SUCCESSFUL FIRST-YEAR STUDENTS’
PERCEPTIONS AND EXPERIENCES OF RETENTION
AND THROUGHPUT AT A SELECTED FET COLLEGE

SOUTH AFRICA

SHARIFA HARTLEY-OHLSON

A full thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

Masters in Social Work

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL WORK

UNIVERSITY OF THE WESTERN CAPE

Supervisor: Doctor Anna-Marie Beytell

November 2011
KEYWORDS

Environmental systems
Experiences of success
First-year successful students
Further Education and Training (FET)
Further Education and Training College (FETC)
Interpersonal systems
Intrapersonal systems
Student perceptions of success
Student retention
Student throughput
ABSTRACT

The Further Education and Training Colleges Sector is a new phenomenon and attract students from school who are unprepared for the rigours of further education and training. This could have a direct impact on retention and throughput of first-year students in the sector. Against this backdrop student retention and success or throughput is a critical topic for further education and training in the public FET Colleges.

The goal of this research was to explore and describe the challenges of retention and throughput from the perceptions and experiences of successful first-year students based on the assumption that lessons can be learned from this. The objectives were to explore and describe successful first-year students’ perceptions and experiences of retention and throughput a selected FET college; make recommendations to the management of the FET college sector; and to describe the role of social work to increase retention. An explorative, descriptive and contextual research design was adopted for the purpose of the study. It was conducted at Northlink FET College, Protea campus in Bellville, Cape Town. The population encompasses academic inclusion criteria for homogeneity and included all successful first-year students who met the minimum pass requirements for all their subjects in the national examination results of November 2007 and the supplementary examination results of February 2008. Non-probability purposive sampling was used to select the sample of 21 participants. Focus group interviews were facilitated by a semi-structured interview guide. The interviews were conducted in English and Afrikaans to accommodate the diversity of the participants. The data analysis and verification were done according to the framework recommended by Cresswell (1998).
The findings of the study revealed that the following factors are strong predictors for student retention and success:

Environmental influences within the college contribute to successful throughput and retention. These include financial aid, student support and developmental services, monitoring student progress, study programs and safety of the college. Public internet, library and transport services were experienced as important essentials which contributed significantly to the retention and success of the participants. The participants experienced the lack of an internet and library service, and study facility at the campus a major challenge to overcome.

Student support in the form of group support or peer help, study groups, student counselling and referral for rehabilitation services were key determinants or predictors for the retention and throughput of the participants. The importance of trusting relationships also featured as key factors in the form of family and role models contributing to the success and persistence of the participants. Relationships in the academic environment with the academic staff and their communication styles of practicing such as flexible communication channels and democratic authoritarian relationship building contributed significantly to the receptiveness of learning and the success and persistence of the participants.

Key factors with regards to the significant strengths of the participants which have contributed to their retention and throughput highlighted by the findings of the study included self-efficacy with its underpinning developmental intrinsic aspects self-discipline,
self-esteem, independent decision-making, locus of control and acquiring essentials skills to adapt to student life. These attributes are strong predictors of student success and retention as have emerged from the findings of the study. Personal challenges such as hard times, drug abuse, learning disabilities, health problems and single parenting were indicated by the participants as strong predictors to rise above these adversities by persisting and succeed to enjoy a good quality life. The participants’ perception of education and employment were inter-linked toward an outcome for economic benefit and also perceived as a strong predictor for retention and throughput.

Other factors indicated by the participants that have contributed to their retention and throughput, are neighbourhood and socio-economic background. The findings of this research study are generally in line with most of the studies conducted at community colleges internationally, and with some of the studies conducted at institutions of Higher Education in South Africa.
DECLARATION

I declare that Successful First-Year Students’ Perceptions and Experiences of Retention and Throughput at a Selected FET College is my own work, that it has not been submitted for any degree or examination to any other university, and that all the sources I have used or quoted have been highlighted and acknowledged as complete references.

Sharifa Hartley-Ohlson

Signed: . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . .

Date: . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . .
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am deeply indebted to the Chief Executive Officer, campus manager and staff of Protea campus, Northlink FET College, for making it possible for me to conduct the research study. The findings reported and analysed therein are taken directly from the national examination results of the Department of Education and rich in-depth verbatim interviews with the sample student population group, to whom I express my sincere thanks for their voluntary participation in the study.

To my supervisor, Doctor Anna-Marie Beytell, I wish to convey special thanks for her professional and exceptional way of directing the study, and supporting and inspiring me to persist.

To my editor, Helen Allen, a special word of thanks for her assistance in taking care of the language and professional presentation of the thesis, and to Elizabeth le Sueur for final assistance in this regard.

I also wish to express my deepest gratitude to my husband, Edward, and daughters, Yolanda, Evana and Lucinda, for their patience, understanding and support.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

**KEYWORDS** ii  
**ABSTRACT** iii  
**DECLARATION** v  
**ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS** vi  

## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

1.1 Introduction 1  
1.2 Contextual Information 2  
1.2.1 Problem Statement 7  
1.3 Research Methodology 7  
1.3.1 Research Goal and Objectives 7  
1.4 Research Design 8  
1.4.1 Population and Sampling 10  
1.4.2 The Research Setting 11  
1.5 Data Collection 12  
1.5.1 Preparation for Data Collection 12  
1.5.2 Preparation of Participants 15  
1.5.3 Pilot Study 15  
1.6 Method of Data Analysis 16  
1.7 Method of Data Verification 17  
1.8 Ethical Considerations 19  
1.9 Conclusion
# CHAPTER 2: FURTHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING IN PUBLIC COLLEGES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>Background on Further Education and Public Colleges</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>The current education system</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3.1</td>
<td>The National Qualifications Framework (NQF)</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3.2</td>
<td>The National Youth Policy</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.4.1</td>
<td>Defining the Further Education and Training System</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.4.2</td>
<td>The FET Sector</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.4.3</td>
<td>The challenge of developing social and economic competency in formal institutions</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.4.4</td>
<td>Globalisation and the challenge of human resource development</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.4.5</td>
<td>Current Institutional Forms: Community Colleges in South Africa</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.4.5.1</td>
<td>Employer demand: high, intermediate and low skill</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.4.5.2</td>
<td>A more market-driven approach to education and training</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.4.5.3</td>
<td>Teacher competence</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>The current Further Education and Training system</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.5.1.</td>
<td>Long-term vision and goal</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.5.2</td>
<td>What is Further Education and Training?</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.5.3</td>
<td>Critical issues facing Further Education and Training</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.5.3.1</td>
<td>The learner</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.5.3.2</td>
<td>Lifelong learning</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2.5.3.3 Learner support – Effective career guidance
2.5.3.4 Social issues
2.6 FET curriculum transformation
2.6.1 The concept curriculum
2.6.2 The current realities about the FET curriculum
2.6.3 Technical College education
2.6.4 The National Curriculum Framework for FET
2.6.5 Implications of the Outcomes-Based Curriculum on the FET Curriculum
2.6.6 The NQF and implications for the FET curriculum
2.6.7 Impact of new learning programmes
2.6.8 Education and Training Quality Assurance
2.6.8.1 The functions of an ETQA
2.6.8.2 Assessment
2.6.9 National Certificate Vocational
2.6.9.1 Minimum entry requirements, duration and subjects
2.7 The Skills Development Act and FET Act relationship
2.8 Conclusion
3.5.4 Formulation of a programme Mission Statement that clearly articulates the meaning and purpose of academic advising

3.5.4.1 Provision of sufficient incentives, recognition, and reward for effective academic advising

3.5.4.2 Established criteria for the recruitment, selection and development of academic advisors

3.5.4.3 Substantive orientation, training and development of academic advisors

3.5.5 Empirical relationships between student advisement and student retention

3.5.5.1 College satisfaction with the college experience

3.5.5.2 Pre-entry information

3.5.5.3 Effective educational and career planning and decision-making

3.5.5.4 Student utilisation of campus support services

3.5.5.5 Student-faculty contact outside the classroom

3.5.5.6 Fear of failure

3.5.5.7 Financial support

3.5.5.8 Social and academic integration

3.5.5.9 Campus climate

3.5.5.10 Social support

3.5.5.11 Teaching and learning activities

3.6 Conclusion
### CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>127</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>Research goal and objectives</td>
<td>127</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>Research approach and design</td>
<td>129</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3.1</td>
<td>Research approach</td>
<td>129</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3.2</td>
<td>Research design</td>
<td>132</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3.2.1</td>
<td>Exploratory inquiry</td>
<td>133</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3.2.2</td>
<td>Descriptive and contextual research</td>
<td>134</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>Population and sampling</td>
<td>135</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>Research methods and process</td>
<td>137</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.5.1</td>
<td>Data collection methods</td>
<td>137</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.5.1.1</td>
<td>Focus group interviews</td>
<td>137</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.5.1.2</td>
<td>Recording of focus groups, interviews and field notes</td>
<td>139</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.5.1.3</td>
<td>Research process</td>
<td>140</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.5.1.3.1</td>
<td>Planning and practicalities</td>
<td>140</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.5.1.4</td>
<td>Preparation of participants</td>
<td>145</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.5.1.5</td>
<td>Conducting a pilot study</td>
<td>146</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>Method of data analysis</td>
<td>147</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>Method of data verification</td>
<td>149</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.7.1</td>
<td>Trustworthiness</td>
<td>149</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.7.2</td>
<td>Reflexivity</td>
<td>153</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>Ethical considerations</td>
<td>153</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>157</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION OF THE RESEARCH FINDINGS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>158</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>Discussion of findings from analysis of semi-structured interviews</td>
<td>158</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2.1</td>
<td>Environmental Sources</td>
<td>162</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2.1.1</td>
<td>College</td>
<td>162</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2.1.2</td>
<td>Public resources</td>
<td>170</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2.2</td>
<td>Interpersonal Relations</td>
<td>182</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2.2.1</td>
<td>Student Support</td>
<td>183</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2.2.2</td>
<td>Trusting relationships</td>
<td>189</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2.2.3</td>
<td>Relationships within the academic environment</td>
<td>193</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2.3</td>
<td>Intrapersonal Influence</td>
<td>198</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2.4</td>
<td>Self-efficacy</td>
<td>199</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2.5</td>
<td>Career decision-making determinant factors</td>
<td>205</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2.6</td>
<td>Perceptions of Achieving Success</td>
<td>208</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2.7</td>
<td>Challenges Influencing Throughput and Success</td>
<td>209</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>215</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>217</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER 6 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Introduction
6.2 Research goal, objectives and questions
6.3 Conclusions of the study
6.4 Limitations of the study
6.5 Recommendations
6.6 Conclusion

LIST OF REFERENCES

APPENDICES

1. Addendum A. Information sheet
2. Addendum B. Consent form
3. Addendum C. Parental consent form
4. Addendum D. Permission from the CEO of Northlink FET College to conduct the study
5. Addendum E. Raw data analysis example
6. Addendum F. Interview example
LIST OF TABLES AND FIGURES

Table 1.1  Pass and throughput rates (percentages) 2000-2002  5
Table 1.2  Distribution of First-Year Results per Instructional Offering  6
Table 1.3  Pass Percentage Distribution of the Sample Population  11
Table 2.1  The National Qualifications Framework  28
Table 5.1  Major and sub-categories found in analysis of semi-structured interviews with first-year students as influencing factors of retention and throughput/success  161
Figure 3.1  PVEST; 2004 Revised Process Version  74
Figure 3.2  Swail’s triangle of interaction between student and institution  81
# LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ABET</td>
<td>Adult Basic Education and Training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DoE</td>
<td>National Department of Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DoL</td>
<td>National Department of Labour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ETQA</td>
<td>Education and Training Quality Assurance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FET</td>
<td>Further Education and Training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GET</td>
<td>General Education and Training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HET</td>
<td>Higher Education and Training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LLL</td>
<td>Lifelong Learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NICE</td>
<td>National Institute for Community Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NQF</td>
<td>National Qualifications Framework, South Africa’s basic system for classifying education qualifications.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OECD</td>
<td>Organisation for Economic Cooperation in Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OBE</td>
<td>Outcomes-based Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RPL</td>
<td>Recognition of Prior Learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAQA</td>
<td>South African Qualifications Authority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SDA</td>
<td>Skills Development Act</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SETA</td>
<td>Sectoral Education and Training Authority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SGB</td>
<td>Standards Generating Body</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNESCO</td>
<td>United Nation Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION

As an introduction to the study it is important to understand the role of Further Education and Training (FET) in the broader context of the education system in South Africa. FET lies at the crossroads between general education, higher education, and the world of work (Department of Education, 1998a, 1998b). It is thus expected of FET colleges to contribute to national human resource development (HRD) through the provision of intermediate to higher-level skills. The FET sector’s role also lies in expanding access, widening participation, and promoting social inclusion in a society of widespread poverty, unequal distribution of income, and high unemployment (Fisher, Jaff, Powell and Horn, 2003)

However, the phenomenon of a high percentage of student failures and drop-outs in their first year remains a concern nationally and globally. Retention and throughput of these students are therefore important in further education and training.
1.2 Contextual Information

Over the past twenty years, college academic success and retention have traditionally been predicted by using demographics and academic variables (Pritchard and Wilson, 2003). It is important to differentiate between throughputs or academic success and pass rates. Academic success or ‘throughput’ refers to a student who has successfully completed a college-level course in a given year. ‘Throughput rate’ refers to students who have succeeded out of the total number of candidates who have enrolled for the course, while ‘pass rate’ refers to the number of candidates who have succeeded out of the total who sat for the examination. Hence, throughput rates are always lower than pass rates as they include students who have not reached the examination. ‘Retention’ refers to a student who persists with a college-level course in a given year, has written examinations, and has re-enrolled at an institution that he or she attended the previous year (Arnold, 1999). ‘Drop-out’ refers to a student who leaves the college without completing a course-level in a given year (Pandor, 2005; Akojee, McGrath and Visser, 2008).

There are many factors that have been found to influence retention and to be strongly associated with student persistence. These factors include initial student commitments, lack of family and peer support, academic involvement, frequency and quality of faculty-student interaction, academic preparedness, racial or ethnic differences, financial assistance, emotional, and social and cultural factors (de Beer,
2005; Pritchard and Wilson, 2003; Bailey and Alfonso, 2005). These factors can adversely affect students’ ability to obtain the post-secondary training and education they want. Community colleges can help students to overcome some barriers to success by employing open enrolment policies, identifying and addressing the particular needs and circumstances of an increasingly diverse population, and developing policy and institutional practices that will improve student retention and academic success rates (Siedman, 1995).

Bailey and Leinbach (2005) have found in research that students from minority groups, first-generation college students, students with lower levels of academic achievement in high school, and students from low-income families are all significantly over-represented in community colleges. The persistence and completion rates of these students in these colleges are however low.

Community colleges experienced an increase in the drop-out rates during the 1980s and 1990s. In 1995 only 36% of all first-time college students who entered a community college in the United States of America (USA) earned a certificate, Associate or Bachelor’s degree within six years (Jang Wan Ko, 2005). This author has also found that retention and throughput rates of vocational education graduates were lower than those of general students in both four-year and two-year universities and colleges. In 1998 there was a 46% drop-out rate for open-enrolment institutions, a 46% drop-out rate for public two-year institutions and a 30% drop-out rate for
private two-year institutions. The national graduation/throughput for students at public two-year institutions was 34% (Reisburg, 1999).

The pass and throughput rates of FET colleges in South Africa indicate that areas of growth are still necessary before the sector is considered to be performing efficiently. Table 1 shows that the averages of the pass and throughput rates declined by 1% in the period 2000 to 2002 and highlights significant provincial differences of the scores. The Western Cape had a higher-than-average pass rate of 70% and a throughput rate of 60% and Northern Cape a pass rate of 65% and throughput rate of 57% in contrast with lower overall scores in North West with a pass rate of 54% and throughput rate of 51% and Limpopo with a pass rate of 53% and throughput of 50%. The success rates in the sector are complicated by significant variations in success by vocational field. In 2002 the average pass rate of 52% in Engineering was lower than in Business Studies 62% and Utility Studies 70% (Powell and Hall, 2004). The variations within particular programmes sometimes have an effect on throughput and affect the number of students who qualify. For example, the national enrolment for Mathematics, a fundamental subject for qualification in Engineering, was 12 561 in 2002, with a pass rate of 51%. This implies that in 2002 more than 6 000 students failed. Similarly, the success rate for Electro-Mechanics Theory in the same year was 47% of 3 161 enrolments resulting in about 1 400 students who failed Electrical Engineering. The pass rates for Mining and Metallurgy 73% and Business Studies 62% were much higher than for Engineering 52%. Although the pass rates
for Electrical Engineering 48% and Motor and Transport 49% were closer to the average, the failure rates were higher. Resources are significantly wasted by this phenomenon and are likely to impact on the numbers who are able to enter the labour market at any given time (Powell and Hall, 2004; Akojee et al., 2008).

Table 1.1 Pass and throughput rates (percentages) 2000-2002

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Pass rates</th>
<th>Throughput rates</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Eastern Cape</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Free State</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gauteng</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KwaZulu-Natal</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limpopo</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mpumalanga</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North West</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northern Cape</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western Cape</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>National Average</strong></td>
<td><strong>58</strong></td>
<td><strong>57</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: Powell and Hall 2002, 2004

The 2003, 2004 and 2005 National Examination results of Protea campus, Northlink FET College in the Western Cape reveal that approximately 69% of students dropped out in their first year of study. Only 41% successfully completed their first year of study, in comparison with the overall national examination results of a 50% drop-out rate and a throughput rate of 50%. The high drop-out rate during this period served as the rationale to conduct the research under discussion. However, the results of 2006 to 2009 in the first-year National Certificate programmes offered reflect lower drop-out rates with higher throughput rates in some of the programmes
at Protea campus in comparison to the results of national as illustrated in Table 2.

Further to this, the FET and White Paper 6 on inclusive education reports (Department of Education, 1997a; 2001a) recognised that the students are historically categorised as ‘having special needs’. According to the National Centre for Education Statistics, between 1982 and 2000 there has been a rapid increase of students enrolling for programmes in vocational education in public colleges (Levesque, 2000). He also states that in spite of the increase, almost no studies have focused on this population.

### Table 1.2: Distribution of First-Year Results per Instructional Offering

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year/Nov</th>
<th>Program</th>
<th>Enrolled</th>
<th>Written</th>
<th>Pass %</th>
<th>Drop-out %</th>
<th>Enrolled</th>
<th>Written</th>
<th>Pass %</th>
<th>Drop-out %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>N2/NIC</td>
<td>388</td>
<td>333</td>
<td>74.77</td>
<td>14.18</td>
<td>15957</td>
<td>12201</td>
<td>62.07</td>
<td>23.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>N3/NSC</td>
<td>867</td>
<td>774</td>
<td>77.78</td>
<td>10.73</td>
<td>1438344</td>
<td>116302</td>
<td>56.91</td>
<td>21.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>N2/NIC</td>
<td>674</td>
<td>527</td>
<td>70.40</td>
<td>21.81</td>
<td>10986</td>
<td>8252</td>
<td>53.78</td>
<td>24.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>N3/NSC</td>
<td>1043</td>
<td>915</td>
<td>66.23</td>
<td>12.27</td>
<td>161975</td>
<td>130438</td>
<td>52.22</td>
<td>19.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>NCV L2</td>
<td>618</td>
<td>539</td>
<td>71.43</td>
<td>12.78</td>
<td>89027</td>
<td>65002</td>
<td>63.39</td>
<td>26.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>NCV L2</td>
<td>903</td>
<td>700</td>
<td>85.43</td>
<td>22.48</td>
<td>200483</td>
<td>193042</td>
<td>57.56</td>
<td>3.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>N3/NSC</td>
<td>1341</td>
<td>989</td>
<td>65.02</td>
<td>26.25</td>
<td>130268</td>
<td>94105</td>
<td>43.31</td>
<td>27.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>NCV L2</td>
<td>1080</td>
<td>655</td>
<td>81.07</td>
<td>39.35</td>
<td>459989</td>
<td>316805</td>
<td>66.41</td>
<td>31.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>N3/NSC</td>
<td>764</td>
<td>652</td>
<td>56.60</td>
<td>14.66</td>
<td>62434</td>
<td>43069</td>
<td>46.21</td>
<td>31.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td></td>
<td>7678</td>
<td>6084</td>
<td>71.56</td>
<td>20.76</td>
<td>1279463</td>
<td>979216</td>
<td>58.66</td>
<td>23.47</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Department of Education Results for November 2006-2009
1.2.1 Problem Statement

In view of the high failure and drop-out phenomenon of first-year college students universally, contextual information indicates a need to understand the challenges of retention and throughput from the perspective of successful students. The intention of this research was to approach the issue from the notion that lessons can be learnt from successful students.

1.3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The overarching research question was: What are students’ perceptions and experiences of factors contributing to their success with regards to throughput and retention during the first year?

1.3.1 Research Goal and Objectives

The research process of this study was guided by the research goal and objectives. The research goal was to explore and describe the challenges of retention and throughput from the perceptions and experiences of successful first-year students in order to use the findings to present structured guidelines based on the research findings to stakeholders in Further Education and Training.
The objectives were:

- To explore and describe successful first-year students’ perceptions and experiences of factors relating to retention and throughput at a selected FET College to stakeholders in Further Education and Training.
- To make recommendations to the management of the FET College sector on the factors which contributed to retention and throughput of first-year successful students at a selected FET College?
- To describe the role of social work to increase retention and throughput of students at FET Colleges based on the findings.

1.4 RESEARCH DESIGN

For the purpose of this research, an explorative, descriptive and contextual research design was employed. This strategy of enquiry does not fit a specific structure; it is more descriptive evaluative in nature.

**Exploratory research**: The researcher aims to become conversant with basic facts and to create a general picture of conditions. This strategy is conducted if a problem or issue needs to be explored of a group or population. Exploratory research allows the researcher to generate a complex, detailed understanding of the issue by talking directly with people, going to their homes or places of work, and allowing them to
tell their stories freely by what we expect to find or what we have read in the literature. Exploratory inquiry is conducted to empower participants to share their stories, hear their voices, and collaborate directly with them to minimise a power relationship between a researcher and the participants, to understand the contexts or settings in which participants in a study address a problem or issue; and because quantitative measures and the statistical analyses do not fit the problem. Qualitative approaches are simply a better fit to accommodate problems or issues of this nature (Creswell, 2007).

Descriptive research refers to the accurate portrayal of particular individuals or real-life situations in words, for the purpose of discovering new meaning, describing what exists, and categorising information (Burns and Grove, 1993). Data that materialises from a qualitative study is descriptive in that the researcher is interested in the process of bringing order, structure and meaning (de Vos, Strydom, Fouche and Delport, 2005). Through the application of this strategy the researcher attempted in this research to accurately assess and describe the perceptions and experiences, which contributed to retention and throughput from the perspectives of successful first-year students.

The context involves situating the object or phenomenon of the study within its immediate setting (Creswell, 2007). A contextual strategy avoids the separation of participants from the larger context (de Vos et al., 2005) and is uniquely descriptive
in that differences and distinguishing characteristics are described (Rand Afrikaans University, 2000). The researcher had to understand the interviewing data and observations obtained from students in the context of the educational setting.

1.4.1 Population and Sampling

Bless and Higson-Smith (2000) refers to a ‘population’ as the set of elements upon which the research focuses, and to which the obtained results should be generalised. Seaberg (cited in de Vos et al., 2005) posits a population is the total set from which the individuals or units of the study are chosen (de Vos et al., 2005). The research population consisted of all successful first-year students at Protea Campus, Northlink Further Education and Training College in 2007. ‘Successful students’ refers to those students who met the minimum pass requirements for all their subjects in the National Examinations of 2007. The supplementary examinations of March 2008 form part of the results of the November 2007 examinations. The population size was 39 students who met all the aforementioned requirements from a total of 181 students who wrote the National Examinations. The pass percentage distribution of the sample population is illustrated in Table 3.

Sampling is a subset of measurements drawn from the population in which we are interested, and serves as a means of helping us to understand and explain some facet
of the population (de Vos et al., 2005). The total population of 39 was recruited as a purposive sample for this study. In qualitative research non-probability sampling methods in particular, purposive sampling techniques are used rather than random sampling. Researchers seek out individuals, groups and settings where the specific processes being studied are most likely to occur (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000). Since participation is voluntary, there was no guarantee that all the students would participate in the research.

Table 1.3: Pass Percentage Distribution of the Sample Population

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>≥ 60</th>
<th></th>
<th>≤ 60</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>60-65</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>45-50</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65-70</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>50-55</td>
<td>19</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70-75</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>55-60</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>75-80</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80-85</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>85-90</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>90-95</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>95-100</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

∑ 39   N = 18       N = 21

Source: (Department of Education Final Schedule of Results, 2007/18/12 and 2008/04/02)

1.4.2 The Research Setting
Northlink FET College is situated in the northern suburbs of Cape Town, South Africa, and operates on eight campuses, offering engineering, maritime, building, business, utility and social-related courses. Protea campus is situated in Bellville and offers two- to three-year pre-matric courses in Hospitality Services National Certificate Vocational (henceforth referred to as NCV), Financial Management NCV, Business Management NCV, Clothing Production National Senior Certificate (henceforth referred to as NSC) and Business Studies NSC. Clothing production and the business-related courses are offered on pre-matric and post-matric levels, and hospitality services are offered only on pre-matric level at Protea campus. Courses in hospitality services and business-related studies are also offered at Tygerberg and Parow campuses respectively on pre-matric, post-matric and tertiary levels. The average age of the students is between 16 and 22 years.

1.5 DATA COLLECTION

1.5.1 Preparation for Data Collection

The researcher used focus groups to allow for group perspectives and group interaction from which the researcher could learn about the research issue. Focus groups are extremely valuable to understanding decision-making processes and are especially effective in studying professional practices. The researcher is allowed to access the process through which collective meaning is negotiated and through
which group identities are elaborated (Wilkinson, 1999, as cited in Barbour, 2008). Focus groups encourage participants to collectively address topics to which, as individuals, they may have previously devoted little attention. Group discussions do not put individuals ‘on-the-spot’, they are helpful in creating rationales for issues such as non-take-up of services (Barbour, 2008).

The focus groups in this study were homogeneous in terms of the languages English and Afrikaans. The academic inclusion criteria for homogeneity were all successful first-year students who met the minimum pass requirements for all their subjects in the national examination results of November 2007 and the supplementary examination results of February 2008. It was initially anticipated that the groups would comprise 6-10 participants. However, this did not materialise. Participation was voluntary and the interviews were scheduled without interfering with the participants’ academic activities. This affected the structure of the anticipated numbers per group as follows: two individual interviews, eight participants, four participants, two participants and five participants. In total, six varied interview sessions were conducted with twenty-one participants from the actual sample population size of thirty-nine. If the researcher failed to recruit the full sample, it was planned for that students from the Bellville campus would be approached to swell the numbers. Provision was made for individual interviews for those participants who did not want to participate in the focus group interviews. For the purpose of this research, a semi-structured interview guide was used. The researcher
started with the following open-ended question to engage with the participants and for the purpose of spontaneous responses: What do you think contributed to your achievement of success with your studies in the first year? Probing questions related to the objectives of the study were asked to enable participants to elaborate on social and educational/academic issues. The following themes/questions were included:

- What personal obstacles did you have to overcome in order to be successful?
- What is the role of family and how does it influence student success?
- What role do friends play in performance?
- What is the role of support from the college?
- What do you think were the most important factors that helped you with your success at the college?

To facilitate rapport with participants the recommended pattern for introducing the group discussion included a welcome, overview of the topic, and ground rules for group participation (de Vos et al., 2005; Creswell, 2007). The researcher also obtained permission from the participants to audio-tape the interviews. One of the many advantages of this method is that the tapes preserved the sequence of talk; for example, I could inspect the sequences of utterances without being limited to the initial extracts chosen to make sense of the interviews or conversations. It could also be replayed to improve the transcripts to give a true reflection of the talk (Silverman, 2006).
Barbour (2008) highlights the importance of field notes and recommends it be done during and directly after the focus groups. Contextual factors such as gestures, facial expressions, tone of voice, change in tempo of speech, and general body language assist in getting a bigger picture of what was said and to check whether the researcher’s initial understanding corresponds with that of the participants.

1.5.2 Preparation of Participants

The researcher began the process by making contact with the prospective participants individually at the campus, to request them to participate in the study. The criteria for inclusion were explained to them. The attached preamble and information sheet (Appendix A) was used to inform the participants about the goal of the study and possible risks and conditions of the research. The participants were also be informed that the researcher could not guarantee anonymity and confidentiality of any information shared in the focus group discussions, but an appeal was made to adhere to the ground rules, which included, among others, respect for confidentiality of information shared by group members. Participants who needed to speak with the researcher personally and privately were accommodated.
1.5.3 Pilot Study

A pilot study was conducted with a participant who did not form part of the sample. The participant was a successful first-year student enrolled for a post-matric course in Clothing Production. This pilot study assisted the researcher to come to grips with some aspects of establishing access, making contact and conducting the interviews (Siedman, 2005).

1.6 METHOD OF DATA ANALYSIS

Qualitative analysis transforms data into findings (Patton, 2002). This encompasses reducing the volume of raw information, sifting significance from trivia, identifying significant patterns, and constructing a framework for communicating the essence of what the data reveals. The steps as recommended by Creswell (1998) stipulated in de Vos et al., (2005) were applied for the data analysis of this research. These steps are not rigid but should rather serve as guidelines, because they can overlap:

- The labelled audio-recorded interviews and notes taken by the assistant moderator and the researcher were transcribed in English and Afrikaans.
Additional data obtained from attitudes, expressions, non-verbal codes and perceptions were also be added to the transcripts.

- To get a sense of the whole, the researcher read the entire transcripts several times, jotting down ideas as they came to mind.

- The researcher chose one of the transcribed interviews, and read through it to try to establish the underlying meaning, rather than the substance of the information.

- This process was repeated until a list of all the themes was obtained.

- Thereafter the data was revisited. An abbreviation for each of the themes was used in the form of a code, and the codes were then written down next to the appropriate segments of the texts. An organising scheme was used to detect new categories and codes.

- The researcher generated the most descriptive wording for the themes, and placed them into categories. Grouping themes together into larger constructs, as necessary, reduced the total list of categories.

- The data material belonging to each category was assembled in one place to start a preliminary analysis and writing of the report.

1.7 METHOD OF DATA VERIFICATION

Creswell (1998) emphasises eight key verification procedures and recommends that qualitative researchers engage in at least two of them in any given study. The following three cost-effective procedures were applied for this study:
• **Rich, thick description:** This procedure allows a potential inquirer to make decisions regarding transferability so that the researcher could describe in detail the participants and the setting under study. This detailed description would enable the transfer of information to other settings and an assessment of whether the findings could be transferred because of shared characteristics (Creswell, 2007). Lincoln and Cuba (1985) argue that it is not the naturalist’s responsibility to provide an index for transferability, but rather to provide the database that makes transferability judgements possible for potential appliers. Furthermore, they claim that a naturalist cannot specify the external validity of a study based on thick data.

• **In-member checks:** Lincoln and Guba (1985) state that this technique is the most critical for establishing credibility. It involves taking data, analyses, rough drafts, interpretations, language usage and conclusions back to the participants to judge the accuracy and credibility of the findings. This is an effective technique to use in focus groups. Summaries and reflections are used as communication techniques during and at the end of the interview sessions and consensus is reached as to what was conveyed.

• **Triangulation:** This concept in qualitative research refers to different modes of data collection which come logically to hand, depending on the methods
used (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). Creswell (2007) posits that the process of triangulation involves corroborating evidence from different sources.

1.8 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

A code of ethics is a prerequisite for full professional recognition (de Vos et al., 2005). Ethics is a set of moral principles, which offers rules and behavioural expectations about the most correct conduct towards experimental subjects and participants, employers, sponsors, other researchers, assistants and students. It is impossible to confine ethical considerations to certain sections only; they are present from the start and are woven through every step of the research methodology – as was indicated in the discussion on preparation for data collection (Margot and Anzul, 1991).

The researcher applied the following ethical standards by which she accepted accountability for any consequence which might occur by her decisions:

- Obtained permission from the CEO of Northlink FET College and the Research Ethics Committee of UWC to conduct the research;
- Informed the participants fully about the purpose of the study;
- Informed participants of their rights to withdraw at any stage of the interview since participation was voluntary;
• Informed participants, and respected their rights to withhold any private or personal information;

• Assured participants of anonymity in reporting of findings;

• Set ground rules which included respect for confidentiality of information shared by the group;

• Consent was obtained from the parents/guardians of the participants under the age of 18 who volunteered to participate in the study;

• Ensured that the investigation proceeded correctly at all times and that no one was deceived by the findings.

1.9 CONCLUSION

The phenomenon of a high percentage of student failures and drop-outs in the first academic year remains a concern nationally and globally. Retention and throughput or success of students is important in the education and training sector. Research indicates that students from minority groups, first-generation college students, students with lower levels of academic achievement in high school, and students from low-income families are all significantly over-represented in community colleges. The persistence and completion rates of these students are generally low. The pass and throughput rates of FET colleges in South Africa also indicate that there is still some way to go in areas of growth before the sector is considered to be performing efficiently. The contextual information indicated a need to understand
the challenges of retention and throughput from the perspective of first-year successful students. A qualitative research approach was identified suitable to conduct the research of which the methodology will be highlighted in detail in Chapter four. The assumption of this research was to approach the issue from the notion that lessons can be learnt from successful students. Chapter One is an introduction to the study and highlights looking briefly at the following key aspects: contextual information, problem statement, research design and methodology, goal and objectives of the research, population and sampling, the research setting, data collection methods and procedures, methods of data analysis and data verification and ethical considerations.

Chapter Two describes further education and training in South Africa broadly by highlighting important influential aspects in the past to current contemporary issues nationally and globally as background information to better understand its role in the broader context of the education system in South Africa. This chapter serves as the first section of literature reviewed pertinent to this research study.

Chapter Three comprise relevant general literature and research reviews conducted globally on factors that contribute to student success and retention in the first year.
Chapter Four describes the research design and scientific process implemented to address the research question; “What are the perceptions and experiences held by students of factors contributing to their success in their first year”

Chapter Five describes the findings of the semi-structured interviews conducted with first-year successful students in order to establish their perceptions and experiences of factors relating to their retention and throughput or success.

Chapter Six presents a summary of the study, statements about the findings and literature review, literature review and recommendations for future studies as well as the limitations, implications of the study.
CHAPTER 2

FURTHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING IN PUBLIC COLLEGES

2.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter further education and training in South Africa is described broadly by focussing on important influential aspects or determinants from the past to current contemporary issues nationally and globally.

New challenges for further education and training have emerged since the inception of the new democracy in South Africa in 1994. Previously educational and racially separated economies represented by the greater South Africans and its creations, the Bantustans and the self-governing states are now part of a single united economy with all races equally represented and participative. Thus, the national mission of further education and training is to dislodge itself from the economies of the past and to interface with the economies underpinning the reconstruction and development programmes aimed at transforming South Africa. Furthermore, further education and training, which was fragmented along racial lines in the past, has been challenged to establish a single, coherent system of education and training. This system can offer programmes responsive to a spectrum of imperatives ranging from the individual and
local, through the national and global. Such a system will also create direct synergistic linkages between education and training on the one hand and the economic sector on the other hand (Thoahlane, 2000).

2.2 BACKGROUND ON FURTHER EDUCATION AND PUBLIC COLLEGES

The post-apartheid education system in South-Africa has emerged out of one of the worst systems of inequalities and disparities in the world. Research shows that apartheid ensured division of education along ethnic and racial lines and was extremely undemocratic in terms of the manner in which it was governed at all levels. It is believed that South Africa will bear the scars of this legacy for a long time to come due to the unequal nature of the previous system, which made the growth and development of human potential extremely distorted. South-Africa therefore lacks skilled and trained labour which makes the country less competitive in the international market. Resistance against apartheid on the other hand has led to the destruction of the culture of learning and teaching in large sections of local communities (Odora-Hoppers, 2000).

Approximately 3.5 million young women and men in South Africa are considered marginalised of which a good number are not just marginalised, but effectively lost. South Africa’s latest official unemployment statistics (March 2009) reflect that 23.5% (4.2 million people) are currently jobless. More significant is the high levels
of youth unemployment. The latest figures show that 3.037 million (74%) of those unemployed were between 15-34 years. Those considered “unavailable for employment” are excluded from this figure and is being referred to as the silent category. The majority of this category are in grave danger because they are not only unemployed but are also without any significant school qualification. An estimate of 15 million adults is without effective reading and/or basic school education. Furthermore, Young black women followed by young black men are most disadvantaged in terms of employment when race and sex are considered. Young black African males make up 46% and young black African females 62% of unemployed people found in various areas, with a great number living in rural areas. The situation is compounded by skills scarcity and slow economic development in the country. The Minister of Higher Education and Training, Blade Nzimande highlighted the concern by stating that the FET sector has to play a more important role in artisan and other scarce skills production. (National Youth Policy, 1997; NEPI Framework report, 1993; Odora-Hoppers, 2000; StatsSA, 2009; StatsSA, 2019; Cloete, 2009; Nzimande, 2009; McGrath and Akojee, 2010).

2.3 THE CURRENT EDUCATION SYSTEM

The current education system consider the development of human potential, the realisation of the goals of democracy, the national reconstruction and development objectives, and the bringing together of the goals of liberty, equality and justice as
crucial. It is based on the right to education and training according to the Bill of Rights (The Constitutional Assembly, 1996) to ensure that citizens’ freedom of choice is exercised within a social and national context of equality of opportunity and the redress of inherited imbalances. As a result of this the new education policy have focussed on the restructuring of school education, integration of education and training, transformation of the curriculum, reconstructing of the bureaucracy and the improvement of the educational infrastructure in general. Governance at all levels of the integrated national system of education is aimed at maximising the democratic participation of stakeholders and; nation building and the eradication of racism, tribalism and ethnicity as the basis of educational organisation. It also strives to ensure a balance between the national and provincial governments in relation to their legislatures in order to ensure the most effective combination of responsiveness and accountability at each level of the system, as well as transforming and re-orientating the education system to greater efficiency, public accountability and transparency. Against this backdrop the national system of education and training in South Africa aims to enable citizens to become progressively qualified in a process of lifelong learning. To achieve this education and training has been integrated into one system within a credit-based qualifications framework to enable all citizens to develop their capacities (The Constitutional Assembly, 1996).
The current system is learner centred and achievement led to ensure maximum flexibility for horizontal and vertical mobility between levels of the education and training system, both formal and informal. In comparison to the old education system learners are now provided with opportunities to learn regardless of age, circumstances and the level of education and training they may have (Odora-Hoppers, 2000).

2.3.1 The National Qualifications Framework (NQF)

The national standards the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) reflects the achievement of learning outcomes defined at different levels from the foundation phase to post-graduate qualifications as illustrated in table 4.

The following are pivotal to the new educational system: multiple entry and exit points for qualifications and certifications; Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) and experience; mobility within all sectors of economic activity; democratic participation of all stakeholders in the education and training system and the development of a national curriculum based on the integration of academic and vocational skills (Odora-Hopper, 2000).
Table 2.1: The National Qualifications Framework

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GRADE</th>
<th>NQF LEVEL</th>
<th>BAND</th>
<th>TYPES OF QUALIFICATIONS AND CERTIFICATES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>HET</td>
<td>Post-doctoral research degrees, doctorates, masters degrees and professional qualifications</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
<td>Honours degrees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
<td>National first degrees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td>Higher diplomas, national diplomas and National certificates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>FET</td>
<td>Further education and training certificate: Schools, FET institutions, private providers, workplace-based training (learnerships), Public adult learning centres, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>GETC</td>
<td>General education and training certificate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 - 9</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Senior phase</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 - 6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Intermediate phase</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R - 3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Foundation phase</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Pre-school phase</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Odora-Hoppers, 2000: 7

2.3.2 The National Youth Policy

Further education and training (FET) is a priority in the development of the youth because the provision of quality, relevant, and well managed education and training is inextricably linked not only to their development but also to that of our
communities as a whole. Thus, in an attempt to promote social justice the National Youth Policy (1997) aims at redressing past imbalances, creating an empowering environment and promoting a rural bias in recognition of the need to address the need of young people, their communities and the broader society. Access and the admission criteria therefore plays a key role in determining to what extend an education and training institution is responding to their needs in terms of giving them new opportunities to engage in education and training (Odora-Hopper, 2000).

The National Youth Policy declares that education and training must address various challenges. These include new and creative strategies of financing studies; the elimination of institutional and procedural racism and the expansion and deepening of the institutions previously known as Youth and Community Colleges. It is also necessary to develop new pedagogies and a modus operandi that will openly address the nature and extent of the problems in the past. Once such institutions are strengthened it can develop innovative models of responsiveness that will help to reshape practice in the traditional colleges too. For the goals of building an equitable, productive and democratic society to be realised, young people need to be placed into the broader context of reconstruction and development. These young people need to find a way that can enable them to develop fully as individuals and as citizens where their personal and collective efforts can contribute to society and to the reconstruction and development of their communities.
FET programmes consist of, amongst others, the following very important principles to facilitate youth development: inclusiveness; promotion of reconstruction and development; linking community service and internships to career-orientated studies; promoting accreditation within the National Qualifications Framework; tapping into public, private and civil society resources; focussing on rural development projects; combining compulsory and incentive measures to motivate young people into the programmes (Odora-Hopper, 2000; National Youth policy, 1997).

2.4 DEFINING THE FURTHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING SYSTEM

2.4.1 The FET Sector

The FET sector is at the intersection of a wide range of government policies, which are critical to the construction of the new South African society, the requirements of the new information-based economy, and the promotion of personal and social development. It is an important facilitator of life chances and an education band in the NQF that offers both initial and second chance opportunities to young people and adults. FET also addresses the transformation of the senior secondary school system, the technical and community colleges and the development of new meaningful education and training opportunities for young people outside formal education (Education White Paper, 1998). The White Paper also states that FET institutions would enable many young people to pursue their post-compulsory education, not in
a school, but in a FET institution where flexibility, programme diversity, facilities and support services are able to support an open learning environment. The new FET system, when fully developed, should provide access to high quality education and training to a diverse set of learners, including school-going young people, out-of-school youth, young adults and the larger adult population. It is against this backdrop that a successful FET system would need to provide diversified programmes offering knowledge, skills, attitudes and values South Africans require as individuals and citizens, as lifelong learners and as productive members of society (Odora-Hoppers, 2000; Education White Paper, 1998).

2.4.2 The Challenge of Developing Social and Economic Competency in Formal Institutions

Social competency of an institution refers to the development of institutional capability to directly interact with communities through service oriented outreach projects, or research and developmental interventions. Economic competency refers to the development of institutional capability to offer economic development curricula for example, computer technology, tourism, engineering, education with production etc. For FET sector to develop economic competency colleges must undertake direct economic support activities such as offering spaces and training for small and medium scale enterprise (SMMEs) for the community. In this way colleges will serve as centres for pedagogical and economic development and as service centres for local communities (Odora-Hoppers, 2000: 10).
It can be deduced that it is within this framework that the Skills Development Act(1998) and the provisions contained in it, have come along way in shaping the responsibility and obligation of the private and public sector to skills development requirements in the country. The individualised approach that runs through this act tends to leave out notions of responsibility of institutions to local communities, and does not adequately address the issue of effective utilisation of colleges in socio-economic terms. However, initiatives such as learnerships are now being implemented, which focus on education and training in the workplace. Learnership initiatives should also seek to integrate both economic and social competency as functions of formal institutions in relation to their communities. Notions of education space are emerging which bring out the perspective that learning which occurs in multiple settings are far more diverse and fascinating than the routine school or college. Existing space should therefore be utilised efficiently in the following two ways: Physical space can be designed for multiple uses that reflect the diversity of its users. Secondly to utilise college space optimally in relation to potential or actual demand for education services in the community. This would combat the wasteful and exclusionary practice so commonplace in formal institutions, in which the community is denied routine access to public institutions as their very own learning centres (Odora-Hoppers, 2000).
2.4.3 Globalisation and the Challenge of Human Resource Development

Globalisation transforms finance, currency, trade, employment, social systems, modes of living, the formation of societies and training policies in an unequal manner. It is also a fact that globalisation has redefined the world economic map, permanently marginalising the already poor as a result of the systematic cutting back on social policy delivery. North-South, East-West divides have now been broken; and that new polarity exacerbated by globalisation, is between skyscrapers and shanty towns existing permanently side by side. From the perspective of education and training, all nations of all walks of life realise that knowledge is the decisive factor in industrial production and global competition. Skills acquisition throughout life is becoming a key requirement to keeping up with the global economy. Education and training is also on the top of the political agenda as a decisive factor for income and employment throughout life. It serves as a key determinant for the competitiveness of enterprises on the global market. In order to ensure that emancipatory concepts such as lifelong learning (LLL) sustain their intended meaning vigilance on the other hand would also have to be sustained (Falk cited in Odora-Hoppers, 2000; Korsgaard, 1997).

International experience confirmed that this is not always easy to do, for example, lifelong learning was started by UNESCO in the late 1960s. During this period pressure for expansion of educational opportunities had deep social roots. UNESCO drew from the humanistic tradition and was connected with democracy and self-
development. A belief was held that more even distribution of investment in education and training will equalise individual earnings. Democratisation through education was the underlying motivational factor for linking the economic justification for education reform with social demands for equality of opportunities. However, since the 1980s UNESCO’s position as the main body for the humanistic perspective was weakened by the gradual erosion of commitment to equality and the total dominance of the economic imperative. The developed countries, mainly Western countries, obtained increasing influence on education policies through the Organisation for Economic Cooperation in Development (OECD). Lifelong learning shifted to a neo-liberal conception of education as an investment in human capital. Social justice issues were excluded and adult education was provided only in economic terms. The humanistic and democratic tradition was replaced by a new political economic imperative with education and training being governed by almost solely economic goals.

Society requires goals that are broader than economic and world order priorities should provide for basic needs of all persons. For example, the goals of education for cooperation and sustainable human rights must be address on a continuous basis; new social contracts that can bind together democratic citizenship, social justice, and capitalism need to be developed or strengthened. Communitarian traditions seeking to empower the community and facilitate social action and public responsibility should not be left on the side-line (Odora-Hopper, 2000; Korsgaard, 1997).
2.4.4 Current Institutional Forms: Community Colleges in South Africa

Post apartheid South Africa continues to struggle with the question of how to restructure its institutions of higher education to foster an equitable society, as well as contribute to the country’s economic and technological development (Human Services and Research Council, 1999). Profound educational problems inherited from the past may be resolved in the short term by using existing educational structures to create separate courses or curricula but a long term solution would be to create a system of community colleges. The appropriateness of community colleges, as new institutional forms, comes within the larger context of remaking the post-secondary education system and the society at large (Odora-Hopper, 2000; Ratcliff and Gibson-Benninger, 1999; Strydom, Bitzer and De Beer, 1995)

Community colleges are regarded as providing an education, training and development model, which can resolve the inherited legacy of apartheid since they are democratic in tone and substance; humanistic, inclusive and flexible, allow for a relatively easy acquisition of a range of skills and competencies embrace the notion of community service and development; facilitate lifelong learning and distance learning and ensure horizontal and vertical mobility (Lategan, 1998; Mahoney, 1998; Ratcliff and Gibson-Benninger, 1998).
The transition from narrow specialised colleges into community colleges has to be rooted at a very fundamental level and have a direct bearing on the agenda of transformation at personal, institutional and professional levels. It also has to be anchored in the values of equity, democracy, effectiveness and development (Odora-Hoppers, 2000; National Institute for Community Education Trust, 1996).

2.4.5 Global Competitiveness

Given the current conditions of global economic competitiveness there is a demand for both general and specific skills. In terms of supply this implies a demand for a new type of educational institution that is neither vocational nor academic, but rather, both. This argument is based on the agreement that people are beginning to think differently about the idea of a single job for life and an end to traditional ideas about careers. The call is for labour that is more flexible. A large proportion of unskilled youth with minimal education is a serious problem in most countries. They require quality general education which equips them for the transition to adult and working life. Key vocational skills are the capacity to continue learning, motivation to work and problem-solving. Rote learning and the assimilation of facts are no longer appropriate. New approaches to teaching in both vocational and general education are needed. Manufacturing and service industry must play an important part in preparing students for the transition to work. Universities, like schools, are
part of the transition to work and must adapt their teaching and curriculum, and where appropriate their research accordingly (OECD, 1996; Gamble, 2003)

Moja and Cloete (2001) argue that higher education seems to be facing what could be seen as three sets of competing or contradictory demands: The scholarisation of the general population has to be improved, demanding a sustained focus on teacher education and school improvement; at the lower end of the high skilled band, much larger numbers of students must be better educated in terms of the use of technology, problem-solving and social skills. This layer forms the backbone of the new technology and social service occupations associated with globalisation; be it as data processors or tour guides. At the end of the high skilled band, more knowledge producing and managing skills are required for global competitiveness.

On technical education and training at the intermediate level Medway (1993:16) asserts that, “Workers in modern industry have to adapt to their working methods to a diversity of different production requirements and the continual renewal of technology”. The introduction of new technologies fails where the provision of the equipment is not matched by dissemination of know-how. Whereas the traditional technical education produced cohorts of specialists competent in specific production processes, many employer bodies now call for a whole workforce with a level of general education, which will ensure adaptability and the ability to benefit from
frequent retraining. This general education should include broad and transferable technological abilities.

Castells (2001), one of the most influential analysts of the global ‘knowledge’ economy, argues that labour is the basis of any economy and that even in the new global economy, labour is as much the source of productivity and competitiveness as it was in previous economies. Castells (2001) further characterise the new global economy as an economy in which levels of productivity and competitiveness are brought about by knowledge and information, which is supported and powered by information technology. It is global but not in a sense that the whole world has one single economic system, or that jobs are global. It can be described as global because most, if not all, jobs are influenced by what happens in the global centre of the economy. However, in the planning stage, most jobs are still determined by local, regional and national labour markets; it can work as a single unit up to the point of the whole planet operating as a unit in terms of technology, for example via telecommunications and informal systems. Firms and networks also have the capacity to organise themselves globally in terms of markets and supplies. At the institutional level, trade deregulation and liberalisation have now opened up the possibility for the economy to operate globally. Self-programmable labour, for example labour which has the built-in capacity to generate innovation and information, has the ability to reconstruct itself throughout the occupational career. These are workers who have the ability to be flexible and adapt throughout their
working life. Generic labour is the labour force that has no specific skill apart from some basic level of education. It co-exists with unskilled and semi-skilled labour and machines. The distinction between generic and self-programmable labour rests on high quality education. Hence, high-skill and low-skill labour both require high quality education (Castells, 2001; Gamble, 2003).

2.4.5.1 Employer Demand: High, Intermediate and Low Skill

No matter where one draws the boundaries between high, intermediate and low skill, it can be deduced that at all levels of the education and training system there is a trend towards inserting the general into the vocational and vice versa. In many countries employers complain about skills shortages and that their education systems do not supply them with a labour force that has the skills they need. In a review of research on education and training in the United Kingdom for example, numerous studies show the distinctions made between the skills required at different organisational levels. To promote general education key or core skills of communication, use of number, information technology skills, teamwork and problem-solving are built into all National Vocational Qualifications in Britain. Demand for key or core skill is only strong if it is specified at the lowest levels while higher levels of skill across core or key skills are not required for the majority of their employees. “The evidence on skills suggests that employers in the new “knowledge economy” are after just those traditional academic skills that schools
have tried to promote. The ability to read and comprehend, write fluently and correctly, and do mathematics appears more important than ever’ (Wolf, 2002:37; Brown and Keep, 1999; Gamble, 2003)

A study on employer demands in Malta shows that on the higher level employers are looking for ‘a package that might include academic credentials, but are particularly anxious to find evidence in their future recruits of such personal qualities as adaptability, a sense of responsibility and a willingness to keep on learning. In other words, rather than being aware of the academic significance of formal qualifications, employers tend to use qualifications as a kind of ‘shorthand’ of the assessment of personality traits. At the lower occupational levels employers are asking for more ‘trainable’ people. They want workers with a sound general education, which is literacy and numeracy, the ability to read and follow simply instructions, convey messages accurately, understand simple diagrams, perform basic calculations and have knowledge of such matters as wages, social security, work books and trade unions’. Despite the prevalent government rhetoric about Malta moving to a high wage, high value-added production sector, there is more than convincing evidence that most employers do not require highly advanced technical abilities from their workers. Many of the employees in the manufacturing sector are involved in what is termed ‘screwdriver technology’ industries, where high technology components produced abroad are simply assembled locally and re-exported. Many employers in Malta, as in many developing and intermediately developed countries, have therefore
little incentive to exert pressure on education, other than to ensure that workers with the right personality, as opposed to technical skills are available’ (Sultana, 1997a: 40–55).

The HSRC baseline survey of industrial training in South Africa confirms these trends. Literacy and practical manual skills for on-job application are regarded by small, medium and large firms as the most important areas of need for lower-qualified employees. Interpersonal skills and customer relations ranked second last and last out of nine categories (Kraak, Paterson, Visser and Tustin, 2000: 68). Contradictory to the messages coming from the economy research findings indicate that employers are not asking for high levels of general education but rather for a sound educational foundation. In terms of general employer demand under conditions of global competitiveness the new trend is for a narrowing of the qualitative gap between the preparation required for professional and management workers, and the preparation required for lower-level employees. Whereas in the past lower-end workers were traditionally deemed to require mostly only limited manual technical skills, the demand for more general education for the majority of the work force has become stronger. The level of knowledge and skill required for higher level occupations is both more specialised and more generalised in terms of the capacity for flexibility and knowledge production.
At this level over-education and/or over-training will increasingly become the norm, with many people acquiring more qualifications than actually needed for a particular job. Over-education does not necessarily make people more productive, less motivated or worse at what they do. Hence, the one thing it does do is to make formal qualifications a stronger labour market requirement, resulting in employers to believe that anyone without a formal qualification is not worth employing. Long-run labour demand studies also show an increasing demand for high skill workers that is similar to that experienced in most other countries. Technological change itself, rather than globalisation has been the main reason for skills intensification across all sectors (Brown and Keep 1999; Kraak et al., 2000; Wilson, 2002; Bhorat, Lundall and Rospabe, 2002; Gamble, 2003).

At intermediate level there is also continued demand. In South Africa there are a number of trades associated with traditional mass production manufacturing and an increased demand in ‘high-tech’ trades in the more technology-driven and automated sections of manufacturing, technical personnel and skilled operators in addition to craft workers. However, alarming is the serious decline in established sectors such as the motor and metal sectors. Further course for concern is the lack of growth in recruiting apprentices in key Reconstruction and Development Programmes (RDP) fields such as building, electricity supply and local government; and the slight investment in artisans in key value-added industries of the future, such as the textile sector. It is anticipated that any form of provision for intermediate knowledge and
skill will need to include both technological components and the broader educational elements considered necessary for the future (HSRC, 1999; Kraak et al., 2002; Gamble, 2003).

2.4.5.2 A More Market-driven Approach to Education and Training

It is clear that governments have to respond to market trends that include local and global demands when determining policy about education and training. It is anticipated that consumer demand will play a more important role than national planning in determining the structure of supply. Therefore, attempts to influence learning patterns at a national level will have to deal with both international and locally-based labour supply. A more consumer-driven approach could increase rather than reduce inequality of access to education and training. A massive increase in access to education and training would lead to a larger proportion of the population being better educated and better able to develop their potential. A further argument is that not all social groups come to the educational market as equals. A market-driven approach may appear to ensure efficiency and flexibility but also leads to more, rather than less, social class inequality. Even though improved supply of education may make it possible for more people to obtain formal qualifications that make them employable, if they cannot find employment or create their own jobs, they end up in an evermore desperate search for qualifications that will give them some form of competitive advantage in the labour market. This situation of provision
of increased education and training is also indicative of the insecure nature of work in the twenty-first century (OECD, 1995; OECD 1996; Brown and Lauder, 1996; Wolf, 2002 & Gamble, 2003).

In conjunction with a demand for higher overall levels for general education there is also a greater demand for closer links between formal education and training, and workplace practices. Combining education and training with workplace experience helps employers to match potential workers to the workplace. This is an effective way of making education more relevant. For example, local partnerships recruit employer support for education and training institutions; serve as a way of organising employers and community members as mentors and advisers for students, and of gaining community input into curriculum development. However, it’s important to note that these partnerships are often part-time and voluntary and may be hard to sustain unless both parties benefit (OECD, 2000). Brown and Keep’s (1999) view in this regard is that business/education partnerships are stronger in Anglo-Saxon countries than elsewhere in the world.

Recently, Japan expects schooling to provide traditional grounding in academic knowledge, with employers being responsible for work-related skill and vocational knowledge in the workplace. Whereas the United Kingdom is giving greater emphasis to the idea of employers helping to design elements of the curriculum and teaching materials, and influencing the ways in which teaching is undertaken.
Notwithstanding, apprenticeship is viewed as the best-known way of linking formal and workplace knowledge. However, due to the absence of strong apprenticeship traditions, short and longer periods of work experience are increasingly being included in the formal curriculum at all levels of education and training in many countries (Gamble, 2003).

2.4.5.3 Teacher Competence

New and different forms of teacher expertise are central to meeting curriculum demands. A study conducted by the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training in European Union countries highlights two main problems with regards to teacher competence. Without regular contact with the world of work, public employment agencies and vocational guidance centres, the knowledge of many teachers and instructors eventually becomes out-dated in terms of technical, economic and social issues. This is referred to as ‘loss of qualification’. Secondly, teachers and instructors often cannot make the necessary links between practical and theoretical knowledge, to keep abreast of changes in the content of work, or the ways in which work is organised. They do not have sufficient acumen regarding the introduction of new technologies, nor of the educational processes involved in multi-media and self-instruction approaches (CEDEFOP, 1990).
In Britain, the large range of learning needs requires those whom they call ‘VET professionals’ to develop expertise in resource-based learning, modular curriculum design and the new information technology. They must also keep up to date with their own specialisation areas, know how to collaborate with other specialists (guidance, counselling and assessment), and with those working in different organisations. They must support their students in making the transfer from the classroom to the workplace which requires them to be able to both apply theoretical knowledge in new situations, and to diagnose and solve problems in the workplace. VET professionals need to be able to work out ways of helping their students to develop ‘poly-contextual’ skills meaning, having the ability to move confidently between groups with different kinds of expertise. These professionals themselves have to develop ‘poly-contextual’ educational and teaching skills, and be able to move across boundaries that have traditionally divided different kinds of specialist teachers and trainers. They are also increasingly required to make contributions to developing the corporate identity of the college, company or training provider, and assisting with institutional development (Young and Guile, 1997).

The work of FET teachers in South Africa has become more complex. However, some writers argue that there has been little discussion of the question of professionalism. Thus far, notions of professionalism have tended to be derived from primary or secondary teaching without adequate consideration of the very different history and culture of the further education and training sector. The poorly developed
initial teacher education and the lack of continuing professional development in the further education sector, adds to the problem. Colleges are moving away from hierarchical organisational structures to become more like private sector institutions. Staffs are also required to take on more managerial responsibilities and provide wider support to their learners. Another contributing factor is the increasing tendency to employ part-time and often minimally qualified or unqualified teachers, instructors and assessors, in order to be able to offer a wider range of programmes, without the problem of incurring high staff costs (Brown and Keep, 1999; Guile and Lucas, 1999; Gamble, 2003).

2.5 THE CURRENT FURTHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING SYSTEM

2.5.1. Long-term Vision and Goal

The long-term vision for further education and training is the development of a coordinated FET system, providing high quality and responsive programmes and opportunities for a learning society (Education White Paper, 1998). The goal of FET is a vigorous reaffirmation of equality of education and training; and improvement of participation, recruitment, retention, campus climate, faculty disparities and achievement rates (Mokgatle, 2000).
The underpinning intentions of FET are that a successful FET system will provide diversified programmes offering knowledge, skills, and attitudes and values that South Africans require as individuals and citizens as lifelong learners and as economically productive members of society and that FET will provide the vital intermediate to higher level skills and competencies our country need to become globally competitive in the 21st century. FET implementation strategies need to include agreements by government in partnership with industry, labour and civil society to transform our education and training system, an analysis of economic, industrial and social forces for change and their implication for education and training over a period of time, a vision for FET aligned with key objectives set out in the policy and legislation and strategies to ensure that these objectives are achieved (Mokgatle, 2000).

2.5.2 What is Further Education and Training?

FET includes all teaching and training programmes leading to qualifications from level 2 to 4 (refer to figure 1). Learning programmes registered on the NQF from levels 2 to 4 correspond with the present grades 10 to 12 in the school system and N1 to N3 in the technical college system according to the NQF as determined in the South African Qualifications Act (1995). It builds on the foundation provided by the general education and training (GET) band. The FET band plays a pivotal role of integrating prior learning with continuing education thereby giving credence to the
concept of lifelong learning. Due to its nature and unique position on the NQF, FET becomes a lever to either the world of work and self-employment, or to higher education (Maluleke, 2000). The purpose of FET is to address the inherited educational history, which was strongly biased in favour of the purely theoretical and academic aspects. This bias resulted in skewed over-production and over-supply of skills which were out of tune with the realities of both the world of work and the under diversification of human potential to engage with other income generating domains using the same qualification. The lack of diversity due to an over-emphasis on the theoretical aspects in the education system resulted in glutting the market with irrelevantly trained people (Maluleke, 2000; Mokgatle, 2000).

2.5.3 Critical Issues Facing Further Education and Training

To ensure that implementation of FET results in the optimum envisaged outcomes a number of critical issues needs to be addressed in a meaningful way.

2.5.3.1 The Learner

Firstly a particular FET level has to concern itself with the nature and needs of the learner to acquire the competence effective and efficient performance in learning. The competencies, which include knowledge, skills and attitudes, must be driven by continuing academic study and the world of work. Fundamentally, FET must
provide for the development of self-learning skills; engender generic knowledge, skills and attitudes, assist the learner to make informed and self-fulfilling career choices and facilitating the learner’s commitment to lifelong learning. Thus, the major responsibility of FET is to ensure that the learning experience of the learner results in self-fulfilment and a commitment to lifelong learning (Makgatle, 2000).

2.5.3.2 Lifelong Learning

The education and training environment is in a constant state of flux and change, which are influenced by factors such as the high rate of unemployment and the demand for new training and retraining; technological developments introducing new skills and making others redundant; the shift from rural to urban areas which requires a change in competencies, life skills, and life style; migration and the displacement of people within the southern African region who needs a reorientation to a different sphere of education and training. These factors demand commitment to and provision of a lifelong-based FET system with technical and vocational elements as well as community development to ensure a holistic FET system. Such a system would contribute to the attainment of our education and training goals. The FET environment with the world of work requires that its participants be given the opportunity for constant personal development if we are to combat the plaque of unemployment. Furthermore, lifelong learning also requires personal commitment
and motivation, which will only come from such learning if it is, rewarded (Mokgatle, 2000).

2.5.3.3 Learner Support – Effective Career Guidance

Continued education and training linked to the world of work includes effective career guidance and counselling at the very early stages of general education and this must proceed throughout FET. At this level career guidance and counselling is more comprehensive in that the person is oriented in three possible directions, which include continuing academic education, the world of work or self-employment.

The process is gradual and requires the development of appropriate attitudes, of expectations that are realistic, of a career choice that is in harmony with the person’s potential, personal desires and characteristics, and of self-directed learning skills that enable the person to engage in lifelong learning (Makgatle, 2000).

2.5.3.4 Social Issues

There are many issues that impact on the FET learner’s ability to learn, as well as factors that impact on the availability of learning programmes and the provision of learning opportunities. These encompass the following:
The challenge of traditional perceptions of appropriate roles for females in FET and, consequently of appropriate programmes in community, technical, and vocational education and training for females. It is unacceptable to provide education and training programmes, which have any form of gender bias or discrimination. Thus, the content of FET programmes, strategies for delivery of such programmes and the teaching/educating personnel involved all need to take up the challenge and make appropriate changes.

Intercultural appreciation and respect must be engendered as a result of economic, political and social factors which cause increasing mobility of people in the country. Thus people are attracted to FET and require a high degree of responsibility to show appreciation and respect for the different cultures among learners and educators. Programmes leading to the understanding of culture and customs of particular communities must therefore form part of FET.

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL): the need to measure prior learning and experiences is also a challenge for FET. The upgrading of skills, development, learning and training programmes or courses need to be designed to enable communities to gain maximum benefit.

Sensitivity to people with physical challenges and accessibility to FET colleges needs to increase. FET accessibility must become more infused with human concern,
community education programmes and strategies to also enable such potential learners to participate broaden and deepen their aspirations and achievements within their social and economic contexts (Mogatle, 2000).

2.6 FET CURRICULUM TRANSFORMATION

Curriculum related issues are at the centre of any attempts to transform the inherited South African education system. Curriculum is a problematic and disputed terrain of contestation because education is not neutral. Education and curriculum are acts of power, and are set within the relations of political and socio-economic domination and subordination (Hlophe, 2000). Rasool (1999) as quoted by cited in Hlophe (2000) states that curriculum development and implementation are philosophical and moral acts of power, and are informed by values of those who have access to the structures through which the curriculum is planned, implemented and evaluated. This statement is supported by Giroux (1981:28) in saying: “The school institutionalises, in various aspects of the curriculum, modes of knowing, speaking, style, manners and learning that mostly reflect the culture of the dominant social classes”. Hlophe (2000) further asserts that any efforts by the present ruling order to serve the interests of a non-racial and democratic state through curriculum will also be an inherently ideological and politically informed process triggering debates and critiques. The NQF curriculum innovation therefore, cannot simplistically be seen as a remedy to solve all of South Africa’s educational and socio-economic challenges. However, it
has to ensure the overall success of these innovations and provide decision-makers with a point of departure for curricular implementation.

2.6.1 The Concept Curriculum

People within education, sociology, business and the government all have very different and sometimes conflicting ideas about the exact definition and scope of the concept curriculum. Some experts differentiate among the following types of curriculum: formal, informal, hidden, taught and learned curricula (Hlophe, 2000). Cited in Hlophe (2000:106-107), Ashley (1989:4) defines a curriculum as “the planned and organised activities pupils experience in school. The concept includes the subject matter they are exposed to, as well as the methods of teaching and evaluation. These follow closely from aims and differing beliefs and values about the purpose of schooling and lead to the selection of different subject matter, teaching styles and modes of evaluation”. Jarvis (1995:190) on the other hand defines it as: “the total provision of an educational institution, it can also refer to the subject matter of a particular course of study or even to the learning that is intended. Hence, it relates to both the known and the intended, that is, the educational organisation and provision, or to the unknown and unquantifiable, that is, the learning experience. One should look at the curriculum within the education system together with its external relations to society. Thus, curriculum is as broad as encompassing all of the teaching and learning activities that take place in learning institutions.
Currently South Africa aims to expose learners to a curriculum that concentrates broadly on all aspects of career development, with the nucleus at FET being an integrated approach to education and training (Hlope, 2000).

### 2.6.2 The Current Realities about the FET Curriculum

Hlope (2000) argues that the content of the old curriculum and the major parts of the current curriculum tend to be Eurocentric and representative of middle and upper class Eurocentric ideas. The legacy of inequality has produced a very poor record of human resource development (HRD) in South Africa compared with other countries in similar stages of development, for example: Low literacy rates; high dropout rates; little opportunity to return to the formal education system; no recognition of prior learning and experience; poor links between education and training, and between education and economic and social development. The current curriculum is also not keeping sufficient pace with the globalising patterns of modern life; it is not adequately aligned to the world of work; and not adequately equipping citizens to participate in the political institutions of the new democracy and civil society.

General academic and vocational education is currently divided into two types of institutions, namely schools and technical and community colleges. Schools (excluding vocationally-orientated schools) are largely responsible for general
academic education and technical colleges are mainly responsible for specific as well as broad vocational courses, both in FET and HE levels (Hlophe, 2000).

### 2.6.3 Technical College Education

Technical colleges provide post-school vocational education according to the human resource needs of commerce and industry and the various communities in which they are situated. It is intended to equip learners with the knowledge, skills and attitudes required in the workplace. The instructional offerings are based on theoretical, practical and integrated instructional offerings. The vocational educational levels vary from FET level to three years after FET level with National N certificates, National Integrated Certificated and National N Diplomas. Learners are educated and trained mainly as skilled, middle-level workers for specific occupations (See table 4). The instructional programmes leading to national examinations are planned, compiled and revised by the education authorities in co-operation with employer and employee organisations and advisory bodies in commerce and industry, after which such instructional programmes are approved as national policy (Hlophe, 2000).

Technical colleges offer programmes in five broad areas, namely: Engineering; Business; Utility industries (clothing production, hospitality services, hairdressing and tourism); Social services (early childhood development, care of the aged, handicapped and child care, visual and performing arts); General education (matriculation courses).
There is limited evidence that these colleges are driven to serve and meet the needs of their clients and stakeholders (students, employers and community). The following reflect the state of affairs of technical college offerings according to the National Business Initiative Report on Gauteng Technical Colleges (1999):

- The instructional programmes cut across the NQF bands (GET, FET, and HET);
- The majority of the technical colleges are not at the forefront of curriculum development and most of its courses are not in line with either the NQF or OBE;
- There is little evidence that the programmes offered result in jobs and that these colleges are not responsive to employer needs;
- Insufficient attention is paid to lifelong learning concepts and to the vocational and training needs of those in work;
- The curriculum lacks innovative approaches and is too narrowly focussed and fails to provide the skills needed;
- Advisory and support services, recreational, cultural and sporting facilities, student tracking studies, customer and marketing are all insufficiently developed;
- Limited curriculum development at the formal level is taking place since the national curriculum and the system of nationally set examinations has prevented initiative. Thus, very few courses have been introduced recently; and
There is also a lack of evidence that students are being given opportunities to develop their competencies in the core skills of communication, problem solving and team work or that programmes are being designed to develop these competencies (Hlophe, 2000).

2.6.4 The National Curriculum Framework for FET

The DoE has developed a new curriculum framework for the FET curriculum that will provide South African FET learners with the knowledge, skill, values and attitudes necessary to respond rapidly and creatively to the demands of the growing national and global economy. The national curriculum goals, which must be achieved by the framework, include preparation of all our citizens for the challenges of the 21st century; promotion of the social, cultural and personal development of our citizens; understanding and appreciation of South Africa in the context of the Southern African continent and the world; promotion understanding and respect for linguistic and cultural diversity; improvement of the quality education and training; learner performance and achievement (Further Education and Training Act, 1999).

The curriculum is currently driven by the seven critical and five developmental outcomes accepted by the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) since they underpin all learning at FET institutions, universities, schools and in the workplace. It encompasses essential qualities that all South Africans will need if we are to build
a new democratic society and create a thriving economy. FET programmes therefore have to be organised, designed and planned around the outcomes as stipulated in the new curriculum framework. Critical outcomes of this framework include that learners should be able to: identify and solve problems and make decisions using critical and creative thinking; work effectively with others as members of a team, group, organisation, or community; organise and manage themselves and their activities responsibly and effectively; collect, organise and critically evaluate information; communicate effectively, using visual, mathematical and/or language skills in the modes of oral and/or written presentation; use science and technology effectively and critically, showing responsibility towards the environment and health of others; and demonstrate an understanding of the world as a set of related systems by recognising that problem-solving contexts do not exist in isolation. There is however also developmental outcomes, which include that learners should be able to reflect on and explore a variety of strategies to learn more effectively; participate as a responsible citizen in the life of local, provincial, national and global communities; be culturally and aesthetically sensitive across a range of social contexts; explore education and career opportunities; and develop entrepreneurial skills. As a single curriculum framework it must also integrate academic and vocational education, theory and practice; provide curricula that will offer a flexible combination of fundamental, core and elective learning within the NQF; offer programmes and curricula for the FET band that are drawn from the twelve organising fields; as well as programmes derived from a combination of credits from nationally registered unit
standards leading towards nationally recognised qualifications (Further Education and Training Act, 1999; Hlophe, 2000).

2.6.5 Implications of the Outcomes-Based Curriculum on the FET Curriculum

Outcomes-based education (OBE) was introduced in South-Africa in December 1995 to overcome the problems in the national system of education and training inherited from the apartheid regime. The concept of OBE means defining, organising and directing all aspects of an instructional and certificating programme or system in relation to the things that all learners should be able to demonstrate successfully when they exit the programme or system. It is within this context that FET has to subscribe to the following OBE premises: All learners can learn and succeed, but not all in the same time or in the same way; success breeds success; learning sites control the conditions of learner success. All learners have talent and it is the job of learning sites to develop this talent. The role of the school is to find ways for learners to succeed rather than to find ways for learners to fail. Mutual trust drives all OBE sites. Excellence is for every learner, not just a few and by preparing learners every day for success; the need for correctives will be reduced. Learners should collaborate rather than compete negatively. As far as possible no learner should be excluded from any activity; and a positive attitude is essential (Hlophe, 2000; Klein, 1999).

In summary, OBE focuses on the culminating significant exit outcomes which are regarded as an acceptable, culminating demonstration of learning which occurs in an
authentic performance, and which has long-term usefulness. These outcomes should directly reflect the knowledge, competencies and orientations needed to effectively meet the challenges, adaptations and opportunities the learners will face in their particular career, family or working life context. Clear statements are made about what knowledge, skills, values and attitudes learners should acquire as a result of their learning. It also provides several chances for learners to demonstrate their success. Assessments, performances, standards and certification are criterion-based. Assessment methods emphasises applied learning in relevant real-life contexts. It is linked to a flexible system of eligibility, placement, and grouping that enables students to advance through a curriculum whenever they can successfully demonstrate essential performance prerequisites for new course units or courses (Hlophe, 2000).

2.6.6 The NQF and Implications for the FET Curriculum

NQF is designed to promote the integration of education and training, offer multiple entry and exit points to learners and ensure learner mobility and the portability of credits. It provides a framework for the development of a new, integrated FET curriculum and offers a flexible mix of fundamental, core and elective learning to meet the needs and requirements of learners, employers and Higher Education institutions. SAQA requires that all FET qualifications comprise of the three basic components, namely: Fundamental learning, which includes language and communication, life skills and mathematical literacy and provides the knowledge and skills that are the foundation for all learning at the level concerned. Core learning
refers to the specific core knowledge and competencies required for the completion of a particular qualification and elective learning offers learners an opportunity to complete additional or optional credits of personal interest and/or professional relevance with a range of possible career opportunities and occupational choices (White Paper on FET, 1998).

FET should break the division between academic and vocational education and between education and training. It should be characterised by a sound foundation of general knowledge, combined with practical relevance, offer the learner flexibility and choice and ensure that all the programmes and qualifications offer a coherent and meaningful experience (Hlophe, 2000).

2.6.7 Impact of New Learning Programmes

A framework for the recognition of prior learning (RPL) forms an important part of the FET curriculum. It would assist those who have been denied formal opportunities for learning, and those who have acquired knowledge and skill through self-study or work experience to get credit and obtain a qualification.

Furthermore, the Further Education and Training Certificate (FETC) will replace the current exit certificates to provide a reliable and credible basis for selection and entry to higher education; and to provide employers with a realistic profile of a learner’s knowledge and competencies.
All FET institutions must provide learner counselling and support services to assist new learners to the system to make meaningful choices of study, ensure that all learners are given every opportunity to succeed, provide information on learning programmes, education and training providers, qualification, job opportunities and on the labour market (Hlophe, 2000).

2.6.8 Education and Training Quality Assurance

Education and training quality assurance (ETQA) bodies are formed on the basis of social sectors, economic sectors and education and training sub-systems of which the FET ETQA is based on the latter. A quality system is a comprehensive, organisation-wide approach to continuous improvement and to ensuring consistent quality standards. Quality in the FET sector means continually striving to improve what we do for example offering clients, industry and the general community products and services that meet, if not exceed, their needs and expectations. These include learning programmes, assessment and learner awards, learner support and the general management of the institution that makes it possible to give quality service to its customers (Hlophe, 2000; Lolwana, 2000).

2.6.8.1 The Functions of an ETQA

The functions of an ETQA include promotion of quality amongst constituent providers, accreditation of providers in terms of quality management, facilitation moderation across constituent providers and cooperation with relevant national standard generating bodies (NSBs) for the purpose of moderation across ETQAs. It
should also register constituent assessors, evaluation assessment, and certification of learners as well as maintaining an acceptable database with submission of reports to SAQA. The ETQA must make recommendations on unit standards to standard generating bodies (SGBs) and qualifications to NSBs as appropriate, monitor provision and undertake quality system audits (South African Qualifications Authority, 1999; Hlophe, 2000).

2.6.8.2 Assessment

Assessment forms a central part of the FET curriculum. Assessment in FET institutions is primarily an institutional responsibility within the framework of approved curricula, outcomes and quality assurance mechanisms. It provides valid and reliable information about the achievement and competencies of learners; is developmental and informative, providing learners with feedback and guidance on their progress and performance. The fundamental goal of assessment is to promote learning. Thus, FET will play a role in the continuous monitoring of learner’s progress towards achieving outcome; providing information to educators about problems experienced and providing coherence to overcome the “free-standing” nature of unit standards through integrative assessment techniques. In addition to this role the FET also have to comply with the four assessment principles of fairness, validity, reliability and practicality together with the new approaches to assessment. Assessment should focus on applied competence, which is a combination of practical, foundational, and reflexive competence, be flexible through the use of various assessment methods and instruments, based on clearly articulated criteria and
standards of achievement. It is important that assessment enable progression through the levels but also that it is transparent in terms of the standard expected, fairness to all learners, ensuring that no learner is disadvantaged in any way and allow for accelerated access to further learning through RPL. The new FET assessment techniques therefore have to be: formative with a summative component; criterion-referenced with a place for norm-referenced marking; and continuous for diagnostic purposes (HSRC, 2000; National Business Initiative, 1999; Department of Education, 1998; Hlophe, 2000).

2.6.9 National Certificate Vocational

Colleges have long offered a set of programmes that were developed and examined by the National Department of Education (NATED). These NATED programmes have been subjected to considerable criticism as being too slow to change and too far removed from the needs of industry. In recent years the focus has been directed to NQF-aligned courses developed by Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETA’s). In 2007 the National Certificate Vocational (NCV) replaced the NATED courses (N1 – N3) as part of the new curriculum at public FET Colleges. The vocational programmes are: Office Administration, Marketing, Finance, Economics and Accounting, Management, Civil Engineering and Building Construction, Engineering and Related Design. It was introduced at NQF Levels 2 in 2007, Level 3 in 2008 and Level 4 in 2009 (see figure 1). It gives grade 9 learners a vocational alternative to an academic grade 10 – 12 by offering industry focussed training on the NQF levels 2 – 4. The qualifications are designed to provide theory and practice
in a real workplace environment or simulated workplace environment. These qualifications will also provide learners the opportunity to enter higher education studies subject to appropriate subject combinations and the minimum pass percentage requirements (Akojee, McGrath and Visser, 2008; Further Education and Training Colleges Act, 2006).

2.6.9.1 Minimum Entry Requirements, Duration and Subjects

Stated in the National Curriculum framework for FET, the minimum entry requirements into the National Certificate Vocational at NQF level 2 are: grade 9 certificates or; an NQF level 1 qualification; or an approved programme designed for the specific purpose to access NQF level 2; or a RPL assessment to meet the basic requirements for access to NQF level 2.

The NCV qualification is a full year programme at each of the NQF levels of study. A learner is issued with a certificate on successful completion of each level of study. In order to obtain the NCV qualification a learner is required to enrol for seven subjects consisting of the three fundamental subjects and four vocational subjects for example, Finance, Economics and Accounting the three fundamental subjects are: Mathematics or mathematical literacy, life orientation and a language of teaching and learning. The four vocational subjects are: Applied accounting, economic environment, financial management and new venture creation (South African Qualifications Authority, 1999; Further Education and Training Act, 1999; Further Education and Training Colleges Act, 2006).
2.7 The Skills Development Act and FET Act Relationship

The link between the FET Act (1998), Skills Development Act (1998) and the National Skills Development Levy Act (1999) is vital for the FET development. Whereas the FET Act’s purpose is to establish a nationally coordinated further education and training system to promote cooperative governance and provides for programme-based further education and training, the Skills Development Act aims at the development of skills for the South African workforce in order to improve the quality of life for workers their prospects of finding work. It allows for labour mobility, improve productivity in the workplace, give employers the necessary competitive edge, promote self-employment and improve the delivery of social services (Skills Development Act, 1998).

The SDA also obliges employers to pay a levy of 1% of their payroll to fund the Skills Development Fund (SDF) to address the short supply of skilled staff. The latter situation according to the Department of Labour is the most serious obstacle to the competitiveness of industry in South Africa. The purpose of the levy-grant scheme is to expand the knowledge and competencies of the labour force to improve employability and productivity through new approaches to planning, training programmes, incentives and an improved employability service. The funds will be used for training through the various Sector education and Training Authorities (SETAs). The focus of the SDA is therefore on FET since it is at this level that the greatest skills deficit currently exists. Thus, FET institutions will reap the benefits of being partners in the development of a better skilled and more productive workforce.
Education providers should be seen as playing a complementary role to that of employers. It is crucial that the education and labour ministries work towards the development of a unitary FET system. This development is important for the supply and demand equation. The SDA therefore is to ensure that it’s input into education and training impacts directly on developing a vibrant and relevant labour market with increasing gain in South Africa’s gross domestic product (GDP) (Maluleke, 2000).

2.8. CONCLUSION

The current education framework is based on the Australian education and training model (Further Education and Training Act, 1998). Internationalist influence of some sort was inevitable given the growing trend towards globalisation and South Africa having been isolated under the apartheid regime. Although this legislation is one of the major further education and training policies in South Africa the transformation is not an easy task. Maluleke (2000: 45) summarises this as follows: ‘South Africa still has to break free from its Australian surrogate and carve its own niche in our unique education and training context. Notwithstanding the slow transformation in the face of so many challenges to overcome; it is beginning to define and shape itself in relation to the needs of South Africa and its people.'
CHAPTER 3

STUDENT RETENTION AND SUCCESS IN THE FIRST YEAR

3.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter the scope of the literature explored for the purpose of the research topic under discussion will focus on relevant general literature and research reviews conducted globally on factors related to student retention and success in the first year.

Firstly, the ecological systems theory is discussed from the perspective of the PVEST model (Spencer, 2008). Key to our being is the ability to conceptually organise and make sense of social phenomena, which start from birth and continue throughout our lifespan. This ability is however critical for helping individuals interpret their contextual-linked experiences. Human vulnerability, referring to the balance between risks and protective factors, behavioural responses and emergent patterns of coping are unavoidable. This is followed by a discussion of important developmental concepts amongst others, self-appraisal, coping-strategies and academic success.
A framework for student retention is discussed in the following content, as well as issues that impact on retention and success.

3.2 ECOLOGICAL SYSTEMS THEORY

3.2.1 Theory and Foundational Assumptions

Life-course human development experiences are shaped by both objective reality and perception. Through interaction with others individuals come to understand and respond to their world. It is the meaning that they make from their social encounters (perceptions) that determine life outcomes and not the interactions as such. In other words, individuals perceive and act on their perceptions, infer meanings, engage in responsive coping processes, and then construct formal and informal “action plans”. These processes are associated with emotions in that human variability represents both successes and failures of human coping processes. Therefore, the meaning making inferred within the social contexts of development, contributes to the variability of human coping and identity formation outcomes as lives unfold across the life course. The assumptions and inferences made, and subsequent coping patterns enacted result from the quality of fit between the individual and the diverse context encountered. “It is these unavoidable and life-course processes that signal the need to combine fundamental human developmental thinking with basic phenomenological tenets and ecological perspectives” (Spencer, 2008: 697).
3.2.2 The Importance of the Ecological Theoretical Framework

The importance of social settings is highlighted by the individual-context interaction perspective offered by Bronfenbrenner’s ecological systems theory (1985) and a more basic view arrangement provided by the early ecological psychologists, Barker and Wright (1954) who highlighted the character of settings such as size and arrangement. The fact remains that one’s point of view matters and is associated with the character of the environment. Furthermore, the potential exits for a wide variety of bi-directional, individual-context interactions that, contributes to diverse and patterned outcomes. It allows one to study the effects on an individual at escalating levels of analysis for example the micro-system a given setting (school, home and peer group locations); meso-system (interaction between more than one micro-system); exo-system (one or more settings which the individual does not inhabit but where decisions are made that do affect the individual); and the macro-system consisting of the preceding systems (Thomas, 1992). Thus, one can conceptualise and study risks and similarly protective factors which exist at different levels.

However, individuals have experiences, perceptions, and coping processes that represent active meaning making as a function of the quality of individual-context interactions, which is unavoidable. The latter is very different from the traditional and linear acknowledging of the “what” (individuals patterned outcomes). It demands the introduction of a new framework that can help illuminate the
phenomenological quality of individual-context. Phenomenological Variant of Ecological Systems Theory (PVEST) is a dynamic and recursive framework that was developed to encourage the critical analysis of human development processes that unfold in multilevel context over time (Spencer, 2006b; Spencer, Dupree, and Hartman, 1997; Spencer et al., 2006).

PVEST (Spencer, 2008) combines social cognition relevant phenomenology themes with ecological systems theory to provide a heuristic tool to understand the unique experiences of diverse group members at varying developmental periods. Outcomes are often compared between and among members of diverse groups resulting in frequent stereotypic assumptions and interpretations. PVEST considers the unique and cumulative individual-context interactions for example the interaction between maturational influences and social experienced-based cognitions. This can include cognition-linked comparisons made between self and others along with stressful self-consciousness. Important to note, is that social inequalities that may impact context experiences are not only seen as a potential category of risk but also as a source of daily challenge. This involves having to deal with disseminated stereotypes such as racial discrimination, economic status disadvantage and age discrimination. This framework also improves our understanding about unique and patterned processes and outcomes given human variability, cognition supported perceptual variations, and unavoidable individual-context interaction differences. Additionally, it combines social-cognition linked perceptions with unavoidable context features, and
acknowledges the critical role of coping processes in identity formation and allows a way to frame context-linked life course experiences and explain patterned outcomes for diverse humans (Spencer, 2008).

3.2.3 An Overview of the PVEST model

PVEST (Spencer, 2008) presents both an inclusive and process-orientated human development framework. It considers, unpacks and recasts the many life stage specific expressions of human diversity as individuals interact with the physical and psychological ecologies where growth and development take place. PVEST, as a systems explanatory framework functions differently in that it defines and considers diverse individual-context interactions as worthwhile contributors to the sources and pathways of both productive and less productive coping processes, which, in turn, result in patterned life stage-specific outcomes. PVEST functions to disaggregate the multiple sources and pathways of less than stellar outcomes, as well as to emphasise the many expressions of positive outcomes obtained under conditions of systematic inequality. The framework therefore acknowledges, accommodates and proactively explores the attainment of resiliency or good outcomes obtained in the face of significant and frequently overlooked challenges. All humans are vulnerable, that is, exposure both to risks and protective factors is part of human experience. In varying contexts of development, coping outcomes can represent both unproductive as well as productive developmental stage specific patterns. Protective factors are

73
experienced as sources of support as individuals confront both normative and unique life-course tasks and crises. Spencer (2008) notes protective factors serve to balance against the impact of risk factor presence. Hence the aptness of this approach to better understands the student population diversity of this research.

As indicated in Figure 3.1 PVEST highlights the connection between human vulnerability (the presence of risks and protective factors) and the myriad life stage specific outcomes.

![Figure 3.1: PVEST; 2004 Revised Process Version](Source: Damon and Lerner, 2008)
PVEST is conceptualised as five basic components linked by bidirectional, recursive processes, forming a dynamic, cyclic model (Damon and Lerner, 2008). The first component, net vulnerability level, consists of the contexts and attributes that can potentially pose a challenge during an individual’s development at any life stage. A risk factor may predispose an individual for adverse outcomes during a particular developmental stage. Risk factors function as a liability and may be offset by corresponding stage-specific protective factors such as cultural capital. For marginalised youth, risk includes socio-economic conditions such as poverty, imposed expectations regarding race and gender stereotypes, racial subordination and discrimination. Risk and protective factors are unavoidably and bi-directionally linked because too much of one without a corresponding balance of the other affects net vulnerability. Self-appraisal, perception of the risks an individual faces and the protective resources available are key factors of identity formation and development.

The second component, net stress engagement level refers to the actual experience of a situation challenging an individual’s well-being (Damon and Lerner, 2008). Thus, the actual risk encountered works together against available support. Available social support can help an individual negotiate an experience of stress. Support in this instance therefore serves as an actualised protective factor. Unconscious equilibrating efforts affect future vulnerability and occur as the individual engages these stresses and supports. Normative developmental experiences such as puberty, identity exploration and peer relations that all adolescents must confront. These
experiences are not without dissonance or a lack of harmony and are salient stressors. An individual’s cultural socialisation can serve as a protective factor in this process. Available adult role models can also be supports to help a youth reactively cope with these experiences. Reactive coping responses are employed to resolve a dissonance-producing situation and include problem-solving strategies that a youth employs to deal with stress and dissonance; which can lead to either an adaptive or maladaptive solution. Stevenson (1997) noted that a solution can be adaptive in one context such as neighbourhood and maladaptive in another (school). Those strategies that produce desirable results for the ego, whether adaptive or maladaptive, are, with redundant usage, replicated and become stable coping responses over time and space. Coupled together they yield emergent patterned responses or identities.

Emergent identities define how individuals view themselves within and between their various contexts of development for example their family, neighbourhood and school (Damon and Lerner, 2008). The combination of cultural and ethnic identity, sex role understanding, and self and peer appraisal all help to define an individual’s identity. Identity forms the foundation for future perception, self-appraisal, and behaviour, yielding unproductive or productive life-stage, specific coping outcomes. Unproductive or adverse outcomes include poor health, incarceration, and self-destructive behaviour, while productive outcomes include good health, positive relationships, and high self-esteem.
PVEST represents dynamic processes that continue throughout the life span as individuals encounter and balance new risks against protective factors; engage new stressors potentially offset by supports, establish more expansive coping strategies, and redefine how they view themselves, which also affects how others view them. “As noted by Erikson (1968), unresolved issues within one life stage influence future coping and identity processes” (Swanson, Spencer, Del’Angelo, Harpalani, and Spencer, 2002:78). An identity-focused cultural-ecological perspective specifies the nature and character of intervening processes. Thus, PVEST aims to capture this entire developmental process and place it within its broader social contexts.

3.2.4 Self-appraisal

Self-appraisal processes integrate various aspects of one’s life that promote development of a strong sense of personal identity and represent cognitive, affective and social processes. During adolescence it becomes crucial for the youth to develop a sense of efficacy because of their heightened self- consciousness and increasing cognitive awareness. It is important to note that development is partially determined by the opportunities, limitations, and expectations that society makes available to the individual. Successful performance on a particular task increases a sense of personal competence and therefore the likelihood of future success in subsequent tasks. Competence is rooted in one’s culture and prior successes or status in society and is crucial for successful adaptation to subsequent adult roles. Self-system development
is reciprocally determined from self-other appraisal processes. These recursive self-other evaluative processes are unavoidably linked to the experience of stress particularly during middle childhood. Coping is required to the stress which then leads to stable psychological responses or strategies which may be maladaptive or adaptive. These strategies are linked to the coping outcome that may either be productive such as competency, self-efficacy and resiliency; or unproductive such as school avoidance, acting-out behaviour, leaving school, and or dropping out (Swanson et al., 2002).

### 3.2.5 Coping Strategies

Several unique characteristics of individual coping strategies exist among adolescents. Important aspects of cognitive and social development are self-perception self-efficacy, self-esteem, intelligence, and temperament, problem-solving and inter-personal skills (Spencer et al., 1991). Individual characteristics develop as a function of behaviours, which reflects as an active, selective, structuring orientation towards the environment. The ability to modify, selects, and reconstructs the environment depends on one’s competency to engage in behaviour that influence the environment. The environmental context for example social structures, and conditions, from micro-to macro-level systems offers relevant experiences interacting with the psychological processes to produce unique behaviour. The individual is thus, engaged in a life-course process of coping with environmental
challenges (risk and stress), socio-cultural contexts (expectations, attitudes, cultural beliefs and assumptions), and normative developmental tasks (Swanson et. al, 2002).

3.2.6 Academic Success

Academic success or competence during adolescence is a significant factor in determining life-course choices. Hence, school is an environment critical to their psychological development. Their academic experiences can either support or undermine normative developmental processes. As highlighted by Bronfenbrenner (1989), individuals develop and adapt through interactions that occur within a particular environmental setting. During early and middle adolescence it is imperative to have positive school experiences and achieve academically to enable them to develop a healthy identity and a sense of competence.

Developing a sense of efficacy (industry versus inferiority) requires from youth to initiate and manage significant aspects of the environment (Erikson, 1968). During this process positive identification with a competent adult may be enhancing. However, if the social encouragement is too weak and the chances to achieve academic success are difficult it may foster a sense of inadequacy and inferiority, thus preventing job marketability. Student role-conflict can also seriously impede personal competence during adolescence and generate aimlessness, and erode social
commitment (Swanson and Spencer, 1998). Adaptive coping within the academic setting is therefore critical to facilitate competence.

Students who hold low evaluation of their academic competence and self-worth usually perform poorly in school, loose interest in academic and school activities, and display delinquency in the form of school violence and vandalism. Ecological experiences such as environmental risks, resource availability, family relations and job-training opportunities have implications for any identity formation process. The psychological implications of academic competence are an essential resource for healthy and positive identity development during adolescence, and for navigating the difficult transition to gainful employment in adulthood (Swanson et al., 2002).

Public school policies and practices often frustrate the student’s effort to prepare educationally for a successful school-to-work transition into adulthood. Adolescents who are reared in an affluent neighbourhood obtain more years of schooling than those from a similar structure in a poorer neighbourhood. These factors influence the psychological processes determine whether a student pursues achievement goals, which goals are pursued, and how effectively the aspirations are pursued (Swanson et al., 2002).
3.3 STUDENT RETENTION

3.3.1 A Framework for Student Retention

![Swail's triangle of interaction between student and institution](image)

**Figure 3.2: Swail’s triangle of interaction between student and institution**

*Source: Swail, 2006:3*

Swail (2006) employs a simple graphic to demonstrate the interaction of the student and the institution through the use of a triangle, where one side represents the cognitive characteristics or skills that a student brings with him or her to campus, a second side which represents the student’s social characteristics and skills, and a bottom side of the triangle which represents the level of support or interference (in a negative context) that the institution applies to the mix. The cognitive, social and institutional factors must be in some balance to support student success. When a
student is lacking in cognitive or social skills, other factors must rise to make up for the deficiency. It is important for institutions to understand what each student brings with him or her, in order to provide the appropriate support to ensure student success.

The work of Uri Treisman (as cited in Swail, 2006) in the 1980s is regarded as valuable knowledge to build on because it showed that social systems on campus are uniquely and unequivocally connected to the academic progress and success of students. Treisman conducted a study to look at the differences between academic habits of Asian and Black students on the campus of an institution that was largely white and largely American. Asian students were more likely to study and socialise together. Black students were more likely to study alone, and were less likely to integrate themselves into a sub-group or into the institution. This study revealed that, the Asians prospered and the Blacks suffered.

Swail (2006:2) identifies the following five factors of equal importance to support students on campuses: financial aid, social integration, academic preparedness, campus climate, and commitment to educational goals and the institution. He states, ‘Often the dearth of resources in one area can undermine all progress’

Tinto (1993) notes, that the majority of students entering higher education leave their initial college of choice without completing a degree. National attrition rates have been increasing since the early 1980s at both two-year and four-year public and private institutions (Postsecondary Education Opportunity, 2002). The most critical period of vulnerability for student dropout continues to be the first year of college
and at all types of higher education institutions (Learning Slope, 1991). For example, more than half of all students who withdraw from college do so during their first year (Consortium for Student Retention Data Exchange, 1999) resulting in a first-year dropout/attrition rate of more than 25% at four year institutions, and approximately 50% at two-year institutions.

3.3.1 Economic Implications

Students have become a precious commodity for institutions. Against the backdrop of the alarming high rates of attrition institutions must make changes if it is to survive in anything resembling its present form. They must concern themselves with retaining students so that, if nothing else, budgets can be preserved. Tinto notes further that strengthening institutional efforts aimed at increasing student retention may be a more effective enrolment-management strategy than devoting more resources to increasing student recruitment. The value of using sophisticated marketing techniques to recruit students has diminished markedly. Institutions therefore have come to view the retention of students to degree completion as the only reasonable cause of action left to ensure their survival (Gardner, 1981; Tinto, 1987). Alexander Astin (1975:2) reminds us of the cost effectiveness of focusing on student retention by stating that: “In four year institutions, any change that deters students from dropping out can affect three classes of students at once, whereas any change in recruiting practices can affect only one class in a given year. From this
viewpoint, investing resources to prevent dropping out may be more cost effective than applying the same resources to more vigorous recruitment. Retention initiatives designed to manage student enrolment are estimated to be three to five times more cost-effective than recruitment efforts for example, the cost of recruiting one new student to college approximates the cost of retaining 3-5 already enrolled students (Noel, Levitz, and Saluri, 1985; Rosenberg and Czepiel, 1983; Tinto, 1975). Another advantage associated with student retention initiatives is that graduating students are much less likely to default on their student loans than students who drop out. This is due, in large measure, to the fact that graduates are more likely to find gainful employment stated by Seaks as cited by Levitz (1993). However, improving student retention not only fulfils the institutionally self-serving function of promoting fiscal solvency but also serves the more altruistic student-centred purpose of promoting learning and development. From an educational viewpoint, Astin (1975) states that changes that help students complete college, represents a real service to them, whereas successful recruiting efforts may simply change students’ choice of institutions.

3.3.2 Student Retention Assessment Outcome

Student retention is an assessment outcome amenable to accurate measurement. Retention also functions as a fundamental student outcome and is a prerequisite for meaningful assessment of other outcomes such as knowledge acquisition, critical
thinking, and attitude change, which cannot possibly be accurately measured as final outcomes of the college experience unless and until students have persisted to completion of the college experience. Any outcome assessment data collected on students who have graduated from a postsecondary institution with attrition (students who have withdrawn prior to degree completion) rates of 50% or higher is, in effect, conducting assessment on an unrepresentative sample of students. Institutions seriously interested in outcomes assessment should include student retention as a primary outcome measure to make meaningful interpretations of other assessed outcomes. If the ultimate purpose of assessment is institutional improvement, then improvement in student retention should be an intended outcome of any postsecondary institution. Given the high levels of student attrition at many colleges and universities, retention represents a student outcome that can be dramatically improved because it is much more influenced by institutional behaviour than by student characteristics such as a lack of academic motivation or academic underpreparedness (Cuseo, 2003).

In support of this view Tinto (1987:127-177) reports that though the intentions and commitment with which individuals enter college matter, what goes on after college matters more. The daily interaction of the student with other members of the college in both the formal and informal academic and social domains of the college and the student’s perception of the character of those interactions largely determines their
decisions as to staying or leaving. Deduced from this student retention is as much a function of institutional behaviour as it is of student behaviour.

However, the literature tends to favour the use of formative assessment as a means of improving learning by encouraging ‘reflection-for-action’ (Cowan, 1998). Heywood (2000) notes that, since students learn in part to be assessed, their learning should be assessment led in the most positive meaning of the phrase. Some institutions have redesigned the first semester to be a formative assessment, deferring summative assessment till the end of the first year. Thus, allowing formative assessment to offer students opportunities to build on their experience. Researchers claim that good assessment has a greater influence on how and what students learn than any other single factor (Ellington, 1999; George and Cowan, 1999 cited in Trotter and Roberts, 2006). Findings reveal that students welcome summative assessment as an incentive and motivator to study (Trotter, 2006).

A review of student-non-completion models by Laing and Robinson (2003) indicate that current models offer little in the way of explanations of the causes of non-completion or justification for the strategies used to reduce non-completion. There is very little guidance on or hard evidence of which strategies is likely to encourage the greatest improvements for students to persist (Johnston, 2001; Christie, Munro and Fisher, 2004).
3.4 The South African Context

3.4.1 Public Further Education and Training Colleges

The FET College sector with 50 merged former technical colleges, colleges of education, and training centres emerged in 2002 in terms of the Further Education and Training Act, No. 98 of 1998, is a new phenomenon. The literature reveals that research on retention and success in this sector is lacking. As already discussed in the preceding chapter, research focuses more on contemporary economic issues such as skills development and the role of FET Colleges with regard to intermediate-level education and training (Akojee, 2008; Kraak, 2008) and the problem of rising unemployment among graduates of post-school institutions such as the FETC and HE sectors (Kraak, 2010).

Dr Glenda Kruss (2006), chief research specialist in Education, Science and Skills Development (ESSD), states that the central vision for FET colleges is to become a seamless interface between basic schooling and workplace learning, and a bridge to higher learning as proposed by the Department of Labour (DoL) and the Department of Education (DoE). FET colleges have a duty to provide responsive programmes that prepare students for successful insertion into the labour markets or upgrade the skills of the already employed. Responsiveness includes amongst others, concerns with the educational content and quality of what is provided, and may be linked for
some to having a second chance to access higher education (Akojee *et al.*, 2008).
Thus, FET colleges should become the automatic and first choice of young people to
become skilled workers in any occupation.

### 3.4.2 Pathways through the Education and Training System

Analyses conducted by the Education, Science and Skills Development research
programme at the HRSC (2000) show major obstacles in the education pathway
system for example; the majority of learners entering FET colleges and learnerships
have already achieved National Senior Certificate (grade 12 qualifications) prior to
enrolment. In a HSRC (2000) survey of the destinations of graduates from N2, N3
and NSC programmes revealed that 81% of respondents had already achieved a
Senior Certificate prior to enrolling for a technical college programme. Thus, most of
these learners revert to a level of learning lower than their highest qualification in
enrolling in FET College learning programmes; thereby negating a key principle of
the NQF to facilitate programme articulation and learner progression through the
education and training system. The South African College Principals’ Organisation
has introduced an accelerated NCV 4 programme in FET colleges to obviate
repeating learning at levels already traversed (Cosser, 2003; Visser and Kruss, 2009).

HRSC studies also reveal similar misalignment at the education-labour market
interface. Around a third of FET graduates are employed, unemployed and not
economically active and nearly a third of grade 12 learners are unemployed or not economically active a year after school. Young unemployed learners 72% in a recent HSRC study were already in possession of a qualification at NQF level 4 when they enrolled for a learnership. The overwhelming majority 92% of this group have enrolled for a learnership programme lower than or equal to NQF level 4 (Visser and Kraus, 2009). Some 18% university and university of technology graduates and 37% student drop-outs of the Higher Education system are unemployed three years after leaving university (Cosser, 2003; 2008; Cosser with Sehlola, 2009; Bhorat, Mayet and Visser, 2010). Against this backdrop the extent of disarticulation remains a concern.

Research indicate that one of the key problems identified in the post Department of Higher Education and Training establishment period, is the paucity of future learning opportunities for youth who leave school either prematurely (with a grade 9 or GET certificate or after grade 10 or grade 11) or with a National Senior Certificate. According to the NQF it includes levels 2 to 5. Universities loom disproportionately large in post-school learners, due to the disbandment of teacher training and nursing colleges, the post-apartheid state opening up learning opportunities in study programmes besides teaching and nursing for black African learners; and for a variety of reasons including poor marketing, poor image, and the incapacity of the FET colleges to attract large numbers of learners. Notwithstanding, the regulation of the sector, private provision at the FET level has been found to be
far larger than public provision in the college. FET colleges are not perceived to be offering relevant, credible programmes in sought-after technical and vocational learning areas that will lead to the uptake in the labour market. At the higher level, private higher education appears de facto to be plugging the gap between schooling and public higher education provision. There are too few institutional options in the FET band to cater for the demand for further learning and which provide a pathway into the labour market; which perforce pushes learners into higher education that comes with a cost. The attrition rate in university is notoriously high. Many learners enrolling in universities should rather enrol in other institution types for qualifications other than degrees. Universities provide comprehensive support for students ill-prepared for university study for example, bridging programmes, extended curricula, intensive and sustained academic development. The concern remains, should universities continue to bear the human and financial resource brunt of failures in the schooling system? (Akojee and McGrath, 2004; Akojee, 2005).

The phasing out of N5 to N6 certificates by FET colleges has contributed, moreover, to the gap in education and training provision at NQF levels 4 to 5. Furthermore, the policy decision to phase out N4 to N6 qualifications and to confine FET college provision to NQF levels 2 to 4 programmes (cemented by the introduction of the NCV as parallel qualification to the NSC in the schooling sector) has had dire consequences for the college sector and for skills development at the intermediate level. The consequence is the dearth of NQF level 5 programme provisions, which
exacerbates the university-as-only-option scenario in which universities must offer certificate and diploma programmes in addition to the degree programmes that are arguably their focus area. Certificate and diploma programmes offered by Universities of Technology and by the Technology components of Comprehensive institutions go some way towards accommodating this need. However, these intermediate qualifications are not the natural preserve of universities and should be offered by other institutional types (Stumpf with Papier, Needham and Nel, 2009; Lolwana, 2010).

3.4.2.1 The Schooling System

Fedderke, de Kadt and Luis (2000) note, that South Africa’s schooling system has seldom, if ever, represented human capital formation that could be described as healthy. It has been and remains distorted and fundamentally dysfunctional, and is not producing graduates who can go on to university. Those who reach university are often under-prepared and socially ill-equipped for higher education studies. Keating argued that many who make it to university drop out because they cannot cope with the academic demands (The Cape Argus, 2007). Literature supporting these views by Fiske and Ladd (2004) show that repetition and dropout rates among black students are high and matriculation rates are low, with little evidence of improvement (Letseka, Cosser, Breier and Visser, 2010).
3.4.2.2 Student Attrition

Literature reviewed reveals that the key factors contributing to student attrition in South Africa is school leavers’ under-preparedness for higher education (Moll, 2004; Nyamapfene and Letseka, 1995; Slonimsky and Shalem, 2006) and financial difficulty (Letseka et al., 2010). In 2000 of the 120 000 students who enrolled in higher education 36 000 (30%) dropped out in their first year; a further 24 000 (20%) dropped out during their second and third years of study. Only 22% of the remaining 60 000 (50%) graduated with a generic bachelor’s degree within the specified three-year period (DoE, 2005). By comparison, the dropout in the UK is estimated to be 22% (Grimston, 2008), while UK universities are under pressure to increase participation in higher education to 50% for under-thirties by 2010/11 (House of Commons Public Accounts Committee, 2009). In Australia, the dropout rate was 19% for domestic students and 18% for international students (DEEWR, 200). In the United States, about 58% of first-time students enrolled for a bachelor’s degree or its equivalent and attending a four year institution full-time in 2000/1 completed the degree or its equivalent at this institution within six years (National Centre for Education Statistics, 20007; Letseka et al., 2010).
3.5 ISSUES THAT IMPACT ON RETENTION AND SUCCESS

3.5.1 Academic Advisement

Literature reveals consistently that the first year is the most critical in shaping persistence decisions and plays a formative role in influencing student attitudes and approaches to learning (Allen, 1999; Blythman and Orr, 2003; Fitzgibbon and Prior, 2003 as cited by Trotter and Roberts, 2006). Student decisions about staying or leaving is affected by academic advising as one of the major academic and social domains of the college experience. Thus, academic advising is being referred to as the “cornerstone of student retention” (Crocket, 1978). Their empirical connection though has yet to be carefully documented and systematically synthesised. However, academic advising exerts a significant impact on student retention through its positive association with, and mediation of, factors that are strongly associated with student persistence, namely: student satisfaction with the college experience, effective educational and career planning and decision-making, student utilisation of campus support services, student-faculty contact outside the classroom, and student mentoring. Wyckoff (1999:3) notes: “To establish a high degree of commitment to the academic advising process, university and college administrators must become cognisant not only of the educational value of advising but of the role advising plays in the retention of students”.

3.5.1.1 Defining Quality Academic Advising

Wyckoff (1999) notes, that any potentially effective attempt to increase student retention through improvement in academic advisement must be guided by a clear vision of what good or quality advising entails. However, if we cannot define it, we cannot recognise it, nor can we assess it or improve it. The following statements to mention a few from scholarly literature serve as focal points for guiding the development of effective advising practices and procedures:

a) “Developmental academic advising is a systematic process based on a close student-advisor relationship intended to aid students in achieving educational, career, and personal goals through the utilisation of the full range of institutional and community resources. It both stimulates and supports students in their quest for an enriched quality of life” (Winston, Miller, Ender, and Grites, and Associates, 1984: 538)

b) “Advising programmes that emphasise registration and record keeping, while neglecting attention to students’ educational and personal experiences in the institution are missing an excellent opportunity to influence directly and immediately the quality of students’ education and are also highly inefficient, since they are most likely employing highly educated (expensive) personnel
who are performing essentially clerical tasks” (Winston, Miller, Ender, and Grites, and Associates, 1984:542).

c) “Students may enter the advising process with a set of perceptions and expectations quite unrelated to those of the advisor. The importance of the interpersonal relationship for students should not be underestimated (Wyckoff, 1999:3)”.

From the student’ perspective literature reviewed points to the conclusion that undergraduates value most highly academic advisors who function as mentors or counsellors, and who are available/accessible, knowledgeable/helpful and approachable.

3.5.2 Advisor Roles

Cuseo (2008) posits that high-quality advisement is distilled into and defined in terms of the following three key advisor roles or functions:

As a humanising agent an advisor is someone who interacts with students on a less formal, more frequent, and more continues basis than course instructors. Each student can have continuous contact and an on-going relationship with an academic advisor that may endure throughout the college experience. For this very reason an
advisor is uniquely positioned to develop a personal relationship with students; someone whom students feel comfortable seeking out, who knows them by name, who knows their individual interests, aptitude, values, and who takes special interest in their personal experiences, progress and development.

An advisor as a counselling or mentoring agent is an experienced guide who helps students navigate the bureaucratic maze of institutional policies and administrative protocol; serves as a referral agent who directs and connects students to campus support services that best serve their needs; is a confidante to whom students can turn for advice, counselling, guidance and encouragement; who allows them to freely explore their values and belief systems; is a student advocate, treating them as clients to be served and developed rather than as subordinates to be evaluated and graded; who listens to them actively, empathically and non-judgmentally.

Serving the function of an educational or instructional agent an advisor can equip students with specific strategies for success, and can bring integration and coherence to the students’ college experience by promoting their appreciation of the college mission, the purpose and value of the curriculum (education) and co-curriculum (experiential learning outside the classroom); through effective questioning techniques, helps students become more self-aware of their distinctive interest, talents, values, and priorities; who enables students to see the connection between their present academic experience and their future life plans; who broadens students’
perspectives with respect to their personal life choices, and sharpens their cognitive skills for making these choices for example, effective problem-solving, critical thinking, and reflective decision-making.

Literature review findings on advising for the past 25 years by American College Testing (ACT) point to the following essential elements for academic advisement programmes:

3.5.3. Student Mentoring

Mentoring is increasingly being viewed as a tool for promoting student retention (Walker and Taub, 2001). The importance of mentoring for college students is well expressed by the leader of the first-year experience movement, John Gardner (1981:70) as follows: “Students need mentors and facilitators. They need, in the words of Carl Rogers, authentic professional human beings who are worthy of emulation. They need models who exhibit professional behaviour, a sense of commitment and purposefulness, a sense of autonomy and integrity in a world that generates enormous stress. Students cannot be told how to do this; authenticity cannot be transmitted through lectures”.

Research on mentoring indicates that mentoring is especially critical to the retention and success of underrepresented, first-generation college students who do not have
role models at home (Tinto, 1987). Levinson (1987) asserts that it also has a positive impact on the personal and professional development of young adults. Campbell and Campbell (1997) and Wallace and Abel (1997) refer to a growing base of empirical research between mentoring and student retention in higher education for example, Miller, Neuner, and Glynn (1988) used an experimental design in which students were randomly assigned to either an experimental group who received mentoring, or a control group who did not. Students who received mentoring achieved higher retention rates than non-mentored students with similar pre-enrolment characteristics.

Traditionally mentoring is delivered through one-on-one relationships, thus making it difficult to find a sufficient number of mentors to sustain a mentoring programme that reaches a significant number of students (Redmond, 1990). Walker and Taub (2001) however, found that “network” mentoring programmes, in which multiple students are mentored by one college faculty or staff member, are comparable in effectiveness to traditional one-on-one mentoring arrangements as measured in terms of student satisfaction with the quality of the mentoring relationship and the frequency of contact with their mentor. While advising and mentoring have been traditionally seen as distinct different programmes, this finding suggests that academic advisement programmes can co-function as mentoring programmes, because a ratio of multiple students to one advisor may also enable the advantages of mentoring to be realised. The criteria cited in scholarly literature for effective mentors appear compatible with the characteristics of effective advisors, for
example: more mature than the mentee; interpersonal skills; willingness to commit time; and knowledge of the campus (Johnson, 1989).

Habley and Associates (2000) note that students, repeatedly state that they value most highly academic advisors who serve as mentors, are accessible, approachable, and helpful in providing guidance that connect their present academic experience with their future life plans. It is clear that mentoring forms an integral element of academic advisement and as such, advising programmes should be viewed and pursued with the same enthusiasm for promoting student retention and mentoring programmes.

3.5.4 Formulation of a Programme Mission Statement that Clearly Articulates the Meaning and Purpose of Academic Advising

Crocket, Habley, and Cowart (1987) found that only 54% of post secondary institutions have a written statement that articulates the purposes and procedures of their advising programme. This is a clear indication that advising is not considered to be a bona fide educational programme with important goals and objectives (Cuseo, 2008).
3.5.4.1 Provision of Sufficient incentives, Recognition, and Reward for Effective Academic Advising

Habley (1988) found that less than one-third of campuses recognise and reward faculty for advising and, among those that do, advising is recognised by giving it only minor consideration in faculty promotion and tenure decisions. A recent study of first year academic practices at close 1,000 colleges and universities only 12% of postsecondary institutions offered incentives or rewards that recognised outstanding advising of first-year students (Policy Centre on the First Year of College, 20003). Scott (2000) states that the failure of most institutions to conduct systematic evaluations of advisers is explained by a number of factors amongst others, the traditional reward structure often blocks the ability to reward faculty who are genuinely committed to advising.

3.5.4.2 Established Criteria for the Recruitment, Selection and Development of Academic Advisors

Important to note is that academic advising effectiveness is almost never mentioned as one of the selection criteria listed in job advertisements or position announcements posted by post-secondary institutions seeking to recruit and hire new faculty (Cuseo, 2008). Crockett, Habley and Cowart (1987) also found that 68% of post-secondary institutions surveyed have no criteria for selecting advisors. This is indicative of a lack of attention to professional preparedness of academic advisors.
and indifference to the identification of advisors most qualified to work with students who are at risk for attrition for example, under-prepared and underrepresented first generation students, and re-entry students.

3.5.4.3 Substantive Orientation, Training and Development of Academic Advisors

Habley (1988) states about one-third of college campuses provide training for faculty advisers, less than one-quarter require faculty training; and the vast majority of institutions offering training programmes focus solely on dissemination of factual information, without giving significant attention to the identification of the goals and objectives of advising, and the development of effective advising strategies or relationship skills. Based on his review of findings from five national surveys of academic advising he concludes that training, evaluation, and recognition and reward have been, and continue to be, the weakest links in academic advising throughout the nation. He further notes, “These important institutional practices in support of quality advising are at best unsystematic and at worst non-existent (2000:40). This conclusion is reinforced by the Carnegie Foundation’s national report based on three years of campus visits and extensive national survey research: “We have found advising to be one of the weakest links in the undergraduate experience. Boyer, (1987:51) states that only about a third of the colleges in their study had a quality advisement programme that helped the students think carefully about their academic options”.
3.5.5 Empirical Relationships between Student Advisement and Student Retention

Literature reviewed highlights empirical research findings of factors where strong correlations exist between academic advisement and student retention as described below:

3.5.5.1 College Satisfaction with the College Experience

College satisfaction is a primary predictor of student persistence (Noel and Levitz, 1995). Metzner (1989) conducted a longitudinal study of first-year retention rates of students at public university which included influential factors amongst others, students’ academic preparedness, college grades, and college satisfaction. Findings revealed that students, who perceived advising to be of good quality, withdrew at a rate that was 25% lower than that of students reported receiving poor advising. They also withdrew at a rate that was 40% less than that of students who received no advising at all. Further data analysis showed that high-quality advising had a statistically significant, indirect effect on student persistence mediated by its positive association with students’ level of college satisfaction and its negative association with students’ intent to leave the university. In a National survey of 944 colleges and universities identified “inadequate advising” as the number one factor linked to student attrition on their campuses, and that “improvement of academic advising
services” was the most common student retention strategy adopted by their institutions (Beal and Noel, 1980).

3.5.5.2 Pre-Entry Information

Allen (1999) notes that, students with a positive first impression of an institution maybe extrinsically motivated to persist. Outreach work with potential entrants serve a dual function of beginning the process of engagement with institutions early, and assisting students to possess higher levels of academic preparedness (York and Thomas, 2003). Studies by Brennan (2001) and Watson, Johnson and Austin (2004) recognised that the challenge for student recruitment is how to communicate with prospective students who assume they already know enough to make to make an informed choice of course and institution. In the first-year experience in Australian universities by Krause, Hartley, James and McInnis (2005), it was found that while the enhanced efforts to bridge the gap between school and university may account for students’ increasingly positive views of the role of school in preparing students for study, the proportion of students feeling positive in this regard was still 40%, with 30% feeling ill-prepared to choose a university course on leaving school (Trutter and Roberts, 2006).
3.5.5.3 Effective Educational and Career Planning and Decision-making

Literature on retention suggests that student commitment to educational and career goals is perhaps the strongest factor associated with student persistence to degree completion (Wyckoff, 1999). Research findings indicate that three of every four students are uncertain about their career choice at college entry (Titley and Titley, 1980; Frost, 1991), only 8% of new students feel they know a great deal about their intended major (Lemoine, cited in Erickson and Summers, 1991), over half of all students who enter with a declared major change their minds at least once before they graduate (Foote, 1980; Gordon, 1984), only one senior out of three will major in the same field they preferred on entry level (Willingham, 1985). The conclusion is that 75% of all students entering college are actually undecided about their academic and career plans, and at least half of all majors are pre-maturely decided majors, who will eventually change their minds. This may result in delayed progress toward degree completion by necessitating the need for students to complete additional courses to fulfil specific degree requirements for their newly chosen major (Cuseo, 2008).

Kramer (1993) notes for example, that the number of students who take five or more years to graduate from college has doubled since the early 1980s. This phenomenon reflects confusion, procrastination, or premature decision-making due to students’ lack of knowledge about themselves and their compatibility with their initial choice,
or lack of knowledge about the relationship between college majors and future careers. Some of the confusion about majors and careers may result from, “Students being pushed into careers by their families, while others have picked one just to relieve their anxiety about not having a career choice. Still others may have picked popular or lucrative careers, knowing nothing of what they’re really like or what it takes to prepare for them” (Upcraft, Finney, and Garland, 1984:18). This degree of student uncertainty and propensity for changing educational plans highlights the need for student support in the academic planning and decision-making process of students.

Astin’s (1975) research on the relationship between effective educational decision-making and student retention indicates that prolonged indecision about academic major and career goals is correlated with student attrition. Lean, Beal and Sauer (1980) also report that students’ goal motivation or commitment correlates positively with persistence to graduation. This correlation has been found to hold true for both males and females (Anderson, 1988). One of the most frequently factors that detracted students from experiencing a more successful and satisfying college career, is a “poor sense of direction” (Willingham, 1985). Levitz and Noel (1989) also found “lack of certainty about a major and/or career” to be the number-one reason cited by high-ability students for their decision to drop out of college. “Many students transfer or sometimes drop out simply because they do not know that a particular course of study is available at their college, or because they think they cannot have a
particular option in their programme of studies” (Beal and Noel, 1980:103). These findings further imply the need for academic advising.

3.5.5.4 Student Utilisation of Campus Support Services

Research clearly suggests that there is a positive relationship between the use of campus-support services and persistence to programme or degree completion (Churchill and Iwai, 1981; Pascarella and Terrinzini, 1991). Students who seek and receive academic support have been found to improve both their academic performance and their academic self-efficacy, that is, they develop a greater sense of self-perceived control of academic outcomes, and develop higher self-expectations for future academic success (Smith, Walter and Hoey, 1992). Solberg, O’Brien, Villareal and Davis (1993) have also found that higher levels of self-efficacy correlate positively in particular with Hispanic college students’ academic performance and persistence, and under prepared students in general (Lent, Brown and Larkin, 1987).

It has also been found that college students under-utilise academic support services (Friedlander, 1980; Walter and Smith, 1990), especially those students who are in most need of support (Knapp and Karabenick, 1988; Abrahams and Jernigan, 1984). Levin and Levin (1991) assert that at-risk students in particular, have trouble recognising that they are experiencing academic difficulty and are often reluctant to seek help even if they do recognise their difficulty. Even more disturbing is that
meta-analysis research by Kulik, Kulik and Shwalb (1983) reveal that academic support programmes designed for under prepared students exert a statistically significant effect on their retention and grades when they are utilised, especially if these services are used by students during their first year.

All these findings above strongly suggests that institutions should deliver academic support intrusively by initiating contact with students and aggressively bringing support services to them, rather than offering services passively and hoping that students will come and take advantage of them on their own accord. In this way students can then be provided with timely assistance before their academic performance and persistence are adversely affected by ineffective learning strategies. Another way of promoting student retention is by connecting students to student development services and co-curricular programmes. Students who are more socially integrated or involved in campus life, and feel they are part of the campus community, are more likely to persist to graduation (Terenzini, 1986; Tinto, 1987).

Winston (1994: 114) argues that this is the way in which developmental advising exerts its greatest impact:

“Developmental advising has the greatest impact through supporting and challenging students to take advantage of the multitude of learning opportunities outside of their formal classes and to use the human and programmatic resources designed to
promote development of their talents and broaden their cultural awareness. Developmental advising has a multiplier effect that increases students’ involvement in institutional programmes and services; this positively influences retention for the institution and increases the overall impact of educational experiences for students”.

3.5.5.5 Student-Faculty Contact outside the Classroom

A broad base of research demonstrates that student-faculty contact outside the classroom is strongly correlated with student retention (Bean, 1981; Pascarella, 1980; Pascarella and Terenzini, 1979; Pascarella and Terenzini, 1991). Astin (1977:223) reports in a longitudinal study of 200,000 students at 300 institutions of all types, that “Student faculty interaction has a stronger relationship to student satisfaction with the college experience than any other variable and any student characteristic or institutional characteristic”. Consistent with these findings was the following observation made by Noel (1978:96-97) based on his extensive consulting experiences with colleges and universities interested in promoting student retention: “It is increasingly apparent that the most important features of a “staying” environment relate to the instructional faculty. Students make judgments about their academic experience on the basis of such factors as quality of instruction, freedom to contact faculty for consultation, availability of faculty for consultation, and faculty involvement outside the classroom.”
Tinto (1975) found that out-of-class contact between faculty and students has particularly powerful effects on the persistence of students who are “withdrawal prone”. After conducting interviews with high-risk students who succeeded in college against the odds, He also found that, “In every case, the students cited one or two events, when someone on the faculty or less commonly the staff had made personal contact with them outside the classroom. That’s what made the difference” (quoted in Levitz, 1990, cited in Cuseo, 2008). Research findings also indicate that the frequency of non–classroom contact between students and faculty to discuss academic issues had its most positive influence on the persistence of students with low initial commitment to college, and students whose parents had relatively low levels of formal education. Furthermore of importance to note, is that student-faculty interaction outside the classroom has been found to exert a direct effect on student retention independent of other potentially influential factors for example, students’ level of involvement with college peers, academic preparedness, or educational inspirations at college entry. It is predicted that when student-faculty interaction outside the classroom involves discussion of students’ academic and career plans, high quality advising will have a significant impact on student retention in general, and the retention of at-risk (withdrawal-prone) students in particular (Wilson, 1975; Terenzini, 1986). Academic advisement may therefore be the only institutional structure to ensure that students have personal one-on-one contact with a faculty member. Such personal contact is underscored by the national survey research conducted by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching,
which indicates a substantial decline in the percentage of undergraduates who agree with the statement, “There are professors at my college whom I feel free to turn to for advice on personal matters” (Boyer, 1987).

3.5.5.6 Fear of Failure

Dougherty (1994), Dougherty and Kienzl (2006), and Nora (1993) conducted studies of students entering two-year colleges with intentions of earning baccalaureate degrees reveal that these students face significant organisation-level barriers in realising their original goals. Thus, the dream of greater educational opportunity remains unfulfilled for many community college students. The site of postsecondary access for the least advantaged students is also the place where degree aspirants are least likely to succeed. Community colleges admit students who are unprepared for what awaits them, “while some students of low promise are successful, for large numbers failure is inevitable and structured” (Clark, 1960a:571). Research has shown that between 30% and 40% of first-year students are unprepared for college-level reading and writing (Swail, 2006). The findings also show that 44% of all college students who complete a 2- or 4-year degree enrolled in at least one remedial developmental course in mathematics, writing or reading (Swail, 2006).

Data analysis from a study of students across six sections of a first-semester composition course highlights the potential for students to undermine their own
educational goals in the absence of active intervention from the college. The majority of students revealed tremendous anxiety about the educational and occupational paths they were embarking on. A significant number of students’ stress was directly linked to their doubts about assuming the new role of “college student”. Students who worried about their transition into college were, at some level, struggling with the fear that they would not be able to succeed in college or realise their career goals (Cox, 2009). The experience of entering the college proved to be an immensely stressful transition for example, students’ fresh from high school revealed that the transition represented a crucial threshold to adulthood.

Older students also experienced the transition as scary, unfamiliar or life-changing. Although many viewed a college degree as essential to their futures, many lacked the kind of “college knowledge” that middle class students typically have and they were uncertain how to approach their degree paths and coursework (McDonough, 1997). This resulted in feelings that ranged from lack of confidence to overwhelming fear. This fear had been heightened by these students’ experiences with failure in past academic contexts for example, bad decision-making, poor performance at various level of schooling, failing or dropping classes at the postsecondary level (Cox, 2009).

The stakes are high, yet the likelihood of success is low and the students’ understandings of it are structured by an intersecting set of material, social and cultural conditions, including their own location within the lowest tier of a highly
stratified system. Most of these students had passed the reading and writing test on entering college but had failed the mathematics assessment and were required to enrol in at least one remedial mathematics course before taking the college-level mathematics requirement. More than three-quarters of students began their education by failing an entry level assessment test, whilst 80% of the sample mentioned at least one of these forms of failure. The past failure provided objective evidence of academic inadequacy. Students who did not explicitly discuss past failures revealed the same underlying lack of confidence and doubts about their capacity to succeed in college. These findings offered proof of the students’ minimal academic competence at the least or lowest status form of college. Admission therefore, into a selective college even if the institution is not highly selective, suggests that a student has the capacity to succeed at that school (Cox, 2009).

3.5.5.7 Financial Support

Swail (2006) notes, for many low-income students, enrolment and retention are driven by the availability of financial aid. Low-income students who receive grants are therefore more likely to persist than those who receive loans. He also claims that given the rising costs of college fees, it is unlikely that low-income students will be able to graduate without loan aid.
According to Breier (2010) the dominant international literature fails to reflect the extent of socio-economic deprivation among students in countries where many people live below the poverty line. Brier’s article draws on a study conducted by the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) on student retention and graduate destination at seven HE institutions in South Africa. The study focuses on the University of the Western Cape, which caters for a large proportion of impoverished students, and finds that many students have left before completing a qualification. According to the findings of the study, they were too poor to stay. The methodology of the HSRC research included a postal survey questionnaire survey of 20,353 persons from selected fields and institutions who left their institutions in 2002 without achieving a qualification, and 14,195 who graduated in the same year: a total of 34,548, with an overall response rate of 16%. The response rate for the graduates was 15%, and for those who left without achieving a qualification, 16% (Breier, 2010, 60:660). Brier’s article also draws on the model of Tinto, (1993:114) and takes issue with his approach to student finance as a reason for student dropout. The quantitative and qualitative research on which his article was based confirms the following: finances are felt most strongly by the lower socio-economic groups and influence choice of institution; sudden unexpected demands can lead to premature departure; work study programmes can help poor students.

The findings also indicate that some students from socio-economic disadvantaged backgrounds do succeed in graduating in time (Breier, 2006). It should be noted that
in South Africa the government has funded aid schemes to provide partial costs in an attempt to help as many needy students as possible.

In a study conducted by Letseka et al., (2010) 43% African students rely on support from parents/guardians, only 28% received support from the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS), Likewise, 38% coloured students get support from parents/guardians, compared with 20% from NSFAS; 74% Indians receive support from parents/guardians and only 2% from NSFAS, and whites 57% from parents/guardians and 3% from NSFAS. Furthermore, the study reveals that the predominant reason for leaving for both the coloured and Africans was financial and not academic.

3.5.5.8 Social and Academic Integration

The question may be asked: Why should there be social integration on campus? Swail (2006) notes that when students are separated from the social fabric of society, they withdraw, and at worst, decide to sever the relationship completely. Without social connection, students become isolated and drop out. Researchers agree that institutional fit and campus integration are important for student retention and success (Swail, 2006). Tinto in Swail (2006) hypothesise that commitment to one’s occupational and educational goals and commitment to the institution significantly
influence college performance and retention. Students are more likely to succeed with stronger goals and with commitment to the institution.

Trotter and Cove (2005) assert that students’ decisions to withdraw are significantly affected by the degree of their intellectual and social integration. Research studies on attendance reveal that, students who withdraw have been found to miss classes more often, have poorer study skills and less efficient time-management skills than those who continue with their studies (Johnson, 1994; Fitzgibbon and Prior, 2003). Furthermore, the attendance rate of those students who passed their course ranged from 67% to 98% with an average attendance rate of 88%, while attendance of those who failed ranged from 53% to 92% with an average of 69% (Gracia and Jenkins, 2000).

Research findings at four-year colleges show that students who participate in student organisations or interact with faculty persist and graduate at higher rates. This does not imply that graduation rates will increase if every student joins a student organisation or interacts with faculty. Students and faculty may share values and an orientation towards academic activity (Bailey et al., 2005). Pascarella and Terenzeni (1991:395), for example, conclude in their study that ‘educational aspirations are more likely to influence contact with faculty than contact with faculty is to influence educational aspirations’. The types of studies that show a relationship between social integration and retention do not imply that introducing policies to promote
integration will necessarily increase retention. ‘If the students share the same environment, then measures of integration are measures of individual characteristics, and not institutional characteristics’ (Bailey et al., 2005: 12).

The student integration model of Tinto (1993) forms the conceptual basis of much of the research on retention and success. It is designed to help colleges understand why students leave, so the institutions can design activities to better serve students’ needs and thereby increase the retention and success rates. Although many methodological problems persist, many empirical studies indicate that academic and social integration has positive effects on persistence (Braxton, Hirschy and McClendon, 2004; Cabera, Nora and Casteneba, 1993). Rice and Mirzadeh (2000) argue that students who are adaptive perfectionists tend to adjust better to college and also show higher rates of retention. However, little research has addressed the relationship of college students’ social and emotional well-being to retention and academic success (Pritchard et al., 2003).

3.5.5.9 Campus Climate

Campus climate mediates students’ academic and social experiences in college. Students who are inadequately prepared for non-academic challenges can experience culture shock. For example, lack of diversity with regard to income and race or ethnicity in the student population, faculty, staff and curriculum, often restrict the
nature and quality of minority students’ interactions in and out of the classroom, and could threaten their academic performance and social experiences (Swail, 2006).

Colleges and universities are hugely complex social systems, which need to ‘think systemically and think collaboration’, both within and across organisational units. They should also ‘think integration’ to create an environment in which everyone has a responsibility and role to play in promoting students’ learning. When that happens, persistence will take care of itself. His research shows that specific college experiences affect a student’s persistence and educational attainment regardless of the characteristics of the institution attended (Terenzini 2006). Levitz and Noel (1989) state that although some students leave for reasons beyond the control of the institution, most attrition is preventable.

3.5.5.10 Social Support

Social support systems play a crucial role in determining the level of social functioning. Benefits of social support systems include a sense of security and belonging, social integration, the opportunity to nurture others, physical care, personal worth, a sense of reliable alliance, and guidance. Problems, strengths and resources encountered result from interaction of intrapersonal, interpersonal and environmental systems (Hepworth, Rooney and Larsen, 2002),
Pearlin and Schooler cited in Hepworth *et al.* (2002) note, social support is frequently considered to be a multi-dimensional construct. There are several different categories in social support which include emotional support, esteem support, belonging support, network support, appraisal support, tangible support, instrumental support, and informational support. The various categories of social support differ with respect to the adaptation demands they can moderate. Social support is effective in minimising the negative effects of stressors only when there is congruence between adaptation demands and support resources. Social support systems like family, friends, counselling services, and also recreational activities, will thus invariably help students to experience a sense of security and belonging, social integration, self-esteem, a sense of reliable alliance and guidance, and an opportunity to relax from stressful situations.

Tinto in Trotter and Roberts (2006) asserts that it is possible to lessen the social transition from the relatively secure environment of school to that of an unknown college and university environment. Research reveals that a workshop to develop peer networks facilitated the formation of social networks and peer groups, which eased students’ transition (Peat, Dalzeil and Grant, 2001); while a learning-to-learning programme can have a positive impact on learning and on assessment outcomes (Zeegars and Martin, 2001). The transformation towards a mass higher education system has brought with it a wider diversity of students who might have
been prevented from participating, and who are more likely to need additional support.

Literature indicates that, little research has addressed the relationship of college students’ social and emotional well-being to retention and academic success (Pritchard et al., 2003). However, student psychological state is strongly associated with student withdrawal. Helping students deal with personal problems or crises and supporting them through this period of personal and intellectual growth, should be an integral rather than ancillary feature of further education (Jaques, 1990; Earwaker, 1992; Johnson, 1994). The majority of students do not seek support (Christie, Munro and Fisher, 2004). Hence, an institutional strategy to build good support must build structures that reach all students (Blythman and Orr, 2003). In a study by Gutteridge (2001), every single student interviewed reported some difficulty when entering higher education. This experience is further complicated by their emotional developmental stage of intense mood swings and attitudes (Raadheim, Wankowski and Radford, 1991).

Studies on how to improve academic and pastoral support suggest much tighter guidelines for students and staff on the purpose and contents of tutorials be applied, tutorials be prepared in advance by the student, involving personal tutors in skills development and integrating their role into the mainstream curriculum ((Yorke and Thomas, 2003; Jones, 2002).
3.5.5.11 Teaching and Learning Activities

Johnson cited in Trotter and Roberts (2006) notes that, tutor behaviour has been associated with differential student persistence. McInnes (2003) believed that the fundamentals of good undergraduate teaching should be supported. Whereas, Heywood (2000) argued that the effective delivery of the curriculum depends on multi-strategy approaches to instruction. Methods stressing active learning rather than the traditional didactic lecture should be a requirement (Biggs, 1999). Characteristics identified by students impacting on persistence decisions include collaborative teaching and learning, which promotes social relations between students through academic activities (Thomas, 2000). At the heart of any strategy to improve retention is learning and teaching strategy, which directly targets the development of student commitment and ability enhances their likelihood of staying the course (Mortiboys, 2002).

3.6 CONCLUSION

The scope of relevant literature reviewed for the purpose of this study on student retention and success in this chapter highlights:

The ecological systems theory within the Phenomenological variant of ecological systems theory (PVEST), which allows for critical analysis of human development
processes that unfold in multilevel context over time; the connection between human vulnerability (the presence of risks and protective factors) and the myriad life stage specific outcomes; unpacks and recasts the many life stage specific expressions of human diversity as individuals interact with the physical and psychological ecologies where growth and development take place. Protective factors serve to balance against the impact of risk factor presence. Self-appraisal, coping strategies and academic success are all important developmental processes encapsulated in this framework. Hence, the aptness of this approach to better understands the student population diversity of this research.

A framework for student retention presented by Swail (2006) demonstrates the interaction of the student and the institution, emphasising the cognitive characteristics or skills that a student brings with him or her to campus, a second side which represents the student’s social characteristics and skills, and then the level of support or interference (in a negative context) that the institution applies to the mix. The cognitive, social and institutional factors must be in some balance to support student success. When a student is lacking in cognitive or social skills, other factors must rise to make up for the deficiency. It is important for institutions to understand what each student brings with him or her, in order to provide the appropriate support to ensure student success.

Looking at the economic implications, institutions are reminded of the cost effectiveness of focusing on student retention by stating that: “In four year institutions, any change that deters students from dropping out can affect three
classes of students at once, whereas any change in recruiting practices can affect only one class in a given year” (Astin, 1975:2).

Researchers claim that good assessment has a greater influence on how and what students learn than any other single factor. Findings reveal that students welcome summative assessment as an incentive and motivator to study.

The South African context of public further education and training colleges with specific reference to pathways through the education and training system, lack of research on retention and success in the sector, the schooling system and its impact on student attrition in higher education. Key factors contributing to attrition in South Africa are the under-preparedness of school leavers (the probability exists include learners from the FET college sector mobilising into higher education) and financial difficulty.

Literature reviewed on issues that impact on both retention and success are academic advisement and related aspects such as advisor roles, student mentoring, college satisfaction, pre-entry information, career planning and decision-making, student utilisation of campus support services, faculty contact outside the classroom, fear of failure, financial support, social and academic integration, campus climate, social support and teaching and learning activities. Only some of the findings on these issues are highlighted:
The first year is the most critical in shaping persistence decisions and plays a formative role in influencing student attitudes and approaches to learning. Student decisions about staying or leaving is affected by academic advising as one of the major academic and social domains of the college experience. Academic advising is referred to as the “cornerstone of student retention. It is suggested that to establish a high degree of commitment to the academic advising process, university and college administrators must become cognisant not only of the educational value of advising but of the role advising plays in the retention of students. Wyckoff (1999) for example notes that any potentially effective attempt to increase student retention through improvement in academic advisement must be guided by a clear vision of what good or quality advising entails.

Focal points suggested from scholarly research for guiding the development of effective advising practices and procedures are:

Developmental academic advising based on a close student-advisor relationship intended to aid students in achieving educational, career, and personal goals through the utilisation of the full range of institutional and community resources. “It both stimulates and supports students in their quest for an enriched quality of life” (Winston, Miller, Ender and Grites and Associates, 1984: 538)
“Advising programmes that emphasise registration and record keeping, while neglecting attention to students’ educational and personal experiences in the institution are missing an excellent opportunity to influence directly and immediately the quality of students’ education” (Winston, Miller, Ender and Grites, and Associates, 1984:542).

A strong correlation exists between academic advisement and student retention. Research findings of Noel and Levitz (1995) indicate that college satisfaction is a primary predictor of student persistence. Pre-entry information also serves as an important influential factor. Allen (1999) notes that, students with a positive first impression of an institution maybe extrinsically motivated to persist.

Student commitment to educational and career goals is perhaps the strongest factor associated with student persistence to degree completion. Research indicate about 75% of all students entering college are actually undecided about their academic and career plans, and at least half of all majors are pre-maturely decided majors, who will eventually change their minds. This may result in delayed progress toward degree completion by necessitating the need for students to complete additional courses to fulfil specific degree requirements for their newly chosen major (Cuseo, 2008). This degree of student uncertainty and propensity for changing educational plans highlights the need for student support in the academic planning and decision-making process of students.
There is a positive relationship between the use of campus-support services and persistence to programme or degree completion. Students who seek and receive academic support have been found to improve both their academic performance and their academic self-efficacy (Smith, Walter, and Hoey, 1992). It has been found that college students under-utilise academic support services (Friedlander, 1980; Walter and Smith, 1990), especially those students who are in most need of support (Knapp and Karabenick, 1988; Abrahams and Jernigan, 1984). Levin and Levin (1991) assert that at-risk students in particular, have trouble recognising that they are experiencing academic difficulty and are often reluctant to seek help even if they do recognise their difficulty. For many low-income students, enrolment and retention are driven by the availability of financial aid. Low-income students who receive grants are more likely to persist than those who receive loans. Given the rising costs of college fees, it is unlikely that low-income students will be able to graduate without loan aid (Swail, 2006). All these findings above strongly suggests that institutions should deliver academic support intrusively by initiating contact with students and aggressively bringing support services to them, rather than offering services passively and hoping that students will come and take advantage of them on their own accord.

Why should there be social integration on campus? When students are separated from the social fabric of society, they withdraw, and at worst, decide to sever the
relationship completely. Without social connection, students become isolated and drop out (Swail, 2006).

It is evident from the preceding literature reviewed that research plays a central role in any strategy to increase student success and retention rates. The literature has consistently declared the first year to be the most critical in shaping persistence decisions. It is thus; more productive to concentrate and identify those issues that impact on retention and success that are within the power of institutions to alter. It is important that colleges and particularly the FET sector, since it is a new phenomenon.
CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter the research design and scientific process implemented to address the research question, “What are the perceptions and experiences held by students of factors contributing to their success in their first year” will be described in detail.

4.2 RESEARCH GOAL AND OBJECTIVES

The research process of this study as stated in chapter one was guided by the research goal and objectives. The research goal was to explore and describe the challenges of retention and throughput from the perceptions and experiences of successful first-year students in order to use the findings to present structured guidelines based on the research findings to stake holders in Further Education and Training.

The objectives were:
• To explore and describe successful first-year students’ perceptions and experiences of factors relating to retention and throughput at a selected FET College to stakeholders in Further Education and Training.

• To make recommendations to the management of the FET College sector on the factors which contributed to retention and throughput of first-year successful students at a selected FET College?

• To describe the role of social work to increase retention and throughput of students at FET Colleges based on the findings.

The broad goals of professional research are regarded as either basic or applied. Applied research is aimed at specific policy problems or at helping practitioners accomplish tasks. While, basic or pure research seeks empirical observations to formulate and refine theory. Another characteristic of applied research is the scientific planning of induced change in a troublesome situation hence, the suitability of the approach to explore and contextually describe the research question: “What are the perceptions and experiences held by students of factors contributing to their success in their first year”. Arkava and Lane; Grinnel, cited by de Vos et al. (2005) note that exploration and contextual descriptive research are seen as objectives of applied research to generate knowledge on the research question. Social sciences involve the study of people amongst others their beliefs, behaviour, interaction and institutions which aims at gaining a valid understanding of it (Neuman cited in de Vos et al., 2005). Furthermore, social science is scientific in that it uses appropriate
methods as highlighted in the aforementioned, and is rigorous, critical and objective in its handling of data (Silverman, 2006).

The paradigm of social constructivism claims that individuals seek understanding of the world in which they live and work. Hence, they develop varied and multiple subjective meanings of their experiences. These subjective meanings are formed through interaction with others and cultural norms that operates in individuals’ lives. The intention of the researcher of the study was therefore, to look for the complexity of views rather than to narrow the meanings into a few categories or ideas. By doing this the researcher inductively develops a pattern of meaning (Lincoln and Guba, 2000; Newman, 2000; Swandt, 2001).

4.3 RESEARCH APPROACH AND DESIGN

4.3.1 Research Approach

A qualitative research approach was applied to explore and construct detailed descriptions of the social reality of the research study. Traditionally, research approaches fall into two main paradigms namely, qualitative and quantitative (Daly, 2003). The terms “approaches” (Creswell, 2007), “strategies of inquiry” (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005) and “methods” (Morse and Richards, 2002) are used interchangeably by researchers. It is widely accepted that methods encompasses a set of standards or
rules and procedures to guide research and against which its claims can be evaluated and understood (Daly, 2003). Rabinowitz and Weseen (2001) posit that qualitative and quantitative methods have been variously defined and the debates about the value and use of each have swirled around psychology for well over two decades. Creswell (2007: 11) holds a more objective and scientific approach to qualitative research and quotes, “Qualitative inquiry represents a legitimate mode of social and human science exploration, without apology or comparisons to quantitative research”. The characteristics of qualitative research are contained in an evolving definition by Denzin and Lincoln (2005:3):

“Qualitative research is a situated activity that locates the observer in the world. It consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible. These practices transform the world. They turn the world in a series of representations, including field notes, interviews, conversations, photographs, recordings, and memos to the self. At this level, qualitative research involves an interpretive, naturalistic approach to the world. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them”.

Creswell (2007) emphasises the design of qualitative research and the use of distinct approaches to inquiry and posits the following definition:
“Qualitative research begins with assumptions, a worldview, the possible use of a theoretical lens, and the study of research problems inquiring into the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem. To study this problem, qualitative researchers use an emerging qualitative approach to inquiry, the collection of data in a natural setting sensitive to the people and places under study, and data analysis that is inductive and establishes patterns or themes. The final written report or presentation includes the voices of participants, the reflexivity of the researcher, and a complex description and interpretation of the problem, and it extends the literature or signals a call for action (Creswell, 2007:37).

De Vos et al. (2005) posit that qualitative research in its broadest sense elicits participant accounts of meaning, experience or perception. It produces descriptive data in the participant’s own written or spoken words, identifying the participant’s beliefs and values that underlie the problem or issue. Thus, the researcher is concerned with understanding rather than explanation; naturalistic rather than controlled measurement; the subjective exploration of reality from the perspective from an insider; and small samples, often purposively selected. It aims to understand social life and the meaning that people attach to everyday life.

Creswell (2007) notes there are different forms of qualitative approaches and that the design of research within each has distinctive features.
4.3.2 Research Design

The research design encompasses all the decisions a researcher is doing during the planning of the study. A research design therefore contains the entire process of research from conceptualising a problem to writing research questions, and onto data collection, analysis, interpretation, and report writing (Bogdan and Taylor, 1975 cited in Creswell, 2007). Yin (2003:20) posits, “The design is the logical sequence that connects the empirical data to a study’s initial research question and, ultimately to its conclusions”.

To conduct any fully scientific research in the social sciences field one should at least have one of three primary objectives for example to explore, to describe, or to explain (de Vos et al., 2005). For the purpose of this research, an explorative, descriptive and contextual research design was utilised, which is inline with the criteria of a qualitative research approach. It allowed the researcher to explore and describe the challenges of retention and throughput or success from the perceptions and experiences of successful first-year students, which were identified as a need in the FET college sector highlighted in chapter 1.

Creswell (2007) notes there are different forms of qualitative approaches and that the design of research within each has distinctive features. Qualitative approaches
applied for the purpose of the study are exploratory, descriptive and contextual which are interwoven in the planning, methods and processes of the study.

4.3.2.1 Exploratory Inquiry

Mouton (2001) posits that the answer to a what question constitute an exploratory research. In exploratory studies the researcher aims to become conversant with basic facts and to create a general picture of conditions. This strategy is conducted if a problem or issue needs to be explored of a group or population. We need a complex, detailed understanding of the issue by talking directly with people, going to their homes or places of work, and allowing them to tell their stories freely by what we expect to find or what we have read in the literature. Exploratory inquiry is conducted to empower participants to share their stories, hear their voices, and collaborate directly with them to minimise a power relationship between a researcher and the participants, to understand the contexts or settings in which participants in a study address a problem or issue; and because quantitative measures and the statistical analyses do not fit the problem. Qualitative approaches are simply a better fit to accommodate problems or issues of this nature (Creswell, 2007). The researcher utilised exploratory research to understand the challenges of retention and throughput from the perceptions and experiences of successful first-year students.
4.3.2.2 Descriptive and Contextual Research

This strategy presents a picture of the specific details of a situation, social setting or relationship, and focuses on how and why questions. The researcher begins with a well-defined topic and conduct research to describe it accurately. Data that materialises from a qualitative study is descriptive in that the researcher is interested in process, meaning, and understanding (Creswell, 2007). In qualitative studies description refer to a more intensive examination of phenomena and their deeper meanings, thus leading to thicker description and a research strategy (Rubin and Babbie, 2001; Patton, 2002). Through the application of this strategy, the researcher has accurately assessed and described the perceptions and experiences which contributed to retention and throughput from the perspectives and experiences of successful first-year students highlighted in chapter five.

It is important to understand the contexts or settings in which participants in a study address a problem or issue. A contextual strategy therefore avoids the separation of participants from the larger context. Hence, talking directly to people and seeing them behave and act within their context is a major characteristic of qualitative research. Qualitative researchers seek out individuals, groups and settings where the specific processes being studied are most likely to occur. In a good plan for a qualitative study one or more of these levels that is, , the event or process,
participants and site must be clearly identified (Creswell, 2007). The researcher has done this research in the context of FET colleges with first year students.

4.4 POPULATION AND SAMPLING

Bless and Higson-Smith (2000:85) refers to a ‘population’ as the set of elements upon which the research focuses, and to which the obtained results should be generalised. De Vos et al. (2005) posit that a population is the total set from which the individuals or units of the study are chosen. “To study the particular is to study the general”. Research asserts that any case will have attributes of the universal (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000: 370).

The research population in this study comprised successful first-year students in 2007 at Protea Campus, Northlink FET College enrolled for the following pre-matriculation instructional offerings: Business Studies National Intermediate Certificate (henceforth referred to as NIC), Clothing Production NIC, Business Management Level 2, Financial Accounting Level 2, and Hospitality Services Level 2. ‘Successful students’ refers to students who met the minimum pass requirements for all their subjects in the National Examinations in 2007. The supplementary examinations of February 2008 form part of the results of the 2007 examinations. The population size comprised 39 first-year students, who met all the aforementioned requirements from a total of 181 students who wrote the National Examinations in 2007.
In qualitative research non-probability sampling methods in particular, purposive sampling techniques are used rather than random sampling. Researchers seek out individuals, groups and settings where the specific processes being studied are most likely to occur (Denzin and Lincoln (2000). ‘Sampling’ is a subset of measurements drawn from the population in which we are interested, and serves as a means of helping us to understand and explain some facet of the population (de Vos et al., 2005). The population size of 39 consisted of all the successful first-year students at Protea campus of Northlink FET college. They were identified and selected from the National Department of Education’s final schedule results for the period 2007 and February 2008 (see Table 3 in chapter one) as a purposive sample for this study. As a staff member serving in student support services I had direct legal access to the students and documents of their performance. Since participation was voluntary, there was no guarantee that all the successful first-year students of this cohort would participate in the research, hence the rationale for the decision to include the total population of 39. Creswell cited in de Vos et al. (2005: 329)) notes, “The purposeful selection of participants represents a key decision point in a qualitative study. Researchers designing qualitative studies need clear criteria in mind and need to provide rationales for their decisions” Purposive sampling contains some feature or process that is of interest for a particular study (Silverman, 2000). The participants selected can purposefully inform an understanding of the research problem when the criteria for selecting participants are clear (de Vos et al., 2005). Sampling is vital, not
only for practical reasons, but also as part of the process of delineating the inquiry (Henning, 2004).

4.5 RESEARCH METHODS AND PROCESS

4.5.1 Data Collection Methods

Qualitative methods are to discover important questions, processes and relationships, and not to test them (de Vos et al., 2005). Kvale (1996) cited in Henning, Van Rensburg and Smit (2004) notes, a method in Greek means “a route that leads to a goal”. The qualitative methods applied in this study included focus group interviews, a tape recorder and field notes to give more strength to the study.

4.5.1.1 Focus Group Interviews

The researcher used focus groups to allow for group perspectives and group interaction from which the researcher could learn about the research issue. It proved to be effective to obtain data through interaction of the participants. It informed us about the participants’ views and values, but also empowered them to learn from each other by re-assessing their own understanding and experiences (Kitzinger, cited by de Klerk, 2010). Bloor, Frankland and Thomas (2000) posits that focus groups are
the method of choice only when the purpose of the research to study group norms, group meanings and group processes. Kreuger (1998:18) defines a focus group as a “carefully planned discussion designed to obtain perceptions in a defined area of interest in a permissive, non-threatening environment”. Generally, focus groups are used in community development processes as a form of a “dialogical research method” to give voice to the marginalised groups as advocated by Paolo Freire (Schenck, 2002). Focus groups are extremely valuable to understanding decision-making processes and are especially effective in studying professional practices. The researcher is allowed to access the process through which collective meaning is negotiated and through which group identities are elaborated (Wilkinson, 1999 as cited in Barbour, 2008). Focus groups encourage participants to collectively address topics to which, as individuals, they may have previously devoted little attention. Group discussions do not put individuals ‘on-the-spot’, they are helpful in creating rationales for issues such as non-take-up of services (Barbour, 2008).

The focus groups in this study were homogeneous in terms of the languages English and Afrikaans. The academic inclusion criteria for homogeneity were all successful first-year students who met the minimum pass requirements for all their subjects in the national examination results of November 2007 and the supplementary examination results of February 2008.

Open-ended and flexible questions are likely to get more considered responses than closed questions and therefore provide better access to interviewees’ views,
interpretation of events, understandings, experiences and opinions … [qualitative interviewing] when done well is able to achieve a level of depth and complexity that is not available to other, particularly survey-based approaches. Qualitative interviews are defined by Kvale (in Sewell, 2001:1) as “attempts to understand the world from the participant’s point of view, to unfold the meaning of people’s experiences, and to discover their lived world prior to scientific explanation.” It is a form of conversation in which the purpose is for the researcher to gather data that address the study’s goal and questions. Good interviews are summarised as those in which the participants are at ease and talk freely about their points of view, and produce rich data filled with words that reveal the participants’ perspectives (AECT, 2001) as highlighted in chapter five. See research process for how the interviews were facilitated and managed by the researcher and moderator.

4.5.1.2 Recording of Focus Groups, Interviews and Field Notes

To ensure that one truly listens to participants it’s important to record what they say for example to maintain the integrity of raw data, using respondents’ words and including quotes liberally as highlighted in chapter five. Field notes were made while and directly after the focus groups were conducted by the researcher and the assistant moderator. It provided an invaluable source of additional contextual information to aid the analysis (Barbour, 2008). These notes harnessed some of the contextual factors that were not in the focus groups, such as gestures, facial
expressions, tone of voice, change in tempo of speech, and general body language. De Vos et al. (2005: 306) notes: “The crucial concern is not the amount of data but rather the richness of data; not the total counts but the detailed description”. In addition to these notes, the researcher and assistant moderator or co-researcher made brief notes after each conversation to assist in getting a bigger picture of what was said and to check whether the researcher’s initial understanding corresponds with that of the participants.” Both the assistant moderator and tape recorder assistant were contractually bound not to disclose information of any kind. By studying tapes of conversations, you are able to focus on the ‘actual details’ of one aspect of social life. The advantages of tapes and transcripts are that tapes are a public record, available to the scientific community. It could be replayed and the transcripts were improved. The tapes also preserved the sequence of talk for example; I could inspect the sequences of utterances without being limited to the initial extracts chosen to make sense of the interviews or conversations (Silverman, 2006).

4.5.1.3 Research Process

4.5.1.3.1 Planning and Practicalities

To enable a researcher to pay closer attention to the type and content of interaction, and to transcribe the discussion, most social science researchers recommend a maximum of six to eight individuals for focus groups (Barbour, 2008). The group
members generally meet for one or two hours to respond to questions and share personal experiences on a particular topic. Although it is possible to run focus group discussion with smaller groups (Kitzinger and Barbour, 1999), it is advisable to over-recruit slightly as there are likely to be ‘no shows’ on the day (Barbour, 2008). It was initially anticipated that the groups would comprise six to ten participants. However, this did not materialise as planned. Participation was voluntary and the focus groups were scheduled without interfering with the participants’ academic activities, the group numbers were as follows: Eight participants, four participants, two participants, and five participants. In total, six varied interview sessions with varied interview slots of one to two hours were conducted with twenty-one participants from the actual purposive sample population size of 39. A minimum of five group sessions were planned. If the researcher failed to recruit the full sample, it was planned for that students from the Bellville campus would be approached to swell the numbers. However, this plan deemed unnecessary since the twenty-one participants volunteered to participate in the study. There are no rules for sample size in qualitative inquiry. Sampling can change during a study and researchers need to be flexible (Creswell, 2007). Hence, sample size depends on what you want to know, the purpose of the inquiry, what is at stake, what will be useful, what will have credibility, and what can be done with available time and resources (Patton, 2002). Apart from the focus groups planned for, provision was also made for two individual interviews. This was done because two participants requested it due to sensitive issues and it could also assist with data triangulation. The interview
sessions were conducted in a safe environment on campus which was setup as
planned prior the interviews from 21 to 27 November 2008. The venue on campus
met the needs of both the researcher and the participants. The researcher’s primary
concern was to hold the focus groups and capture data while, comfort was the main
concern for the participants (de Vos et al., 2005). For the purpose of this research, a
semi-structured interview guide comprised of the probing questions was used. The
questions were most suited for the groups to feel comfortable with and elicited
adequate responses to explore the research topic (see chapter five). Interview guides
are relatively short and more suitable for less structured approaches such as focus
groups and one-to one interviews. In this instance, qualitative research is concerned
with in-depth accounts from people with room for them to select which aspects they
wish to emphasise (Barbour, 2008). Barbour (2008:119) further notes that “the semi-
structured aspect is critical as it refers to the capacity of interviews to elicit data on
perspectives of salience to respondents rather than the researcher dictating the
direction of the encounter”. Semi-structured interviews are organised around areas
of particular interest, while still allowing considerable flexibility in scope and depth
(de Vos et al., 2005). The interview sessions were spread over five days to
accommodate the participants without interfering with their academic activities. As a
campus staff member, it was convenient for the researcher to manage this process.
To engage the participants and for the purpose of spontaneous responses, the
researcher started with the open-ended question: What do you think contributed to
your achievement of success with your studies in the first year? Noaks and Wincup
(2004: 80) note, open-ended questions are commonly used in interviews in order to achieve ‘rich data’. Key is ‘active listening’ in which the interviewer allows the participant the freedom to talk and ascribe meanings, while bearing in mind the broader aims of the study (Silverman, 2006).

Furthermore, probing questions (semi-structured interview guide) related to the objectives of the study as set out below were posed to enable the participants to elaborate on social and educational or academic issues:

- What personal obstacles did you have to overcome in order to be successful?
- What is the role of family and how does it influence student success?
- What role do friends play in performance?
- What is the role of support from the college?
- What do you think were the most important factors that helped you with your success at the college?

These questions were prepared in English and Afrikaans separately on A4 paper and handed out to the participants in the sequence above once a question became saturated. This enabled the participants to scan, reflect and make key notes on each question handled at specific intervals (Henning et al., 2004). Their notes were collected from them at the end of the interviews, which served as a technique of triangulation to further strengthen the trustworthiness of data analysis. Padget cited in de Vos et al. (2005: 361) describes “triangulation in qualitative research as the
convergence of multiple perspectives that can provide greater confidence that what is being targeted is being accurately captured”. Research interviews are particularly relevant for researchers who wish to probe an issue and work inductively for example working from the unknown to the known (Henning et al., 2004).

The researcher built rapport with the participants by welcoming them, giving them an overview of the topic, and establishing the ground rules for group participation which they all understood and agreed to. The researcher also found it fit during this time to get verbal permission to audio-tape the interviews. After the initial briefing the interviews proceeded with questions and answers, clarifications, explorations and pause where deemed necessary; and recorded in verbatim style. The interaction was direct and open which allowed for a variety of responses and deeper levels of meaning to be explored. Although the group dynamics and power structures within the groups were observed and noted, each participant was empowered to give sufficient input of their experiences and perceptions on the probing questions (Henning et al., 2004; de Vos et al., 2005; Creswell, 2007). They also expressed themselves confidently in their home language, which was either English or Afrikaans. Three of the participants who were identified needing debriefing after the interviews also received counselling on campus from the co-moderator counsellor (see pilot study and ethical considerations on debriefing). Termination and withdrawal of the debriefing sessions were handled sensitively and appropriately (de Vos et al., 2005).
4.5.1.4 Preparation of Participants

The researcher started the process on 15 November 2008 by making contact with the 39 prospective participants individually at the campus and per telephone, to set up an orientation and recruitment session. The session was held on 17 November 2008 and took place on campus after permission was obtained from the CEO of the college on 5 November 2008. The criteria for inclusion were explained to them. The attached preamble and information sheet (Addendum A) were used to inform the participants about the goal of the study and possible risks and conditions of the research before they consented to participate in the study. The participants were also informed that the researcher could not guarantee anonymity and confidentiality of any information shared in the focus group discussions, but an appeal was made to the volunteers to adhere to the ground rules which included respect for confidentiality of information shared by the group members. Participants were also allowed to speak with the researcher individually regarding any matter of concern. At this stage twenty-five participants were recruited of which four participants declined voluntary during the interview sessions. The remaining participants of twenty-one consisted of males and females. Their ages varied from below 18, above 18 and with the oldest participant being over 40. Only three of the participants under the age of 18 years needed consent from their parents/guardians to participate in the study.
4.5.1.5 Conducting a Pilot Study

The purpose of the pilot testing was to assess whether the interview methods and process will work prior the onset of the actual study. Simpson (2004) recommends the use of a pilot study or pre-test is to refine and develop research instruments, assess the degrees of observer bias, frame questions, collect background information and adapt research procedures. A pilot test is to refine data collection plans and to develop relevant lines of questions (Yin, 2003). A consented pilot test was conducted on 19 November 2008 with a participant who did not form part of the research sample. The participant was a successful first-year student enrolled for a post-matriculation course in Clothing Production. The semi-structured interview guide was applied to assess the time required to discuss and clarify each question. The pilot study aided the researcher to come to grips with some aspects of establishing access, making contact and conducting the interviews Siedman (2005). The sequence of the questions of the interview guide remained unchanged since it elicited the information sought after for the purpose of the research project. Hence, the piloting helped to ensure that the questions elicit the sort of data required and that the order was likely to facilitate a progression that was comfortable and that worked for both participant and researcher (Barbour, 2008). However, the pilot test interview was emotive for the participant. The questions related to family support mainly triggered the hardship she suffered during her studies. She was sobbing and received debriefing from the assistant moderator counsellor after the interview session to work through the
participants’ experience and aftermath. Ethically debriefing is one possible way in which the researcher can assist and minimise harm (Judd, Smith and Kidder, 1991) cited in de Vos et al. (2005). Thus, problems generated by the research experience can be corrected Babbie (2001) by debriefing to discuss participant’s feelings immediately after the interview session (Salkind, 2000). The interview empowered the participant to speak for the first time openly and in-depth about her challenges and experiences to achieve success. It became evident during the pre-testing that the one-to-one interview builds the kind of intimacy that is common for mutual self-disclosure (Johnson, 2002). The interview may develop in unexpected ways and it should be kept in mind that the experience of “listening to oneself”, hearing your own voice articulating the thoughts and emotions that may have been dormant for a long time, is often a frightening experience for participants (Henning et al., 2004).

4.6 METHOD OF DATA ANALYSIS

De Vos et al. (2005) posit that the aim of data analysis is to look for trends and patterns that reappear within a single focus group or among various focus groups. The essentials of qualitative analysis are that it must be systematic, sequential, verifiable and continuous; requires time; is jeopardised by delay; seeks to enlighten; should entertain alternative explanations; is improved by feedback; and is a process of comparison (Krueger and Casey, 2000). Warren (2002) divides interview research and analysis into three phases: Finding the participants and setting up the interview
in accordance with the overall research design, conducting the interview, and reflecting on the interview and working with, or analysing and interpreting the data (Henning et al., 2004:70). Qualitative analysis transforms data into findings. This means reducing the volume of raw information, sifting significance from trivia, identifying significant patterns, and constructing a framework for communicating the essence of what the data reveals (Patton, 2002). The steps as recommended by Creswell (1998) cited in de Vos et al., (2005) were applied for the data analysis of the research. These steps are not rigid but should rather serve as guidelines, because they can overlap:

- The labelled audio-recorded interviews and notes taken by the assistant moderator and the researcher were transcribed in English and Afrikaans. Additional data obtained from attitudes, expressions, non-verbal codes and perceptions were added to the transcripts.
- To get a sense of the whole, the researcher read the entire transcripts several times, jotting down ideas as they came to mind. Bogdan and Biklen cited in AECT (2001) also recommend reading data over at least several times in order to begin to develop a coding system.
- From the transcribed interviews the researcher chose one, and read through it to try to get the underlying meaning, rather than the substance of the information.
- This process was repeated until a list of all the themes was obtained.
• Thereafter the data was revisited. An abbreviation for each of the themes was used in the form of a code, and the codes were then written down next to the appropriate segments of the texts. An organising scheme was used to detect new categories and codes.

• The researcher generated the most descriptive wording for the themes, and placed them into categories. Grouping themes together into larger constructs, as necessary, reduced the total list of categories.

• The data material belonging to each category was assembled in one place to start a preliminary analysis and writing of the report.

4.7 METHOD OF DATA VERIFICATION

4.7.1 Trustworthiness

De Vos et al. (2005) posits that when the human condition is researched, “the truth value”, applicability, consistency and neutrality of the study must be established. Thus, it is important to apply verification procedures to validate the reliability of the research study. In qualitative research reliability can be addressed in several ways (Silverman, 2005). Reliability can be addressed by using standardised methods (for example interviews) to write field notes and prepare transcripts as applied in the study. Creswell (2007:209) notes, “Reliability can be enhanced if the researcher obtains detailed field notes by employing a good quality tape for recording and by
transcribing the tape. The interviews need to be transcribed to indicate the trivial, but often crucial, pauses and overlaps”. Furthermore, positivists argue that interviews based on pre-tested, standardised questions are a way of increasing the reliability of research. Naturalism agrees with positivism that the best kinds of data are somehow ‘untouched by human hands’ - neutral, unbiased and representative. Reliability for interview and textual studies can also be improved by comparing the analysis by several researchers. The credibility of qualitative research studies rests on the reliability of their data and methods, and the validity of their findings (Silverman, 2006).

Hammersley cited in Silverman (2006) notes that validity means the extent to which an account accurately represents the social phenomena to which it refers. Creswell (2007) also posits “validation” to be an attempt in qualitative research to assess the “accuracy” of the findings, as best described by the researcher and the participants. He further notes, that validation is a distinct strength of qualitative research in that the account made through extensive time spent in the field, the detailed thick description, and the closeness of the researcher to participants in the study all add to the value or accuracy of the study. He concludes that validation in qualitative research is to suggest that researchers apply accepted strategies to document the “accuracy” of their studies.
Creswell (1998) and Creswell and Miller (2000) emphasise eight key verification procedures and recommends that qualitative researchers engage in at least two of them in any given study. The following three cost-effective procedures were applied for this study:

- **Rich, thick description**

This procedure allows a potential inquirer to make decisions regarding transferability because the researcher described in detail the participants and the setting under study. The detailed description would enable a potential inquirer to transfer information to other settings and to assess whether the findings could be transferred because of shared characteristics (Creswell, 2007). Lincoln and Cuba (1985) argue that it is not the naturalist’s responsibility to provide an index for transferability, but rather to provide the database that makes transferability judgements possible for potential applicers. Furthermore, they claim that a naturalist cannot specify the external validity of a study based on thick data.

- **Member checking**

Lincoln and Guba (1985) state that this technique is the most critical for establishing credibility. It involves taking data, analyses, rough drafts, interpretations, language usage and conclusions back to the participants to
judge the accuracy and credibility of the findings. During each interview session summaries of each question were reflected to reach consensus as to what was conveyed. This method proofs to be highly effective since the data summaries from the interviews were tested for accuracy immediately after the interviews and during the interviews after the saturation of each question (Creswell 2007). The trustworthiness of the data collection was already determined after the third focus group. In comparing the data generated of the three focus groups the findings showed similarities in most of their responses to the questions. Creswell (2007:306) notes, “If the discussion reaches saturation and becomes repetitive after two or three groups, there is little to be gained by increasing the number of groups. Reason and Rowan cited in Silverman (2006:292) argue, that “good research goes back to the subjects with tentative results, and refines them in the light of the subjects’ reactions”.

Silverman (2006) also highlights analytic induction as a way of validating qualitative research which was applied throughout the data collection process under study.

• Triangulation

This concept in qualitative research refers to different modes of data collection which come logically to hand depending on the methods used (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). Creswell (2007 posits that the process of triangulation involves corroborating evidence from different sources. Peer
debriefing between the researcher and peer moderator was appropriately applied after each interview session to analyse it for the purpose of exploring the aspects of the inquiry that might otherwise remained only implicit in the researcher’s mind. This also ensured that the researcher truly listens to what the participants were saying and not to allow my own values and biases to influence the findings of the data analyses. “Multi-purposes are served by such a debriefing” (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). From the point of credibility it helped the researcher to be honest, to explore meanings and clarify interpretations honestly. The peer moderator’s role was to ensure that I know my position as a facilitator in the study (Lincoln and Guba, 1985) and also allowed the researcher the opportunity for catharsis by sympathetically listening to the researcher’s feelings (Lincoln and Guba cited in Creswell, 2007). Provision was also made for two individual interviews which assisted with data triangulation. The key notes the participants have written as preparation to answer each question of the semi-structured guide were collected from them at the end of each session served. These notes further strengthen the trustworthiness of data analysis when compared with the data of the transcripts.
4.7.2 Reflexivity

The researcher was aware of her own limitations and that of the participants. This was her first qualitative research, which could have had an influence on the way the probing questions were posed. The probability does exist that this could have influenced the participants’ responses. She was also aware that invalid results could be caused by misinterpretations of questions owing to limited vocabulary of the participants during sessions. Although the responses of the participants came across spontaneously and truthfully, misleading responses could also have occurred because of group sensitivity and withholding personal sensitive experiences.

4.8 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Ethics is defined as a set of widely accepted moral principles that offers rules for, and behavioural expectations of, the most correct conduct towards experimental subjects and respondents, employers, sponsors, other researcher, assistants and students (de Vos et al., 2005). Hence, the researcher is accountable for any negative or positive consequences derived from his decisions. Barker notes cited by de Vos et al. (2005:68-69), “The right of social scientists to study whatever they deem to be of scientific interest is fundamental in a free society”. However, it implies the responsibility to ensure that the relevant investigation meets all the ethical requirements as set out as it is for any other method and the profession in general.
Different authors identify different ethical issues. De Vos et al. (2008) identified the following general ethical issues which the researcher considered throughout the study: harm to participants, informed consent, and deception of participants, violation of privacy, action and competence of the researcher, cooperation with contributors, release of publication of the findings, and the debriefing of participants. Creswell (2007) the benefits of research over risks and participant should be considered and should not go beyond social norms (Lipson, 1994). Appropriate standards should be introduced to protect the anonymity of the participant by assigning numbers or aliases to individuals (Glesne and Peshkin, 1992).

It is impossible to confine ethical considerations to certain sections during the research only and it is present from the start and is woven through every step of the research methodology Margot and Anzul (1991). Williams cited in de Vos et al. (2005) posits that informed consent or decision implies that all possible or adequate information on the goal of the study, the procedures which will be followed during the study, the possible advantages, disadvantages and dangers to which participants may be exposed, as well as the credibility of the researcher, be rendered to potential participants or their legal representatives.

The researcher applied the following ethical standards which she accepted accountability for any consequence which might occur by her decisions: On the 5th of November 2008, the researcher obtained permission from the CEO of Northlink FET College to conduct the research. As a former staff member of the college at the
time this request was facilitated via email (see annexure). Prior to this, my proposal
to conduct the study was already approved by the Research Ethics Committee of
UWC. Thereafter, the researcher facilitated the recruitment process for volunteers to
participate in the study. The initial contact according to my planning started on 15
November 2008 with prospective volunteers from the already identified research
population. The prospective volunteers were contacted per telephone and on campus
to set up a recruitment orientation session which was held on the 17th of November
2008 on campus. The content of the orientation comprised of informing the
volunteers fully of the purpose of the study; their rights to withdraw at any stage of
the interview since participation was voluntary; that their right to withhold any
private or personal information would be respected; assured anonymity in the report
findings; ground rules which included respect for confidentiality of information
shared by the group; and gave assurance that the investigation proceeded correctly at
all times and that no one was deceived by the findings (see Addendum A). The
information sheet (Addendum A) together with the consent form was distributed to
the prospective volunteers. They were instructed to study the documents to further
empower them to make an informed decision whether they want to participate or not.
For those under 18 years were given a parental consent form (see Appendices). They
were also instructed to hand in the consent form the following day if they needed
more time to decide. At this stage twenty-five participants were recruited of which
should ever be coerced into participating in a research project, because participation
must always be voluntary”. Judd cited by de Vos (2005:59) notes, “when subjects are involved without their consent, their right to self-determination is impaired”.

### 4.8. CONCLUSION

Qualitative research is intensive and time-consuming. However, it keeps good company with the most rigorous quantitative research, and it should not be viewed as an easy substitute for quantitative study.

In this chapter the intention was to describe in detail the design, process and methods used for the research topic to ensure that the findings were systematic and a true reflection of the participants’ perceptions and experiences.
CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION OF THE RESEARCH FINDINGS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

Chapter Five consists of the findings of the semi-structured interviews conducted with first-year successful students in order to establish their perceptions and experiences of factors relating to their retention and throughput or success. Data was collected through semi-structured interviews, verbatim transcripts and field notes with participants during the data information gathering. The interviews were audio-taped, then transcribed followed by data analysis. An inductive approach was applied throughout the data-gathering and analysis processes. Data analysis was performed according the steps suggested by Creswell cited in de Vos et al. (2005). The interviews were transcribed and data analysis performed. In order to affirm the findings of data analysis, literature controls were implemented, which are included as part of this chapter.

5.2 DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS FROM ANALYSIS OF SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS

Data analysis of the interviews with the participants, first-year students at a FET college, revealed three themes. The themes comprised:

- environmental sources
• interpersonal relations; and

• intrapersonal influences.

Certain major categories and sub-categories were identified as sub-sections of these themes. Regarding environmental sources of influence, two major categories and 14 sub-categories were identified. Three major categories and nine sub-categories were identified as significant contributing factors of interpersonal relations in students achieving success. Two of the sub-categories in this section, namely family and academic staff, indicated another three sub-categories respectively as part of the sub-categories. Four major categories and 11 sub-categories were identified as significant intra-personal influences in achieving success.

The major categories analysed as environmental sources of influence were:

• College

• Public resources.

The major categories analysed as interpersonal relations were:

• Student support

• Trusting relationships

• Relationships within the academic environment.
The major categories analysed as intrapersonal influences were:

Self-efficacy

- Career decision-making determinant factors
- Perceptions of achieving success
- Challenges influencing throughput and success.

The summarised version of the analysis is illustrated in Figure 5.1 below in the form of themes, major categories and sub-categories.
Table 5.1: Major and Sub-Categories Found in Analysis of Semi-structured Interviews with First-year Students as Influencing Factors of Retention and Throughput /Success

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ENVIRONMENTAL SOURCES</th>
<th>INTERPERSONAL RELATIONS</th>
<th>INTRAPERSONAL INFLUENCES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>COLLEGE</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Safety of college</td>
<td>• Group support/peer</td>
<td>• Self-discipline</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Positive academic</td>
<td>help</td>
<td>• Self-esteem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>atmosphere</td>
<td>• Study groups</td>
<td>• Independent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Study programmes</td>
<td>• Student counsellors</td>
<td>decision-making</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Cafeteria studying</td>
<td>• Rehabilitation support</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>source</td>
<td></td>
<td>abilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Financial aid</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Locus of control</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Monitoring student</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>progress as a</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>measure of success</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Student support and</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>development programs</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>PUBLIC RESOURCES</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Socioeconomic</td>
<td>• Familial</td>
<td>• Career interests</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>background</td>
<td>• Role models</td>
<td>• Hard times</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Neighbourhood</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Community values</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Secondary school</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Transportation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Library and Internet</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>service</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Employment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>SELF-EFFICACY</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CAREER DECISION-</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>MAKING</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>DETERMINANT FACTORS</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Career interests</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Hard times</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>PERCEPTIONS OF</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>ACHIEVING SUCCESS</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Substance</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>abuse/use</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Physical health</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Learning</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>challenges</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Teenage</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pregnancy and</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>single parenting</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5.2.1 Environmental Sources

College was the first major category identified and experienced by the participants that contributed to their retention and throughput or success. This included subcategories, namely safety of the college, positive academic atmosphere, study programmes, cafeteria as a studying source, financial aid, and monitoring student progress as a measure of success and student support and development programmes. These aspects will be highlighted by direct quotes and literature control.

5.2.1.1 College

Literature reviewed reveals that it is important for institutions to understand what each student brings with him or her, in order to provide the appropriate support to ensure student success. Social systems on campus are uniquely and unequivocally connected to the academic progress and success of students (see chapter three) (Treisman, cited in Swail, 2006).

a) The safety of the college was emphasised by the participants and indicated during interviews as follows: “Campus security”, “no violence”, “calm”
Community resilience includes features of a community, which promotes the safety of its population and serves to protect them against injury and violence and allows them to recover from exposure. Hence, the college needs to be resilient for the students through their structures, networks, and collective relationships as they are the measures of community cohesion (Ahmed, Seedat, van Niekerk and Bulbulia cited in Moleli, 2005).

b) **Positive academic atmosphere**

The participants also experienced positive academic atmosphere at the college as a contributing factor to their success, throughput and retention quoted as follows: “This is the right place to study”, “Everyone is positive”. “You feel good” “Die eerste dag was jy opgewonde” (“On the first day you were excited”), “Administration staff helpful and friendly”, “Felt good”. “Always willing to help with course information and referrals”, “Never gets tired”, “Kon altyd teruggaan na hulle” “Could always go back to them”.

Swail (2006:2) identifies the following five factors of equal importance to support students on campuses: financial aid, social integration, academic preparedness, campus climate, and commitment to educational goals and the institution. He states, “Often the dearth of resources in one area can undermine all progress”. Campus climate mediates students’ academic and social experiences in college. Students who are inadequately prepared for non-academic challenges can experience culture shock. For example, lack of diversity with regard to income and race or ethnicity in the student population, faculty, staff and curriculum, often restrict the nature and quality
of minority students’ interactions in and out of the classroom, and could threaten their academic performance and social experiences (Swail, 2006:2). Research findings show that specific college experiences affect a student’s persistence and educational attainment regardless of the characteristics of the institution attended (Terenzini 2006).

c) Study programmes

The participants quoted the study programmes a significant determinant factor in achieving success and for persisting. The following quotes by the participants highlights this finding as follows: “Practical classes were of great benefit”, “Taught you how to deal with pressure on the job”, “Health and safety kursus buite” (“courses outside”), “Het vakke wat jy wil doen” (“Subjects you want to do”), “Jy het uitgesien om in die klas te wees” (“You looked forward to being in the class”), “No one forces you to keep up”, “Dit is anders as skool” “It’s different from school … you have freedom”), “Genoeg inligting oor die kursusse” (“Enough information about the courses”).

Literature reviewed reveals that student decisions about staying or leaving are affected by academic advising as one of the major academic and social domains of the college experience. Academic advising is referred to as the cornerstone of student retention. As already highlighted in Chapter Three, the first year is the most critical in shaping persistence decisions and plays a formative role in influencing student
attitudes and approaches to learning (Allen, 1999; Blythman and Orr, 2003; Fitzgibbon and Prior, 2003 as cited by Trotter and Roberts, 2006). Factors that were found strongly associated with student persistence in are: student satisfaction with the college experience, effective educational and career planning and decision-making, student utilisation of campus support services, student-faculty contact outside the classroom, and student mentoring (Cuseo, 2008).

d) Cafeteria studying source

The participants quoted the *cafeteria studying source* against all odds a factor in achieving success as follows: “Moet in die geraas studeer in die cafeteria” (“Have to study in the noisy”), “Geen fasiliteite vir die studente nie” (“No facilities for students”), “Hot-spot to complete tasks”, “Do homework and study”.

e) Financial aid

The participants experienced *financial aid as* an important predictor to be retained at the college and to achieve success, and are quoted as follows: “Applied for a bursary”, “IKAPA loan”, “NSFAS bursary”, “Nie geld gehad nie” (“Had no money”), “Die staat het ‘n beurs gegee” ( “The state gave a bursary”).

Enrolment and retention are driven by the availability of financial aid for many low income students. The importance of financial aid is highlighted by the findings of research by Swail (2006), Breier (2010) and Letseka et al. (2010). The majority of
the participants in these studies were dependent on financial aid from the institutions to persist with their studies and to succeed. Low-income students who receive grants are more likely to persist than those who receive loans. Given the rising costs of college fees, it is also unlikely that low-income students will be able to graduate without loan aid (Swail, 2006). The dominant international literature fails to reflect the extent of socio-economic deprivation among students in countries where many people live below the poverty line. Brier’s article draws on a study conducted by the Human Sciences Research Council on student retention and graduate destination at seven higher education institutions in South Africa. The study focuses on the University of the Western Cape, which caters for a large proportion of impoverished students, and finds that many students have left before completing a qualification. The findings of the study indicate that they were too poor to stay. Finances are felt most strongly by the lower socio-economic groups and influence choice of institution. Sudden unexpected demands can lead to premature departure but work study programmes can help poor students (Breier, 2010). Some students from socio-economic disadvantaged backgrounds do succeed in graduating in time. The South African government has funded aid schemes to provide partial costs in an attempt to help as many needy students as possible. African and coloured students rely on financial support mainly from parents/guardians. Only 28% received support from the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS), whereas coloured students only get 20%, Indians 2% and whites 3%. The predominant reason for coloured and
Africans dropping out was for financial and not academic reasons (Letseka et al., 2010).

f) **Monitoring student progress as a measure for success** were experienced a highly significant factor in persisting and to succeed, quoted by the participants as follows: “You had to adhere to the rules”, “Gave you guidelines not to get into trouble”, “It made you strong”, “Had to hand in assignments on time”, “Die lecturers het omgegee hoe leerders presteer en wanneer hulle afwesig was” (“The lecturers cared about how well the learners did and when they were absent”), “You had to attend 80% of the classes to graduate to the next level”, “Should you bunk, you lose 30% of your attendance”, “Jy kon kla by die lecturers, hulle het die saak sommer onmiddellik aangevat” (“You could complain to the lecturers, and they tackled the problem at once”), “studente wat sukkel… aan hulle die werk verduidelik” “As ons nie verstaan nie kan ons weer terug gaan en vra” “explained work to students who struggled”, “If we don’t understand we can go back again and ask”, “Family get to know your lecturers ”, “It’s important that parents ask what subjects you’re battling with, then they can tell the lecturers you’re struggling with it”.

Literature reviewed reveals that student faculty interaction has a stronger relationship to student satisfaction with the college experience than any other variable and any student characteristic or institutional characteristic (Cuseo, 2008). Literature further indicates that it is increasingly apparent that the most important features of a staying
environment relate to the instructional faculty. Noel cited in Cuseo (2008) that
students make judgments about their academic experience on the basis of such
factors as quality of instruction, freedom to contact faculty for consultation,
availability of faculty consultation, and faculty involvement outside the classroom.
These findings are consistent with Astin’s quantitative study, also cited in Cuseo
(2008). Student-faculty interaction outside the classroom has been found to exert a
direct effect on student retention independent of other potentially influential factors,
for example students’ level of involvement with college peers, academic
preparedness, or educational inspirations at college entry. It is predicted that when
student-faculty interaction outside the classroom involves discussion of students’
academic and career plans, high-quality advising will have a significant impact on
student retention in general, and the retention of at-risk (withdrawal-prone ) students
in particular (Wilson, 1975; Terenzini, 1986).

g)

Student Support and Development Services

The participants indicated experiencing student support and development services as
being of essential importance to persist and succeed quoted as follows: “If it wasn’t
for student support services, may students would leave”, “Knew there was someone
you could talk to”, “Helped a lot with financial and academic problems”,” Had a
problem and got help”, “Can always go there”, “MOT character building programme
very helpful”, “No more racial issues”, “Respect one another”, “Motivate each
other”, “Encourage students to be successful”, “Peer education programme helped”,

168


“Understand the person next to you”, “Great experience”, “SRC leadership programme eye-opener”.

From these quotes it is deduced that the relationship between student retention and success and student support and development programmes are interrelated. Research defines student development as ‘the process of promoting the social, emotional, physical, moral, cognitive and spiritual development of students through meeting their needs’ (Wissing and van Eeden, 2002) (Moleli, 2005: 32). Astin (1984) has suggested that the most important predictor of success and retention in the first year is student involvement (Pritchard and Wilson, 2003: 18). For students to be retained and achieve success, it is imperative for educational institutions to interface with students on this level. The learning environment and teaching practices must use a holistic developmental approach to student needs, in order to ensure retention and successful students.

“Developmental advising has the greatest impact through supporting challenging students to take advantage of learning opportunities outside of their formal classes and to use the human and programmatic resources to promote development of their talents and broaden cultural awareness. Developmental advising has a multiplier effect that increases students’ involvement in institutional programmes and services; this positively influences retention for the institution and increases the overall impact of educational experiences for students” (Winston cited in Cuseo, 2008:8-9).
Literature reviewed on the important role of academic advisement and its impact on retention and throughput is broadly discussed in chapter three.

5.2.1.2 Public resources

During the interviews, the participants made it clear that public resources were an additional major category which contributed significantly to their success and persistence in their first year. Seven sub-categories resulted from the major category, namely socioeconomic background, neighbourhood, community values, secondary school, transportation, library and Internet service, and employment. These aspects will be highlighted by direct quotes and literature control.

a) Socioeconomic background

The participants indicated socio-economic background as have experienced an important contributing factor, are quoted as follows: “Family has good education”, “Mother a teacher”, “Professionals”, “Successful business people”.

Damon and Lerner (2008: 112) note, “There is a long history of research concerning the links between socioeconomic status and parenting”. Hoff, cited in Damon and Lerner (2008), posits that in contrast to traditional assumptions that socioeconomic status is a static state, most argue that it is a dynamic concept. Over the course of childhood and adolescence, families change social class and change is greatest in the
youngest ages. Research reveals 50% of American children change social class prior to entering school (Featherman, Spenner, and Tsunematsu, cited in Damon and Lerner, 2008). There are socioeconomic status differences in parental socialisation practices and beliefs; lower socioeconomic parents are more authoritarian and more punitive than higher socioeconomic families. There are also more socioeconomic differences in language measures than on nonverbal measures, with higher socioeconomic mothers being more verbal than lower socioeconomic-status mothers (Hof cited in Damon and Lerner, 2008). Some socioeconomic differences are independent of race and income. In China, where there are relatively small differences in income across groups who vary in terms of education, Tardif cited by Damon and Lerner (2008) found that less-educated parents used more imperatives with their toddlers than better-educated mothers. Hess and Shipman in their studies of cognitive socialization found clear socioeconomic differences in African American lower-class and middle-class families (Damon and Lerner, 2008).

A number of academic factors have been researched in an attempt to identify the students most likely to achieve success in college. Qualitative factors such as high school grade point average and educational level of the parent (Ting and Robinson, 1998; Tobey, 1997; Wolfe and Johnson, 1995) have been associated with college retention rates (Pritchard et al., 2003). Brown cited in William and Demmert (2001) found in his study that parents’ education and occupation were important predictors of student success in college.
Earl, in her study (2008) of the socioeconomic realities of social work students at the University of South Africa (UNISA), emphasised that developing an understanding of educational throughput cannot rely on figures. “These can only be understood within the contexts of the factors that impact on the institution and those who study there.” She also quotes one of the educators as saying: “Sometimes you will be surprised … it has nothing to do with intelligence … even those we think are intelligent do fail” (2009: 301). Gibbons’ (2010) study reveals that first-generation university students were often significantly weaker than their peers and did not always receive appropriate support at home. The parental levels of education were lower for the non-completer group than for the graduate group, as were family incomes. The highest proportion (44%) of these non-completers left Stellenbosch University during or after the first year of study, with the highest attrition or drop-out rate proportionately in the first year being of coloured followed by whites.

b) **Neighbourhood** was depicted by the participants as an important enabling factor experienced by them to persist and succeed without negative interference as highlighted in the following quotes: “Clean”, “Calm”, “No noise”, “No unexpected visits”, “No gang violence”, “No crime”, “Good teachers”.

Parents and children are co-designers of their neighbourhood. Damon and Lerner (2008) posit that many decisions are influenced by children’s and parents’ needs,
wishes, and decisions. “Parents act as designers when they seek to control or influence the settings in which children are likely to meet and interact with peers.” Parents make choices about neighbourhoods and schools as well as the formal and informal activities in which their children can participate (Ladd and Pettit, 2002: 286). There is considerable variability in neighbourhood effects on children because of the ways in which parents manage their children’s access to aspects of their neighbourhood setting. Parents generally consider children’s needs such as safety, access to other children in their choice of neighbourhood. Research reveals that youngsters in areas with high levels of poverty differed from those in low-poverty areas on several outcomes, including reading scores, birth weight, infant death, and juvenile delinquency (Coulton and Pandey in Damon and Lerner, 2008). Australian Homel and Burns cited in Damon and Lerner, 2008) found that children in the most disadvantaged neighbourhoods, reported higher loneliness, feelings of rejection by peers, worry, and lower life satisfaction compared to children in less disadvantaged neighbourhoods. The effects of neighbourhoods on children’s outcomes are often mediated by parenting practices such as supervision and monitoring. A study by O’Neil, Parke and McDowell (2001) found when mothers and fathers perceived their neighbourhoods as dangerous and low in social control, they placed more restrictions on their fourth grade children’s activities, which were related to higher peer competence for their children. As children develop, middle-class parents who have options, select neighbourhoods as a function of quality of the schools that are available. The ability to choose is not inconsequential because exercising the ability
to choose a school has been linked to adolescent academic outcome (Furstenberg cited in Damon and Lerner, 2008).

c) **Community values** were signified as a factor contributing to their retention and success as highlighted in their quotes as follows: “You know it is wrong”, “You have to become someone in life”, “I’m not a typical black girl”, “People judge you by your friends”, “Find someone that is a reflection of who you are”, “Proud that you are studying”.

Damon and Lerner (2008) contextualise community values within the concept of social capital. Social capital considers the relations among people, institutions, and organisations of the community outside the immediate family structure. It is both the flow of information and the sharing of norms and values that serve to facilitate or constrain the actions of people who interact in the community’s social structures, for example schools and places of worship. Coleman in Damon and Lerner (2008) posits that children benefit from the presence of norm and value consensus among members of their family and the wider community. Elder and Conger (2000) note multiple efforts of network members who hold shared family-community norms and values facilitate monitoring of children as is their socialisation. Furthermore, if a child’s own family is negligent in fulfilling the socialisation role; other adults are available to assume the responsibility. Community networking has implications for youth development for example adolescent boys have better school performance and
attendance and more positive social behaviour when their social networks include large numbers of non-related adults (Cochran and Bo cited in Damon and Lerner, 2008). When parents as well as non-related adults were perceived as authoritative in their parenting style, adolescents were lower in delinquency and substance abuse (Fletcher, Darling, Steinberg, and Dornbusch cited in Damon and Lerner, 2008). When both parents and their children are acquainted with other parents and their children, they form a closer network that involves more shared values and more social control over their offspring which is related to better social outcomes (Darling, Steinberg, Gringlas, and Dornbusch, 1995). Social capital can aid parents’ socialisation of their children through several pathways, for example when parents and children have community ties, more social support is available; and parental awareness of community services and their participation in shaping community institutions promote the maintenance of values and norms that influence their children. Lastly, parental participation with their children enables closer child supervision and reduces children’s time with peers. “Parenting is a community enterprise and both children and adults are active players in the distribution of social capital” (Damon and Lerner, 2008: 112).

d) Secondary school

The participants highlighted negative experience in secondary school as a factor which influenced them to persist in college and to succeed quoted as follows: “Struggled with studying at school”, “Couldn’t cope”, “Wasn’t motivated”, “It was
boring”, “Were not interested in school”,”Used to failing”,”Didn’t have anyone that believed in me”, “Quit school”, “Left school”, “Failed grade 11”, “Failed twice in grade 10”, “Used to failing”.”Passed grade 10”, “Not a good environment to learn”, “You can’t concentrate on the work”, “Packed classes”, “Too much noise”, “Constant fighting”, “Disrespect toward teachers”, “Het swanger geraak op skool” “Got pregnant at school”.

Literature reviewed emphasised that during early and middle adolescence it is imperative to have positive school experiences and achieve academically to enable them to develop a healthy identity and a sense of competence. Although school is an environment critical to their psychological development, their academic experiences can either support or undermine normative developmental processes. Literature further reveals that public school policies and practices often frustrate the student’s effort to prepare educationally for a successful school-to-work transition into adulthood. Adolescents who are reared in an affluent neighbourhood obtain more years of schooling than those from a similar structure in a poorer neighbourhood. These factors influence the psychological processes that determine whether a student pursues achievement goals, which goals are pursued, and how effectively the aspirations are pursued (Swanson et al., 2002).

Underachievement among high-ability students is also viewed as a major problem after decades of research. John Gowan (1955:247) described the gifted underachiever
as “one of the greatest social wastes of our culture”. The problem of underachievement has been identified as the number one concern among educators of high-ability and high-potential students (Renzulli, Reid and Gubbins, cited in Reis, Colbert, and Herbert, 2005). The National Commission on Excellence in a Nation at Risk stated that “over half the population of gifted students does not match their tested ability with comparable achievement in school” (1983: 8). Reis and McCoch (2000) posit that some students underachieve or fail in school for the following obvious reasons: excessive absences from school, poor performance, disruptive behaviour, low self-esteem, family problems, and poverty. Frymier (1992) conducted a study involving 21706 students from 276 schools that identified 34 risk factors in the following five categories: personal pain, academic failure, family tragedy, family economic situation and family instability. The conclusion of the study was that children, who hurt, hurt all over, thus children who fail, often fail in everything they do. Therefore if a student is at risk in one area, that student is very likely to be at risk in many other areas (Reis et al., 2005).

In higher education many attribute the unsatisfactory performance of the sector to the shortcomings of the school system caused by the legacy of inequalities that had a profound effect on the quality as well as the shape of its output (Scott, Yeld and Hendry, 2007). Fedderke, de Kadt and Luiz (2000) in the literature reviewed in chapter three study reveals similar findings. South Africa’s schooling system has seldom, if ever, represented human capital formation that could be described as
healthy. It has been and remains distorted and fundamentally dysfunctional, and is not producing graduates who can go on to university. Those who reach university are often under-prepared and socially ill-equipped for higher education studies. The history of the country has ensured that performance on the senior certificate is highly skewed in terms of ‘race’, and generally very poor. For example, in 1995 of over 1.6 million learners who entered Grade 1, 66% dropped out of school before reaching Grade 12, only 21.1% obtained a Senior Certificate, and only 5% obtained a Senior Certificate for entry to a degree study. With statistics such as these the national target of 20% participation rate in higher education makes it difficult to reach. Although the secondary school academic performance of the participants of the study under discussion looks negative, it can be inferred that it motivated the participants to achieve success at the college (Scott, Yeld and Hendry, 2007). Poor schooling is viewed as the single most challenge faced by higher education institutions at the point of entry. At Stellenbosch University the matriculation examination results are still seen as the best predictors of success. However, although the student population came with increasingly better results, the reality experienced in the faculties was that students were increasingly poorly prepared. Since 1990 the university has been studying the ratio of chances of passing first-year based on matriculation results. Students with A and B aggregates were viewed as likely to succeed, while students below that level were at risk to varying degrees. Student results for the Access test, which has been administered since 1995, have shown significant deterioration in levels of preparedness among students. It is also observed that students often have a
false notion of their levels of preparation for university study because of unrealistic school results (Stellenbosch University 2003b:15; Gibbon, 2010).

Gibbon (2010), in her study at Stellenbosch University, highlights school location also as a factor and notes that students from urban schools were generally better prepared than those from the *platteland*. These schools were more likely to be under-resourced, overcrowded, and with under qualified teachers. This she found cut across races. Furthermore, she argued that the best student in poor schools would not necessarily succeed at university without extended time, and even better-prepared students still had writing and language skills problems. The achievement in the Senior Certificate examination in the non-completer respondent group was markedly lower than for the graduate group.

e) **Transportation**

The participants experienced transportation as an essential factor assisting to achieve success. They quoted the modes of transport and challenges they had to endure to persist as follows: “Private”, “Mornings and evenings traffic terrible on the roadpad” ,“Came late”, “Left the train, caught taxi”, “More expensive than the train”, “Must walk far to catch transport”.

All people need a range of adequate resources within their social environment to function optimally. Resources such as social support systems, specialist health care
services, recreational facilities, ability to socialise, utilise resources for example transportation, exercise their rights as citizens, adequate housing, fire protection and security, safe and healthful work conditions, adequate financial resources, nutritional intake, opportunities to education and self fulfilment, legal resources, religion and employment opportunities. The systems are central in a person’s life, although it is essential that they have a dual role, both as sources of difficulties or as sources that may be tapped or modified in problem solving (Hepworth et al., 2002).

f) **Library and Internet service**

This public service essentially assisted the participants with their success as indicated in their quotes as follows: “No library service at the college” “Utilise outside resource” “Travel to a library outside living area” “Get home late” “Not enough time for homework and relaxation” “Internet use during lecturing time only under supervision” “Some lecturers don’t allow you to use the internet” “Not available after hours” “Use outside facilities”

Students are increasingly required to have appropriate online literacy skills in order to complete their studies successfully. They are expected to be comfortable and proficient with both printed and digital resources. Such a level of expertise is necessary to access study materials and to enable them to efficiently filter information, communicate using diverse methods and store relevant resources within practical and logical systems. Currently many education and training institution courses include components which provide opportunities for students to develop
digital information competencies. Such skills are essential to succeed within current academic and employment contexts (Coald rake and Stedman, 1998). Online networks provide opportunities for students to be involved in recreational activities which foster the development of skills useful to their academic life. Internet users who search for information across worldwide databases of information are practising skills that are useful when researching literature to support academic essays for assignments. Similarly, when students collaborate online by using email or bulletin boards create contexts that are conducive to the socio-cognitive development of knowledge to occur. Interactions with other students and associates within collaborative online environments frequently occur in recreational contexts. The skills applied in such environments can translate to the academic learning environment when students are required to complete group assignments, share research information and correspond with other students. Promoting learning partnerships and peer tutoring opportunities within online environments may be useful strategies to enhance greater academic understanding in adult learning environments (Gallini and Zhang, 1997; Stock, 1998; Bleed, 2000)).

g) Employment

The participants signified their perceptions of employment a driving force to persist and succeed as follows: “Wil nie sonder geld sit nie” (“Don’t want to be without money”), “Want a good job”, “Want to be out there”, “Not a mediocre job”, “Want a good salary”, “Earn good money”, “If you want to live like a king you must work like a slave”, “Become independent”.

Ecological experiences such as environmental risks, resource availability, family relations and job-training opportunities have implications for any identity formation process. The psychological implications of academic competence are an essential resource for healthy and positive identity development during adolescence, and for navigating the difficult transition to gainful employment in adulthood (Swanson et al., 2002). Erikson, cited in Good and Adams (2008), posits that one’s ability to obtain gainful employment and a desired standard of living as an adult largely depends upon one’s success in school. The perceptions of the participants had a positive outcome towards persistence and successful attainment.

5.2.2 Interpersonal Relations

Relationship implies a sense of knowing oneself and others through a process of mutual relational interaction and continuity (Turner 2001). Erik Erikson (1968) hypothesised that social environments that are warm, supportive, and encouraging of adolescent independence are thought to be conducive to the successful identity formation or achievement of the adolescent and the young adult. The psychological theory of development of Erikson, cited in Good and Adams (2008), highlights that successful identity formation is a careful balancing act between the self and the other. This process starts during infancy in a safe and trusting relationship with a parental figure. In this relationship the child comes to know him or herself as a
completely distinct entity in the world that, at the same time, is loved and valued by others. This process continues throughout one’s lifespan. This is indicative of the participants’ responses below to the open-ended questions related to their perceptions and experiences of interpersonal relationships in their social milieu (Good and Adams, 2008).

The major-category student support yielded four significant sub-categories as predictors of student retention and success. The sub-categories were: group support or peer help, study groups, student counselors, and rehabilitation support. The major-category trusting relationships yielded two sub-categories namely; familial and role models. The major-category relationships within the academic environment yielded one sub-category, namely academic staff. The sub-category academic staff yielded another two sub-categories, namely democratic authoritarian relationship and flexible communication channels. Verbatim quotes from the transcribed interviews and literature control will support further discussion on the major and sub-categories.

5.2.2.1 Student Support

a) Group support/peer help

The participants emphasised the important role of group support or peer help in persistence and attaining success in their quotes as follows: “Most teenagers seek
guidance from their peers”, “Having no one to listen to you can be frustrating, and can lead to lots of dangers being a teenager”, “Van hulle het nie ‘n computer nie” “Ons tik vir hulle hul take” (“Some don’t have a computer”, “We type their assignments for them”), “Motivate you not to drop out”, “Ek help hulle baie” “Kan sien hoe hulle sukkel” (“I help them a lot”, “Can see how they’re struggling”), “Hulle is skaam om te praat” (“They are too shy to talk”), “Wil nie wys hulle sukkel nie” (“Don’t want to show they’re battling”), “Lecturers don’t know about it”, “Don’t want to show they’re battling”, “Students who do wrong things”, “A small group of us want to help them”, “We first warn them, then we report them”, “They talk to me”, “Ek kom uit swaarheid…verstaan hulle” (“I also come from a difficult background…understand them”), “My boyfriend encouraged me to continue”, “If it weren’t for my girlfriend I would’ve been a failure”.

Damon and Lerner (2008) posit that the simplest order of complexity of peer experience involves interactions. Interaction refers to the social exchange between two individuals. Experiences with peers constitute an important developmental context for children wherein they acquire a wide range of behaviours, skills, and attitudes that influence their adaptation during the life span. The forms and trajectories of episodes of interaction are shaped by the relationships in which they are embedded, for example friends are more committed to resolving conflict with each other than non-friends, are more likely than non-friends to reach equitable resolutions, and continue to interact following a disagreement (Laursen, Finkelstein,
and Betts, 2001; Laursen, Hartup, and Koplas, 1996). Beyond this, children engaged in interaction vary their behaviour as a function of such factors as their short-term and long-term personal goals, their understanding of their partner’s thoughts and feelings in the situation, the depth of their repertoire of alternative responses, and various ecological features of the context of the interactions, such as the presence of bystanders. It is the demonstration of such range and flexibility in responding to the challenges of interpersonal interaction that many writers think of as social competence (Bukowski, Rubin, and Parker, 2001).

b) **Study groups**

The participants affirmed study groups as a significant influential factor for persisting and achieving success as follow in their quotes: “You must have friends who speak the same language “If you do badly, your friend can help you”, “We study together, swap ideas and so we help each other”, “We talk about the same things”, “Its good to have friends in the same course”, “It makes studying easier”, “Helps you to cope academically”, “You can discuss problems together”, “You reap the benefit of passing”, “You aim for the best and succeed”, “Builds you up”, “Encourage you to do better”, “It makes you feel better you do better”, “Pushes your marks up to an A”, “We always checked who did the best” “In 2011 I see all of us working and having a stable career.”

Damon and Lerner (2008) define a group as a collection of interacting individuals who have some degree of reciprocal influence over one another. Hinde, cited in
Damon and Lerner (2008), suggests that a group is the structure that emerges from the features and patterning of the relationships and interactions present in a population of children. Hence, groups possess properties that arise from the manner in which the relationships are patterned but are not present in the individual relationships themselves. It includes properties such as cohesiveness, or the degree of unity and inclusiveness exhibited by the children or manifest by the density of the interpersonal relationships; hierarchy, or the extent of intransitivity in the ordering of the individual relationships along interesting dimensions, for example: “If Fred dominates Brian and Brian dominates Peter, does Fred dominate Peter?”; and homogeneity, or consistency across members in the ascribed or achieved personal characteristics (for example sex, race, age, or attitudes toward school). Every group has norms, or distinctive patterns of behaviours and attitudes that characterise group members and differentiate them from members of other groups. Researchers may address the degree to which the relationships and interactions in a group are segregated along sex or racial lines (Killen, Lee-Kim, McGlothlin, and Stangor, 2002); they may compare the rates of social isolation among groups that differ in composition; or they may investigate the extent to which a group’s hierarchies of affiliation, dominance, and influence are linear and interrelated. Group norms can be used as a basis for distinguishing separate crowds in the networks of relationships among children in high school (Brown, cited in Damon and Learner, 2008). The construct popularity has dominated the peer literature during the past 25 years is both an individual and a group-oriented phenomenon. Measures of popularity refer to the
group’s view of an individual in relation to the dimensions of liking and disliking. In this regard, popularity is a group construct and the processes of rejection and acceptance are group processes. Newcomb, Bukowski and Pattee in Damon and Lerner (2008) argue, “Yet, despite this reality, most peer researchers treat popularity as characteristic of the individual.“

Students are likely to benefit socially and academically from college environments where strong peer cultures, social integration, and close friendships are present among students (Pascerella and Terenzini, 1991; Inkelas and Weisman, 2003). Research by Tobey, McGrath and Braunstein, cited in Pritchard et al. (2003) reveal that those students with good support from friends and family and favourable impressions of other students have higher retention rates. Research findings of Reis (1998), Reis and McCoach (2000) about underachievement from the last five decades show that peers can play a major role in preventing underachievement from occurring in their closest friends. Thus, peer help or group support as inferred from the participants’ perceptions and experiences is an important factor for preventing and reversing underachievement (Reis et al; 2005).

c) Student counsellors

The key role of counsellors as a significant factor contributing to their retention and throughput emerged from the interview transcripts in quotations as follow for both c and d:
“Are always there to assist you personally and academically”, “Geweet daar is iemand met wie jy kon praat” (“Knew there was someone to talk to”), “Helped a lot in difficult times”, “I had a problem and got help”, “You can always go there”.

d) Rehabilitation support

“Helped a lot in difficult times”, “Had a problem and got help”, “I tried to overcome my drug addiction”, “I had to go for help”, “Counselling helped a lot”.

Literature reveals that undergraduates value most highly academic advisors who function as mentors or counsellors and who are accessible, helpful and approachable (Cuseo, 2008). Each student can have continuous contact and an ongoing relationship with an academic advisor that may endure throughout the college experience. An advisor as a counselling or mentoring agent is an experienced guide who helps students navigate the bureaucratic maze of institutional policies and administrative protocol; serves as a referral agent who directs and connects students to campus support services that best serve their needs; is a confidante to whom students can turn for advice, counselling, guidance and encouragement; who allows them to freely explore their values and belief systems; is a student advocate, treating them as clients to be served and developed rather than as subordinates to be evaluated and graded; who listens to them actively, empathically and non-judgmentally (see Chapter Three). In two recent reviews of research related to the underachievement of academically talented students (Reis, 1998; Reis and McCoach
2000) a caring adult, such as a counsellor, a coach or an academic content teacher, can help to reverse the process of underachievement (Reis et al., 2005).

5.2.2.2 Trusting relationships

a) Familial

The participants emphasised the key role of family support in their achievement of success and retention in their quotes as follows:

“Family support changes your life”, “Gives you strength” “Makes a difference, respects self-worth, and allows independence”, “Check on studies and ask questions”, “Wants to know if I’m safe or need anything”), “Father expects you to succeed”, “Put a lot of money into studies”, “Want the best for you”, “To progress in life”, “People who love you support you”, “Mother always there for you”, “Helps you to achieve your goals”, “Attend parent meetings”, “Put your mind at ease”, “Applaud you every step of the way”, “Speak openly about my feelings with her”, “Proud that you are studying”.

“My mother and sister played a big role in my success”, “Hou toesig oor die kinders” “Genoeg tyd in die eksamen” (“Keep an eye on the children”, “Enough time in the exam”), “Always pleased when I got 80%”, “Altyd bly as ek 80% behaal het” (“They didn’t have the opportunity”), “My oom is die een wat my boeke gevât het en gewys hy stel..."
belong” (“My uncle is the one who looked at my books and showed me he was interested”).

Existing evidence suggests that subjective feelings of closeness and objective measures of interdependence decrease across the adolescent years (Collins and Repinski, 2001). After a decrease in early adolescence, older teens report more positive effects during family interactions (Larson cited in Damon and Lerner, 2008). Furthermore, children who had warm relationships with their parents during preadolescence are likely to remain close and connected with their parents during adolescence, even though the frequency and quantity of positive interactions may be somewhat diminished (Collins and Laursen, 2004). The style of the interaction between parent and child is linked to a variety of social outcomes. Parents who are responsive, warm, and engaging are more likely to have children who are more socially competent (Grimes, Klein, and Putallaz, 2004). Research also reveals that high levels of positive synchrony and low levels of non-synchrony in patterns of mother-child interaction are related to school adjustment rated by teachers, peers, and observers (Harrist, Pettit, Dodge, and Bates, cited in Damon and Lerner, 2008).

Father involvement is quantitatively less than mother involvement; fathers have an important impact on their offspring’s development. Quality is highlighted rather than quantity of parent-child interaction as the important predictor of cognitive and social development. Grusec and Goodnow (1994) posit that parental strategies vary in their
effectiveness as a function of the quality of the parent-child relationship. Parents may influence children’s relationships (Damon and Lerner, 2008) directly in their role as a direct instructor, educator, or advisor. Caregiver forms of management shift as children grow from direct involvement or supervision of the ongoing activities of children and their peers to consultation, a less public form of management, involving advice or consultation concerning appropriate ways of handling peer problems (Ladd and Pettit, 2002). Parents use verbal guidance, for example discussion about future consequences, talk of values, and offering their advice more often than direct interventions such as limiting the adolescent’s activities with peers or inviting friends over to the house to shape peer influence (Mounts, 2000).

These indirect forms of supervision that emerge as the child reaches adolescence are linked with positive outcomes. The extent of parental involvement in school-related activities, for example parent-teacher associations or school conferences, is positively related to children’s academic outcomes. Practices of partnerships between parents and schools decline across development; in recognition of adolescents’ need for autonomy and independence, parental involvement decreases in high school, but young adolescents still want their families to support their learning and activities at home (Epstein and Sanders, 2002). These developmental changes suggest that the child is active in shaping the form that the parent-school partnership will assume at different points in the child’s educational career.
Research by Matheis and Adams (2004) and Berzonsky (2004) on family processes and identity formation found that young people whose parents encourage appropriate levels of exploration within a warm and supportive environment are more likely than other adolescents to report identity achievement in university (Good and Adams, 2008). It is evident from the findings that it is imperative to be surrounded by individuals who are supportive of a student’s chosen identity commitments to achieve success.

An important mode through which parents remain connected to adolescents without constraining them unduly is monitoring (Crouter and Head, 2002). Damon and Lerner (2008) note that parental monitoring and supervision are correlated highly with positive adjustment and academic achievement among adolescents. It is argued that the beneficial outcomes often attributed by researchers to effective parental monitoring may actually have little to do with monitoring and may merely be the end result of a parent-adolescent relationship in which the adolescent willingly discloses information to the parent (Stättin and Kerr, 2000). Stättin and Kerr’s work indicate the importance of distinguishing between what parents do and what they know. Researchers interested in parental monitoring should take care to ensure that the measurement of this construct is precise and that, parental knowledge of their adolescent’s behaviour and how the knowledge is obtained is measured separately (Damon and Lerner 2008).
b) **Role models** were also indicated by the participants as a contributing factor in persisting and achieving success quoted as follows: “Sister looks up to me as her role model”, “Uncle is studying … look up to him”, “Parents are successful business people”, “They always looked at me as an example”, “Have always been very competitive”, “You aim for the best and succeed”, “Try to achieve what they are doing”, “Had to see to it that they also worked hard”, “Help them to understand difficult work”, “Motivates you not to drop out”, “Always in class”, “Never late, never absent”.

Research on mentoring indicates that mentoring is especially critical to the retention and success of underrepresented, first-generation college students who do not have role models at home. It has a positive impact on the personal and professional development of young adults. Empirical research between mentoring and student retention in higher education indicate that students who received mentoring achieved higher retention rates than non-mentored students with similar pre-enrollment characteristics (Tinto, 1987; Levinson, 1987; Campbell & Campbell, 1997; Wallace & Abel, 1997; Miller, Neuner, and Glynn, 1998).

### 5.2.2.3 Relationships within the academic environment

Grotevant and Cooper, cited in Good and Adams (2008), posit that social contexts outside the family are important during adolescence. Most individuals experience a
process of separation and individuation from parents during this period. Researchers found that the relational contexts of educational environments are significant predictors of students’ psychosocial and academic well-being (Good and Adams, 2008). The quotes below of the participants highlight the significance of academic staff support in contributing to their achievement of success. Research highlighted in the text further suggests that students need support from knowledgeable academic advisors to engage in effective educational planning and decision-making, and if this support is received, they will more likely persist to degree completion (Cuseo, 2003).

5.2.2.3.1 Academic staff

“Aanvaarding en respek het vir jou die go-ahead gegee” (“Acceptance and respect gave you the go-ahead”), “They made you feel important”, “Jy is hier om te studeer” (“You are here to study”), “It’s comforting, gave us hope”, “Hulle was eerlik met ons” (“They were honest with us”), “You will make it or you won’t”, “They spoke harshly to us”, “It helped us learn harder and be a success”, “Pushes you to pass”, “Received great support from the programme manager”, ” “Jy kon kla by die lecturers” (“You can complain to the lecturers”) “Hulle het die saak sommer onmiddellik aangevat” (“They attend to attend to complaints immediately”) “Feel free to ask questions”.
Eccles and Roeser (2003) found that owing to the developmental significance of relationships during adolescence outside the family, a socially supportive academic atmosphere promotes positive academic and social outcomes in young people (Good et al., 2008: 223-224). Tinto (1993: 41) notes, “It is part of the educational mandate of institutions to assist nurturing youth in coming to grips with the important question of adult careers. The regrettable fact is that that some institutions do not see student uncertainty in this light. They prefer to treat it as a deficiency in student development rather than as an expected part of that complex process of personal growth”.

Research by Bernard (1997) highlights the importance of lecturer support and students acquiring a sense of coherence. According to Perkel (1990), sense of coherence is a life-appraising factor and affects the overall quality of one’s cognitive and emotional functioning. Researchers assert that a strong sense of coherence is made up of three components, namely comprehensibility, manageability and meaningfulness (Strumfer, 2003; Emmons, 2003; Edwards and Besseling, 2001).

5.2.2.3.1.1 A democratic authoritarian relationship emerged as an important factor contributing to the retention and success of the participants in the interview quotes as transcribed as follows: “Almal gelyk behandel” (“Treated everyone the same”), “Dieselfde punishment gekry” (“Got the same punishment”), “Nie na ouderdom gekyk nie” (“Didn’t look at age”), “You were treated like big grown-up
people” “If you don’t listen they disown you”, “They don’t help you unless you step up and make an effort”.

Studies find that the use of authoritarian strategies under these circumstances may be linked with more positive outcomes for students (Dodge, McLoyd, and Lansford, 2005). The transition from school to further education and training is not easy because of the difference in approach. Schools concentrate on the acquisition of knowledge, whereas further education and training institutions require the application of knowledge combined with independent study. Autonomy is a central feature of western culture and is integral in coping with adult roles (Ferreira, 1995). Students gaining access to further education and training institutions come from different cultural backgrounds. This scenario represents a possible mismatch between the institution’s ethos and the student’s cultural values (Ferreira, 1995; Nyamafene and Letseka, 1995). Non-graduates reflected that they had autonomy difficulties after leaving university, which indicated that they have experienced the same difficulties while still studying. The difficulties could be dealing with being on their own and having to make decisions. Thus, students with low-autonomy skills would experience difficulties within the tertiary education setting (Hunt cited by Rahim, 2007).

5.2.2.3.1.2 A flexible communication channel also emerged as an important factor contributing to the retention and success of the participants in the interview quotes as transcribed as follows: “Het altyd met jou gepraat… wou die college los
om te gaan werk” (“Always talked to you … wanted to leave the college to go to work”), “As jy uitgebly het, het hulle jou gevra of hulle die werk van gister aan jou moet verduidelik” (“If you stayed away, they asked if they could explain the previous day’s work to you”), As jy nie by die een onderwyser hulp gekry het nie, kon jy altyd na ‘n ander onderwyser gaan vir hulp” (“If you didn’t get help from one teacher, you could go to another one for help”), “Hulle wil he dat ons moet slaag” (“They want us to pass”).

Robert G. Powell and Dana L. Powell (2010) posit how students feel about school and their classes are largely determined by the quality of the relationships they have with their teachers. Teachers who engage in power struggles have more problematic relationships. Such relationships have more to do with control than with student learning. Motivation is influenced by the social-emotional connection between teachers and students. Teachers, who exhibit a positive affect or liking, promote positive attitudes about instructional material, increase a sense of belonging, and increase student efficacy (Brophy, Comstock, Rowell and Bowers cited by R.G. Powell and D.L. Powell, 2010). The primary function of immediacy is relational and consists of both verbal and nonverbal behaviours that reduce psychological distance. The primary function of teachers’ nonverbal behaviour in the classroom is to improve affect for the subject matter, teacher and class, and to increase the desire to learn more about the subject matter. If this happens than the student is likely to listen more, learn more and have a positive attitude about the school. Immediacy is positively associated with a number of affective factors that unfold in the classroom.
Students who view a teacher approachable may feel more comfortable in the learning situation and inclined to listen to the teaching content, and may also feel more comfortable to seek clarification on information they don’t understand. Frymier and Houser cited in R.G. Powell and D.L. Powell (2010) found that immediacy was positively linked with two important communication skills: Referential skill which is concerned with explaining content and ego support is how teachers meet student needs. The immediate teacher is more psychologically connected to students for example; they consistently assess student feedback and adjust instructional messages to meet their needs (Powell and Harville cited in R.G. Powell and D.L. Powell, 2010).

5.2.3 Intrapersonal Influence

The first major category, self-efficacy as an intrinsic strength, which emerged from the interviews as contributing to the participants’ retention and success, resulted from the questions related to intrapersonal influences during the interviews. This major-category yielded another five sub-categories, namely: self-discipline, self-esteem, independent decision-making abilities, locus of control and skill. These findings will be supported with verbatim quotes from the interview transcriptions and literature control.
Penuel and Wertsch, cited in Good and Adams (2008), are of the opinion that one of Erikson’s most important insights is that all intra-psychic functions take place within a social and historical context. Identity achievement could therefore only transpire if an individual’s chosen commitments and identifications are valued and legitimised within his or her particular culture. Erikson posits that a socially supported environment is significant because it results in the ascendance of psychological strengths or ego virtues which provide the basis for success, happiness and fulfillment (Good and Adams, 2008).

5.2.4. Self-efficacy

Participants experienced self-efficacy as the main driving force of their success, and gave a variety of quotes to support their experience as follows: “You set your own goals of what you’re going to achieve for the day”, “You couldn’t really fail”, “Chose to make a success”, “Knew my goal was to pass the end of the year”, “I’m here to study”, “Everything is up to you; your choices that you make and where you want to be, it’s up to you if you want to make a success”, “Determined not to be a potato cast-out”.

Bandura (1997) defines self-efficacy as the levels of confidence individuals have in their ability to execute a course of action or attain specific performance outcomes. Frydenberg (1997) states that self-efficacy is all about knowing one’s beliefs and
dealing effectively with fussy situational demands. According to Bandura, personal efficacy expectations influence initiating behaviour, how much effort will be applied to attain an outcome, and the level of persistence applied to the task in the face of difficulties and setbacks. Self-efficacy and performance have also been researched to a great extent by Moritz, Feltz, Fahrback, and Mack, 2000; Multon, Brown, and Lent, 1991; Stajkovic and Luthans, 1998, cited in Davenport and Lane (2006). Self-efficacy is cognitive in nature, and is influenced by information derived from four main sources: performance accomplishments, vicarious experience, verbal persuasion, and the control of negative emotions (Davenport and Lane, 2006). Research reveals that, in order to complete an undergraduate degree, students must cope with many challenges and stressors, for example excessive worry regarding the competencies needed to pass a dissertation or research methods, and the adoption of maladaptive coping strategies such as substance abuse and denial as means of coping with such stressors (Lane, Davenport, and Horrel, 2004; Lane, Hall, and Lane, 2004). Recent research by Davenport, Lane, Jones, and Stevens (2002) reported that high self-efficacy is associated with adaptive coping skills such as planning.

5.2.4.1. **Self-discipline** emerged as a significant predictor for achieving success and for persisting as indicated by the participants’ quotes as follows: “Moes baie hard werk om te leer” “Had to work very hard”, “Dictionary elke dag gebruik om die terme te verstaan” (“Used dictionary every day to understand the terms”), Waking up every morning on time and being in class on time”, “Attend class every day”, “Listen
attentively and do homework”, “No coming late, you know college is the next day”, “Waking up every morning on time and being in class on time”, “Balance studies and relaxation”, “Remaining motivated was hard work and sacrifice”, “Not being laid back”, “Had to adapt to student life”.

Research by Reis (1998), and Reis and McCoach (2000) also found that regular patterns of work and practice seem to help talented students develop an achievement model in their own lives. For example; regular time for homework and reading can be very helpful for developing positive self-regulation strategies. Students who are involved in clubs, extra-mural activities, sport and religious activities are less likely to underachieve in school (Reis et al.; 2005: 111).

5.2.4.2 Self-Esteem inter-dependent to self-efficacy and self-discipline: the participants highlighted the importance of this aspect in contributing to their retention and throughput in the transcribed quotes as follows: “Found my love for studying”, “Feel uplifted”, “Enjoy studying”, “Always been very competitive”, “Thought of failing not for me”, “Ek’s Afrikaans en die vakke is Engels” (“I’m Afrikaans-speaking and the subjects are in English”), “Leer, luister in die klas en slaag met 80%” (“Learn, listen in class and pass with 80%”), “Your success is your responsibility”, “By doing things for yourself, you gain more respect for yourself”, “Don’t get influenced easily”, “Want to stand for who I want to be”, “Het nooit probleme saamgebring nie” (“Never brought problems with me”), “Strong person
kept on going feel good”, “Don’t care about what the next person thinks of you”. Students who hold low evaluation of their academic competence and self-worth usually perform poorly in school, loose interest in academic and school activities, and display delinquency in the from of school violence and vandalism (Swanson et al., 2002).

5.2.4.3 Independent decision-making abilities were experienced by the participants as a key factor to self-determination in their quotes as follows:

“Realise people aren’t going to help you where you actually want to be”. “Make own decisions” “It depends on you”, “It is to your advantage if you want to do well”, “It’s about your life, your future” “Have to make a choice whether you are going to deal with it or run around”, “You think about your situation not to rely on parents” “They’ve made it in life, you still have to make it”, “Your success is your responsibility”, “By doing things for yourself, you gain more respect for yourself”, “Independent”, “Don’t get influenced easily”.

Hill and Holmbeck, cited in Damon and Lerner (2008), posit that behavioural autonomy encompasses multiple capacities involved with self-reliance, but the construct of behavioural independence has appeared in two very different forms in research on adolescence. Behavioural autonomy refers to the capacity for competent self-governance in the absence of external guidance or monitoring as when, for example, an adolescent is able to function on his or her own without parents in a new
or challenging situation or behave ethically when outside the purview of adult supervision. In another form behavioural autonomy refers to the capacity to function independently in the face of excessive external influence, when, for example, the adolescent must be able to resist peer pressure to behave in a way that goes against his or her better judgment or personal preferences. However, both these situations require self-reliance. Whether these different aspects of behavioural independence develop concomitantly has not received adequate research attention, nor has the broader issue of whether the expression of behavioural autonomy is stable across contexts (Damon and Lerner, 2008).

5.2.4.4 Locus of Control

‘Locus of control’ refers to the perceived source of control over one’s behaviour. It is when an individual takes responsibility for his own actions and views himself as having control over his own ‘destiny’ (Reber, 1984). This description is evident in the participants’ perceptions below of taking responsibility to succeed.

“If you went back to the other friends you will still smoke and use drugs, you would not come off it”, “Knew what you wanted even though you’re going to drink”, “Elke dag by die college” (“At college every day”), “Studeer naweke” “Al is dit vir klein toetse… leer hard” (“Study weekends,” “Even if it’s for small tests …study hard”), “Hoef nie so hard te werk vir eksamens nie” (“Don’t need to work so hard for exams”), “I’m here to study”, “Want to stand for who I want to be”, “Don’t care
about what the next person thinks of you”, “Much more confident now”, “Know you can do it”, “Don’t stress anymore”, “Wanted to pass”, “I didn’t want to go back to school”.

High self-confidence (Boyer and Sadlacek, 1998; Foster, 1998), self control (Wolf and Johnson, 1995) and having an achievement-oriented personality (Foster, 1998) are associated with a higher academic performance. It has also been reported that students who are adaptive perfectionists tend to adjust better to college and have higher retention rates (Rice and Maritz cited in Pritchard et al., 2003:18).

5.2.4.5    Skills
The participants highlighted their experience of having to acquire essentials skills to enable them to persist and succeed as follow in the transcribed interview quotes: “With new friends you don’t know how to talk with them”, “At the end you get you used to them”, “You start to gel in with them than things are all right”, “They will tell you, don’t do this, don’t do that because that’s not the way they do it”, “You can’t think you will get marks, you must bring your side as well”, “I had to see to it that they also work hard”, “If they didn’t understand the work, I explained it to them”, “Have more friends here than at school”.

Adaptive coping within the academic setting is critical to facilitate competence. Developing a sense of efficacy (industry versus inferiority) requires from youth to
initiate and manage significant aspects of the environment (Erikson, 1968). During this process positive identification with a competent adult may be enhancing. However, if the social encouragement is too weak and the chances to achieve academic success are difficult it may foster a sense of inadequacy and inferiority, thus preventing job marketability. Student role-conflict can also seriously impede personal competence during adolescence and generate aimlessness, and erode social commitment (Swanson & Spencer, 1998).

5.2.5 Career decision-making determinant factors

The major category career decision-making determinant factors were deduced from the interview-related questions and responses from the participants. This category yielded another two sub-categories, namely career interests and hard times. These findings will be highlighted with verbatim quotes from the transcribed interview responses and literature control below.

5.2.5.1 Career Interests

Career interests have been perceived by the participants as a positive predictor of their success as quoted: “You are here to study something that you like”, “Wanted to become a chef”, “Really enjoy being in the kitchen”, “Nobody forced you”, “Wanted to do the course”, “Knew what I wanted to do”, “It’s something you want to do”.
Adolescence is considered the most crucial phase of identity formation. It is a period in which individuals are afforded a socially sanctioned opportunity to explore different ideals and choose for themselves in accordance with their own interests, goals, talents, and standards of their social milieu. Goals are essential components of an individual’s experience to make life meaningful for him or her (Adams, Munro B., Doherty-Poirer, Munro G, Petersen and Edwards 2008). Student commitment to educational and career goals is strongly associated with student persistence to degree completion. About 75% of all students entering college are undecided about their academic and career plans, and at least half of all majors are pre-maturely decided majors, who will eventually change their minds. This may result in delayed progress toward degree completion by necessitating the need for students to complete additional courses to fulfill specific degree requirements for their newly chosen major. The academic performance of Native college students were strongly related to career maturity (the ability to deal with occupational choices) (Wyckoff, 1999; William and Demmert, 2001 and Cuseo, 2008).

5.2.5.2 Hard times emerged as an important determinant experienced by the participants to persist and achieve success and quote the extent of its influence as follows: “Make the best of the situation”, “Grab it with both hands”, “Have to become someone in life”, “Had to get out of the situation” “Working at night to support myself was tough”, “Kept on telling yourself in three years’ time this is going to be over”, “Having had all my obstacles” “Pick up my life”, “Het dit nie
The reasons that some students achieve at high levels, even when they encounter difficult situations and pressures, are of great interest to both researchers and practitioners. Resilience theory tries to explain academic achievement among students who encounter negative psychological and environmental situations. There are different definitions for resilience. Ruther (1981, 1987) describes resilience as a protective mechanism that modifies an individual’s response to a risk or an adjustment despite negative life events. Wang, Haertel, and Walberg (1994:46) define educational resilience as “the heightened likelihood of success in school and other life accomplishments despite environmental adversities brought about by early traits, conditions, and experiences”. Resilient individuals are also being described as hardy, invulnerable and invincible (Woolin and Woolin, 1993). Resilience is not a fixed attribute in individuals, and the successful negotiation of psychological risks at one point in a person’s life does not guarantee that the individual will not react adversely to other stresses when the situations change. If circumstances change, resilience alters. Risk factors are those factors that increase negative outcomes and protective factors are those that promote positive outcomes. For example, protective factors such as good intellectual ability, problem-solving ability and engagement in
productive activities can serve to deflect the harmful effects of adversity (Ruther, Anthony and Kohler cited in Reis et al., 2005).

Kobasa cited by Rahim (2007) refers to hardiness as the person’s ability to rise above challenges and turn them into opportunities for growth. It encompasses three psychological processes: commitment, control, and challenge. Commitment is the ability to involve oneself fully with the challenges of different spheres of life. Control refers to the belief that one can influence events, whereas challenge refers to the ability to embrace change and tolerate ambiguity. Hardy individuals tend to have higher positive self-beliefs in stress situations than those with low hardiness in similar situations. Hardy individuals suffer also less from illnesses because they are able to think of life events in more positive, less threatening ways (Alfred and Smith; Funk and Houston cited in Rahim, 2007).

5.2.6 Perceptions of Achieving Success

This major category is a strong predictor of influence for retention and success experienced by the participants. According to the ecological social systems model, people’s perceptions of others and themselves and events largely determine how they feel and respond to life’s experiences in general and to their problematic situations in particular (Hepworth et al., 2006). The verbatim quotes by the participants in the transcriptions of the interviews and literature control support the finding as follows:
“Education is important”, “Mense kry swaar wat nie geleerd is nie” (“People struggle without education”), “Become someone in life”, “Want security”, “Want to be successful”, “To have a better life for my child and myself”, “Grab it with both hands”, “It’s never too late to study”, “Not to rely on parents”, “They’ve made it in life you still have to make it”.

Among any population of young adults who are beginning in earnest their search for adult identity, it would be surprising if one found that most were very clear about their long-term goals. The college years are an important growing period in which new social and intellectual experiences are sought as a means of coming to grips with the issue of adult careers. They enter college with the hope that they will be able to formulate for themselves, not for their parents, a meaningful answer to that important question. College experience is as much, if not more, one of discovery as one of confirmation (Tinto, 1993). However, these successful first-year participants were driven by their underlying motives so clearly reflected in their quotations to achieve their personal mission statement.

5.2.7 Challenges Influencing Throughput and Success

This major category emerged from the interview participants’ responses in the transcriptions to the questions relating to their experiences regarding intrapersonal...
influences. The major category yielded another four sub-categories, namely substance abuse/use, physical health, learning challenges, and teenage pregnancy and single parenting. Further discussion on these findings will be supported by verbatim quotes from the interview transcriptions and literature control.

A challenge refers to a demanding task, one that calls upon the use of one’s skill and strength. According to the challenge model a stressor is debilitating and promotes maladaptive behaviour, while too little is not challenging enough. Dealing with a challenging yet manageable stressor (challenge) helps the individual cope with the next one successfully (Zimmerman and Arunkumar, 1994).

5.2.7.1 Substance abuse/use emerged as a driving factor from some of the participants’ responses in the transcribed verbatim quotes as follows: “Started doing drugs at school”, “Took advantage of freedom”, “Drink on and off campus”, “Smoke dagga on and off campus”, “If you went back to the other friends you will still smoke and use drugs … you would not come off it”, “Knew what you wanted even though you’re going to drink”, “I tried to overcome drug addiction”, “Family helped to see a psychologist”.

Alcohol consumption is an increasing social behaviour during college years. It has been identified as a significant negative health behaviour directly affecting student academic performance (Wood, Sher and McGowan, 2000). Students that drink believing that it will allow them to cope with their problems has been found to drink
more often when compared with those who do not. Little research has addressed the relationship of college students’ social and emotional well-being to retention and academic success. Student psychological state is strongly associated with student withdrawal. Helping students deal with personal problems or crises and supporting them through this period of personal and intellectual growth, should be an integral rather than ancillary feature of further education (Jaques, Earwaker and Johnson cited in Pritchard et al., 2003).

5.2.7.2 Physical health as a challenge also emerged as a factor from some of the participants responses in the transcribed verbatim quotes as follows: “Sickness is not something you can help for … work is a must”, “Associate TB with poverty”, “Contracted TB because immune system was weak”, “Symptoms are terrible”, “Did not look after myself”, “Sleeping very little”, “Working at night 7pm-3am”, “Hated myself and could not understand why I got it”.

Folkman cited in Rahim (2007) posits that stress is often blamed for negative trajectory outcomes which manifest in individuals lives. Stress is defined as an unpleasant state of emotion accompanied by physiological symptoms that individuals experience in situations that they perceive threatening or challenging. Stress has both positive and negative effects. The negative effects manifest in physical illnesses such as heart attacks, hypertension and many other illnesses. Positive stress has the
potential to motivate individuals to perform better in challenging situations and can heighten their creativity (Limbardo, 1992).

**Learning challenges** emerged as a significant factor in persisting and to succeed as experienced and emphasised in the quotes as follows: “Kan nie agter sit nie” (“Can’t sit at the back”), “Moet baie fyn luister wat gese word” (“Must listen very carefully to what is being said”), “Gehoor is nie te goed nie… het plastiek oordromme” (“Hearing is not too good…, have plastic eardrums”), “Het ‘n leer disleksie” (“Have a learning dyslexic”), “Dit maak dat ek heeltemal verbouereerd raak en nie reg kan dink nie” (“It makes me totally confused and can’t think properly”), “Dyslexic… sometimes it takes a little longer to process things”.

The attributes related to the success of students with learning disabilities are self-awareness, reactivity, perseverance, goal-setting, the presence and use of effective support systems, and emotional coping strategies. Research emphasises that not every successful individual possesses each of these attributes, and some attributes may be present to a greater or lesser degree. Similarly, persons who might be considered unsuccessful may nevertheless possess some of the success attributes, to a lesser or greater degree. Hence, successful persons with learning disabilities are much more likely to have these characteristics than unsuccessful individuals. It is important to keep in mind that having these attributes does not guarantee success. However, it increases the chances of achieving a fulfilling and successful life.
Research also indicates that these characteristics may have a greater influence on success than factors such as academic achievement, gender, socio-economic status, ethnicity, and even intelligence quotient. Successful people with learning disabilities are open and specific about their difficulties and understand how they affect their lives. These individuals have the ability to compartmentalize their disability. They are able to see their learning difficulties as only one aspect of themselves. They recognize their talents along with accepting their limitations. In addition to recognizing their strengths, weaknesses, and special talents, they are also able to find jobs that provide the best fit with their abilities. They are generally actively engaged in the world around them, participate in community activities and take an active role in their families, neighborhoods, and friendship groups. They often step into leadership roles at work, in the community, and in social and family settings. They possess the ability to make decisions and act upon those decisions and assume responsibility for their actions and resulting outcomes. They show great perseverance and keep pursuing their chosen path despite difficulties. These individuals are able to see and pursue alternative strategies for reaching their goal, or know when the goal itself might have to be modified. They set goals that are specific, yet flexible so that they can be changed to adjust to specific circumstances and situations. Furthermore, they are willing to accept help when it is offered, whereas unsuccessful individuals are not as likely to actively seek support or accept it when offered. However, although all persons with learning disabilities may experience disability-related stress, successful individuals appear to have developed effective means of reducing
and coping with stress, frustration, and the emotional aspects of their learning disabilities. There appear to be three aspects of successful emotional coping: awareness of the situations that trigger stress, recognition of developing stress and availability/access to and use of coping strategies (Raskind, Goldberg, Higgins and Herman, 2003).

5.2.7.3 Teenage pregnancy and single parenting were experienced and indicated in the transcribed quotes by participants as a determinant to persist and succeed as follows: “Klaar opgemors… wil dit nie weer aan hulle doen nie” (“Messed up already … don’t want to do that to them again”), “Werk in die nag” (“Work at night”), “Wag dat kind slaap, klaar kos en skoon gemaak het” (“Wait until the child is sleeping, finished cooking and cleaning”), “Was skaam vir die studente, omdat ek op my ouderdom ‘n kind het” (“Was shy because I have a child at my age”), “To be able to study had to be separated from my daughter”, “Hardest thing I’ve ever had to do”.

Teenage pregnancy remains a potential threat that may affect students’ academic, personal and social involvement. Risk factors such as abuse, marginality, poverty, divorce, violence and stress are positively related to adolescent pregnancies and high school dropout (McGaha-Garnet). The more risk factors the youth have to face, the higher the probability of teenage pregnancy and high school drop-out. Adolescent mothers who continue in school, despite the overwhelming responsibility of
parenthood were found to be resilient. Ormrod (2006) posits that resilient youth show strong and positive characteristics of social competence, problem solving, independence and motivation. Students with a higher self-esteem have a greater likelihood of identifying and fulfilling academic completion. Thus, those individuals who demonstrate positive traits of resilience are more likely to have increased esteem and assumed responsibility. The mental picture and preparation of the birth of their child often increases the desire to achieve academically and socially. Protective factors such as supportive relationships from adults, school personnel, family involvement, and social training provide multiple benefits. It will give them a sense of belonging, higher expectations for parenting and overall achievement, increased educational aspirations, and involvement in meaningful activities. The more protective factors identified by counsellors and adolescent mothers, the less the perceived threat of risk factors (Chavkin and Gonzales, 2000; Busch, 2002; Gonzales, 2003; McGaha-Garnet).

5.3 SUMMARY

It can be inferred from the participants’ perceptions and experiences in this study that the following factors are strong predictors for student retention and success:

- Environmental influences within the college, namely; financial aid, student support and developmental services, monitoring student progress, study
programmes and safety of the college. Public internet, library and transport services were experienced as important essentials which contributed significantly to the retention and success of the participants. The participants experienced the lack of an internet and library service, and study facility at the campus a major challenge to overcome.

- Student support in the form of group support or peer help, study groups, student counselling and referral for rehabilitation services were key determinants or predictors for the retention and throughput of the participants. The importance of trusting relationships also featured as key factors in the form of family and role models contributing to the success and persistence of the participants. Relationships in the academic environment with the academic staff and their communication styles of practising, such as flexible communication channels and democratic authoritarian relationship building, contributed significantly to the receptiveness of learning and the success and persistence of the participants.

Key factors with regards to the significant strengths of the participants which have contributed to their retention and throughput highlighted by the findings of the study are: self-efficacy, with its underpinning developmental intrinsic aspects such as self-discipline, self-esteem, independent decision-making, locus of control and acquiring essential skills to adapt to student life. These attributes are strong predictors of student success and retention, as have emerged from the findings of the study.
Personal challenges such as hard times, drug abuse, learning disabilities, health problems and single parenting were indicated by the participants as strong predictors to rise above these adversities by persisting and succeeding in enjoying a good-quality life. The participants’ perceptions of education and employment were interlinked toward an outcome for economic benefit and also as a strong predictor for retention and throughput.

Other factors indicated by the participants that have contributed to their retention and throughput are neighbourhood and socioeconomic background. The findings of this research study are generally in line with most of the findings in the literature reviewed in this chapter and that of Chapter Three.

5.4 CONCLUSION

In this chapter the researcher presented comprehensively the findings of the semi-structured interviews conducted with first-year successful students in order to establish their perceptions and experiences of factors relating to their retention and throughput or success. Chapter Six presents a summary of the study, statements about the findings and literature review, recommendations for future studies, identifications of limitations, implications, and a conclusion.
CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents a summary of the study, statements about the findings, literature review and recommendations for future studies as well as the limitations, and implications of the study.

6.2 RESEARCH GOAL, OBJECTIVES AND QUESTIONS

The research goal was to explore and describe the challenges of retention and throughput from the perceptions and experiences of successful first-year students. Based on the goal of the study the intentions of the objectives identified were achieved:

- To explore and describe successful first-year students’ perceptions and experiences of factors relating to retention and throughput at a selected FET College to stakeholders in Further Education and Training.
- To make recommendations to the management of the FET College sector on the factors which contributed to retention and throughput of first-year successful students at a selected FET College?
To describe the role of social work to increase retention and throughput of students at FET Colleges based on the findings.

To engage the participants and for the purpose of spontaneous responses, the researcher started with the open-ended question: What do you think contributed to your achievement of success with your studies in the first year?

The probing questions (semi-structured interview guide) related to the objectives of the study as set out below were posed to elicit participant’s responses:

- What personal obstacles did you have to overcome in order to be successful?
- Tell me about family and how it influence student success.
- What role do friends play in performance?
- Talk to me about the role of support from the college.
- What do you think were the most important factors that helped you with your success at the college?

It can be concluded that the goal and objectives of the study were successfully achieved through individual interviews and focus groups consisting of a non-probability purposive sample of twenty-one first-year successful students of Northlink College at Protea campus in Cape Town. Based on the results different
aspects of student retention and throughput were identified and described as highlighted in chapters four and five.

6.3 CONCLUSIONS OF THE STUDY

The phenomenon of a high percentage of student failures and dropouts in the first-year remains a concern nationally and globally. Retention and throughput or success of students is important in the education and training sector.

Attrition in higher education in South Africa is high, especially in the first year of study. Key factors contributing to attrition in higher education in South Africa include the under-preparedness of school leavers (the probability exists include learners from the FET college sector mobilising into higher education) and financial difficulty.

Furthermore, the first year is the most critical in shaping persistence decisions and plays a formative role in influencing student attitudes and approaches to learning. Student decisions about staying or leaving is affected by academic advising as one of the major academic and social domains of the college experience. Academic advising is referred to as the cornerstone of student retention.
Issues that impact on both retention and success are academic advisement and related aspects such as advisor roles, student mentoring, college satisfaction, pre-entry information, career planning and decision-making, student utilization of campus support services, faculty contact outside the classroom, fear of failure, financial support, social and academic integration, campus climate, social support and teaching and learning activities.

Student commitment to educational and career goals is one of the strongest factors associated with student persistence to degree completion. Students are indecisive about their academic plans and the degree of student uncertainty and propensity for changing educational plans highlights the need for student support in the academic planning and decision-making process of students.

There is a positive relationship between the use of campus-support services and persistence to programme or degree completion. Students who seek and receive academic support have been found to improve both their academic performance and their academic self-efficacy.

Environmental factors in both the college and the public contribute significantly to the retention and success or throughput of the participants. These included safety of the college, positive academic atmosphere, study programmes, the cafeteria as a studying source, financial aid, monitoring student progress as a measure of success,
student support, and development programmes. Public resources included socioeconomic background, neighbourhood, community values, secondary school transportation, library and Internet service, as well as employment.

Interpersonal relationships with reliable alliances are highly significant in contributing to retention and success of the participants. These included student support overall in the form of group support or peer help, study groups, student counsellors, rehabilitation support, trusting relationships with family members, role models and academic staff.

Intrapersonal Influences are also important for successful retention and throughput in the first year of education. Self-efficacy as a significant strength was perceived and experienced by the participants as the main driving force behind their success. Other significant strengths revealed in their responses included self-discipline, self-esteem, independent decision-making abilities, locus of control, and skill. In the face of adversity, by being self-efficient as perceived by the participants, they could overcome challenges such as substance abuse or use, physical health, learning challenges, teenage pregnancy, and single parenting.
6.4 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Since this is the first study of student retention and success or throughput in the public FET sector, the findings can not be compared with other empirical findings of this sector in South Africa. Generally it can be compared with some of the findings of studies conducted nationally in higher education and internationally in community colleges. This study was also conducted only on a micro scale with full-time first-year successful students at one particular campus of a selected FET college. It should also be noted that instructional offerings differ from campus to campus. This could limit the generalizations of the findings to the broader FET College sector. Part-time students were also not included in the study.

6.5 RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE STUDY

It is of paramount importance to prevent student dropout caused by the high costs involved. Low retention rates cannot be attributed to one factor only. The findings of the study highlight the importance of understanding the complex interaction of a multitude of factors which contribute to student retention and success. Inferred from the statement, low retention and success rates overall and the important findings of this research, the challenge for FET colleges now are to increase the number of successful first-year students. This can be achieved by enhancing services based on the aforementioned findings of the study highlighted. The findings are also indicative
of the multiple roles of social work in advocating for services that will promote the overall wellbeing, academic capacity building and life skills development of the student. These services can be offered by social workers on campus through student counseling and support. Hence, to prevent student dropout in the first-year and increase retention and throughput it is crucial for management of further education and training institutions to plan intervention strategies in collaboration with social work counsellors or practitioners.

Social workers can play an important role to link students with the environmental support systems highlighted in the research findings such as financial aid schemes, employment opportunities, mentoring student progress to prevent early dropout; design and offer training for academic capacity building and personal development to cope with academic demands, achieve success and to become employable. They can also interface with public support systems mainly transportation, internet and libraries to enhance their services to benefit the students. Assist first-year students with their transition from secondary school to further education and training institutions, develop self-efficacy and to make the right career-choice independently during induction.

Social work counselors perform the role of mediator to facilitate strong alliances between students and all stakeholders to enable them to persist and succeed. Delivering mezzo social work at further education and training institutions in the
form of group support and or peer help is of great significance to achieve success. Student counsellors, study groups, rehabilitation support, trusting relationships with family members, role models and academia were experienced by the participants key factors in their interpersonal relationships to achieve success.

Undergraduates value most highly academic advisors who functions as mentors or counselors and who are accessible, helpful and approachable. In two recent reviews of research related to the underachievement of academically talented students a caring adult, such as a counselor, a coach or an academic content teacher, can help to reverse the process of underachievement. Thus, more revenue should be invested in the invaluable role social work can play in the prevention of early student dropout.

Student decisions about staying or leaving is increasingly affected by academic advising as one of the major academic and social domains of the college experience. Hence, academic advising is referred to as the cornerstone of student retention. Academic advising exerts a significant impact on student retention through its positive association with, and mediation of, factors that are strongly associated with student persistence, namely: student satisfaction with the college experience, effective educational and career planning and decision-making, student utilization of campus support services, student-faculty contact outside the classroom, and student mentoring.
The most important predictor of success and retention in the first year is student involvement. For students to be retained and achieve success, it is imperative for management and academia to interface with students on this level. Developmental advising has the greatest impact through supporting challenging students to take advantage of learning opportunities outside of their formal classes and to use the human and programmatic resources to promote development of their talents and broaden cultural awareness. In this instance academia and management should be flexible to address students’ developmental needs holistically. Hence, services should be in balance with these needs for example academic support, sports, media services, student counseling and after hour contact with academia. Developmental advising has a multiplier effect that increases students’ involvement in institutional programmes and services; this positively influences retention for the institution and increases the overall impact of educational experiences for students. To establish a high degree of commitment to the academic advising process, university and college administrators must therefore become cognizant of both the educational value of advising but of the role advising plays in the retention of students.

The findings of this research can be further explored by comprehensive quantitative studies and/or a combination of qualitative and quantitative studies including all FET colleges on national level to build up a rich source of knowledge to assist these
colleges and their student population with increased retention and success rates especially within the current climate in higher education in South Africa.

6.5 CONCLUSION

Seidman (2005) claims that community colleges have become “an educational melting pot” because of their open admissions and ease of accessibility. Access alone may not be enough; rather, the particular needs and circumstances of an increasingly diverse population must be identified and addressed by the colleges to ensure retention and success for all students. This is apparent by the findings perceived and experienced by the participants of the study under discussion. This study is a classical example of the current situation of the public FET colleges in South Africa. Against the backdrop of these findings knowledge can be built through ongoing research in the FET College sector to better understand the needs of their student population, and improve strategies to increase the rates of retention and throughput.
LIST OF REFERENCES


Ferreira, L.S. 2002. The design, implementation, and evaluation of student support and development services in further education and training colleges in South Africa. Philosophiae Doctor in Educational Psychology. University of the Western Cape.


Rand Afrikaans University (2001). *Ethical standards for research*.


ADDENDUM A

INFORMATION SHEET

Project Title: Successful First Year Students’ Perceptions and Experiences of Retention and Throughput at a Selected FET College

What is this study about?
This is a research project being conducted by Sharifa Hartley-Ohlson at the University of the Western Cape. We are inviting you to participate in this research project because you passed all your subjects in your first-year enrolment of 2007 at Northlink Further Education and Training College (FETC). The purpose of this research project is to get information from you of your experience of success. Your information will be valuable in assisting the college to improve their services and also help other students to achieve success.

What will I be asked to do if I agree to participate?
You will be asked to:

• Sign the consent form
• If you are under 18, your parents also need to sign a consent form
• Report for the interview session at Protea campus on the arranged date and time
• The duration of the interview session will be 2 hours
• Questions for the discussion include amongst others: your perception of what contributed to your success, obstacles you had to overcome, the influence of family and friends to perform, support from the college, important factors that helped you to achieve success, and how the college can help students to achieve success
• Respect the ground rules and confidential information of the group.

Would my participation in this study be kept confidential?
We will do our best to keep your personal information confidential. To help protect your confidentiality, information shared by you and the group members will be stored in a locked storage area, identification codes will be used on information forms and password-protected computer files will be used. Only the researcher will have access to your information.

If we write a report or article about this research project, your identity will be protected to the maximum extent possible.

What are the risks of this research?
There are no known risks associated with participating in this research project.
What are the benefits of this research? This research is not designed to help you personally, but the results may help the investigator learn more about the challenges students have to deal with to achieve success. We hope that, in the future, other people might benefit from this study through improved understanding of factors that contribute to student success.

Do I have to be in this research and may I stop participating at any time? Your participation in this research is completely voluntary. You may choose not to take part at all. If you decide to participate in this research, you may stop participating at any time. If you decide not to participate in this study or if you stop participating at any time, you will not be penalized or lose any benefits for which you otherwise qualify.

Is any assistance available if I am negatively affected by participating in this study? Yes, you will be debriefed and also referred appropriately to a student counsellor or other professional for further assistance should it be necessary.

What if I have questions? This research is being conducted by Sharifa Hartley-Ohlson of the Social Work Department at the University of the Western Cape. If you have any questions about the research study itself, please contact Sharifa Hartley-Ohlson at:

Northlink FET College
Protea Campus
80 Voortrekker Road
Bellville
Telephone: 021-9462240.

Should you have any questions regarding this study and your rights as a research participant or if you wish to report any problems you have experienced related to the study, please contact:

Head of Department:
Dean of the Faculty of Community and Health Sciences:
University of the Western Cape
Private Bag X17
Bellville 7535

The University of the Western Cape’s Senate Research Committee and Ethics Committee has approved this research.
ADDENDUM B

CONSENT FORM

Title of Research Project: Successful First Year Students’ Perception and Experiences of Retention and Throughput at a Selected FET College

The study has been described to me in language that I understand and I freely and voluntarily agree to participate. My questions about the study have been answered. I understand that my identity will not be disclosed and that I may withdraw from the study without giving a reason at any time and this will not negatively affect me in any way.

I .................................................................. undertake to participate in the group discussion and will not disclose any names, private and/or personal information of the group members without their permission, and will sign the ground rules including confidentiality as set out and agreed upon by the group members.

Participant’s name.............................................
Participant’s signature..........................................
Date..........................................................  

Should you have any questions regarding this study or wish to report any problems you have experienced related to the study, please contact the study coordinator:

Study Coordinator’s Name: Sharifa Hartley-Ohlson

University of the Western Cape

Private Bag X17, Bellville 7535

Telephone: (021) 959-2277

Cell: 0824494573

Fax: (021) 959-2277

Email: sohlson@northlink.co.za
ADDENDUM C

PARENTAL CONSENT FORM

Title of Research Project: Successful First Year Students’ Perceptions and Experiences of Retention and Throughput at a Selected FET College

We are inviting your son/daughter to participate in the research project. Since the student is under the age of 18, your consent is required for him/her to participate. There are no known risks of his/her participation in the study. He/she must also undertake to participate in the group discussion and sign a contract of agreement to keep confidentiality and to respect the ground rules of the group discussions.

I confirm that the study has been described to me and questions posed were answered in language that I understand. I understand that my son/daughter will participate voluntarily that his/her identity will not be disclosed, and that he/she can withdraw from the study at any time without having to give a reason. Such a step will not deprive him/her of his/her rights and privileges.

I…………………………………hereby give/do not give consent for my daughter/son……………………………..to participate voluntarily in the research project.

Parent’s/Guardian’s name…………………………………………

Relationship……………………………………

Parent’s/Guardian’s signature……………………………………

Date…………………………
Should you have any questions regarding this study or wish to report any problems you have experienced related to the study, please contact the study coordinator:

**Study Coordinator's Name: Sharifa Hartley-Ohlson**

University of the Western Cape

Private Bag X17, Belville 7535

Telephone: (021) 959-2277

Cell: 0824494573

Fax: (021) 959-2845

Email: sohlson@northlink.co.za
ADDENDUM D

Your e-mail to the CEO, dated 31 October refers.

Mr. Beech has contacted me and devolved the authority to use my discretion in this regard, to make arrangements with you. Following our consequent discussion, I wish to confirm that:

1. Our resources, (telephone, e-mail, paper and printing), are available to you to conduct your research. You have agreed that these will be used within reason to minimize costs.

2. Classroom facilities will be made available after hours, (seeing that your sample group is currently busy with examinations, therefore there would not be any interruption in their contact time).

3. With regard to your time spent on the project, I would suggest that you negotiate this particular aspect with Mr. Pierre de Waal - Manager Student Support Services.

Northlink wishes you well with your research and we trust that the results of the study will be made available to the Institution.

Yours faithfully

Nolan Kearns
Campus Manager: Protea
Inductive Categorization of findings to the open ended questions related to the themes of environmental systems

ENVIRONMENTAL SYSTEMS

INDUCTIVE CATEGORIES

Academia
Secondary School Vs FET college
Secondary school environment
Academic performance
Socio-economic reasons
Learning difficulties
Academic atmosphere
FET College Environment
Academic performance
Work history of students
Career path
Career Decision-Making
Changing Career
Freedom of Choice
Career Interests
Hard times
Career goals and values
Academic atmosphere
Transition from school/work to FETC
Adaptation to student diversity
Age Difference
Different academic levels
Disruptive behaviour
Racial conflict
College administration
Long college hours
Packed classes
Positive sources of influence
Student orientation
Freedom to exercise own choices
Keeping own identity
Role of student support services
Lecturer’s attitudes toward students
Acceptance and respect
Dropout failure prevention measures
Regular communication
Open/ flexible communication channels
Problem intervention
Monitoring progress and attendance
Getting positive feedback
Strict rules
Taking ownership/responsibility
Time management
Attendance requirements
Exposure to the world of work
Preparing students for the job market
In-service training
Trusting relationship
Examination preparation
Negative sources of influence
Lecturer’s attitudes toward students
Insensitivity towards students needs
Disrespect self-worth
Intimidation
Lack of support
Damage your self-esteem
In-effective management
Lack of communication
Inconsistent/unreliable
Disorganized
Late Assignments
Physical environment
Health and safety
Student facilities
Campus security
Student academic resources
Student support services
Counselling
Study facility
Internet
Library
Family
living environment
Neighbourhood/community
Transport
Socio-economic background
Role of family
Consistent Caring
Interested in performance
Feelings of Security/Safety
Motivates
Regular Communication
Future
Advice
Problem Solving
Teaches Values
Acknowledgement/Praise
Builds Resilience
Boost Self-esteem
Social integration

**Friends**
Positive influences/Functional behaviour
Group identification
Group conformity:
Respecting group values
Sense of belonging
Acceptance
Sharing common problems
Speak same language
Studying easier
Respect family values
Study groups
Group norms and standards
Peer Help/Support groups
Co-operation
Group commitment
Responsible
Peer help/group support
Peer intervention
Role models
Leadership
Setting an example
Goal directed
PARTICIPANTS’ RESPONSES TO INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Secondary school environment - academic performance - Dropouts: “Quit school”
“Left school” “Dropped out of school” “Failed grade 11” “Failed twice in grade 10”
“Used to failing” “Passed grade 10” “Passed grade 9” “Passed grade 8”. Socio-
economic reasons – Teenage pregnancy “Swanger geraak op skool” Lack of
family support: “Didn’t have anyone that believed in me” “Had to do everything
for myself” Drug abuse: “Started doing drugs at school” “Nobody really supporting
me” “wasted money” Learning difficulties: “Struggled with studying at school”
“Couldn’t cope” “Wasn’t motivated” “It was boring” “Not interested in school”
“Not interested in the school curriculum” Academic atmosphere: “Not a good
environment to learn” “You cant concentrate on the work” “Packed classes” “Too
much noise” “Constant fighting” “Disrespect toward teachers”

FET College Environment - academic performance: Passed all subjects; Pass rate
percentage: > 60 = 13 < 60 = 25 (population sample 38). Work history of students:
“Worked part-time and study” “Home for two years after leaving school” “Gewerk
as verpleegster vir 20 jaar” Career Decision-Making - Career interests: “You are
here to study something that you like” “Wil ‘n chef geraak het” “Geniet dit baie in
die kombuis” Changing career: “Gewerk as verpleegster” “Wil eers’n chef geraak
het” “Daai tyd was die geld nie daar nie” Freedom of choice: “Nobody forced you”
“Wanted to do the course” “Knew what I wanted to do” “Its something you want to
do” Hard times: “Having had all my obstacles” ”Had to get out of the situation”
“Had to become someone in life” “Pick up my life” Career goals – Economic
**benefits:** “Mense kry swaar wat nie geleerd““ Wil nie sonder geld sit nie” “Want a good job” “Want to be out there” “Not a mediocre job” “Want a good salary” “Earn good money” **Career values:** “Education is important” “If you want to live like a king, you must work like a slave” “Want security” “Want to be successful” “Want to live a better life” “To have a better life for my child and myself” “Become independent” **Academic atmosphere:** “This is the right place to be” “This is the right place to study” “Everyone is positive” “You feel good” “Die eerste dag was jy opgewonde”

**Transition from school/work to FETC - Adaptation to student diversity - Age difference:** “Dink aan die feit dat ek die oudste is” “Dit was baie swaar” “Afkom tot hulle level maak dit makliker” “Youngest in class” “Taunted and made fun of me” “Very hard” **Different academic levels:** “A lot of people here are drop outs” “Some of them were promoted” “Didn’t know how to handle the children in class” **Disruptive behaviour:** “People come in and disrupt things” “Some of them carry on with their own ways” “Realized this place is going to give you hell” **Racial conflict:** “Die enigste wit mens in die klas” “Uitsit” “Behoort nie by die college nie” “Nie daaraan gesteur nie” “’n Tydjie gevat om te aanvaar” **College administration - Packed classes:** “Give you hell” “Didn’t know how to handle the children in class” “Moeilik om in ‘n groot klas te konsentreer” “Moes baie hard werk om te leer” **Long college hours:** “Het lank gevat om aan te pas by die tyd” “One break of half an hour only, too short” “Some days have to wait for 1 – 2 hours before next period starts” “Gap is too big between morning and afternoon classes” **Impact on**
student performance/functioning: “Too tired to work” “Bunk” “Go home” “Fall behind with the work” “Disappointed with empty class, only 2 students” “Loose motivation”

Educational services - Books supply: “Always late” “Not allowed into classes without books” “Lecturers put us outside” College fees - Affordability: “Higher than school fees” Library: “No service” “Utilize outside resources” “Travel to a library outside living area” “Get home late” “Not enough time for homework and relaxation” Internet: “Use during lecturing time only under supervision” “Some lecturers don’t allow you to use the internet” “Not available after hours” “Use outside facilities” Social cultural activities: “No sports for ladies” “Christian fellowship no longer exists”

Positive sources of influence - Student orientation: “Get to know everyone” “Get to understand what was expected of you” “Put you at ease” “Didn’t help much”

Freedom to exercise own choices: “No one forces you to keep up” “Dit is anders as skool” “Jy het vryheid” “Het vakke wat jy wil doen” “Jy het uitgesien om in die klas te wees”

Keeping own identity: “You could come with casual clothes” “You feel more mature” “At school you were treated like a child” “Here you could smoke without any trouble”

Student support and development services - Role of student support services: “As dit nie vir student support services was nie, sal baie studente uitloop” “Geweet daar is iemand met wie jy kon praat” “Baie gehelp met finansiele hulp, akademies en probleme”

Participation in student development programmes – MOT character building programme: “Sessions helped with racial issues”
“Respect one another” “Motivate each other” “Encourage students to be successful”

Peer education programme: “Understand the person next to you” “Great experience” “Eye opener” SRC leadership programme: “Eye opener”

Lecturer’s attitudes toward students - Acceptance and respect: Aanvaarding en respek het vir jou die go ahead gegee” “Hulle het jou belangrik laat voel” “Jy is hier om te studeer” “Its comforting” “Gave us hope”

Dropout failure prevention measures - Regular communication: “Het altyd met jou gepraat; wou die college los om te gaan werk” Open/ flexible communication channels: “As jy uitgebly het, het hulle jou gevra of hulle die werk van gister aan jou moet verduidelik” “As jy nie by die een onderwyser hulp gekry het nie, kon jy altyd na ‘n ander onderwyser gaan vir hulp” “Hulle wil he dat ons moet slaag”

Problem intervention - Attending to Complaints/Problems Immediately: “Received great support from the program manager” “Jy kon kla by die lecturers” “Hulle het die saak sommer onmiddellik aangevat”

Strict rules - Building Resilience: “You had to adhere to the rules” “Gave you guidelines not to get into trouble” “It made you strong”

Equal Treatment: “Almal gelyk behandel” “Dieselfde punishment” “Nie na ouderdom gekyk nie”

Monitoring progress and attendance – Acknowledgement/ Praise: “Geprys voor al die studente as jy 90% gekry het” “Omgegee hoe leerders presteer en wanneer hulle afwesig was”

Positive Feedback: “Getting positive feedback” “Print in your mind that you will pass” “Its comforting” “Gave us hope” “Making you feel you will do good”

Taking ownership/responsibility: “You were treated like big grown up people” “If you don’t listen they disown you” “They don’t help
you unless you step up and make an effect”  
**Time management:** “Had to hand in assignments on time” “Be on time for classes” 
**Attendance requirements:** “You had to attend classes 80% to graduate to the next level” “Should you bunk, you loose 30% of your attendance”  
**In-service training:** “Practical classes were of great benefit” “Taught you how to deal with pressure on the job” 
**Trusting relationship:** “Hulle was eerlik met ons” “Jy sal dit maak of jy sal dit nie maak nie” “Het hard met ons gepraat” “Dit het bygedra om harder te leer en ‘n sukses te maak” “Pushes you to pass”  
**Examination preparation:** “Clues gegee oor wat ons moet studeer” “Ou vraestelle van die afgelope drie jaar gegee om vir die eksamen uit te werk” “Kernnotas gegee het, sodat ons dit beter kon onthou”  
**Extra Tuition Classes:** “Studente wat nie verstaan het nie, kon na klasse kom om aan hulle die werk te verduidelik” “As ons nie verstaan nie kan ons weer terug gaan en vra”  
**Negative sources of influence - Lecturer’s attitudes toward students:**  
**In sensitivity toward students needs:** “Would shut you down in front of people” “Make you feel unimportant” “Rude” “Intimidate you and speak sarcastically” “You’re scared to go ask for help” “Make you come in irrespective of how sick you are”  
**Lack of support:** “No support when you needed to talk or go to somebody” “They don’t care what you do” They’re just there to teach you” “If they knew the problems students have, they wouldn’t be like that”  
**Damage your self-esteem:** “Put doubt in your mind” “Would ask what you are doing here” “Kan afbreek” “Hou nie van jou as jy iets se nie”  
**In-effective management:** “Sometimes there’s no communication from management” “When you ask about something they don’t
know” “If there wasn’t a lecturer they would not come and tell you”

**Inconsistent/Unreliable:** “They teach you to cope with the hours but they are not there” “When you go to class there is no one” “You wasted your time and our course is though” “Disappointed in the way management manages”

**Disorganized - Delays:** “Give assignments on last day before exams start” “Late marks” “Start late” “Absent” “Feel overwhelmed by all the work they have to do”

**Physical environment:** “The toilets are filthy” “Smelling” “Cafeteria not clean” “Unhygienic” “Not up to standard” “Food is too expensive” “Portions too small” “Not nutritional” “Lack variety” “Campus security too little” “Not sufficient”

**Living environment:** “Clean” “Calm” “No noise” “No unexpected visits” “No gang violence” “No crime” “Good teachers”

**Socio-economic background:** “Family have good education” “Mother a teacher” “Professionals” “Successful business people”

**Role of family – Student education:** “Priority” “Pays for studies” “Put a lot of money into studies” “Wants the best for you” “To progress in life”

**Consistent Caring:** “People who love you support you” “Mother always there for you” “Helps you to achieve your goals” “Ma het druk geplaas oor werk” “As ek terug kyk is dit wat saak maak in die lewe” “Wil weet of ek veilig is of iets nodig het” “Father provide in financial needs” “Expects you to succeed” “Motiveer” “Bedoel goed”

**Interested in performance:** “Attend parent meetings” “Monitor performance” “Put your mind at ease”

**Acknowledgement:** “Praise” “Applaud you every step of the way”

**Builds Resilience:** “Family support put you together” “Gives you strength” “Taught you right from wrong”

**Regular Communication:** “Speak to you a lot”
“Check on studies and ask questions” **Feelings of Security/Safety:** “Wil weet of ek veilig is of iets nodig het” “Father provide in financial needs” “Expects you to succeed” **Extended family support:**

**Lack of family support:** “Students with no support systems give up and go work” “Family can support you or break you down” “Kan by jou staan of afkraak”

**Unrealistic parental Expectations:** “Party ouers is baie hard op hul kinders” “Gee hulle te veel ouerlike pligte” “Moet amper die hele huishouding oorneem” **Stress:** “Die stryd is te heavy; kry baie stry” “Moet iets gebruik om jou stress level te laat weeggaan”

**Family values – Materialism:** “kry ouers wat net materialistiese dinge vir jou gee” “Dit moet nou alles wees” **Lack of parental interest and commitment – Academic progress:** “Het nog nie my rapport gesien nie” “het nie gevra nie” “Daar is nie genoeg belangstelling nie” **Parent meetings:** “Kom nie ouer vergaderings bywoon nie” “Die lecturers het uitgekyk, maar dan was die ouers nie daar nie”

**Friends – Positive influences – Functional behaviour -Study groups:** “Ons het altyd saamgewerk aan take” “Studeer saam ,gee idees en help mekaar” **Role models - Setting an example:** “They always looked at me as an example” “very competitive” “Top student” “Altyd gese hulle gaan my verbysteek” **Leadership:** “Moes sien dat hulle ook hard werk” “help them to understand difficult work” “Motivates you not to drop out” “Always in class” “Never late, never absent” **Peer Help/Group Support:** “Ons het altyd saamgewerk aan take en mekaar gehelp” “Vir jou werk gevat en gehou” “Van hulle het nie ‘n computer nie” “Ons tik vir hulle hul
take” “Keep work up to date, stay after college to do tasks” “Motivate you not to drop out” Peer Intervention: “Studente wat verkeerde dinge doen” “‘n Groepie van ons wil hulle help” “Waarsku hulle eers dan kla ons hulle aan”

Friends - Negative influences - Dysfunctional behaviour - Non-conformity/Non-compliance - Anti-social behaviour: “Do wrong things like smoking weed/pot and coming late to classes” Poor adjustment: “Jy kan nie deurdring tot hulle nie; dit vat lank” “Jy kan maar praat en praat” Poor attendance: “When you’re with bad friends you don’t go to class” “You bunk” Poor self-image - “Put you down with words” “Your marks drop” “You are afraid” “You don’t have extra energy to get up in the mornings for college” Unreliable: “Learnt a lesson” “Not supportive” “Rejects you” “Later saw their true colours”
INTERVIEW EXAMPLE

I: What do you think contributed to your achievement of success with your studies in your first year?

P: Putting your priorities first, attend college everyday, listen attentively in class while the teacher is giving a lesson and doing your homework often, that’s it.

I: You’re saying that to listen attentively was important for you, doing homework regularly and putting your priorities first. Can you explain to me about your priorities? What do you mean by saying putting your priorities first?

P: When it comes to college, there’s no coming in late and you know college is the next day, doing your homework, waking up every morning on time, being in class on time etc. Everything has to be up to standard, what has to be done has to be done.

I: So will you also explain to me how you actually managed to do that?

P: I didn’t even know if I would pass at the end of the year.

I: So are you saying that your goal was to actually pass last year and how do you feel about having achieved success through your sacrifices?

P: You feel proud about yourself at the end of the day, you can better yourself, you think about yourself and you get a positive attitude towards life.

I: Were you the only person that actually helped you to become so disciplined?

P: That’s all up to you ja, no one can tell you what to do, everything is up to you, your choices that you make in life and where you want to be, so basically ja myself.

I: Ok. And from your family side, did they also have any contribution to make to assist you?

P: Ja, there was like lots of motivation as well but they just said it’s up to yourself at the end of the day they can tell you what to do but if you don’t do it. It’s nothing, so ja and willpower.

I: Anything else that you want to mention?

P: I feel that I was motivated and I wanted to pass. I didn’t want to go back to school.

I: Are you saying that you were motivated. You didn’t want to return to school so you worked hard?

P: Yes miss.

I: About the school what is it that you are trying to say that you did not want to go back to school. What happened at school?

P: If I come and fail here and return back to school then its like I am a failure.
I: So you feared that you would fail and that’s why you worked hard? You came to the college with what grade?
P: I passed grade 9
I: So you passed grade 9 and came to the college and you never failed in school yet?
P: No miss.
I: Ok so you wanted to be here at college?
P: Yes miss
I: So are you happy here?
P: Yes miss
I: The main reason why you worked so hard last year was because you did not to fail and go back to school?
P: Yes miss.
I: Anything else? Silence…by working hard to achieve success how did your family assist you at home?
P: They motivated me to work hard.
I: How do you perceive things and what is your ultimate goal in life?
P: To make a success of life. I want to live a better life than the one I am living now.
I: You want a better life than the one you living now. So can I ask you to explain a little bit more to me about living a better life to the one you living now?
P: I live a nice life but I want to excel more.
I: So you are saying that you want a good job one day and earn a good salary?
P: Yes miss, to live life to the fullest.
I: To live life to the fullest, so you just want to have a good life?
P: I want security, for security reasons.
I: Anything else you would like to say?
P: Nothing

Verification Summary

I just want to verify your information on question one. You wanted to pass so you always put your priorities first. You kept your focus on the important college activities i.e. to attend college regularly, going to bed early, getting up early to be on time, doing your task and listening attentively in class.
Self-motivation and discipline a pre-requisite for your success: You both were self-motivated to pass. A response from one of you was that you could not see yourself going back to school. So there was a fear of failure too. You also wanted to improve yourselves by being committed and working hard. You wanted to experience personal success at college. You also had your family that stood behind you which influenced you to achieve success. They encouraged you to perform without putting pressure on you, allowing you to make your own choices.
Influences from outside; things that you want to achieve after your studies:
To be equipped for the career that you want to follow, to earn a good salary, to take care of yourself and to live a life better than the one you have. An important factor you mentioned is to enjoy security in life one day, meaning that you want to have economic benefits of studying. When you finish your studies you want to go out and work to earn a good salary and to do things in life you can afford, and to live a life better than the one you have. Yes miss.

I: What personal obstacles did you have to overcome in order to be successful?
P: Consumption of drugs, staying motivated to come to college and studying.
I: I want to ask you a few questions around your answers. The first one you said was consumption of drugs you had to face. Now can you tell me how you actually managed to deal with this obstacle?
P: By saying no, [Staying with my goals]… [Inaudible]
I: I want you to speak from your heart. Tell me about your experiences. So are you saying that you were actually consuming drugs last year? Can you explain to us what happened and who assisted you? How did you overcome it?
P: Through friends miss motivation and my own personal willpower.
I: How long were you on drugs?
P: About two, three years miss.
I: When you came to the college you were already on drugs? You say that you and your friends were motivated and your willpower helped you to stop?
P: Yes miss.
I: Tell me how did your friends assist you?
P: Miss they use to tell me don’t do drugs and don’t drink alcohol and so on. I spend time with them and not the other friends that use drugs.
I: And your family did they have any role to play to assist you?
P: They never knew ms.
I: They never knew, it was only you and your friends that knew about it? So your friends that you mingled with were they of great value to you to assist you to overcome your habit during this time?
P: Yes miss.
I: The assistance of your friend, the motivation, how do you feel that you have overcome the obstacle?
P: Uplifted ms
I: You feel good about yourself. Did it have any effects on your studies at the time?
P: Yes miss.
I: What did it affect and how?
P: My studies and my attendance.
I: When you started to pick up was it difficult to keep track with your studies? You are in hospitality services; a course that is demanding time wise
having to do your practical work, in-service training etc. How did you cope with all of that?

P: Somehow I’ve coped with it.
I: Are you happy now that you have made it through successfully?
P: Yes miss.
I: Apart from this challenge can you talk to me about the second one.
P: Remaining still motivated toward my studies at the college? That was hard work and sacrifice
I: Your self-motivation was not to fail and to go back to school again? Can I go back and reflect on the first obstacle, the habit of doing drugs? Did you start doing drugs at school if I may ask?
P: Yes ms
I: So you did not want to go back to school, because you knew that you would fall back into the habit of doing drugs again?
P: I struggled with studying.
I: What is it about studying that you have a problem with?
P: I wasn’t motivated and it was boring for me too miss.
I: Do you think it was related to the drug consumption?
P: Yes ms
I: When you came off the drug habit, did you start feeling better?
P: Yes ms
I: And starting to enjoy studying?
P: Yes ms
I: I must congratulate you for achieving so much during this time.
P: Cutting the bad friends and making the right friends that will carry you through at college. Quit partying and participating in the group activities at college, stay away from bad influences at college.
I: I want you to go through it one at a time. Cut out bad friends cause they keep you behind. Now let us look at bad friends. If you look at bad friends can you explain what you are referring to about your bad friends?
P: They influenced you when you are trying to study, always bank. They will influence you miss and do wrong things like smoking weed, pot and stuff like that between college hours and coming late to classes.
I: You say you were exposed to these kinds of friends here at the college? What did it take for you to actually overcome this?
P: By wanting to pass the level.
I: Was last year your first year at the college and you came from school?
P: Yes miss.
I: You failed at school?
P: Yes miss, grade eleven.
I: When did you realise that this is not for you?
P: It was from the second quarter miss.
I: Then you started to focus on what you needed to do and it also helped you to become more disciplined?
P: Yes miss.

I: It also helped you to prioritise as you said in your previous question? Yes. Okay, can you talk to me about second obstacle you’ve mentioned?

P: I think what helped me through to the next level was sticking with people who do there homework, that’s in class, also gives me motivation to be there.

I: It was a challenge for you to have to start making new friends and gel with the better friends as you have said?

P: Yes miss because coming out of a bad environment you has your ups and downs. With your new friends you won’t know how to talk with them, communicate with them. At the end you get use to them miss, you start to gel in with them then things are all right. It was challenging.

I: So it was very challenging? Were they open to you when you actually started to make friends with them?

P: No, because they will tell you don’t do this, don’t do that because that’s not the way they do it. The olds friends won’t do that, they will drag you with them down and so that was also motivating somehow. I always say its up to you; if you do want to listen they can’t force you.

I: So you are saying that good friends have norms and standards? And you have to actually accept their norms and standards and adjust to it to be accepted by them completely.

P: Yes miss.

I: Do you feel good about it?

P: Yes miss. You get confidence in yourself to get to their level and reap the benefit of passing.

I: Can you tell me more about the group activities you participated in?

P: When you’re with bad friends you don’t go to class, you bank class. You won’t go to class so that’s why I say keeping yourself busy so that you know you will have success at the end of the year miss. Group tasks, you must keep yourself busy. You can’t just think you will get marks if you work in a group. You must bring your side as well.

I: You also had to work hard to bring your side in the group?

P: Yes miss.

I: Very good! Anything else?

P: I had to quit partying miss, because I partied a lot and that was an obstacle I had to overcome because I had to know the next day is college. It was difficult but I had to give it up.

I: Ok, quitting partying you say was something that you had to consider because it was affecting your work?

P: Yes miss, I had to come to college and study miss.
I: Did it take a lot of courage/motivation to do that? Yes miss. So when you disappointed your friends by not going to the parties, how did you deal with it?

P: I would keep myself away from them miss because I knew that my goal was to pass at the end of the year. They wont probably be there when I get my results. Their lives are sorted out already I still have to sort out my life.

I: Are you happy with your achievement and development to this end?

P: I feel great about it?

I: You feel good about yourself.

Verification Summary
Having to overcome peer pressure
Drug addiction or drug habit
Willpower to success
Good choices that help you eventually to make it to this point
Tenacity even when things weren’t going well that is to endure even to persevere
To stick to your choices that you’ve made
Having developed to this maturity level to be able to identify your shortcomings and how to have overcome that
Also be focused with the goals that you set your priorities to achieve that
Also your social interaction with your friends is important and also by keeping busy and staying out of the wrong doing that will have a negative impact on your future events

I: Tell me about family and how it influence student success.

P: Family plays a role because I have an uncle to whom I look up to. He also reached success and I also want to reach success in the end. That also influenced me telling me which was right and which was wrong. There was all support from my family miss. Good motivation and that was really a positive outcome. It was last year.

I: Are you saying that you really feel safe with the support of your family in that they are always there for you?

P: Yes miss.

I: And really show an interest in your welfare and progress in life? So you can really lean on them because they are great supporters and motivators in your life?

P: Yes miss.

I: Both your mother and father?

P: Both of them.

I: Who of your mother and your father is the one that you look up to the most?

P: My father. We have long chats, talking about the future and he helps me when I bump my head. He is always there for me to help me overcome an obstacle. I always ask for advice from him. So you have a really good relationship with him?
P: Yes miss. So is he your role model? Yes miss.
P: Inaudible…
I: Encourage you to do well. If you talk about your family can you specify whom in the family?
P: My mother and father.
I: Can you explain to me about your mother? Her contribution?
P: She was there to motivate me.
I: And your father?
P: He just encourages me to do well miss.
I: Your mother is it for emotional support?
P: Motivation and support.
I: How does she motivate and support you?
P: By showing me what is right and wrong and not to be a failure.
I: And with your studies how does she help you? She motivates and encourages me to wake up and to go to college all the time. And your dads’ contribution?
P: It’s basically the same as my mother.
I: Are you saying they both show an interest in your achievement and well-being?
P: Yes miss.
I: They encourage and motivate you to see that you achieve the success that you want?
P: Yes miss. They also financially support me.
I: Can you explain to me how they financially support you?
P: They give me money to come to college and pay the stuff that I need miss. Also you’re college expenses?
P: Yes miss.
I: Did they pay for your school fees last year?
P: Yes miss.
I: Didn’t you get a NSFAS bursary?
P: No miss.
I: Did you apply for the bursary?
P: Yes miss but it was declined? Yes miss and this year?
I: Did you apply for the bursary for this year?
P: Yes miss but it was also declined.

Verification Summary
Family plays an important role in your success
They are always there to motivate you and give you the support that you need
They are also good role models
They are there to encourage you to achieve your success
They are also there to give you financial support personally and for your college expenses
For you it is very important to proof to your family that you can achieve success
It’s also important to make them happy in your life

I: What role do friends play in performance?
P: Some things have a positive role in your performance and some things have a negative role in your performance. If you stick with the right friends and the right choices you will not land up in a place where you don’t want to be. When you have the right friends and make the right choices you will have success in the end and end up in the right places.

I: Is that what you experienced with your friends that you had last year?
P: Yes miss.
I: So you had the negative ones which you realised it was not going to benefit you in the end and you had to either choose good friends or stay with the negative friends?
P: Yes miss.
I: And you have experienced the benefit of it?
P: Yes miss.
I: Tell me about your social interaction? What are the things that you do together?
P: We study together we focus on how to complete a task. We always like to aim for the best together miss; to be the best and to succeed miss.
I: So in your circle of friends you always try to do your best?
P: Yes miss.
I: Some of you will be doing better than the others, so how does that affect you in the group?
P: That just give me more motivation to do better miss, because it almost like a battery because you want to do better and that pushes your marks up and you like get an A miss. So there’s always competition in that group miss, good influence.
I: So you say it’s a good and healthy influence. When you have problems, how do they assist you to overcome the problems?
P: Just to be there for you miss, to listen attentively to you. To have a friend that can always listens to you is good miss because having no one to listen to you can be very frustrating and can lead to lots of dangers as well miss being a teenager.
I: Do you experience that when you have a problem you can go to them and talk to them about it?
P: Yes miss.
I: So you had trust in your friends and that enabled you to cope with the academic demands and problems.

P: Yes miss.

I: do you feel that there are some things that you can speak to them about and some things that you can speak to your family about?

P: Yes miss.

I: What can you discuss with them?

P: The more personal problems you can discuss with your family miss and girlfriend problems you discuss with your friends miss because you will get problems if you speak to your family about that. That’s why most of the time that’s why friends are there miss. And if you come with another thing they will have a meeting about it miss you won’t go to your family. Family is there for more moral support miss they like there for upliftment and stuff like that makes you feel good about yourself. You can go to your parent’s miss that’s how I operate miss.

I: So you have experienced both positive and negative influences. What was your experience with the negative friends?

P: They will just bring you down miss.

I: Were you doing the same things they were doing?

P: Yes miss.

I: Give me examples.

P: Like banking college, smoking weed and stuff like that. Coming home late in the evening miss. Stuff like that. Take your stuff of after college miss, never concentrating on college not wanting to get up in the morning to go to college miss. You don’t have extra energy to get up.

I: What effect did it have on your studies at the time?

P: It was difficult miss. My marks I could see was dropping miss then I was afraid because I didn’t want to be a failure I want to be a success and make the best of the situation, take the opportunity and grab it with both hands.

P: The good friends had a good influence on me and the bad friends had a bad influence on me.

I: Let’s take the first one: the good friends had a good influence on you. Explain it to us how?

P: They help you miss; they build you up miss you get a higher self esteem. You do better so you say they help you to develop a higher self-esteem?
I: How did they achieve this? What did they do to help you? You talk about higher self-esteem; do you know what it means?

P: Yes miss. It’s feeling better about yourself. They encourage you to do better and it makes you feel better.

I: Did your good friends spend a lot of time with you when you were on drugs?

P: Yes miss.

I: How did you feel that you had to be around them all the time just to stay away from the drug habit?

P: Bad miss but I knew that if I went back to the other friends that I will still smoke and using drugs that I would not come off it.

I: Do you have friends at the college that have a positive influence on you?

P: Inaudible

Verification Summary
Experience of good and bad friends’ influence
Good friends have a positive influence: enjoys healthy competition, they listen to you and encourage you to do better, you feel free to discuss problems with them, social and cultural influence happens that helps you grow personally, they make you feel good about yourself, and you study together to succeed.
Bad friends drag you down to their level; what not to become
Following their behaviour lead to poor performance

I: Talk to me about the role of support at college.

P: The rules of the college, timetable, line of authority…silence

I: How did it support you?

P: It gave us guidelines.

I: How did the guidelines help you?

P: Not to get in trouble.

I: Anything else that was of great help for you with your studies?

P: No.

I: The timetable, how did it assist you?

P: It showed us what classes you need to be on time for, not to have a low attendance rate.

I: What was it about the timetable that helped you to stay at the college?

P: It was new to me. I wasn’t used to having a long day with a short break. I wasn’t used to such a structured timetable. I had to be here for long hours.

I: What time did you start at the college?

P: From 8 o’clock till 11 o’clock, then we have a half-hours break and finish half past 2 or half past 3.

I: How did it help you to have a structured timetable?

P: At the beginning I had a problem but it forced me to work harder.

I: Talk to me about the line of authority at the college.
P: Knowing who to talk to when you have a problem, you would also know how big the problem was when you speak with them.
I: You’re saying that the rules, timetable and line of authority helped you a lot to achieve academic success?
P: Yes miss.
I: You also said that regular communication is important in your department, it helped you a lot?
P: Yes miss, when you don’t know something you can ask someone in the department.
I: So your experience at the college was good?
P: Yes miss.
I: Tell me about your experience from school to college. How did you find it to adjust to the college?
P: It’s simple. I’m not used to people being laid back.
I: Tell me more, how did you motivate yourself to adjust to college life?
P: I kept on telling myself in 3 years time this is going to be over and than I can go forward in life, do what I want to do.
I: Are you saying that you stick to your goal to be at the college?
P: Yes miss.
I: The rules, timetable and authority; did it also help you to adjust well?
P: Yes miss and my classmate I had a relationship with also helped.
I: How did you choose to follow this career path?
P: My cousin and I decided to do this course.
I: So you did not need assistance from the college to decide. When you came to the college did you go for student orientation?
P: Yes miss before college started.
I: How did it help you?
P: To get to know everyone and to understand what was expected from me
I: Was it easy for you to adjust after the student orientation?
P: Yes miss.
I: Were you also informed about the services the college renders?
P: Yes miss.
I: How was your reception at the administration block, were they of any assistance to you?
P: No miss.
I: So you just applied and enrolled as a student. Were there any programmes that you have participated in at the college?
P: The MOT programme.
I: How did you find the programme?
P: It was something new. I did not attend a lot of sessions.
I: Anything else you would like to say about the college or the support you got?
P: No miss.
I: Are you happy at the college
P: Yes miss.
I: Can you talk to me about the role of support at the college.

P: Bursaries, practical classes every Thursdays and Fridays were of great benefit, we have a smoking zone, rules of the college, and strict rules of the programme manager, personal space - you could come with casual clothes. It makes you feel more mature to come without a uniform to college. Here you can smoke without any trouble. It’s different from school At school you were treated like a child.

I: Tell me about the strict rules of your programme manager. What was it about the strict rules that assisted you in performing?

P: It made us strong. We were treated like big grown up people but also received great support from the programme manager. We had to hand in assignments on time and adhere to the rules of the college. Attending classes regularly is important. 80% attendance is required to graduate to the next level. We were taught how to deal with pressure on the job.

I: The recorder stopped working. Let me recap what you were saying on your social and academic adjustment: You’ve said it is equally important to be socially and academically well adjusted. If you are socially well adjusted you can perform academically well. You also mentioned about your friends that contribute towards coping academically in that you speak the same language. For example when you have a problem with an assignment, you can discuss it together. When you have a problem you can go to them and they will help you.

P: It’s good to have friends in the same course it makes studying easier.

I: So once again, you say that in order to adjust and do academically well at the college is to have friends that work together and with whom you can do things together.

Verification Summary
Just to check on question 5 and what you have said has been written down correctly:
The rules and regulations serve as guidelines to adjust
Expectations helped to cope with academic work (you knew what was expected of you)
College hours too long with a short break
Timetable and lecturing times are structured to help you to focus on your studies and to do well. It also helped you to become disciplined.
Communication is vital to achieve success. In your department you had regular communication with the lecturers. It is important since you knew who to go to for help if you had a problem and that it would be attended to.
You also realise that college is only one aspect of your life that you have to do well in but that if you do well it will help you to do well in all other aspects of your life.
Good College environment: You mentioned that you love the college environment since it is different from school life. At college you don’t need to conform even
though you know the rules and what is expected of you, for example you may leave the college at anytime you wish to do so. You have the freedom to wear casual clothes and you can smoke in designated smoking areas without any interference. Good academic support: Received very good support from the programme manager and lecturers. You felt free and at ease to talk to them about your problems and they would attend to it. You were all treated the same, like adults and not children irrespective of your age differences. They were strict in the application of college rules and the standard requirements of the hospitality industry. They worked consistently to help you to successfully complete your training. Exposure to the reality of the world of work; practical or in-service training: Good experience to bring the theory and practical together also helped you to achieve success. At college you were trained how to handle the pressure and demands on the job site. Support from peers or classmates: Speak the same course language; studying is easier with their assistance. Student orientation aided with your adjustment at the college The social interaction is limited. The college lack social activities for students to interact on a wider scale and across campuses other than to mingle with your classmates only. Suggest a greater variety of sports and social activities than what is currently offered so that you can socially interact with other students too.

I: We can move on to question 6. What do you think were the most important factors that helped you with your success at the college?
P: Parents and good friends, willpower to succeed fear of failure, myself… silence
I: What about yourself?
P: Not wanting to be a failure to yourself; not feeling like a failure
I: Participants?
P: To be well disciplined, willpower to succeed, to take your studies serious, to be at the college everyday, to pay attention in class and to study regularly.

Verification Summary
Fear of failure
Support from parents and good friends
Self-motivation (yourself)
Self-discipline (well disciplined)
Willpower to succeed (self-determination/perseverance)
Taking your studies seriously
Regular attendance
Paying attention/listening in class
Study regularly
Thank you for your participation