitoring activities (13.3% Yes; 86.7% No) shows that the majority do not participate regularly in institutional activities, which demonstrates low adherence and a possible lack of institutional incentive. According to Poma et al. (2024), the participation of Higher Education faculty in monitoring programs is essential for consolidating a culture of academic

support. However, low adherence shows that guidance still does not occupy a priority position in institutional policies. This lack of engagement reflects both the shortage of specific training and the lack of incentive for collective practices, factors that compromise the construction of a solid institutional culture. As a consequence, guidance tends to remain an isolated and undervalued activity in the university context.

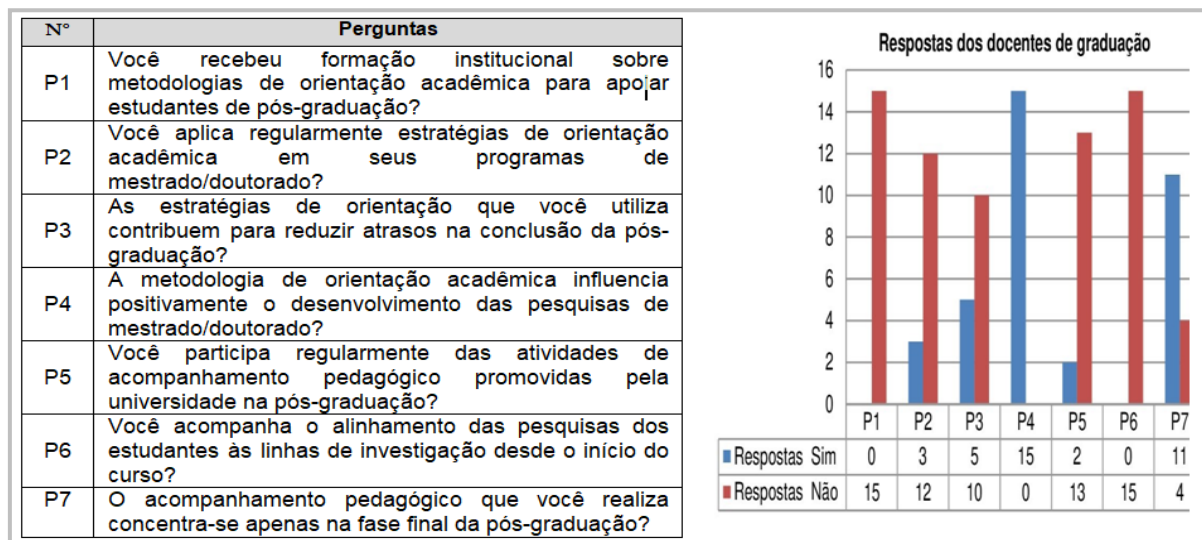
Similarly, P6 – Monitoring of research projects from mid-program (0% Yes; 100% No) shows that no faculty member monitors research projects from the midpoint of the program onward, which reveals a late concentration of guidance. This scenario compromises the development of research skills and the integration between teaching and research. According to Costa et al. (2026), early monitoring is fundamental for consolidating investigative skills and preventing overload in the final phase of the undergraduate degree. The absence of this monitoring means that students receive support only when they are already close to completing the program. This practice limits the continuous development of research skills throughout academic training and results in an accumulation of demands in the final stage, consequently compromising the quality of academic work.

Finally, P7 – Concentration of monitoring only in the final phase (73.3% Yes; 26.7% No) confirms the trend toward late guidance. This pattern reduces the effectiveness of the practice, as it limits preventive intervention. According to Barros; Moreira (2019) and Rodrigues (2024), guidance should be continuous and distributed throughout the program to ensure timely completion. However, its late concentration reinforces the perception of it as a bureaucratic requirement, compromising its preventive function and increasing the risks of delays and dropout. The analysis thus shows both advances and gaps: despite pedagogical recognition, the practice still suffers from low institutionalization and structural weaknesses.

In this scenario, it becomes essential to implement policies of continuing education, early monitoring and curricular integration, so that the positive perception translates into effective practice, ensuring greater equity and quality in training. Next, the perceptions of faculty who teach postgraduate courses are highlighted, whose analysis complements the understanding of the impacts of academic guidance in HE.

Perceptions of faculty who teach postgraduate courses

Figure 5 – Questions applied to postgraduate PhD faculty (analysis of responses).



Source: Authors (2025).

When analyzing the results and discussion of the responses of PhD faculty who teach in postgraduate education, a set of weaknesses and contradictions in the practice of academic guidance becomes evident. In P1 – Institutional training on guidance methodologies (11.1% Yes; 88.9% No), it is observed that most faculty did not receive specific institutional training, which reveals a significant gap in institutional policy. The absence of training compromises the quality of pedagogical monitoring, since guidance requires its own competencies. According to Trevisol et al. (2025), continuing education is essential for faculty to develop supervision skills and support academic trajectories equitably. Thus, the lack of institutionalized training weakens teaching practice and limits the positive impact of guidance. Moreover, it shows that guidance is not treated as a strategic priority, but as an individual responsibility, which compromises equity and generates inequalities among students.

Continuing, P2 – Regular application of guidance strategies (22.2% Yes; 77.8% No) shows that only a minority regularly applies such strategies, evidencing low institutionalization of the practice. Although there is recognition of the importance

of guidance, the lack of systematic application compromises its effectiveness. According to Rodrigues (2024), academic guidance only generates impact when integrated into the curriculum and accompanied by monitoring policies. Therefore, the low application rate suggests that the practice is still seen as accessory, rather than as a structuring part of teaching. Consequently, even amid the perception of relevance, institutional mechanisms that encourage and ensure the practice are lacking, reinforcing the idea that guidance depends on the individual initiative of a few faculty members.

From P3 – Contribution of strategies to reducing delays (66.7% Yes; 33.3% No), a significant shift can be seen: when applied, guidance methodologies are recognized as effective in reducing delays in program completion. This result reinforces the need to expand their adoption and make them part of mandatory protocols. According to Cunha (2020), systematic monitoring practices are fundamental for improving graduation rates and reducing dropout. Moreover, it shows that faculty perception is aligned with practical reality: guidance not only contributes to meeting deadlines but also strengthens student motivation, reducing dropout and increasing confidence in the formative process.

In a complementary way, P4 – Positive influence of the methodology on research development (100% Yes) shows consensus among faculty, demonstrating that academic guidance is decisive for the advancement of research. This result legitimizes the creation of minimum monitoring protocols, such as periodic meetings and progress rubrics. Magalhães (2023) points out that the quality of postgraduate education depends directly on the consolidation of structured supervision practices. This consensus reveals that, when applied consistently, guidance directly impacts scientific production and the consolidation of research lines, raising the standard of research and contributing to scientific innovation.

However, when observing P5 – Participation in institutional pedagogical monitoring activities (11.1% Yes; 88.9% No), an institutional weakness is noted, as faculty do not engage in activities promoted by the university. This suggests a lack of integration between institutional policies and individual practices. Thus, academic governance should include continuous monitoring mechanisms to strengthen the

culture of guidance (Sousa; Oliveira, 2024). This low participation indicates that, even where institutional initiatives exist, they are not sufficiently attractive or mandatory. The lack of engagement compromises the creation of a collective culture of monitoring, leaving responsibility restricted to individual effort.

This weakness connects directly to P6 – Monitoring of research alignment from the outset (22.2% Yes; 77.8% No), which shows that late monitoring compromises the early integration of students into research lines, increasing risks of rework and delays. Initial alignment is essential to ensure methodological coherence and efficiency in the formative process (Lopes et al., 2024). The absence of monitoring from the outset reveals a critical gap in postgraduate management, as students begin their journey without clarity about objectives and without full integration into research lines.

Finally, P7 – Monitoring concentrated only in the final phase (66.7% Yes; 33.3% No) reveals that most faculty intensify monitoring only at the concluding stage, which generates overload and limits the impact of guidance. This late pattern contradicts recommendations for continuous monitoring from the start of the program. In this sense, Sousa; Oliveira (2024) point out that supervision practices should be distributed throughout the entire formative journey to avoid bottlenecks in completion.

This reactive practice, limited to the period close to the defense, compromises the gradual development of skills and generates excessive pressure in the final months. The analysis shows that, although faculty recognize the relevance of guidance for research quality and the reduction of delays, institutional weaknesses persist. The absence of structured training, systematic strategies and early monitoring makes guidance an individual responsibility rather than an institutional policy. To overcome these limitations, it is necessary to strengthen the culture of guidance in postgraduate education, with support, monitoring and training, ensuring greater equity, quality and timely completion.

Strategies to improve timely program completion

The formulation of strategies is based on the diagnosis carried out from the responses and discussions with different groups: undergraduate (Bachelor's)

students, faculty, master's students and postgraduate PhD holders. The results show that improving completion rates requires more than isolated adjustments; rather, it demands the construction of an institutional culture of continuous and integrated monitoring. In this sense, Rosana et al. (2021) and Xavier et al. (2024) point out that faculty training should prioritize strengthening the articulation among teachers, students and coordination bodies. This integration proves essential to ensure effective collaboration in the formative process, in line with current pedagogical guidelines. Thus, educational practice comes to dialogue with institutional guidelines, promoting a more participatory learning environment aligned with the contemporary needs of education.

Furthermore, the promotion of broad competencies and the valuing of meaningful learning are supported by the guidelines of UNESCO and the 2030 Agenda, which emphasize the need for inclusive educational practices aimed at integral education. The diagnosis confirms this perspective by demonstrating that educational inclusion (UNESCO, 2015b; UNESCO, 2016a; OECD, 2022a; Silva et al., 2026) is a central element for advancing policies of retention and academic completion in HE.

Additionally, it is found that inclusion cannot be treated as an isolated action, but rather as part of a collective pedagogical project. In this way, the integration between different levels of education and the valuing of teaching practice are configured as key dimensions for consolidating retention and academic success policies. Likewise, timely completion depends directly on student motivation and engagement, which are stimulated by practices that promote belonging, autonomy and participation in research and outreach projects. Based on these premises, Table 3 presents the dimensions and respective strategies aimed at improving timely completion, reinforcing the need for a systemic and collaborative approach that articulates diagnosis, pedagogical practice and institutional policies.

Table 2 – Proposed strategies to improve timely completion

Dimension	Strategic Proposals	Solutions and Practices for Timely Completion
Faculty training and capacity-building in the pedagogical	Develop continuing education programs in guidance methodologies; train faculty in	Implement mandatory training modules; create internal certifications; establish mentoring groups between experienced

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methodology of academic guidance	innovative, student-centered pedagogical practices; promote workshops and courses on supervision and project monitoring.	and new faculty; monitor the application of methodologies through pedagogical performance indicators.
Curriculum and academic structure and academic guidance	Integration of research from the early years; curricular reorganization with mandatory guidance sessions; expand guidance to all students; institutionalize mandatory protocols; train faculty in supervision methodologies.	Integrative project courses from the outset; semester schedules with mandatory milestones; formalized interdisciplinary modules; minimum meeting calendar; semester progress reports; digital platforms for continuous monitoring.
Research and scientific production	Mandatory initial planning; encouragement of scientific production throughout the program; continuous monitoring with progress rubrics.	Semester scientific production goals; interdisciplinary research groups; academic credits linked to participation in projects.
Institutional management and student autonomy and motivation	Monitor supervision practices; create incentive mechanisms; implement continuing education policies; encourage engagement through pedagogical practices, project participation and support spaces.	Academic performance indicators; financial or academic incentives; pedagogical monitoring committees; peer tutoring programs; incentive scholarships for participation; personal and academic development workshops.
Market-society integration and formation of interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary groups	Establish links between research and social demands; promote partnerships and outreach projects; create interdisciplinary study and research groups.	Agreements with companies and public bodies; mandatory internships linked to research; outreach projects with measurable social impact; institutionalization of interdisciplinary groups; academic credits; integrative seminars and events.
Educational technology and innovation and academic internationalization	Incorporate digital monitoring tools and active teaching methodologies; encourage international exchanges and partnerships.	Digital monitoring platforms; use of artificial intelligence to identify dropout risks; virtual laboratories and simulators; student mobility programs; joint research projects with foreign universities; encouragement of international publication.
Student health and well-being	Ensure psychological support and health programs that favor emotional and physical balance during the undergraduate degree.	Institutionalized psychological support services; academic stress prevention programs; sports and cultural activities integrated into the curriculum.
Continuous evaluation and monitoring and academic flexibility	Implement formative and diagnostic evaluation systems throughout the program; offer flexible educational pathways with elective courses and personalized tracks.	Semester performance reports; integrated evaluations with immediate feedback; monitoring of dropout and retention indicators; differentiated academic pathways; market-aligned elective courses; recognition of extracurricular experiences as credits.

Source: Prepared by the authors (2025).

Timely program completion requires an integrated approach that articulates curriculum, academic guidance, research, institutional management, student motivation, social integration and academic policies. To achieve this objective, it is essential to introduce research from the early years of training, reorganize the curriculum with mandatory guidance sessions and ensure interdisciplinarity.

Furthermore, guidance should be universal and structured, supported by clear protocols, regular meetings and faculty training. Research, in turn, requires initial planning and continuous monitoring, in order to ensure consistency and relevance. In this context, Lopes; Sousa (2026) argue that collaborative work in higher education should be understood as a formative process aimed at qualified intervention. The authors emphasize that “training to intervene” implies reflecting on pedagogical practices grounded in active learning methodologies, articulated with permanent monitoring strategies. Consequently, academic guidance assumes a central role, as it makes it possible to monitor student development systematically, favoring both autonomy and the collective construction of knowledge. Collaboration between faculty and students, mediated by active methodologies, strengthens the integration between theory and practice, broadening the effectiveness of higher education.

Likewise, the dimensions and pedagogical policies of continuing education for faculty in academic guidance, both in higher education and in basic education, are essential for consolidating timely completion strategies (Gomes et al., 2026). At the same time, institutional management should consolidate supervision and continuing education practices, stimulating student autonomy and integration with the market and society. Finally, monitoring units and clear academic policies ensure consistency and transparency, transforming perceptions into concrete results. In this way, they guarantee quality, equity and social relevance in university training, especially in view of the challenges of academic innovation and the contemporary demands of higher education.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

This study sought to answer the central question of how the academic guidance methodology can contribute to undergraduate and postgraduate students at

UniZambeze completing their programs within the established deadline. In line with the general objective, it was found that academic guidance is an essential element for student success, even though it does not consistently ensure timely completion.

In undergraduate education, guidance proved relevant for structuring the formative journey and helping to overcome difficulties. However, weaknesses were evident, such as the absence of formal monitoring, low participation and late start of research. In postgraduate education, it stood out for its methodological and scientific value, especially through structured feedback and goal-setting. However, limitations persist, such as irregular supervision and insufficient initial alignment. From the faculty's perspective, there is recognition of the importance of the practice, but the lack of institutional training and incentive policies makes guidance sporadic and belated, which partly explains the difficulty many students face in completing their programs within the expected time.

Given these results, it becomes evident that there is a need to institutionalize minimum monitoring protocols, establish periodic meetings and invest in continuing education policies for faculty. It is recommended to expand the coverage of undergraduate guidance, integrate research from the early years and systematize practices in postgraduate education, with mandatory initial planning, a minimum meeting schedule and continuous feedback. This creates an environment more favorable to timely program completion.

The contributions of this study are manifested both in the scientific field, by offering support for educational policies aimed at improving the quality and efficiency of higher education in Mozambique, and in the social field, by favoring greater equity, reduced retention and the training of qualified professionals committed to the country's scientific and social development. Possible developments include the consolidation of a culture of continuous monitoring, the strengthening of student autonomy and the integration of curriculum, research, institutional management and academic policies.

Investing in faculty training and capacity-building, as well as in continuing education focused on guidance methodologies, is an essential dimension for improving timely program completion. This investment ensures greater quality, social

impact and sustainability in university education. The research shows that, although valued, the academic guidance methodology needs to be strengthened and institutionalized, in order to transform favorable perceptions into concrete and lasting results.

Finally, it should be noted that research plays a fundamental role in the context of higher education, as it promotes knowledge production, stimulates critical thinking and strengthens innovation capacity. When consistently integrated into the academic journey, it contributes not only to students' scientific training but also to the country's social and economic development, consolidating the university as a space of transformation and progress.

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