Spigot Capacity of Dense Medium Cyclones

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by

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Summary

Dense medium cyclones are used extensively in the mineral processing industry to beneficiate various minerals including coal, diamonds and iron ore, amongst others. According to Reeves (2002), “the cyclone has been installed in over one-quarter of the coal preparation plants worldwide”. Dense medium cyclones have the ability to achieve high capacities, and simultaneously obtain sharp separations and high separation efficiencies. However, this piece of equipment does have a shortcoming in that its capacity is constrained by the solids carrying capacity of the spigot. This is termed the spigot capacity. There is uncertainty on whether the spigot capacities specified by DSM (Dutch State Mines), the original developers of the dense medium cyclone, can be increased or not, and how these capacities were determined. The purpose of this study is to establish a methodology to determine the spigot capacities of dense medium cyclones, and determine the parameters that influence these capacities.

In order to illustrate the significance of increasing the capacity of dense medium cyclones, the following coal example is used: In 2005, South Africa produced about 245Mt of coal valued at R35.86 billion. A significant proportion of this coal is beneficiated through dense medium cyclones. Therefore, an increase in the cyclone capacity, even if relatively small, represents a large number in terms of tonnages of coal produced or monetary gains.

It has been established clearly in this investigation that the maximum spigot capacity is reached at the onset of roping. A critical sinks ore concentration at which spigot overloading occurs has been observed. The simplest and best indicator of possible spigot overloading has been established to be the sinks ore concentration, measurement of this parameter could, however, prove challenging on most industrial cyclones. Further, spigot overloading of a dense medium cyclone can be detected visually by observing the discharge type at the sinks and monitoring particle misplacement to the floats stream.
A regression model that quantifies the spigot capacity, in terms of ore and slurry, has been developed. Various parameters were considered in the model, these include: cyclone geometry, feed head, medium density, and medium grade. Parameters that influence the spigot capacity of dense medium cyclones have been established, and their effect on the spigot capacity has been quantified.

The spigot capacity values obtained in this investigation were compared with those specified by DSM, and it was concluded that there is large potential to increase the ‘spigot capacities’ specified by DSM.

**Keywords:** Dense medium cyclone; Hydrocyclone; Dense medium separation; Spigot capacity; Spigot loading; Roping.
Table of Contents

CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION ...........................................................................................1

CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW ...............................................................................5

2.1. Classification Hydrocyclones .................................................................................6

2.1.1. Characterisation of Overloading at the Underflow ...............................................6

(a) Air Core and Roping ..............................................................................................7

(b) Underflow Solids Concentration ..........................................................................10

(c) Effect of Roping on Cyclone Operation ...............................................................16

2.1.2. The Influence of Cyclone Geometry on the Spigot Capacity ................................22

(a) Inlet Size .............................................................................................................22

(b) Spigot Diameter ..................................................................................................23

(c) Vortex Finder Diameter .......................................................................................30

(d) Cone Angle and Barrel Length ............................................................................31

2.1.3. The Influence of Operational Variables on the Spigot Capacity .........................33

(a) Feed pressure .......................................................................................................33

(b) Ore Size ..............................................................................................................33

(c) Ore Density .........................................................................................................36

(d) ‘Overflow Throttling’ ..........................................................................................37

2.2. Dense Medium Cyclones .......................................................................................38

2.2.1. Characterisation of Overloading at the Sinks ...................................................38

(a) Sinks Ore Concentration ......................................................................................38

(b) Effect of roping on cyclone performance ............................................................42

2.2.2. Influence of Cyclone Geometry on Spigot Capacity .........................................46

(a) Inlet Size .............................................................................................................46

(b) Spigot Diameter ..................................................................................................46

(c) Vortex Finder Diameter .......................................................................................50

(d) Cone Angle .........................................................................................................51

(e) Barrel Length ......................................................................................................52

2.2.3. Influence of Operational Variables on Spigot Capacity .....................................54

(a) Feed pressure .......................................................................................................54

(b) Medium Density ..................................................................................................56

(c) Medium Grade .....................................................................................................57

(d) Ore Size ..............................................................................................................57
2.3. Summary of Literature Review ................................................................. 59
   (a) Characterisation of Overloading at the Spigot ........................................ 59
   (b) Influence of Roping on Cyclone Performance ........................................ 60
   (c) Effect of Cyclone Geometry on Spigot Capacity ..................................... 61
   (d) Effect of Operational Variables on Spigot Capacity ............................... 62
   (e) Classification vs Dense Medium Cyclones ............................................ 63

CHAPTER 3. EXPERIMENTAL APPROACH ...................................................... 65
   3.1. Experimental Set-up - 165mm Cyclone ................................................. 66
      3.1.1. Experimental Procedure: Characterisation of Overloading at Sinks .... 67
      3.1.2. Experimental Procedure: Effect of Variables .................................... 69
   3.2. Experimental Set-Up and Procedure- 350mm Cyclone ......................... 72
      3.2.1. Variables Investigated ..................................................................... 75
   3.3. Experimental Matrix .............................................................................. 76

CHAPTER 4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION ...................................................... 83
   4.1. Characterisation of Overloading at the Sinks ......................................... 84
      4.1.1. Spigot Loading ................................................................................. 85
      4.1.2. The Sinks Ore Concentration ............................................................ 90
      4.1.3. Slurry Flow ....................................................................................... 94
      4.1.4. Medium Flow ................................................................................... 98
      4.1.5. Density Differential ....................................................................... 101
   4.2. Quantifying the Spigot Capacity ............................................................. 105
      4.2.1. Model Development ....................................................................... 115
         (a) Spigot Capacity ............................................................................... 115
         (b) Cyclone Capacity ........................................................................... 121
         (c) Volume Split .................................................................................. 122
         (d) Sinks Ore Concentration ............................................................... 124
         (e) Medium Split to Sinks ................................................................. 125
      4.2.2. Comparison with DSM Spigot Capacities ........................................ 127
      4.2.3. Influence of Cyclone Geometry on Spigot Capacity ....................... 132
         (a) Spigot Diameter ............................................................................ 132
         (c) Vortex Finder Diameter ............................................................... 137
         (d) Inlet Size ...................................................................................... 139
         (e) Cyclone Diameter ...................................................................... 140
List of Figures

Figure 1.1. Cyclone geometry. (Adapted from Bosman 2003b) ..........................................................................................3
Figure 1.2. Milled and atomized ferrosilicon. (Grobler, 2006) ..........................................................................................3
Figure 2.1. Schematic diagram showing spray, semi-rope and rope discharges at the underflow of a hydrocyclone. (Neesse et al., 2004a) ..........................................................................................7
Figure 2.2. Resistivity images showing the air core below the feed inlet of a 44mm diameter hydrocyclone. (Gutiérrez et al. 2000) ..........................................................................................7
Figure 2.3. The influence of feed solids’ concentration on the air core size. (Gutiérrez et al., 2000) ...........................................8
Figure 2.4. Angle of discharge for the underflow slurry with changing feed flow-rate and solids concentration. (Gutiérrez et al., 2000) ..........................................................................................9
Figure 2.5. The influence of solids concentration on the apparent viscosity of the pulp. Particle size range: 75+50μm. (Aplan, 1985) ..........................................................................................9
Figure 2.6. The underflow solids concentration at which roping was initiated for ores of different densities. (From Mular and Jull, 1978 adapted in Heiskanen, 2000) .................................................................11
Figure 2.7. Influence of feed solids on roping. (Plitt et al., 1987) ..........................................................................................12
Figure 2.8. Underflow solids concentration during the transition from spray to rope discharge for (a) a 69mm test cyclone and (b) a 300mm plant cyclone. (Adapted from Fahlstrom, 1963) ...............13
Figure 2.9. Solids recovery in the underflow as a function of material coarser that the separation size in the feed for a 69mm test cyclone. Fahlstrom (1963). Curve 1: %V_SF = 3.9, 8.4 and 19.6%. Curve 2: g_u = C_i^+ ..............13
Figure 2.10. The influence of feed concentration on the critical underflow concentration at which roping commences. (Flintoff et al., 1987) ..........................................................................................15
Figure 2.11. The influence of feed volume concentration on the underflow concentration during roping. The dotted line represents a plot of equation 2.1, and the solid line is equation 2.2. (Heiskanen, 2000) ............15
Figure 2.12. Overflow pulp density during the transition from spray to rope discharge. Curve 1: 69mm test cyclone at various %V_SF. Curves 2, 3 and 4: %V_SF = 15.1, 21.7 and 37.4%, respectively, with D_c = 300mm. (Fahlstrom, 1963) ..........................................................................................16
Figure 2.13. The influence of commencement of roping on the cut-size. (Abbot, 1967a) ..........................................................17
Figure 2.14. Change in the separation size during roping. Curve 1: %V_SF= 3.9, 8.4 and 19.6%. (Fahlstrom, 1963) ..........................................................................................17
Figure 2.15. The relationship between separation size and solids recovery in U/F (mass fraction). (Fahlstrom, 1963). .........................................................................................................................18
Figure 2.16. Influence of roping on cyclone performance at (a) low (~7% by volume) (b) intermediate (~18%) and (c) high (~34%) feed solids concentrations. (Plitt et al., 1987) .................................19
Figure 2.17. The influence of particle misplacement on the shape of the Tromp curve during rope and spray discharges. (Travicinski, 1976) .........................................................................................20
Figure 2.18. Effect of coarse particles misplacement to the overflow on the partition curve. (Kelly, 1991) ..............................20
Figure 2.19. Influence of roping on cyclone performance. %V_SF = 8.4%, D = 69mm and D_u = 16mm. Curves 1, 2, 3, 4 correspond to D_u = 3, 5, 7,9mm. (Fahlstrom, 1963) ..............................................................................21
Figure 2.20. Effect of the spigot size on spigot capacity. (Tarr, 1985) .........................................................................................24
Figure 2.21. Effect of the spigot size on spigot capacity. (Jull, 1972) ................................................................. 24
Figure 2.22. Spigot capacity under rope and near rope conditions. (Plitt et al., 1987) .............................................. 25
Figure 2.23. Relationship between spigot diameter and spigot ore capacity. (Heiskanen, 2000) ......................... 26
Figure 2.24. (a) Comparison of the spigot size-spigot capacity relationships proposed by various authors. (b) Curve in (a) at smaller spigot sizes on normal scale. ................................................................. 27
Figure 2.25. Underflow solids concentration during roping with changing D_o/D_u. Curves 1, 2 and 3 correspond to \%V_SF = 19.6, 8.4 and 3.9%. (Fahlstrom, 1963) ...................................................................................... 28
Figure 2.26. The influence of the spigot-to-vortex finder diameter ratios on the underflow density. (Heiskanen, 2000) ....................................................................................................................................................... 28
Figure 2.27. The influence of feed concentration on the critical underflow concentration at which roping commences. (Flintoff, 1987) .............................................................................................................. 29
Figure 2.28. D_o/D_u ratios at which roping is likely to occur according to Concha et al. (1996). ......................... 30
Figure 2.29. Effect of slurry viscosity on the maximum tangential velocity within a hydrocyclone. (Dyakowski and Williams, 1995) ................................................................................................................. 34
Figure 2.30. Effect of 50% passing particle size on underflow concentration during roping. (Plitt et al., 1987) .35
Figure 2.31. Effect of median particle size of underflow on \%V_MOU. (Heiskanen, 2000) ......................... 35
Figure 2.32. Effect of the size distribution of particles at the underflow on the underflow solids concentration at which roping commences. (Heiskanen, 2000) ........................................................................................................ 36
Figure 2.33. Effect of particle density on spigot capacity. (Jull, 1972). ............................................................... 36
Figure 2.34. Separation density vs ore recovery in sinks (mass fraction) for coal. (Upadrashta and Venkateswarlu, 1982) ............................................................................................................................................... 42
Figure 2.35. Separation density vs ore recovery in sinks (mass fraction). (Upadrashta and Venkateswarlu, 1982) ............................................................................................................................................................................... 43
Figure 2.36. Influence of spigot overloading on the cyclone performance. Spigot overloaded at D_u = 12.5mm and normal operation at D_u = 19.5mm. (Stas, 1957). ................................................................. 45
Figure 2.37. The spigot overloading on the shape of the partition curve. (Leonard and Leonard, 1983) ................. 45
Figure 2.38. The relationship between spigot diameter and spigot capacity for coal. (DSM, 1985) ............... 48
Figure 2.39. The relationship between spigot diameter and spigot capacity for core......................................... 49
Figure 2.40. The relationship between spigot diameter and spigot capacity for industrial minerals and ores with increasing feed pressure. (DSM, 1985) .................................................................................................................. 49
Figure 2.41. The influence of the barrel length on the spigot capacity. (DSM, 1985) ................................. 52
Figure 2.42. The influence of the barrel length on the cyclone capacity. (DSM, 1985) ............................... 53
Figure 2.43. The effect of feed pressure on spigot capacity. (DSM, 1985) ..................................................... 55
Figure 2.44. The effect of ore density on spigot capacity. (DSM, 1985) ......................................................... 58
Figure 3.1. (a) A schematic of the test rig and (b) polyurethane cyclone employed to perform the experiments. 66
Figure 3.2. The test rig, with a 165mm cyclone, on which the experiments were performed.............................. 67
Figure 3.3. The 20° cone with changeable spigots. (Cone A) .............................................................................. 70
Figure 3.4. The 200mm long barrel used during the experiments .............................................................. 70
Figure 3.5. Pictures of the 350mm dense medium cyclone used to perform the validation work .................. 73
Figure 4.1. Spray discharge at the sinks for the (a) 165mm cyclone, and (b) 350mm cyclone ...................... 85
Figure 4.2. Semi-rope discharge at the sinks for the (a) 165mm cyclone, and (b) 350mm cyclone. ...............85
Figure 4.3. Rope discharge at the sinks for the (a) 165mm cyclone, and (b) 350mm cyclone. ......................86
Figure 4.4. Changes in the ore loading at both the floats and sinks streams as ore was added into the cyclone for
a 45mm spigot. Data points with white and grey backgrounds were obtained during spray and semi-rope
discharges, respectively. While data points with black background were obtained during roping. ..................86
Figure 4.5. Changes in the ore loading at both the floats and sinks streams as ore was added into the cyclone for
a 34mm spigot. ..................................................................................................................................................87
Figure 4.6. Changes in the ore loading at both the floats and sinks streams as ore was added into the cyclone for
a 25mm spigot. ..................................................................................................................................................89
Figure 4.7. Volumetric recovery of ore to sinks during the transition to roping for various spigot diameters.....89
Figure 4.8. The volumetric ore concentration at the sinks for a 45mm spigot. Data points with white and grey
backgrounds were obtained during spray and semi-rope discharges, respectively. While data points with black
background were obtained during roping ...........................................................................................................90
Figure 4.9. The volumetric medium-to-ore ratio at the underflow for a 45mm spigot. Data points with white and
grey backgrounds were obtained during spray and semi-rope discharges, respectively. While data points with
black background were obtained during roping ....................................................................................................91
Figure 4.10. The volumetric ore concentration at the sinks for the 25 and 34mm spigots...............................92
Figure 4.11. The volumetric medium-to-ore ratio at the sinks for the 25 and 34mm spigots during the transition
to roping. ..........................................................................................................................................................92
Figure 4.12. Range of all ore concentrations obtained in this investigation when roping was prevalent at the
sinks. ....................................................................................................................................................................93
Figure 4.13. Range of all the sinks medium-to-ore ratios obtained in this investigation when roping was
prevalent at the sinks ........................................................................................................................................100
Figure 4.14. Slurry loading at the sinks for the 45mm spigot. Data points with white and grey backgrounds were
obtained during spray and semi-rope discharges, respectively. While data points with black background were
obtained during roping ........................................................................................................................................95
Figure 4.15. Slurry loading at the sinks for the 25 and 34 mm spigot. ...............................................................96
Figure 4.16. Cyclone throughput (both ore and slurry) during the transition to rope discharge for the 45mm
spigot. Data points with white and grey backgrounds were obtained during spray and semi-rope discharges,
respectively. While data points with black background were obtained during roping .....................................97
Figure 4.17. Cyclone slurry throughput during the transition to rope discharge for the 25 and 34mm spigots. ....97
Figure 4.18. Medium flow-rate at the floats and sinks during the transition to rope discharge for the 45mm
spigot. Data points with white and grey backgrounds were obtained during spray and semi-rope discharges,
respectively. While data points with black background were obtained during roping .....................................99
Figure 4.19. Medium flow-rate at the sinks during the transition to rope discharge for the 25 and 34mm spigots.
........................................................................................................................................................................100
Figure 4.20. Medium flow-rate at the floats during the transition to rope discharge for the 25 and 34mm spigots.
........................................................................................................................................................................100
Figure 4.21. The relationship between R_f and R_m when spray and semi-rope discharges were prevalent at the
sinks. ....................................................................................................................................................................100
Figure 4.22. The relationship between $R_f$ and $R_m$ when rope discharge was prevalent at the sinks.....................101
Figure 4.23. Density differential across the cyclone during the overloading of the 45mm spigot. Data points with white and grey backgrounds were obtained during spray and semi-rope discharges, respectively. While data points with black background were obtained during roping. ........................................................................................................102
Figure 4.24. Density differential across the cyclone during the overloading of the 25 and 45mm spigots........102
Figure 4.25. Range of density differential obtained during roping for all the tests performed with fine magnetite. ...........................................................................................................................................103
Figure 4.26. Influence of feed concentration on the floats and sinks medium densities for the 45mm spigot. Data points with white and grey backgrounds were obtained during spray and semi-rope discharges, respectively. While data points with black background were obtained during roping. ........................................................................................................103
Figure 4.27. Influence of feed concentration on the floats and sinks medium densities for the 34mm spigot....104
Figure 4.28. Influence of feed concentration on the floats and sinks medium densities for the 25mm spigot.....104
Figure 4.29. The effect of spigot diameter on $Q_{USM}$.................................................................................................................................106
Figure 4.30. The effect of spigot diameter on $Q_{UM}$.................................................................................................................................107
Figure 4.31. The effect of spigot diameter on $Q_{USM}$ (15° cone angle). .............................................................................................................107
Figure 4.32. The effect of spigot diameter on $Q_{UM}$ (15° cone angle). .............................................................................................................108
Figure 4.33. Schematic cross sectional view of the 15° cone angle for (a) larger spigot and (b) smaller spigot. 109
Figure 4.34. The effect of spigot diameter on $Q_{USM}$. (Cone A - 20°).................................................................................................110
Figure 4.35. The effect of spigot diameter on $Q_{UM}$. (Cone A - 20°).................................................................................................110
Figure 4.36. Schematic cross sectional view of cone A (20°) for (a) larger spigot and (b) smaller spigot. .........111
Figure 4.37. A picture of cone B........................................................................................................................................................................112
Figure 4.38. A schematic diagram of the cross-section through cone B.................................................................112
Figure 4.39. The influence of spigot design on $Q_{USM}$. (Operating conditions are given in Table A.5). ...............113
Figure 4.40. The influence of spigot design on $Q_{UM}$. (Operating conditions are given in Table A.5). ...............113
Figure 4.41. Configuration of a 350mm DSM cyclone. (Narasimha et al., 2007) ..........................................................114
Figure 4.42. Predicted versus measured $Q_{USM}$ values for equation 4.3 with parameter values in Table 4.9.......117
Figure 4.43. Predicted versus measured $Q_{UM}$ values for equation 4.4 with parameter values in Table 4.10. .....118
Figure 4.44. The effect of medium density on $Q_{UM}$ for the 350mm cyclone. (The plotted lines represent equation 4.5.) ..........................................................................................................................................118
Figure 4.45. The effect of $D_u$ on $Q_{UM}$ for the 165mm and 350mm cyclones. ...............................................................120
Figure 4.46. Predicted versus measured $Q_{UM}$ values for equation 4.5 with parameter values in Table 4.11.......120
Figure 4.47. A closer look at the lower $Q_{UM}$ values in Fig. 4.43 .........................................................................................121
Figure 4.48. Predicted versus measured $Q$ values for equation 4.6 with parameter values in Table 4.12.........122
Figure 4.49. Predicted versus measured $S$ values for equation 4.7 with parameter values in Table 4.13. .............124
Figure 4.50. Predicted versus measured $C_{inv}$ values for equation 4.8 with parameter values in Table 4.14. ......125
Figure 4.51. Predicted versus measured $R_m$ values for equation 4.10 with parameter values in Table 4.15....126
Figure 4.52. Comparison of the spigot diameter-spigot capacity relationship obtained in this study with that by DSM ......................................................................................................................................127
Figure 4.53. Comparison of $Q_{UM}$ obtained in this study and those specified by DSM. ...........................................128
Figure 4.4. Changes in the ore loading at both the floats and sinks streams as ore was added into the cyclone for a 45mm spigot. Data points with white and grey backgrounds were obtained during spray and semi-rope discharges, respectively. While data points with black background were obtained during roping. ........................129

Figure 4.5. Comparison of $Q_{USM}$ predicted from eq. 4.5 (to correct for effect of $D$) and those specified by DSM. Dashed line is extrapolation of eq. 4.11. .............................................................................................................130

Figure 4.54. Comparison of $Q_{UM}$ predicted from eq. 4.5 (to correct for effect of $D$) and those specified by DSM. Dashed line is extrapolation of eq. 4.11. .............................................................................................................131

Figure 4.55. Comparison of $Q_{UM}$ predicted from eq. 4.5 (to correct for effect of $D$) and those specified by DSM. Dashed line is extrapolation of eq. 4.11. .............................................................................................................132

Figure 4.56. The effect of $D_u$ on $Q_{USM}$ for the 165mm cyclone operating with cone A. Plotted lines represent a. equation 4.4, and b. equation 4.5. .............................................................................................................133

Figure 4.57. The effect of $D_u$ on $Q_{UM}$ for both the 165mm (cone A) and 350mm cyclones. Plotted lines represent equations 4.4 ($D_u \leq 45$mm) and 4.5 ($D_u \geq 60$mm). .................................................................134

Figure 4.58. The effect of $D_u$ on $Q_{UM}$ (Jull, 1972) ......................................................................................134

Figure 4.59. The effect of $D_u$ on $C_{invu}$ (Cone A - 20°) ..................................................................................135

Figure 4.60. Porosity in tubes packed with various materials for increasing ratios of particle diameter to tube diameter. (Leva, 1959) ................................................................................................................136

Figure 4.61. The effect of spigot diameter on $R_{spigot}$ (Cone A - 20°) .................................................................136

Figure 4.62. Influence of spigot size on volumetric percentage of magnetite particles at the sinks (Cone A –20°). .................................................................137

Figure 4.63. The effect of vortex finder diameter on $Q_{USM}$ (Cone A - 20°). .................................................................137

Figure 4.64. The effect of vortex finder diameter on $Q_{UM}$ (Cone A - 20°) .................................................................138

Figure 4.65. The effect of $H$ on $Q_{USM}$ (165mm cyclone – cone A) .................................................................139

Figure 4.66. The effect of $H$ on $Q_{UM}$ (165mm cyclone – cone A) .................................................................140

Figure 4.67. The effect of $H$ on $Q_{UM}$ (350mm cyclone) ..................................................................................141

Figure 4.68. The effect of medium density on $Q_{USM}$ (165mm cyclone – cone A) .................................................................142

Figure 4.69. The effect of medium density on $Q_{UM}$ (165mm cyclone – cone A) .................................................................143

Figure 4.70. The effect of medium density on $Q_{UM}$ (165mm cyclone – cone A) .................................................................144

Figure 4.71. The effect of medium density on $Q_{USM}$ (350mm cyclone) .................................................................145

Figure 4.72. The effect of medium density on $Q_{USM}$ (350mm cyclone) .................................................................146

Figure 4.73. The effect of ore size on $Q_{USM}$ (Full details on the operating conditions are given in Table A.6 in Appendix A.) .................................................................147

Figure 4.74. The effect of ore size on $Q_{UM}$ (Full details on the operating conditions are given in Table A.7 in Appendix A.) .................................................................148

Figure 4.75. The effect of ore size on $C_{invu}$ (Full details on the operating conditions are given in Table A.7 in Appendix A.) .................................................................149

Figure 4.76. The effect of ore size on $Q_{USM}$: -1.8+0.8mm vs –3+1mm. (Full details on the operating conditions are given in Table A.8 in Appendix A.) .................................................................150
Figure 4.77. The effect of ore size on $Q_{UM}$: -1.8+0.8mm vs –3+1mm. (Full details on the operating conditions are given in Table A.8 in Appendix A)......................................................................................................................150
Figure 4.78. The effect of ore size on $C_{mvu}$: -1.8+0.8mm vs –3+1mm. (Full details on the operating conditions are given in Table A.8 in Appendix A)................................................................................................................151
Figure 4.55. Comparison of $Q_{UM}$ predicted from eq. 4.5 (to correct for effect of D) and those specified by DSM. Dashed line is extrapolation of eq. 4.11. ..........................................................................................................................158
Figure A.1. The 165mm cyclone with the underflow elbow on...........................................................................176
Figure A.2. The pressure gauge used to measure the feed pressure..........................................................................177
Figure A.3. SEM image of the magnetite employed during the test-work.................................................................177
Figure A.4. A picture of the dense medium cyclone plant at Mintek, Randburg, South Africa..................................178
Figure A.5. The pressure gauge employed during the test-work with the 350mm cyclone. The pressure gauge was 0.915m below the feed inlet........................................................................................................178
Figure A.6. The Marcy scale and ‘density bottle’ used to measure the medium density.............................................179
Figure A.7. The demagnetizing coil at the DMS plant..............................................................................................179
Figure A.8. The area where the sievebends, receiving the floats and sinks slurries, were removed..........................180
Figure A.9. The log-sheet used during flow-rate measurements.............................................................................181
Figure A.10. The log-sheet used during analysis of samples from the float and sink streams..........................182
List of Tables

Table 2.1. Various %V_{MSU} obtained by different workers .................................................................14
Table 2.2. The exponent \( n \) for the relationship between cyclone throughput and inlet diameter ..............23
Table 2.3. \( D_i/D_o \) ratios at which roping is likely to occur according to Concha et al. (1996) ......................29
Table 2.4. The exponent \( n \) for the relationship between Q and \( D_o \) ratio .............................................30
Table 2.5. The exponent \( n \) for the relationship between S and \( D_o \) ratio ..............................................31
Table 2.6. The exponent \( n \) for the relationship between cyclone capacity and feed pressure ...................33
Table 2.7. Ore concentration at the feed and sinks for coal. Sinks concentrations based on assumption that 40% (v/v) of feed pulp was recovered in sinks. (DSM, 1985) .................................................................40
Table 2.8. Ore concentrations in the floats based on the assumption that 40% (v/v) of the feed pulp was recovered at the sinks ..................................................................................................................41
Table 2.9. Ore concentrations in the feed when the cyclones were operating at their spigot capacities. (England et al., 2002) ...........................................................................................................................................41
Table 2.10. Constants \( a_o \) and \( a_1 \) for equation 2.10 ....................................................................................44
Table 2.11. The exponent \( n \) for the relationship between inlet diameter and Q .........................................46
Table 2.12. The exponent \( n \) for the relationship between Q and \( D_o \) ......................................................47
Table 2.13. The exponent \( n \) for the relationship between S and \( D_o \) ......................................................47
Table 2.14. Dimensions of the cyclones employed by DSM, as a fraction of the cyclone diameter ........50
Table 2.15. The exponent \( n \) for the relationship between Q and \( D_o \) ......................................................51
Table 2.16. Feed concentrations for the curves in Fig. 2.41 and 2.42. (DSM, 1985) .................................53
Table 2.17. The exponent \( n \) for the relationship between Q and feed pressure ........................................54
Table 2.18. The exponent \( n \) for the relationship between S and head .........................................................54
Table 2.19. The exponent \( n \) for the relationship between Q and medium density .....................................56
Table 2.20. The exponent \( n \) for the relationship between Q and medium density according to Upadrashta and Venkateswarlu (1982) ..................................................................................................................56
Table 2.21. Comparison of spigot diameter-spigot capacity relationships in the literature .....................61
Table 3.1. Screen analysis of the fine magnetite .......................................................................................67
Table 3.2. The configuration of the cyclone used to perform test-work ....................................................68
Table 3.3. Cyclone dimensions tested during the experimental work .......................................................69
Table 3.4. Operating conditions tested during the experimental work .....................................................71
Table 3.5. The dimensions of the 350mm industrial-scale cyclone ..........................................................72
Table 3.6. Conditions tested on the 350mm dense medium cyclone .......................................................76
Table 3.7. Conditions tested when operating with the 15° cone angle and \( D_i = 0.2D \), with silica that had a size range of –1.8+0.8mm. (Roping only) .................................................................77
Table 3.8. Conditions tested when operating with the 15° cone angle and \( D_i = 0.2D \), with silica that had a size range of –3+1mm. (Roping only) .................................................................77
Table 3.9. Conditions tested when operating with the 15° cone angle and \( D_i = 0.3D \). (Roping only) ..........79
Table 3.10. Conditions tested when operating with cone A and \( D_i = 0.2D \). (Roping only) .......................80
Table 3.11. Conditions tested when operating with cone A and \( D_i = 0.3D \). (Roping only) .......................81
Table 3.12. Conditions tested when operating with cone B. (Roping only)...........................................................82
Table 3.13. Conditions tested when operating the 350mm dense medium cyclone. (Roping only) ......................82
Table 4.1 The feed ore concentrations at which roping commenced for the various spigot sizes.........................88
Table 4.2. Parameter values for equation 4.1. ........................................................................................................93
Table 2.21. Spigot diameter-spigot capacity relationships in literature. ..............................................................105
Table 4.3. Parameter values for equation 4.2 obtained for all the data acquired with the 165mm dense medium cyclone. ................................................................................................................................................................105
Table 4.4. Parameter values for equation 2.13 obtained for all the data acquired with the 165mm dense medium cyclone. ................................................................................................................................................................106
Table 4.5. Parameter values for equation 4.2 obtained for all the data acquired with the 165mm cyclone when operating with the 15° cone angle. ........................................................................................................108
Table 4.6. Parameter values for equation 2.13 obtained for all the data acquired with the 165mm cyclone when operating with the 15° cone angle. ........................................................................................................108
Table 4.7. Parameter values for equation 4.2 obtained for all the data acquired with the 165mm cyclone when operating with the 20° cone angle. ........................................................................................................110
Table 4.8. Parameter values for equation 2.13 obtained for all the data acquired with the 165mm cyclone when operating with the 20° cone angle. ........................................................................................................111
Table 4.9. Summary of statistical results from multiple-regression of $Q_{USM}$ data obtained with the 165mm cyclone (cone A). .................................................................................................................................................116
Table 4.10. Summary of statistical results from multiple-regression of $Q_{UM}$ data obtained with the 165mm cyclone (cone A). .................................................................................................................................................117
Table 4.11. Summary of statistical results from multiple-regression of $Q_{UM}$ data obtained with the 165mm (cone A) and 350mm cyclones. .....................................................................................................................................119
Table 4.12. Summary of statistical results from multiple-regression of $Q$ data obtained with the 165mm cyclone (cone A). ..............................................................................................................................................................122
Table 4.13. Summary of statistical results from multiple-regression of data obtained with the 165mm cyclone (cone A). ..............................................................................................................................................................123
Table 4.14. Summary of statistical results from multiple-regression of $C_{mvu}$ data obtained with the 165mm cyclone (cone A). ..............................................................................................................................................................124
Table 4.15. Summary of statistical results from multiple-regression of $R_m$ data obtained with the 165mm cyclone (cone A). ..............................................................................................................................................................126
Table 4.16. Comparison of $Q_{UM}$ obtained in this study and those specified by DSM..........................................128
Table 4.17. Comparison of $Q_{UM}$ predicted with eq. 4.5 and those specified by DSM. .................................130
Table 5.1. Number of cyclones required to reach the spigot ore capacity of a 350mm cyclone when using a combination of smaller cyclones or those with smaller $D_u$. .................................................................................156
Table 5.2. $R^2$ values for the various equations developed in the current study.................................................159
Table A.1. Dimensions of the dense medium cyclones employed by DSM. .........................................................171
Table A.2. Results obtained when characterizing overloading behaviour of the 45mm spigot. .......................171
Table A.3. Results obtained when characterizing overloading behaviour of the 34mm spigot. .......................172
Table A.4. Results obtained when characterizing overloading behaviour of the 25mm spigot. .......................172
Table A.5. The influence of spigot design on the spigot capacity.................................................................173
Table A.6. The influence of medium density on the density differential......................................................173
Table A.7. The influence of ore size on the spigot capacity........................................................................174
Table A.8. The influence of ore size on the spigot capacity........................................................................174
Nomenclature

A-inlet – 70x25 mm$^2$ ($D_i = 47$mm).

B-inlet – 70x10mm$^2$ ($D_i = 30$mm).

Bl – barrel length (mm).

C – Coarse grade magnetite with 75% (by mass) passing 45μm.

$C_V$ – the volume fraction of the FeSi and ore in the feed.

$C_{vf}$ – volumetric percentage of ore in the feed (applicable to DMS cyclones).

$C_{vf}^{(op50)}$ – volumetric percentage of ore in the feed with densities above the separation density (applicable to DMS cyclones).

$C_{vo}$ – volumetric percentage of ore in the floats (applicable to DMS cyclones).

$C_{vu}$ – volumetric percentage of ore in the sinks (applicable to DMS cyclones).

$C_{mvu}$ – volumetric percentage of ore in the sinks during roping (applicable to DMS cyclones).

D – cyclone diameter (mm).

$D_i$ – Inlet diameter (mm).

$D_o$ – Vortex finder/overflow diameter (mm).

$D_u$ – Spigot/underflow diameter (mm).

d$_{ore}$ – particle size or size range (mm).

$d_u$ – mass median (50% passing) size of the underflow solids.

$d_{50}$ – cut-size (μm).

EPM - Escart Probable Moyen.

F – Fine grade magnetite with 95% (by mass) passing 45μm.

Gr – medium grade, expressed as mass percentage passing 45μm.

$g_u$ – solids recovery in the underflow/sinks (by mass).

H – Feed Head (D).

M – Medium grade magnetite with 85% (by mass) passing 45μm.

O/F – Overflow or floats.

P – feed pressure (kPa).

$Q_o$ – flow-rate of ore through the floats (l/hr ore).

$Q_{os}$ – flow-rate of slurry through the floats (l/hr slurry).
Q_U – flow-rate of ore through the sinks (l/hr ore).

Q_{US} – flow-rate of slurry through the sinks (l/hr slurry).

Q_{UM} – the maximum ore carrying capacity of the spigot (l/hr ore).

Q_{USM} – the maximum slurry carrying capacity of the spigot (l/hr slurry).

Q – flow-rate of slurry through the feed (l/hr slurry).

R_f – water split to the sinks.

R_m – volumetric medium split to the sinks.

RD – Relative Density.

S – volume split during spray discharge (Q_{US}/Q_{OS}).

S_R – volume split during roping (Q_{USM}/Q_{OS}).

SG – Specific Gravity.

U/F – Underflow or sinks.

%V_{MSU} – volumetric percentage of solids in the underflow during roping (applicable to classification cyclones).

%V_{SP} – volumetric percentage of solids in the feed (applicable to classification cyclones).

\( C_i^+ \) – the percentage weight of solids in the feed coarser than the separation size.

\( \alpha \) – cone angle (degrees).

\( \rho_{med} \) – feed medium density (kg/l).

\( \rho_{ore} \) – ore density (kg/l).

\( \rho_{OF(med)} \) – floats medium density (kg/l).

\( \rho_{UF(med)} \) – sinks medium density (kg/l).

\( \rho_F \) – the relative slurry density in the feed.

\( \rho_O \) – the relative slurry density in the floats stream.

\( \rho_U \) – the relative slurry density in the sinks stream.

\( \sigma_{est} \) – Standard error of the estimate.