**STUDENT CHOICE: WHAT FACTORS AND CONDITIONS INFLUENCE UNIVERSITY OF THE WESTERN CAPE UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS' CHANGE OF PROGRAMMES OF STUDY?**

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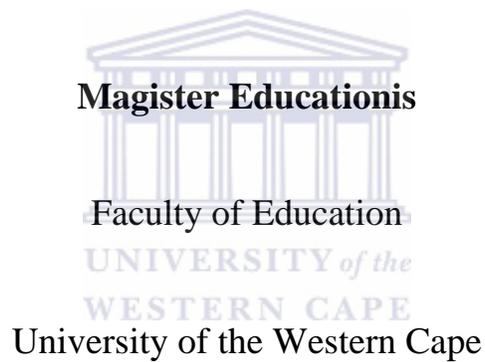
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Student choice: What factors and conditions influence University of the Western Cape undergraduate students' change of programmes of study?

ABSTRACT

The main aim of the study was to investigate change of programmes of study at University of the Western Cape (UWC). This involved examining the extent, nature and possible range of factors which shape change of programmes. The factors influencing choice to study at UWC and choice of programmes formed the background for understanding the link between choice and change of programmes. The study focused on first-time entering undergraduates in selected faculties: Arts, Economics and Management Sciences (EMS) and Community and Health Sciences (CHS). The progression "pathways" of these students were tracked from first year of enrolment in 2001 to 2004.

The findings of the longitudinal data showed that the percentage of students who changed their programmes in the Faculty of Arts and in CHS was very minimal. In total 5% changed their programmes in CHS in three-year programmes while in four-year programmes only 2% changed their programmes. In the Faculty of Arts in three-year and four-year programmes change of programmes ranged from 6% to 10%. The significant change of programmes of study happened in EMS which also had the highest enrolments. In total 18% of the students changed their programmes. It appeared from the statistical data that failure and academic exclusion could be associated with change of programmes of study. Other factors such as financial problems, poor grouping of courses, exploring and changing to preferred programmes as well came out from the interviews as major influences of change of programmes.

The interviews showed a link between subsequent change of programmes and prolonging time for degree completion. All nine students selected for the qualitative component of the study did not complete on record time. With regard to choice of programmes the interviewees pointed out the following factors: career guidance and subjects' choice at secondary school, influence by role models, parents and relatives, peer pressure, perceived job benefits and political and religious influence. Likewise the students cited quality of institution, availability of funding, peer pressure and influence by role models as their main reasons for choosing to study at UWC. The longitudinal component of the study also revealed important data on dropout and throughput/completion rates. The dropout rate was significantly high in all the faculties. The throughput rates in three-year programmes in EMS, Arts and CHS were 23%, 31% and 19% respectively. In total 56% of the students completed in time in CHS, four-year programmes. The throughput rates seemed not to be very low when compared to the benchmarks for graduation set by the *National Plan for Higher Education* (DoE, 2001). The Faculty of Arts in four-year programmes was an exception. The completion rate was very low: only 1 student (or 5%) completed in time. This study concluded by indicating that wrong choice of programmes and subsequent changes are barriers and wasteful. UWC should therefore guide entering undergraduates with choice of programmes and support them throughout their studies.

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undergraduate students' change of programmes of study?

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KEY WORDS

University of the Western Cape (UWC)

Undergraduate students

Efficiency

Effectiveness

Success rate

Dropout rate

Failure rate

Structure/agency

Choice

Change of Programmes

DECLARATION

I, Kefuoehape Evodia Lenepa hereby declare that "***Student choice***: ***What factors and conditions influence University of the Western Cape undergraduate students' change of programmes of study?***" is my own work, that it has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in any other university, and that all the sources I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by complete references.

Kefuoehape Evodia Lenepa   Date: November 2008

Signed……………………..

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DEDICATION

This mini-thesis is dedicated to the loving memory of my elder sister, 'Manteme Elizabeth Lenepa who left us in misery in March 2005. Throughout her life, she had acted as a sister and a friend to me. The memory of her strong personality and inspiration will always help me to strive for my goals.

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UNIVERSITY of the
WESTERN CAPE

LIST OF ACRONYMS

CHS   Faculty of Community and Health Sciences

DoE   Department of Education

EMS   Faculty Economics and Management Sciences

HE   Higher Education

NCHE   The National Commission on Higher Education

NEPI   The National Education Policy Investigation

NSFAS   National Student Financial Aid Scheme

RU   Rhodes University

TEFSA   Tertiary Education Funding Scheme for South Africa

UCT   University of Cape Town

UK   The United Kingdom

US   United States of America

UFS   University of the Free State

UNITRA   University of Transkei

UWC   University of the Western Cape

WITS   University of the Witwatersrand

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

1.1   Introduction

The main aim of this study was to investigate change of programmes of study in selected faculties at University of the Western Cape (UWC). This involved examining the extent, nature and possible range of factors that influence change of programmes. I used statistical data and semi-structured interviews. Whilst documenting the main data on students who changed programmes, the cohort study also revealed the record on dropout, failure, exclusion and throughput/completion rates. I have highlighted and discussed this data with the purpose of linking these aspects to change of programmes.

To draw the link between choice and change of programmes, the interviews involved investigating possible factors affecting choice of studying at UWC and choice of programmes, which I have summarized. This part formed the background for understanding change of programmes as a component of choice. The possible relationship between choice and change of programmes is that uninformed choice could affect students' progress in higher education by resulting in failure and change of programmes. However, change of programmes cannot only be attributed to wrong choice and to negative factors (McMillan 2005). Similar to failure and dropout, subsequent change of programmes is wasteful and undermines efficiency and effectiveness of higher education (HE) system.

To contribute to the equity and development goals of the new democracy, policy goals in post-apartheid HE, South Africa focused on equity, increasing access and participation rates, effectiveness, quality, democracy, relevance and efficiency. The concern formed part of the policy goal emanating from the National Education Policy Investigation (NEPI, 1992). The discussion was taken further by the National Commission on Higher Education (NCHE, 1996). In 1997 it was adopted into the Education White Paper 3: A programme for the Transformation of Higher Education (Department of Education, 1997) (Cloete, 2003). The policy makes a distinction between efficiency and effectiveness by indicating "an effective system or institution functions in such a way that leads to desired outcomes or achieves desired objectives. An

efficient system or institution is one which works well without unnecessary duplication or waste, and within the bounds of affordability and sustainability. It does things correctly in terms of making use of available means (Section 1.22)." The *National Plan for Higher Education*, DoE, 2001) outlines the strategies for implementing the policy. Among the goals of the *National Plan for Higher Education*, a main concern has been on improving equitable access while simultaneously focusing on improved success and throughput rates. The set benchmarks for graduation at undergraduate level are as follows:

Table 1.1 The National Plan for Higher Education benchmarks for graduation:

	Graduation rate	
	Contact	Distance
Up to 3-years: undergraduate	25%	15%
4 years or more: undergraduate	20%	10%

Source: (DoE, 2001: Section 2.3.1).

The *National Plan* also highlights that funding will be linked to the consideration of graduation rates to encourage HE institutions to increase their graduation output. Section 2.3 of the *National Plan for Higher Education* states: "It would be difficult to argue for additional resources to facilitate expansion unless the inefficiency in graduation outputs is addressed satisfactorily" (DoE, 2001).

1.2   Background and motivation of the study

Achieving the goals of access, success and throughput depends on understanding and addressing the complex and inter-related barriers involved: In this study these are modelled as part of the theoretical framework. To achieve these goals, several interventions at institutional level have been developed and various studies have been undertaken.

The reviewed literature shows that previous studies have placed emphasis on retention and throughput rates (Budlender, Mwite, Ngoma and Schuffer, 2002; Bitzer, 2003; Eiselen and Geyser, 2003; Gouws and Van der Merwe, 2004). Low throughput rates, high dropout rates, low

retention rates and duplication of courses, resulting from lack of co-operation between institutions is a major sources of wastage of both financial and human resources. Bunting (2004:21) estimates the dropout rates in the public HE in South Africa to about 100 000 (or 15%) of the annual headcount total while Bitzer (2003:164) indicates that the South African government spends about R1500 million annually on students who drop out from HE institutions. Commending on wastage of resources, Naidoo (2005) reports that of the 120 000 students who registered for various three-year HE qualifications in 2000, only 22% graduated. According to 2005 statistics 50% of the students who registered in 2000 dropped out and just 28% were still in the system.

At UWC, Koen (2001, 2003) discusses the factors and conditions contributing to low graduation rates. The studies draw the sample from Senate Discretion (SD) students and postgraduate students funded by the National Research Foundation (NRF). Koen highlights that finance is a problem influencing majority of students especially Africans to find part-time employment. Part–time jobs impact negatively on students' performance. Other problems that the students indicated include poor allocation of marks, uneven distribution of resources among faculties, lack of support in making appropriate choice of courses, difficulty in using English as medium of instruction and students not prepared /suitable to meet university requirements.

Although the area of retention and throughput in HE has long gained consideration., low graduation outputs and high dropout rates remain a matter of concern both in South Africa and abroad (Tinto, 1975; Davies, Shevlin and Braken, 2000; Makinen et al. 2004; Yorke and Longden, 2004).

Student choice became a matter of concern in South Africa after 1994 with the intention to achieve the goals of transformation. The studies focus on choice of institutions and fields of study which are also identified as barriers (Cosser and du Toit, 2002; Cosser, du Toit and Visser, 2004; Imenda, Kongolo and Crewal, 2004; Cloete, Pillay, Badat and Moja, 2004). Very limited studies on the South African context investigate the issue of choice. In the international literature the debate on choice has long gained recognition (Foskett and Hemsley Brown, 2001; Ball et al. 2002; Brooks, 2003; David et al.2003).

Similar with choice, little attention (if any) is given to the problem of subsequent course change in South Africa. McMillan (2005) indicates that in Australia as well the Department of Education, Science and Training (DEST) does not keep the data on students changing courses. The study further indicates that longitudinal study could investigate whether different educational pathways are related to a wide range of factors such as social background, prior schooling and post-school factors. Robinson (2004) argues that there is little attention given to the individual pathways followed by students through undergraduate degrees. Therefore a study focusing on change of programmes at UWC will help to inform.

1.3   Aims and objectives of the study

The main aims of the study were to:

1. Determine the extent and nature of change of programmes of study amongst undergraduate students at University of the Western Cape.

2. Investigate possible factors and conditions that influence some undergraduate students at University of the Western Cape to change their programmes of study.

In order to achieve these overall aims, the study has the following objectives:

i. Undertake descriptive statistical analysis of new entering undergraduate students in 2001 tracked through 2004 with the aim to determine the extent and nature of change of programmes of study.

ii. Undertake a qualitative study investigating the following.

- Factors and conditions influencing change of programmes of study.
- Factors and conditions influencing choice to study at UWC and choice of programmes of study.

1.4   Main research questions and sub questions

1) What is the extent, nature and pattern of students changing their programmes of study at UWC?

   a) In which faculties and programmes are most students at UWC changing from and to?

b) In which year of enrolment are students mostly changing their programmes of study?

2) What are the possible factors and conditions that students consider in choosing their programmes of study?

3) What are the possible factors and conditions that students consider in choosing to study at UWC?

4) What are possible reasons for some undergraduate students changing their programmes of study at UWC?

1.5   Significance of the study

Understanding of programme change can help institutions to devise strategies for improving choice so that students progress successfully throughout higher education. I believe that the findings of this study will inform policy and practice at UWC. Quality officers, faculty officers, guidance and counsellors and other stakeholders will be aware of some factors driving change of programmes hence find alternative ways of assisting students to make informed choices.

1.6   A background to the University of the Western Cape and students profile

University of the Western Cape (UWC) is classified as a historically disadvantaged institution. UWC was established in 1959 and designated to serve the "coloured" students. Since its establishment, the student population at UWC has increased from a total of 170 predominantly "Coloured" students to a multiracial population of approximately 14771 in 2004 (UWC, 2004).

Among the reasons that could be attributed to student increase at UWC, is its commitment to non-racialism and the policy to increase accessibility as expressed on the mission statement:

> In 1982, UWC adopted a new mission statement and it committed itself to non-racialism and the development of the Third World communities in South Africa. In 1987 the university adopted an "open admissions" policy to make it more accessible to disadvantaged students and developed a highly successful model for integrating academic development support for students into mainstream teaching. These educational initiatives gave promising students a chance to obtain degrees and opened the doors of learning to a growing number of African students (University of the Western Cape, Mission and History, 2004).

As part of three-year rolling plan for 1999 to 2002, UWC took an initiative to address access and efficiency challenges through Equitable Access Project, which aim to address the following problems outlined in the project policy:
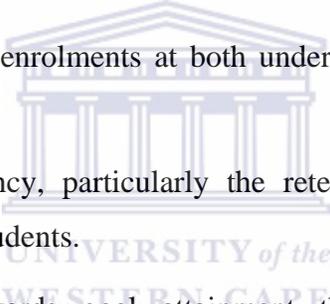
1. To increase the headcount enrolments at both undergraduate and postgraduate level to about 11 000.

2. To improve UWC efficiency, particularly the retention, throughput, graduation and employability rates of all students.

3. To monitor progress towards goal attainment through institutionalized feedback mechanisms and enhance the university's capacity to manage, communicate and sustain success levels.

Currently UWC through the Schools Liaison Unit has an out-reach programme which reaches the schools in the Western Cape with career exhibitions and career counselling. This effort could also be related to the increased enrolments.

University of the Western Cape students profile from 2000 to 2004

The tables below highlight the profile of UWC students from 2000 to 2004. I have disaggregated the enrolments by faculties, by population group, gender, and level of qualification and by study type.

Table 1.2: Total Headcount enrolments by faculties, 2000-2004

Faculties	2000		2001		2002		2003		2004	
EMS	2 548	26%	2 906	27%	3 572	28%	3 975	28%	4 084	28%
Arts	2 137	22%	1 970	18%	2 317	18%	2 609	19%	2 513	17%
Law	1 458	15%	1 626	15%	1 803	14%	1 897	14%	1 601	11%
CHS	1 400	15%	1 653	15%	1 795	14%	1 992	14%	2 424	16%
Science	1 161	12%	1 292	12%	1 569	12%	1 879	13%	1 994	13%
Education	765	8%	1 046	10%	1 538	12%	1 344	10%	1 301	9%
Dentistry	217	2%	238	2%	322	2%	344	2%	854	6%
Total	9 686	100%	10 731	100 %	12 916	100%	14 040	100%	14 771	100%

Source: (UWC statistical records, 2004)

According to table 1.2 above, the total headcounts enrolment at UWC was 9686 and it increased to 14771 in 2004, showing high increase. The enrolments in the Faculty of Economics and Management Sciences (EMS) comprised the highest percentage from 2000 to 2004. The enrolments for the Faculty of Arts followed while the Faculty of Education and Dentistry had lowest enrolments ranging from 8% to 9% and 2% to 6% respectively. The increased enrolments in EMS could be attributed to different reasons. For example, the opportunities available in the job market for students qualified in the fields of management and accounting.
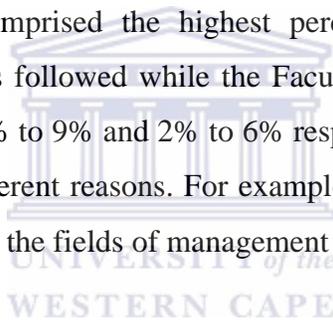
Table 1.3: Total Headcount enrolments by population group, 2000-2004

Group	2000		2001		2002		2003		2004	
African	4 942	51.0%	5 246	48.9%	5 682	44%	5 389	38%	5 019	40%
Coloured	3 877	40.0%	4 520	42.1%	5 911	46%	6 862	49%	7 194	49%
Indian	602	6.2%	658	6.1%	781	6%	1 108	8%	1 409	10%
White	227	2.3%	261	2.4%	293	2%	380	3%	823	6%
Other	38	0.4%	45	0.4%	249	2%	301	2%	326	2%
Total	9 686	100%	10 731	100%	12 916	100%	14 040	100 %	14 771	100 %

Source: (UWC statistical records, 2004)

Table 1.3 above highlights that when disaggregating the enrolments by population group Africans comprised 51% of the total headcount enrolments in 2000. The African enrolments at UWC started to "outnumber" Coloureds enrolments from 1996 (Cooper and Subotzky, 2001: 50). However, the Coloured enrolments increased again from 2002 to 2004 and outnumbered the African enrolments. The increase in the enrolments of African students at UWC can be interpreted in different ways: similar to other HE institutions in South Africa, UWC is committed to redress the racial imbalances by attracting African students and other groups who were previously underrepresented in HE institutions. It may be accurate to argue that in terms of student racial profile, UWC is transforming. According to Cloete et al. (2002), financial assistance through Tertiary Education Fund of South Africa (TEFSA) increased freedom of choice of institutions amongst students in South Africa. We can therefore assume that after 1994 the majority of African students at UWC benefited from this financial scheme. There are other reasons beyond policy that students can point out as the underlying factors and conditions for choice to study at UWC. The scope of the study did not allow for full investigation of fluctuating enrolments between Africans and Coloureds students at UWC but the topic needs to be taken into further investigation in future research.

Table 1.4: Total Headcount enrolments by gender, 2000-2004

Gender	2000		2001		2002		2003		2004	
Male	4 259	44%	4 615	43%	5 517	43%	6 089	43%	6 439	44%
Female	5 427	56%	6 119	57%	7 399	57%	7 951	57%	8 332	56%
Total	9 686	100%	10 731	100%	12 916	100%	14 040	100 %	14 771	100%

Source: (UWC statistical records, 2004)

The gender profile of the students shows that the majority of students at UWC from 2000 to 2004 were females, with approximately 57% while their male counterparts constituted approximately 43%. The area focusing on the increased enrolments of female students at UWC has not been thoroughly investigated through qualitative methods. Previous studies merely quantified the gender enrolments of the students.

Table1.5: Total Headcount enrolments by level of study, 2000-2004

Level of study	2000		2001		2002		2003		2004	
Undergraduate	7 767	80%	8 302	77%	10 386	80%	11 510	82%	11 428	77%
Post graduate	1 919	20%	2 429	23%	2 530	20%	2 530	18%	3 343	23%
Total	9 686	100%	10 731	100%	12 916	100%	14 040	100%	14 771	100%

 Source: (UWC statistical records, 2004)

Table 1.5 above indicates that from 2000 to 2004, approximately 80% of UWC students were undergraduates while approximately 20% were enrolled for postgraduate degrees. In 2004 postgraduate enrolments increased to 27%. As other HE institutions in South Africa, UWC should increase the enrolments and success rate of postgraduate students in accordance with the benchmarks for the *National Plan for Higher Education* (DoE, 2001). To attain the policy goal, UWC should consider improving the throughput and retention rates at undergraduate level.

Table1.6: Total Headcount enrolments by study type, 2000-2004

Year	2000		2001		2002		2003		2004	
Full-ti me	7 753	80%	8 519	79%	9 882	77%	10 961	78%	11 574	78%
Part-time	1 933	20%	2 212	21%	3 034	23%	3 079	22%	3 197	22%
Total	9 686	100%	10 731	100%	12 916	100%	14 040	100%	14 771	100 %

 Source: (UWC statistical records, 2004)

Table 1.6 above illustrates that from 2000 to 2004; approximately 80% of the students at UWC were registered full-time while approximately 20% of the students registered for part-time programmes. In 2004 the enrolments for full-time and part-time students had not changed significantly.

1.7 Theoretical framework

The literature that I considered relevant to the study shows that the United States of America (US) and the United Kingdom (UK) dominate the debate on choice of HE. In the US as in the UK research on choice has long been taken into consideration (Gildersleeve, 2004). The aim of the research was to identify possible solutions on access of HE rather than focusing HE choice on class analysis. The considerable number of studies conducted in the UK and the US show that students' choice of higher education was based on class (Horvat, 2004). However, these studies differ in the way they analyze the class hierarchy. According to Ball, Davies, David and Rear (2002) the working class have minimal opportunities to access HE while the middle class are privileged and going to university is part of their family culture. Brooks (2003) gives a different perspective by indicating that class is heterogeneous and even among the same class, students' understanding of HE differs. Further argument is that many studies ignore the lower middle class but focus mainly on professional middle class (those families that have members who attained HE qualification).

The factors that influence choice to enter HE, choice of HE and choice of programmes of study do not vary widely. The factors include family socio-economic background, influence by friends peers and relatives, finance, previous schooling, status given to institutions and courses, institution environment and students' own motivation and inspiration (Imenda, Kongolo and Crewal, 2004; Cloete et al, 2004). Some studies organize these factors into sociological, economic, and information processing models (Cosser and du Toit, 2002; Gildersleeve, 2004). Mukherjee (1992:2) indicates, "Socio-economic status is a measure of an individual or a group standing in the community. It usually relates to the income, occupation, education attainment and wealth of either an individual or a group."

The second area focuses on students' progress in HE particularly the issue if retention and throughput. This area is closely linked to choice of programmes: choice affects students' progress. Poor choice affects completion (Christie, Munro and fisher, 2004). According to Makinen, Olkinuora and Lonke (2004) the students who are uncertain or undecided about their careers or majors and the students who do not match their choices of careers and programmes with their "learning orientations" are likely to leave university before completing their studies.

Other studies examine students' progress in HE by using sociological models. Amongst the models Tinto's model of attrition is the most popular and has been cited in various studies (Bitzer, 2003; Brunsden, Davies, Shelvin and Bracken, 2004; Yorke and Longden, 2004; Taylor and Bedford, 2004). Tinto's model and other models highlight a linear correlation between secondary school characteristics and performance, family background, individual attributes, HE environmental context and interaction of students with peers friends and other members of society.

It implies therefore that the basis for understanding student choice and progress in HE is to embed students in the broader social structures. Gender, class, race, ethnicity and power relations characterize these structures. I use the sociological perspective to support this argument (Giddens, 1984; Shilling, 1991; Hall 1992; Hodkinson, Sparkes and Hodkinson, 1996; Horvat, 2001). Giddens (1984) uses a concept of structuration to interpret human beings as agents embedded within the cultural setting or structures whereby their actions are shaped by societal rules, norms and ideologies. However, Giddens explains that structure should not always be associated with constraints. It can be enabling as well. Hall (1992) indicates that human identity is developed through interaction of individual and external world, through mediation of principles and values in society. The literature review will be thoroughly discussed in Chapter Two.

1.8   Research design and methodology

This study was empirical in nature. It was a case study intended to answer both descriptive and explanatory questions. The study was conducted through the use of both qualitative and quantitative methods. The sample for the quantitative data was drawn from the cohort of new entering undergraduate students who registered in the three faculties: Arts, EMS and CHS. In analysing the data I used descriptive statistics and tracked the enrolments of the students from 2001 to 2004. I have undertaken a longitudinal cohort study. I collected the qualitative data through semi-structured interviews. I selected a sample of nine students from the cohort. All the

students had changed their initial programmes but they were still continuing with their studies at UWC. In analysing the qualitative data I identified different themes to use for coding. The research design and methodology is broadly explained in Chapter Three.

1.9   Chapter outline:

Chapter 1: Introduction to the study

Chapter 2: Literature review

Chapter two elaborates conceptual framework for the study.   It clarifies the key concepts of the study and builds a framework within which the concept change of programmes of study can be understood. To build the framework for the study I have adopted the theories and models from sociology and from higher education literature.

Chapter 3: Research design and methodology

Chapter three discusses the research design and methodology followed in conducting this case study research at UWC.

Chapter 4: Presentation and discussion of quantitative data

Chapter four presents the findings and discussions of quantitative data. To quantify the extent and nature of change of programmes of study amongst UWC undergraduate students I have used descriptive statistics.

Chapter 5: Presentation and discussion of qualitative data

Chapter Five consists of a presentation and discussion of the qualitative data. Here I present and discuss the factors and conditions that students indicate underlie their choice and change of programmes of study.

Chapter 6: Conclusions and recommendations

Chapter Six is the concluding chapter in which I summarise the research findings and discuss these in terms of the literature. Finally, I highlight recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter builds the theoretical framework for the study. It draws from different models and theories explaining aspects of choice: choice whether to study HE or not to study, factors affecting choice of HE institutions, fields and courses of study. I also build the framework by adopting various models and theories describing and explaining the factors affecting the patterns of progression in HE, particularly the issue of retention and completion/throughput. Although the study focuses on change of programmes of study, it is a phenomenon that has not been thoroughly researched in South Africa and internationally.

McMillan (2005) focuses on change of courses in relation to attrition. The study identifies students who change courses and find alternative ways of reducing dropout rates and course change. It also intends to make a follow-up on the paths followed by dropouts: whether they enter the job market or go to other HE institutions. McMillan suggests that course change should not always be associated with negative factors because some students change courses for positive reasons.

2.2 Choice to study higher education

As I have explained in Chapter One, some studies organize the factors that influence student choice into economic, sociological and information processing models (combining both economic and sociological factors) (Gildersleeve, 2003; Cosser and du Toit, 2004).

2.2.1 Information processing models

Information processing model combines economic and sociological factors with the actual process of decision-making. Gildersleeve (2003) indicates that choice to study at a HE institution involves three stages or phases. The phases constitute the predisposition, search and choice. In the predisposition phase, students choose whether they will proceed to HE institutions and consider all the important aspects pertaining to taking such a decision. In the search phase, students gather information relevant about different institutions such as the reputation of

institutions and other institutional characteristics. Finally, the choice phase is where students evaluate the information they have gathered and make a conclusion to choose institutions. In all the phases there are different social and economic factors that influence the decision that students embark on.

Although the three-phase model has some limitations it has been used to develop deeper understanding of choice in relation to different factors affecting choice such as gender, race and ethnicity and it has influenced further research on student choice.

2.2.2 Financial cost and support.

According to Cosser and du Toit (2002:23) "economic models are based on the notion that students maximize utility using some kind of cost and benefit analysis". Because education is regarded as investment, choice to enter HE is based on assessing costs involved and benefits attained after completion. Such costs include tuition, books, costs of living and direct costs (Cosser and du Toit, 2002; Des Jardins, Ahlburg and MC Call, 2003; Gildersleeve, 2004). However, the level at which financial costs affect students varies depending on family income, racial background, gender and environmental factors.

Some studies focus on a class-based analysis of the choice of institution. These studies indicate that students from middle class are more likely to invest on HE when compared to students from working class and disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds. In other words, social inequalities are perpetuated by the fact that there is a greater tendency amongst the middle classes to choose to study HE compared to the working classes. For the professional middle class attaining university qualification is part of family culture; the working class on the other hand, lacks an encouraging environment. Also financial constraints prevent these students to access HE (Vossenteyn, 2000; Ball et al. 2002; David et al. 2004; Hatt, 2005). These studies further argue that financial incentives increase the likelihood of students from disadvantaged backgrounds to enter HE. In South Africa when Tertiary Education Fund of South Africa (TEFSA) was introduced after 1994, enrolment and mobility of students from disadvantaged backgrounds increased in HE institutions in South Africa (Cloete et al. 2001).

2.3 Choice of HE institution, choice of programmes and change of programmes

2.3.1 Financial costs

In South Africa financial costs also affect choice between historically advantaged and historically disadvantaged institutions and choice of programmes. According to the empirical study conducted on school leavers in the Eastern Cape, many students choose to study at Border Technikon and Fort Hare because the two institutions charged low fees. In another study, Imenda et al. (2004) found out that students from disadvantaged backgrounds chose to attend historically black institutions because of financial affordability. Many students chose to study at Peninsula Technikon because of accessibility of financial aid. Some students studying at University of Transkei (UNITRA) accepted that the institution did not offer wide range of programmes but the institution was valued due to low fees. The students expected to reduce their expenses by studying at UNITRA. According to Barnes (2004) at UWC majority of students from disadvantaged backgrounds are attracted by accessible financial support.

Financial factors have much influence on course choice and change of programmes as well. The study conducted by Cosser and du Toit (2002) highlights that the possibility of obtaining a loan or a scholarship was ranked higher amongst the factors that learners pointed for choice of programmes of study. According to McMillan (2005) some students cited financial costs as their main reason for changing their courses. However, in comparison with other factors, financial cost affected only 6% of the students. Other factors such as course interest and preferences, career, work and study load and performance were the most influential.

2.3.2 Economic and social benefits of higher education

Recent debates about the purpose of HE emphasize the importance of its contribution to economic development. HE should open up opportunities in the job market (Bertelsen, 1998; Imenda, et al. 2004). The opportunity to succeed in the job market is therefore associated with choice of science, technology and business related courses. Castells (2001:2) indicates, "We have reached the time when knowledge and information are the basis for production and competitiveness. In this new economy jobs are influenced by what is going on around the globe and information and technology is the key for connecting people worldwide." Ball et al. (2002) indicate that high performance at secondary school maximises the possibility for students to

enroll in high status and professional courses. To emphasize, Cosser, du Toit and Visser (2004) found out from their study that students who did not perform well in grade 12 were unable to enroll in science, business and technology despite their initial expectations. However, in South Africa the basis for analyzing choice in terms of secondary performance needs to take into consideration the legacy of school system under apartheid: lack of qualified teachers, scarcity of resources and the Bantu Education curriculum (Kallaway, 2002; Bunting 2004). To support this argument, Horvat (2001:202) suggests the importance of focusing research on the circumstances under which students make choices. This analysis would in turn provide understanding of admission realities. Further argument is that "often there are unrecognized mechanisms and cultural norms that serve to maintain social hierarchy."

The notion of market responsiveness in HE is contested on the basis that it should not threaten other aspects of democracy such as social and political accountability (Singh, 2001; Waghid, 2001; Van Der Merwe, 2004). The argument is that "education should also contribute towards public good or serve public interests (not reducible to individual interests)" (Singh, 2001). Mji (2002) gives a contradictory opinion by indicating that HE gives people opportunities to develop as individuals.

When arguing for multi disciplinary skills, Waghid (2001:461) indicates that we should not take for granted that entering HE guarantees success in the job market: ambition to study and acquiring of various skills are the basis for success. HE institutions should also enhance "democratic citizenship". In their first two years students should integrate market-orientated subjects with humanities, arts and social sciences.

According to Brooks (2003) students emphasize the value of both economic and social benefits of HE. The students associate these benefits with the subjects' hierarchy. Some students rank the professional courses such as law and medicine highly. Other students give the courses high status depending on the job opportunities available. On the other hand the students' view of history and politics is that the courses open up opportunities for different careers and develop critical thinking.

2.3.3 Influence by family, friends and peers

The sociological perspective highlights that interaction of family socio-economic status, academic ability, motivation to succeed and educational aspirations influence student choice (Gildersleeve, 2004).

Parents, friends and peers play a critical role on student choice (Brooks, 2003; David et al. 2004). The studies point out a correlation between gender and influence by friends and family. Female students tend to take collaborative decisions and are influenced more by friends and peers. Males on the other hand appear to be more independent and individualistic in their choices. Also female parents get more involved in the education of their children when compared to male parents.

According to David et al. (2003) social class has impact on parental influence. Working class parents are less involved in advising their children on HE choice. The problem is lack of exposure to HE environment and family commitments. The upper middle class parents are very supportive and involved on the education of their children especially their daughters. The middle class parents regarded HE highly important because of the perception that it opens opportunities in the job market.

The studies focusing on the South African institutions highlight that family and friends influence choice but it is not the main factor. Cosser and du Toit (2002) indicate that when compared to other factors, parents and friends were less influential in both choice of institution and field of study. Similarly, Imenda et al. (2004) indicate that in all four institutions: Rhodes University, UNITRA, Cape Technikon and Peninsula Technikon the majority of students, 67% to 82% made their own choices of institutions while 3% to 23% of the students indicated that their parents or guardian chose the institutions for them.

2.3.4 Quality of teaching and learning

The studies that cite quality of teaching and learning as factors affecting choice emphasize availability of learning resources, teaching staff, reputation of institution, international recognition and quality of qualifications obtained after (Cosser and du Toit, 2002; Imenda et al. 2004; Cloete et al. 2006). In South Africa the institutional context under which the universities

were established should be taken into consideration in the process of describing quality of institutions. Because of the legacy of apartheid, South African HE institutions are characterized by inequalities and inequities in terms of resources, teaching staff, and students' demographic enrolments: gender, race, age and socio-economic status (Subotzky, 1997; Cooper and Subotzky, 2001; Thaver, 2003). The historically advantaged HE institutions are better resourced, have qualified teaching staff and have high performance in terms of graduation rates. The historically disadvantaged institutions on the other hand lag behind in various aspects. Gibbon and Kabaki (2002:211), highlight that the historically white universities have more staff with doctoral and masters qualifications compared to the historically disadvantaged institutions. At UWC, for example, students complain about overcrowded lecture theatres (Barnes, 2004). However, Koen (2003) indicates that employers perceive UWC graduates highly.

2.3.5 Career guidance and counselling

Career guidance and counselling is essential at both high school and university. It helps students who are undecided about their careers but the students who are certain about choice of programmes and careers need guidance and couselling as well (Gordon 2000). Gordon supports group guidance and counselling rather than individual couselling. Career counselling should be accessible to all students entering HE institutions and compulsory as part of the curriculum. Career guidance can also help students to match career with interests and to raise awareness of different courses offered. This would reduce uninformed decision making which results into course change. According to McMillan (2005:25) majority of students (60%) changed courses because of factors related to course and interest. Some students did not like the first course, some lost interest in the course, for some students the first course was the prerequisite for the second course while other students indicated that they never intended to complete the first course.

Ferreira (2002:101) proposes a learning orientated student counselling service. The principles of a learning orientated student counselling are:

1. Students' learning and personal development are the primary goals of student counselling programmes and services.
2. Resources are allocated to encourage student learning and personal development

3. Student counselling professionals collaborate with other institutional agents and agencies to promote student learning and personal development.
4. Students' counselling policies and programmes are based on promising practices from the research on student learning and specific assessment data.
5. The division of student counselling include staff who are experts on students development

Bitzer (2003) indicates that it is the responsibility of HE institutions to promote access for students and find their skills and abilities with the aim to provide support to the students. Bitzer further argues that the HE system needs to enter and not be privilege only for students who are regarded as prepared for study. However, this view may be contested on the basis that not everybody can qualify for HE. This is the challenge not only in South Africa but worldwide. According to the South African Minister of Education the students who do not qualify for HE have to find alternative routes such as considering Further Education and Training and skills development. McMillan (2005:37) suggests that institutions need to ensure that students enter HE with necessary skills to enable them to succeed in HE or institutions should provide students early with opportunities to acquire these skills.
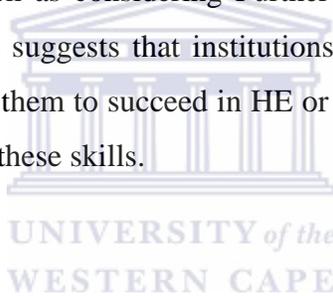
2.3.6 Societal factors

Broadly, society has a large impact on the daily decisions that individuals embark on. Hall (1992) indicates that human identity as a sociological subject is explained in terms of culture and values of society. Hall explains identity as follows:

> According to this view, which has become the classic sociological conception of the issue, identity is formed in the interaction between individual and society. The subject/actor still has an inner core or essence that is the real self but this is formed and modified in a continuous dialogue with the cultural worlds outside and the identities, which they offer (Hall, 1992:276).

Krumboltz (1994) categorises the factors affecting course or career choice as follows:

1. Genetic Endowment and Special Abilities. These include gender, physical appearance and characteristics. Shilling (1991:159) highlights an example of how societal norms associated with gender can limit career choice. Society has norms, values, perceptions, which limit choices made by young men and women: "there are norms, which constitutes what, represents 'suitable' career

for young men and young women". However, Shilling indicates that there are different theories, which challenge gender stereotypic believes, values, norms and perceptions.

2. Environmental conditions and events: Social, cultural and political, economic factors, natural forces and natural resources. "Environmental conditions enhance or limit choice. Certain events and circumstances in the individual environment influence skills development, activity and career preferences and these are even beyond control of an individual". Government policies neglecting certain occupations and the availability of certain resources in the individual's environment may determine the opportunities available (Zunker, 1998).

According to Hodkinson et el. (1996: 349), individual action is shaped by deeper structural factors.

> Individual action, belief and therefore choice must always be culturally and socially situated, for we are all born into a social setting. We cannot, therefore, act or think other than as a person of particular gender, race, class nation etc living in a particular period of time. The 'dispositions' that make the individual subjective perceptions are located within objective 'positions' or social structures.

Bourdieu's dialectic theory argues that structure and agency interact to shape social life. "We no longer view individuals independent of their structural context; likewise, we can explore the role of individuals in shaping organizational and institutional contexts" (Horvat, 2001:201). Horvat further indicates that researchers in HE should try to understand individual action in the social context where class, race, power and social relations have influence on everyday life. We need to understand the interaction of students with the social world to understand student choice. However, Giddens (1984) argues that structures should not only be associated with constraints because they are enabling as well. Agents have capability to bring changes in their lives although the change may not be radical because agents' beliefs are strongly shaped by social forces.

3. Prior learning experiences: Students enter HE institutions from various backgrounds. Secondary education has major impact on the attributes of students. Tinto's model outlined in the next section shows the impact of prior learning on progress in HE studies.

2.4 Students' progress in HE: retention and throughput

2.4.1. A conceptual schema for drop out from college (Tinto, 1975)

Tinto's (1975) longitudinal model of attrition in HE is sociological in nature. The model shows the analysis of the factors affecting students to leave university before completing their studies. It also provides broader understanding of students' progress in HE. The integration of family background, individual attributes and pre-college schooling determine the way students experience HE environment. According to Brunsden and Davies (2000), individual attributes include gender, race, age and other psychometric and demographic indicators. Tinto argues that students should integrate and balance their academic and social worlds to succeed. Students interact with peers and have other external commitments. Students should form a balance between social and academic work, be committed to their studies and have motivation to succeed. Failure to do so is associated with dropout. Many studies have cited the model and elaborated it (Bitzer, 2003; Lounsbury, Saudargas and Gibson, 2004; Yorke and Longden, 2004; Taylor and Bedford, 2004). Non-completion is associated with lack of finance, pressure of work and employment, lack of academic support and counselling, students' perception of the quality of teaching, poor course choice, poor motivation and health status. Tinto's model has been criticized on the basis that it does not provide proper strategies to attrition in HE (Brunsden et al. 2004).

Yorke and Longden (2004:85) argue that there is no single theory or model that can include all possible factors that influence student choice behavior. To provide a model that is practical for research on the student decision process and helpful to improve institutional retention and student success in HE, they developed a theory from Tinto's model of attrition. They recommend that a combination of institutional context, broader societal factors and a proportion of adventitious events have an impact on the psychology of the individual and affect student completion. HE institutions are shaped by different aspects and practices, which give institutions their identities and culture (Higgins, 2005). By adventitious events Yorke and Longden refer to the factors which have influence to a certain proportion or group of students. Adventitious events include the individual's own lack of maturity to handle new found freedom in higher education institutions. The lack of freedom results into student's poor performance or lack of dedication to academic work. Yorke and Longden indicate that some students face

financial challenges, which force them to find part-time jobs. Students' performance may also be affected by part-time employment. Some factors such as accidents, illness, and homesickness are also included among adventitious and extraneous events.

2.4.2 Study orientations of the students

Makinen et al. (2004:173-174) indicate that due to gender, age and social diversity of students who enter HE institutions, "students' study orientations vary greatly". The various study orientations are the basis for understanding students' choice and progress in HE. Students study orientations are as follows:

Theory and professional oriented:

Students who are theory oriented see the meaning of their studies as exploring theoretical problems and accomplishing their own learning goals. The purpose of studying for the professional oriented students is to train for a profession.

Curriculum oriented:

Curriculum oriented students aim to meet the demands of their study programmes in order to finish their studies successfully.

Practice oriented

 Practice oriented students emphasized the practical value of studying and they aimed to find something personal in their studies.

General study orientation

General study orientation looks beyond the cognitive aspects of students and their motivation but focuses on the meaning given to studies by different students. According to Makinen et al. (2002), students who change programmes of study or choose to drop out are mostly uncommitted students and students who are undecided in the first year of enrolment about their majors. It implies that poor course choice influence non-completion. Christie, Munro and Fisher (2004) support this argument. Makinen et al. (2002) further argues that students attach some meaning or

importance to their studies, determined not only by the circumstances prior to enrolment into the universities but also the context of the study environment. It is possible that "the learning environment alienates student and directs the study orientation in an inadequate direction" (Makinen et al. 2002:177).

2.5 Theoretical framework

The model that I have adopted for this study highlights the fact that financial factors, sociological factors, institutional context, family socio-economic factors, pre university schooling, peers and friends and the job market interact to influence and shape choices made by individual students. The model has drawn from the theories and models highlighted in the literature review above. The influence of the HE environment on student progress was also underlined in various studies (Makinen et al. 2004; McMillan 2005).

The factors and conditions that influence choice of HE institution, choice of programmes and change of programmes are as follows:

Pre-university schooling
1. School subject choice
2. Performance
3. Aspirations
4. Career guidance and counselling

Job market
1. Perceived job opportunities and benefits
2. Perceived quality of degrees
3. Financial support
4. Hierarchy of subjects

Higher Education context
1. Admission policies
2. Student guidance and counselling
3. Clarification of programmes and support given to students
4. Quality in terms of teaching and learning

The factors are in turn influenced by broader sociological factors. These factors include:

5   Parents, relatives, role models, peers and friends

6   Cultural beliefs, values and norms

7   Political and religious influence

8   Class and gender

Figure 2.1: The model of student choice and change of programmes of study

To realize the goals of efficiency and effectives of both retention and throughput rates there should be interaction and collaboration between the four entities. Where students enter HE without positive orientations because school, family and society have not prepared them well enough for HE, the institutions should complement this. HE institutions can prepare new

entering students through induction programmes, aiming at helping students to make appropriate choices of programmes of study, teaching students proper study skills and supporting students emotionally, socially and academically. Bitzer (2003) argues that continuous assessment is necessary for HE institutions to determine their input on the development of the students entering university. The policies of HE institutions should seek to minimize the gap between the socio-economically advantaged and disadvantaged students. Support is essential for students who fail to make effective educational choices because of their socio-economic backgrounds.

2.6 Conclusion

Based on the sociological perspective (Shilling, 1991; Hall, 1992; Hodkinson et el. 1996; Horvat, 2001) I have pointed out that the basis for understanding choice is by using the perspective of structure/agency. According to Yorke and Longden (2004) we should consider influences by HE institutional context, societal structures and other factors. This analysis should be based on identifying not only the negative impact of the structures but also the enabling part (Giddens, 1984).
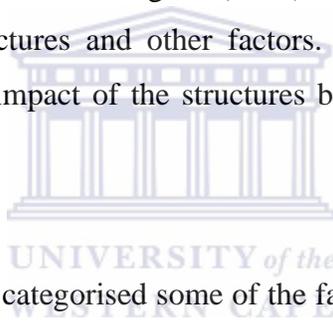
The theoretical framework   above categorised some of the factors which affect choice: financial factors, hierarchy or status given to subjects or institutions, sometimes quality in terms of teaching and learning resources or perceived quality of degrees, and environmental factors. Class has a major impact on how students form course and institutional hierarchy (Ball et al. 2002; Brooks, 2003; David et al.2003). The social learning theorists (Zunker, 1998; Krumboltz 1994) highlight the impact of environment on enhancing skills development. For example, social, cultural and political, economic factors, natural forces and natural resources affect course and career choice. As well the factors have major impact on the decision to study or not to study HE. Family, friends and peers also affect choice. These factors are considerable in the studies in South African and international literature but the level of influence differs (Cosser and du Toit, 2002; Brooks, 2003; Imenda et al.2004; Cloete et al.2006).

Choice affects students' progress in HE. Makinen et al. (2004) point out that study orientations affect students' progress through a degree. It is important that students match their skills and

abilities with course and career choice. To enable successful choice and success, career guidance and counselling is very important. However, certain principles which enhance career development should be adopted (Gordon, 2001; Ferreira, 2002). As highlighted earlier understanding the problems in context should be the basis. The political context in South Africa perpetuated inequalities and inequities in HE (Subotzky, 1997; Gibbon and Kabaki, 2002).

The analysis and interpretation of the study will be based on identifying the consistency of some of the highlighted themes with the literature. The main issues to be outlined in the analysis include: the factors associated with choice to study at UWC, choice of programmes of study, change of programmes, dropout, exclusion and completion. However, the focus as indicated earlier is to identify the possible range of factors that influence change of programmes. The problem should not be understood in isolation from the broader debate of increasing efficiency and effectiveness and reducing dropout and failure rates in the entire HE system. The interconnectedness of choice, change of programmes and low throughput should not be ignored. My argument is that throughput/completion is the end product. The HE process involves following different patterns of progression or pathways. Some of the pathways lead to success while others result into failure and perpetuate wastage of human and financial resources. To analyse low throughput it is important to consider students' choice of programmes and institutions, teaching and learning experience and available support structures.

CHAPTER THREE:

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the research design and methodology followed in conducting this case study. It also examines issues of validity, reliability and ethics.

3.2 Research design

Babbie and Mouton (2001:74) define research design as a "blueprint of how a researcher intends to conduct research." According to Creswell (2003:5), this includes such processes and issues as: the research questions; the theoretical framework; data collection and data analysis procedures and considerations of validity and reliability.

The study was empirical in nature. It was intended to answer both descriptive and explanatory questions. According to Babbie (2002:85), "descriptive studies answer questions, of what, where, when, and how many while explanatory studies answer why questions." Marshall and Rossman (1995:79) indicate that explanatory research answers such questions as "what events, beliefs, attitudes, policies, are shaping the phenomenon? How do the forces interact to result in the phenomenon?" The explanatory part of the study explored the factors and conditions influencing choice and change of programmes of study amongst UWC undergraduate students while the descriptive part quantified the extent of change of programmes.

The figure below illustrates the research design followed in conducting this study.

Figure *3.1: Research design*:

The visual model of the research design illustrated in figure 3.2 above was adopted from Creswell (2003).

1 A "+" indicates a simultaneous or concurrent form of data collection.
2 An   arrow   indicates a sequential form of data collection
3 Capitalization indicates an emphasis or priority on the quantitative or qualitative data analysis in the study
4 "Quan" and "Qual" stand for quantitative and qualitative, respectively, and they use the same number of letters to indicate equality between the forms of data. Below each figure are specific data collection, analysis and interpretation procedures to help the reader to understand the more specific procedures used.
5 Boxes highlight the quantitative and qualitative data collection.

(Creswell, 2003:214).

3.2.1 Case study

This research was conducted through a case study design. According to Babbie and Mouton

(2001), a case study gives evidence about a certain unit of analysis: individuals, groups, communities, organizations, countries or nations and events. Yin (1994:6) recommends case study research for studies that are investigating explanatory questions. Yin emphasizes that case study research takes into consideration contextual factors. Through a case study, researchers are able to capture the setting to understand the conditions within which the problem exists with the insider's perspective. Yin further argues that case study allows researchers to trace a problem over time.

Denzin and Lincoln (2000: 436) point out that what is important in a case study is what can be learned from the single case with the emphasis on "designing the study to optimise understanding of the case rather than generalization beyond". Arksey and Knight (1999: 58) support the argument of non-generalization but point out that some findings from case study may be generalised to some extent but that depends on the readers' own interpretation. The advantage of a case is that it attempts to conduct an in-depth inquiry of the subject of study. A case study broadens the researcher's understanding hypotheses of the subject of study (Yin, 1994).

Sources of error in a case study

Yin emphasizes that all the sources of evidence used in a case study research have advantages and disadvantages and there "is no single source that has complete advantage over all the other sources". Stern (1979:72) indicates that collecting evidence in case studies by the use of interviews can be biased because often case studies collect data from the past and rely on people's memories. Individuals remember mostly the issues that are of interest and importance to them. Because of distorted memories interviewees may omit in their responses certain information that is necessary for research. The structure of interviews can also bias participants' responses. If the research questions are not based on clearly defined operational definitions, the respondents may interpret the questions in a different way from what the researcher wanted to ask. Thus, construct validity will be minimized.

Case studies gathering evidence through the use of documentary sources also have limitations. The researcher can be biased in selecting documents because "the researcher must select information worth collecting and reject other possibly useful information*"* (Stern, 1979:75).

Gathering evidence from existing statistics is also problematic. Statistics do not always match reality. Statistical data may be inaccurate because of data capturing errors that occurred in the original research.

Because sources of evidence used in case study research have limitations, triangulation is recommended for maximizing validity and reliability. Triangulation is a process of collecting data through use of different sources of evidence (Yin, 1994; Merriam, 1998; Arksey and Knight, 1999; Babbie and Mouton, 2001; Berg, 2001).

3.2.2 Longitudinal cohort study

This study could also be regarded as a longitudinal cohort study. In a longitudinal study a researcher observes the population over a certain period of time (Krathwohl, 1993; Babbie and Mouton, 2002). To determine the extent and nature of change of programmes of study amongst undergraduate students, the enrolments of the first-time entering undergraduate students in 2001 were tracked from 2001 through 2004. Thus, only re-registrations from the same cohort were tracked. Failures from previous enrolments and new intakes from other institutions were not included. The approach enabled me to observe students progression through their degrees. To observe students' progression through their degrees, Robinson (2004) used similar methods.

3.3 Data Collection

This study triangulated data collection techniques by using qualitative and quantitative methodology. Creswell (2003) refers this as mixed methods research. Miles and Huberman (1994:41) argue that quantitative studies are less judgmental but abstract because of use of numbers. On the other hand, qualitative researchers use detailed descriptions of the social context; find evidence through communicating with participants and by allowing participants to interpret their own situations (Denzin and Lincoln, 2003; Babbie and Mouton, 2001; Neuman, 2003). The combination of these two methods of data collection provided detailed information presented in both numbers and words. Yin (2004) points out that when a case study relies on different types of evidence that triangulate or join the methods, the findings become more valid and stronger. Neuman (2003:16) supports the combination of quantitative and qualitative

methods by indicating:

> The key features common to all qualitative methods can be seen when they are contrasted with quantitative methods. Most quantitative data techniques are data condensers. They condense data in order to see the big picture … Qualitative methods by contrast, are best understood as enhancers. When data are enhanced, it is possible to see key aspects of cases more clearly.

3.3.1 Collection of statistical data

The quantitative part of the study was based on analysing UWC enrolments statistics of first-time entering undergraduate students with the aim to determine the extent and nature of change of programmes of study. To understand student enrolments, I referred to UWC policies for admission, change of programmes of study, and promotion and graduation. I followed the following steps and procedures in collecting statistical data:

1 I sent the letter of request to UWC Quality office on the 20th July 2004 to provide me permission to use UWC students' statistical data. The copy of the letter is attached as appendix D.

2 The UWC quality manager accepted the request and proposed a discussion meeting on 9th August 2004, which I attended.

3 In the meeting that I held with UWC quality manager he promised to request the data from relevant offices, and sent it to me.

4 On 23 August 2004, I got the statistical data presented in electronic format in Microsoft excel spreadsheet. The data showed a cohort of undergraduate students who registered in 2001 tracked through 2004 in all the faculties. The data also showed the promotion codes for students from their first year of enrolment up to 2003. However, the data did not show the gender and racial identities of students as I had requested.

5 The follow up meeting was arranged for the missing data: promotion codes for students in 2004 and gender and racial profile of the students.

6 In 15th June 2005 I received the second version of the data of the 2001 cohort showing promotion codes for 2004 but the data did not show gender and racial profile of students.

3.3.2 Collection of qualitative data

According to Babbie and Mouton (2001:393), existing statistics should not be considered as the main research design but "should always be considered at least a supplemental source of data." The study looked beyond quantification. I investigated the factors influencing choice and change of programmes of study through semi-structured interviews.

The interviews focused on the following issues:

1   Biography and personal information.
2   Factors influencing student choice of UWC as a HE institution.
3   Perceptions about UWC prior to enrolment and after enrolment.
4   Factors influencing choice of programmes of study.
5   Satisfaction with programmes of study.
6   Socio–economic factors, institutional and social factors influencing students to change programmes of study.

The semi-structured interviews combine use of both closed and open-ended questions. However, Arksey and Knight (1999:7) indicate that semi-structured interviews are more similar to unstructured interviews because "they generate qualitative data." The advantages of semi-structured interviews are that they can control non-response error where by respondents do not answer questions because they do not know what to say. Semi structured interviews also give respondents an opportunity to explain their situation in their own words. Chadwick, Bahr and Albrecht (1984:118) indicate that when using open- ended questions respondents are encouraged to reveal their own definitions of the situation. The interviewer's responsibility is to ask the question and to probe until the respondent has provided the relevant details, and to record the detail as carefully as possible. Neuman (2003:148) indicates that in an open-ended interview "qualitative researchers remain flexible and open to the unexpected, are willing to change the question structure and may abandon their original research question in the middle of the project."

In designing the type of interviews, I made alternatives for telephone interviews and face-to-face interviews. However, in the actual process I conducted only face-to-face interviews because the

students were accessible. I spent one-hour with each interviewee. Because I conducted the interviews in the time most suitable for the participants, some interviews were conducted during the day for students staying outside campus while the interviews of students staying on campus were conducted during the evening. I took detailed field notes during the interviews. Besides, I tape-recorded the interviews with permission from the respondents. I transcribed the records later but ensured confidentiality and anonymity. I did not declare the identities of the students in any form.

The code of research ethics statement adopted by sociologists highlights that honesty, integrity and informed concerned are very important in conducting social research. Equally important is the protection of the welfare and the rights of participants. Gay (1981:63) indicates that participants should not be harmed in any way either socially, mentally or physically. The Ethical statement is attached as appendix.
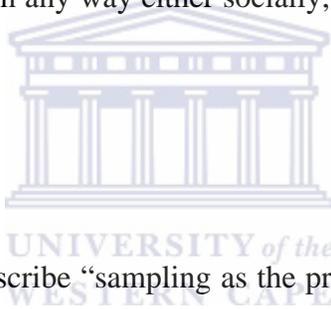
3.4 Sampling and unit of analysis

Babbie and Mouton (2001:164) describe "sampling as the process of selecting observations or a group of individuals who are going to represent an identified portion of some population chosen by some clearly defined set of procedures." Merriam (1998:61) indicates that in a qualitative study probability sampling "is not necessary or even justifiable" because the purpose of qualitative study is not to form generalizations but to get deeper understanding of the situation. Babbie and Mouton (2001:288) recommend that in selecting participants for qualitative research the following should be taken into consideration: enculturation, involvement and availability of participants.

3.4.1 Selection of participants

This case study of UWC is a single case design. The unit of analysis is individual undergraduate students. The selection of the sample was based on the following procedure: after identifying in each faculty the students who had changed programmes of study within and across faculties, I selected a sample of nine students for semi-structured interviews. The participants

were selected based on the fact that they changed programmes and on the basis of availability. I ensured that the students were currently continuing with their studies and had not dropped out. Three (3) students were selected from each of the three faculties: EMS, CHS and Arts.

3.4.2 Selection of faculties

University of the Western Cape had seven faculties: Economics and Management Sciences (EMS), Community and Health Sciences (CHS), Arts, Law, Education and Dentistry. Faculty of Education was eliminated from the study because the students who registered for Baccalaureus Educationis (B.Educ), which is an undergraduate programme; registered in the faculties where they chose their specializations i.e. B.Educ (Arts) was offered by Faculty of Arts and B. Educ (Human Movement Studies) was offered by Faculty of Community and Health Sciences.

Because the Faculties of Law and Science offered some 5-year programmes, they were also eliminated from the study. The scope of the study only focused on 4 years: from 2001 to 2004. The Faculty of Science offered B.Sc1 in the first year of study for undergraduate students registered for 3-year B.Sc degrees, B.Sc (Pharmacy), which was a 4-year programme and Dentistry (BChD), which was a 5-year programme. Faculty of Law offered 2-year Diploma programmes, LLB full time had duration of 4 years and LLB part-time had duration of five years. The total sample taken from three faculties: Arts, Community and Health Sciences and Economics and Management Sciences was 1436 students. Amongst the students 1118 registered in three-year programmes while 318 registered in four-year programmes.

3.5 Data Analysis

Yin (1994: 102) indicates, "Data analysis consists of examining categories, tabulating or otherwise recombining the evidence to address the initial propositions of a study".

3.5.1 Analysis and interpretation of statistical data

According to Denzin and Lincoln (2003:13), quantitative researchers put emphasis on measurement and numbers. They use descriptive statistics, tables, graphs and charts to and present data. In analysing the statistical data I took the issue of accuracy into consideration by ensuring that the student cohort consisted only of first- time entering undergraduate students. The

data was d by means of descriptive statistics by disaggregating the enrolments first by programmes and finally by faculty. To calculate the total number of students I used the Statistical Package for Social Scientists (SPSS).

The categories that I have adopted when documenting the statistical data are as follows:

1 **Commencing** is used to indicate first time enrolment.

2 **A Continuing/ promotion** is used to indicate that students were promoted to the following year of study.

3 **Not promoted/failed** is used to indicate that students were not fulfilling requirements for promotion to following year of study.

4 **Dropped out** is used to indicate that students did not enrol at the university in that particular year. The scope of this study does not allow for consideration of students who transferred to other universities. Therefore, students who transferred to other universities were regarded as dropouts.

5 **Changed** is used to indicate that students changed   programmes of study.

6 **Excluded** is used to indicate that according to UWC promotion criteria **"**the student may not register for the same degree/diploma without special permission of Senate, as the minimum requirements for re-admission have not been fulfilled."   Students may also be academically excluded if after two attempts they have failed to meet the required credits. The credits required for promotion to the following year of study differ by faculty.

Completion is used to indicate that students completed the requirements for the degree or diploma. According to UWC graduation policy a student graduates under the following conditions:

1 The candidate shall pass in the examination determined by the Senate.
2 Pay the fees prescribed by the council
3 Comply in all other respects with the requirements for the degree/diploma

The pass requirements for UWC states:

"Unless otherwise approved by Senate, a student shall obtain credit for a module by gaining a final mark of at least 50%, computed in the relevant ratio from the continuous

assessment mark and the examination or final assessment mark and at least 40% in the examination or final assessment task"(UWC General Calendar, 2005:63).

I have used two methods for calculating completion rates. Firstly I used the "proxy" method widely used by the Department of Education (DoE) and many institutions. I divided the total percentage of graduates in a particular year by the total enrolments in the same year. I have indicated completion rates based on this method as **final year completion.**

The second method tracked the progress of cohort of students entering each programme from 2001 to 2004. This method allowed me to track number and proportions of graduations, dropouts, exclusions and ongoing enrolments in each of the three programmes. The scope of the study did allow follow up on the students who dropped out. I focused on completion rates and the number of years students take to complete their programmes. I have indicated the completion based on this method as **cohort completion.**
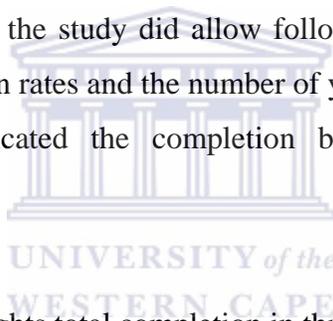
The conclusion in Chapter 4 highlights total completion in three-year and four- year programmes based on both methods.

3.5.2 Analysis of qualitative data

The method of data analysis used in this study was to identify conceptual themes and to find out how the themes were consistent with the literature. Although the number of respondents was very minimal I identified the degree of influence by indicating the number of students who cited each of the themes. However, this was not the main emphasis of the qualitative study.

The participants' responses were recorded word for word. As part of the language culture of students, they used slang and abbreviations. Such culture of students was protected and regarded as a way of understanding the world from the viewpoint of the participants. Denzin and Lincoln (1994: 503-511) emphasize that researchers should protect the language, feelings, emotions and actions of the subjects of study. They also argue against "talking over the respondent's voices but advocate for allowing the subjects to do their own talking". Chapter five presents the themes that emerged from the qualitative study. Denzin and Lincoln (1994) argue that qualitative data is not self-explanatory. Thus, the duty of the qualitative researcher is to interpret and present the data in such a way that represent the participants' views of their situation.

Berg (2001:7) indicates, "The analysis of qualitative data allows researchers to discuss in detail the various social contours and processes human beings use to create and maintain their social realities". Thus, in analyzing qualitative data researchers look for patterns and relationships and form themes or concepts that are used to summarise the findings.

Neuman (2000:163) explains qualitative data analysis as follows:

> A qualitative researcher s data by organising it into categories or the bases of themes, concepts or similar features. The researcher develops new concepts, formulates conceptual definitions and examines the relationship among concepts. Eventually the researcher links concepts to each other in terms of a sequence as oppositional sets…or as sets of similar categories that the researcher interweaves into theoretical statements.

3.6 Validity and reliability

According to Mouton (1996: 108), validity is a process of minimising errors or where possible eliminating the errors in all parts of research. On the other hand, reliability takes into

consideration whether research design used for the study was most appropriate. Thus, if the study is repeated using the same design it should give similar results (Gay 1981:110; Merriam, 1998:205). Rossi, Freeman and Lipsey (1999), when using the evaluation perspective recommend a "good enough design". Rossi et al. argue for consideration of resources, practicability and feasibility of the design. Neuman (2003:185) argues that a research should be understandable by other people.

In this study I tried to maximize validity and reliability. I have explained the main concepts of the study, triangulated the data collection methods and paid particular attention to the accuracy and validity of the questionnaire. To check errors of questionnaire items and validity, my supervisor evaluated the questionnaire and we discussed the themes to be included. The study was piloted on two students who had changed their programmes of study. The questionnaire is attached as appendix A

3.7 Limitations of the study

The limitation of research on choice and change of programmes of study in the African and South African literature influenced this study to predominantly focus on the international literature**.** It could imply that drawing more on the international literature, which presents the experiences of developed counties, might bring some of the aspects that are not very relevant to UWC students. However, the interviews revealed similarities with the international literature.

The main limitation of the quantitative data is that the analysis did not show the profile of the students in terms of gender and race. This problem resulted from inability to obtain such information from the UWC statistical records. However, in chapter one I illustrated the profile of the total number of UWC students from 2000 to 2004.

I analyzed the factors and conditions that the students indicated for choice and change of programmes by themes only. I did not quantify or analyse the frequencies of the factors.

The sampling procedure did not allow the findings to be generalized. The quantitative data was based on one cohort of students, which did not allow comparison by years. The qualitative part of the study was based on a small sample of nine students. The findings apply only to the cohort of new entering undergraduate students in 2001 in the three sampled faculties.

CHAPTER 4

PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSIONS OF QUANTITATIVE RESULTS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter deals with analysis and interpretation of quantitative data. The descriptive statistical analysis was used to quantify the extent and nature of change of programmes of study amongst University of the Western Cape undergraduate students. The scope of the research was only limited to investigating change within and across faculties. Change of course streams was not considered. As indicated in Chapter Three, the categories used in analyzing the data were as follows: commencing, total enrolled, promoted, failed, excluded, change of programmes dropout, final year completion and cohort completion. In each faculty the detailed data disaggregated by programmes of study formed the basis for analysis. However, for the purpose of the presentation, I disaggregated the data by year and faculty.

Figure 4.1: Total enrolments of first-time entering undergraduate students in EMS, ARTS and CHS faculties from 2001 to 2004.
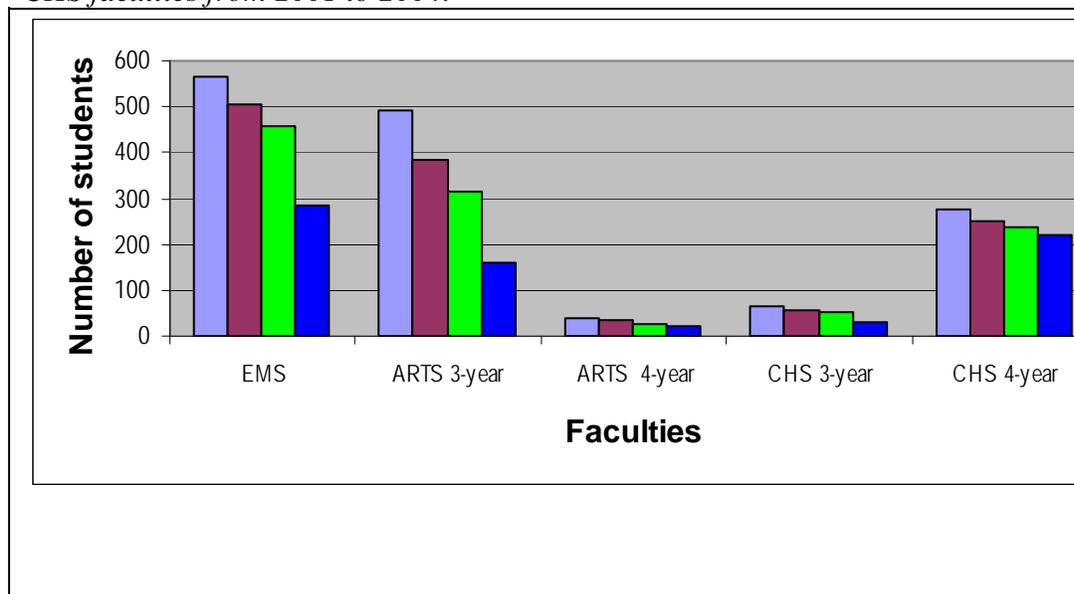
Source: University of the Western Cape student statistics, 2004.

Figure 4.1 above shows the total enrolments in each of the three faculties from 2001 to 2004. The enrolments include only re-registrations of the same cohort of students. New registrations from other institutions and re-registrations of students who failed or dropped out in previous years were not included. I discuss the enrolments patterns per faculty in the following subsidiary sections. In total there were 1118 students enrolled in three-year courses and 318 students enrolled in four-year courses. The total of all the students in the three faculties was 1436.

4.2 The Faculty of Economics and Management Sciences

The Faculty of Economics and Management Sciences had the highest enrolments; in total 565 first-time entering students enrolled in 2001. The faculty comprised six departments. Undergraduate programmes offered were: B.Administration, B.Com (Accounting), B.Com (Law) and B.Com (General). B.Com (General) offered students opportunities to choose specialized streams either in Computer Science, Economics, Human Resources, Information Systems, Investments, Management and Finance. Students who registered for B.Com (General) but did not choose the above-mentioned streams and opted to change to B.Com (Accounting), B.Com (Law) or B.Administration were technically considered to have changed their programmes. The undergraduate programmes offered in the Faculty of Economics and Management Sciences had duration of 3 years.

Table 4.1: Total promotion, failure, exclusion and completion rates in the Faculty of Economics and Management Sciences, 2001-2004

Year	Total enrolled	Promoted		Failed		Excluded		Final-year completion		Cohort completion	
2001	565	520	92%	27	5%	18	3%				
2002	505	396	78%	70	14%	39	8%				
2003	458	237	52%	68	15%	46	10%	107	23%	107	19%
2004	282	123	44%	47	17%	38	13%	74	26%	74	13%

Source: University of the Western Cape statistics, 2004

Table 4.1 above shows that the promotion rate of the students in the Faculty of Economics and Management Sciences was high. In 2001, (520) 92% students were promoted in the faculty. In

2002 the promotion rate started to decline to 78%. The promotion started to decline year by year as students progressed.

In the third year 52% were promoted. In 2001, 5% of the students failed indicating a low failure rate in the first year of enrolment. Failure rate increased gradually from the second year to 15% in 2003.

Although promotion rate of the students was high in the Faculty of Economics and Management Sciences in the first two years, the completion rate was not as high. 23% of the students completed their programmes of study in the minimum time required. The calculation was based on the proxy method widely used by the Department of Education (DoE) and many institutions (dividing the number of graduates in a particular year by the total enrolments in that year).

Another alternative of interpreting the completion rates based on the original number of entering students (the cohort) gives the completion rate of 19%. Both methods show that the completion rate was below 25%, which is the benchmark in 3-year programmes indicated by the *National Plan for Higher Education* (DoE, 2001). However, 2% or 6% is a significantly low difference. It shows high possibility in the EMS of reaching the benchmark but the faculty will have to reduce failure and exclusion. The data also shows that a total of 282 students re-registered for undergraduate degrees in 2004.

Every year, from 2001 to 2004 some students were excluded because of not meeting the minimum requirements for promotion to the following year of study. Unlike promotion, exclusion was high in the third year and fourth year of enrolment. In total 105 (or 19%) of the students were excluded in the Faculty of Economics and Management Sciences.

Table4.2: Total number of dropouts in the Faculty of Economics and Management Sciences, 2001 -2004

Year	Total enrolled	Dropouts	
2001	565	64	11%
2002	505	60	11%
2003	458	71	13%
2004	283	-	-
Total		195	35%

Source: *University of the Western Cape student enrolment for 2001 to 2004*

Table 4.2 indicates that in the Faculty of Economics and Management Sciences the total of 195 (35%) students dropped out before completing their programmes of study. The dropout of 35% was very high. Although some students dropped out because they had been excluded, there were other students who met the requirements for promotion who also dropped out. The reasons for dropout were not evident from the quantitative data. Previous studies for example: Budlender et al. (2002) investigates why academically successful students dropout in some HE institutions in South Africa. Lack of financial support appeared as one of the main reasons. HE institutions in South Africa in general face the challenge of high dropout rates (Bitzer 2003; Bunting 2004; Naidoo, 2005). Koen (2003) investigates the factors influencing dropout rate at UWC. The study highlights economic and social factors such as finance, family commitment, inability to cope with studies and failure.

Table4.3: Total number of students changing programmes of study in the Faculty of Economics and Management Sciences, 2001 -2004

Year	Total enrolled	Change of programmes	
2001	565	0	-
2002	505	44	8%
2003	458	22	4%
2004	283	35	6%
Total		101	18%

Source: *University of the Western Cape student enrolment for 2001 to 2004*

Table 4.4: The faculties to which undergraduate students in the Faculty of Economics and Management Sciences changed their programmes, 2001 -2004

Faculties to which	Total number

students changed	of students	
Within the faculty	95	94%
Faculty of Arts	1	1%
Faculty of Science	3	3%
Faculty of Law	2	2%
Total	101	100%

Source: *University of the Western Cape student enrolment for 2001 to 2004*

According to table 4.3 and 4.4 out of the total of 565 first-time entering undergraduate students, in the Faculty of Economics and Management Sciences 101 (18%) changed their programmes of study. Amongst the students who changed their programmes within the faculty, most of the students changed from B. (administration) and B.Com (accounting). The students who changed from B. (administration) registered for B.Com in the various streams. The students changed mostly in the second year of study and all the students who changed were meeting the requirements for promotion. Similarly, the students who changed from B.Com (accounting) in the second year met promotion requirements. However, in the third year of study, some students changed from B.Com (accounting) due to failure and academic exclusion. Out of 32 students who changed from B.Com (accounting) in 2003, 27 students had failed.

Amongst the students who changed their programmes across faculties 1 student changed to the Faculty of Arts, 3 students changed to the Faculty of Science while 2 students changed to the Faculty of Law. When compared to the other faculties EMS had highest percentage of students changing programmes of study within and across faculties. While some students changed programmes of study because of failure, the factors influencing change of programmes amongst students who had not failed were not understandable from the quantitative data. The interviews presented some of these factors.

4.3 The Faculty of Arts

4.3.1 The Faculty of Arts in 3-year programmes

The Faculty of Arts offered 3-year and 4–year B.A degrees. The 3-year programmes were B.A, B.A Theology and Lower Diploma in Library and Information Science. In the second and third year of study, students registered for B.A choose at least two majors from the subjects offered in the faculty or in the other faculties. The B.A degree majors included: Afrikaans Language

Acquisition, Anthropology, Sociology, English, English 105, Ethics, Foreign Languages (Arabic, French, German, and Latin), Geography, Hermeneutics, History, Humanities, Information Literacy, Language and Communication Studies, Library and Information Science, Theological Studies, Xhosa First Language, Xhosa Second Language. B.A (Prelim) was offered to students who had not obtained matriculation exemption (M E). If the B.A (Prelim) students passed 50% of their courses they were credited to the second year of B.A degree (Faculty of Arts year calendar, 2001).

Table 4.5:   Total promotion, failure, exclusion and completion rates in the Faculty of Arts in 3-year programmes

Year	Total enrolled	Promoted		Failed		Excluded		Final-year completion		Cohort completion	
2001	490	290	59%	149	31%	51	10%				
2002	384	239	63%	105	27%	40	10%				
2003	317	133	42%	57	18%	29	9%	98	31%	98	20%
2004	158	74	47%	25	16%	7	4%	51	32%	51	10%

Source: *University of the Western Cape student enrolment for 2001 to 2004*

The data presented in table 4.5 above shows that the total number of commencing undergraduate students in the Faculty of Arts in the 3-year programmes was 490 in 2001. The promotion rate of the students in the Faculty of Arts was higher than 50 % in both 2001 and 2002. In 2001 promotion rate was 59% and it increased to 63% in 2002. It is important to indicate that promotion rate in the Faculty of Arts was below the promotion rate in the EMS. It should be noted that in 2003 about 43 students were still in their first year of B.A degrees. In total 127 students were excluded. Of the 127 students who were excluded in 2001, 51 were registered for B.A (Prelim). I need to highlight that amongst 46 students who registered for Lower Diploma in Library and Information Science, 44 (or 96%) failed and only 2 (or 4%) were promoted in 2001. Amongst the students who failed, 10 students changed their programmes. Of the 10 students who changed programmes 9 students changed within the faculty while 1 student changed to the Faculty of Economics and Management Sciences.

In 2003, the total of 317 students re-registered for different programmes in the Faculty of Arts. At the end of the year 98 (or 31%) completed their programmes of study. When calculating the graduation rate from the total number of students who re-registered in 2003, the completion rate in the Faculty of Arts was significantly higher. Calculating the graduation rate from the original

number of entering students (490), gave lower percentage. Only 20% of the students graduated. The graduation percentage was below the benchmarks for the DoE. If we take the total number of students who graduated in 2003 and 2004 only 30% of the students graduated.

Table 4.6: Total number of dropouts in the Faculty of Arts in 3-year programmes from 2001 to 2004

Year	Total Enrolled	Dropouts	
2001	490	129	26%
2002	384	72	15%
2003	317	67	14%
2004	158	-	-
Total		268	55%

Source: University of the Western Cape student enrolment for 2001 to 2004

Table 4.6 above highlights that dropout rates were very high in the Faculty of Arts in the 3-year programmes. The total of 268 (55%) students dropped out. Dropouts constituted more than half of the total number of students who enrolled in 2001. Most of the students who dropped out were enrolled for B.A (Prelim). In comparison with the other faculties, the Faculty of Arts had the highest dropout rates. The findings could imply that most of the students who registered in the Faculty of Arts were not prepared for HE. Bitzer (2003) points out that university education should not be taken as opportunity for those students who are regarded as prepared for HE. The argument is that HE institutions should take it as their responsibility to assess and support students.

Table 4.7: The total number of students changing programmes registered in the Faculty of Arts in 3-year programmes, 2001 -2004

Year	Total Enrolled	Change of Programmes	
2001	490	0	0
2002	384	16	3%
2003	317	7	2%
2004	158	2	1%
Total		25	6%

Table 4.8: Faculties to which students registered in the Faculty of Arts changed their programmes, 2001 -2004

Faculties	Total number of students	
Within the faculty	15	60%

EMS	4	16%
Faculty of Science	2	8%
Faculty of Law	2	8%
CHS	2	8%
Total	25	100%

Source: *University of the Western Cape student enrolment for 2001 to 2004*

According to table 4.7 and 4.8 a total of 25 students changed their programmes of study in 3–year programmes in the Faculty of Arts. Out of the students who changed their programmes of study, 10 students changed the programmes across the faculties while 15 students changed within the faculty. The students in the Faculty of Arts registered for B.A 1 in the first year of enrolment and chose their majors in the second year or third year. It could be assumed that by the time the students were in the second or third year of study they had a broad understanding of different programmes. As a result, students made informed choices of programmes.

4.3.2 The Faculty of Arts in 4-year programmes

Table 4.9: Total promotion, failure, exclusion and completion rates in the Faculty of Arts, 2001 -2004

Year	Total enrolled	Promoted		Failed		Excluded		Final-year completion		Cohort completion	
2001	41	20	49%	21	51%	0					
2002	36	19	53%	15	42%	2	6%				
2003	26	13	50%	10	38%	3	12%				
2004	22	11	50%	8	36%	2	9%	1	5%	1	2%

Source: University of the Western Cape student enrolment for 2001 to 2004

According to table 4.9 in the beginning of 2001 the total of 41 new entering undergraduate students registered in the Faculty of Arts for B.Bibl and HDE (Non-graduate Arts) which had duration of four years. At the end of 2001 academic year, 49% of the students were promoted. Promotion increased to 53% in 2002. However, all 14 students registered for HDE (Non-graduate) Arts failed in 2001.The failure rate was high in the 4-year programmes, ranging from 51% in 2001 but declining to 36 % in 2004. Because of high failure rate, the completion rate of students registered in 4-year programmes was very low. Only 1 student managed to complete within the required time. The completion rate was very low based on both methods. Exclusion rate was also low in the 4-year programmes.

In total 7 (or 17%) students were excluded. The tables below show the total dropout rates and total number of students who changed their programmes of study.

Table 4.10: Total dropouts in the Faculty of Arts in 4-year programmes at UWC, 2001 -2004

Year	Total enrolled	Drop outs	
2001	41	8	20%
2002	36	8	20%
2003	26	6	15%
2004	22	-	-
Total		22	55%

Source: University of the Western Cape student enrolment for 2001 to 2004

According to table 4.10 above, in 4-year programmes dropout rate was high. Almost 22 (or 54%) students dropped out. Even though other reasons may be attributed to dropout, 14 students dropped out because of failure.

Table 4.11:   Total number of students changing programmes of study in the Faculty of Arts in 4-year programmes at UWC, 2001 -2004

Year	Total enrolled	Change of programmes	
2001	41	0	
2002	36	4	10%
2003	26	0	0
2004	22	0	0
Total		4	10%

Source: University of the Western Cape student enrolment for 2001 to 2004

According to table 4.11 above, only 4 students amongst 41 changed their programmes. Change happened within the faculty; 2 students registered for B.A (Arts) while the other 2 students changed to B.A (Health Care studies).

4.4 The Faculty of Community and Health Sciences

The Faculty of Community and Health Sciences had ten departments and institutes: Dietetics, Human Ecology, Nursing, Occupational Therapy, Physiotherapy, Psychology, Social Work, School of Public Health, School of Natural Medicine and Sport, Recreation and Exercise Science. The degree programmes offered in all the departments and institutes except in the Recreation and Exercise Science Department had duration of 4 years. The 4-year degrees were

offered in B.A (Human Ecology, B.A (Human Ecology) Education, B.A (Social Work), B.Cur, B. Psych, B.Sc (Dietetics), B.Sc (Occupational Therapy, B.Sc (Physiotherapy), H.D.E. (Non-graduate Human Movement Studies) H.D.E. (Non-Graduate Health) and Diploma in Social Work.

Recreation and Exercise Science Department offered both three-year and four-year degrees. The 3–year programmes offered were (B.A Physical & Health Education, B.A (Sport & Exercise Science), B.A (Sport & Recreation Management) and B.Sc (Sport & Exercise Science). The enrolment in three-year and 4-year programmes in the Faculty of Community and Health Sciences is outlined below.

4.4.1   The Faculty of Community and Health Sciences in 3-year programmes

Table 4.12: Total promotion, failure, exclusion and completion rates in the Faculty of Community and Health Sciences in 3- year programmes, 2001 -2004

Year	Total enrolled	Promoted		Failed		Excluded		Final-year completion		Cohort completion	
2001	63	34	54%	29	46%	0					
2002	58	37	64%	19	33%	2	3%				
2003	52	14	27%	26	50%	2	3%	10	19%	10	15%
2004	31	10	32%	6	19%	6	19%	9	29%	9	14%

Source: *University of the Western Cape student enrolment for 2001 to 2004*

According to table 4.12 above, in total 63 first-time entering undergraduate students registered in the Faculty of Community and Health Sciences in 3-year programmes. The promotion rate was higher than the failure rate in 2001 and in 2002. However, 50% of the students failed in 2003. According to the table above the number of students who managed to complete their programmes of study in record time was 19%. When calculating the completion rate from the total number of 63 students who enrolled in 2001, the completion rate was 16%. The completion rate was below the benchmarks. The data shows that after four years only 30% of the students graduated while the highest percentage of the students did not manage to complete in time.

 It is equally important to indicate that 27 or 52% of the students were still in their first year of study in 2003.   However the total exclusion rate was not as high as the failure rate.

Table 4.13: The total number of dropouts in the Faculty of Community and Health Sciences in 3-year programmes

Year	Total enrolled	Drop outs	
2001	63	7	11%
2002	58	7	11%
2003	52	8	13%
2004	31	-	-
Total		22	35%

Source: *University of the Western Cape student enrolment for*

The dropout rate was high in the Faculty of Community and Health Sciences. In total 22 (or 35%) students dropped out. The dropout rate happened in similar rate in the three years from 2001 to 2003. It ranged from 11% to 13%.

Table 4.14: Total number of students changing programmes of study in the Faculty of Community and Health Sciences in 3-year programmes

Year	Total enrolled	Change of programmes	
2001	63	2	3%
2002	58	1	2%
2003	52	0	0
2004	31	0	0
Total		3	5%

Source: University of the Western Cape student enrolment for 2001 to 2004

Table 4.14 above indicates that change of programmes of study was low; only 3 students changed their programmes of study. Two students changed within the faculty while 1 student changed to the Faculty of Science.

4.4.2 The Faculty of Community and Health Sciences in 4-year programmes

Table 4.15: Total promotion, failure, exclusion and completion rates in the Faculty of Community and Health sciences in 4- year programmes, 2001- 2004

Year	Total	Promoted		Failed		Excluded		Final-year completion		Cohort completion	
2001	277	188	68%	83	30%	6	2%				
2002	251	196	78%	43	17%	12	5%				

| 2003 | 237 | 191 | 81% | 43 | 18% | 3 | 1% | | | | |
| 2004 | 221 | 70 | 32% | 21 | 10% | 5 | 2% | 124 | 56% | 124 | 45% |

Source: *University of the Western Cape student enrolment for 2001 to 2004*

Table 4.15 above highlights that 277 students registered in the Faculty of Community and Health Sciences in 4-year programmes. The promotion rate was higher than the failing rate: 68% in 2001 and increasing to 81% in 2003. In 2001 the total of 30% failed. The failure rate decreased to 10% in 2004. The total number of students who were excluded was low. The total of 26 (or 9%) of the students were excluded. In comparison with other faculties, the Faculty of Community and Health Sciences had the highest completion rate of 56%. The completion rates were calculated based on the total of 221 students who re- registered in the faculty in 2004. The completion rates based on the cohort indicated a lower number, 45%, but significantly above the benchmarks. We could assume that the admission requirements for the Faculty of Community and Health Science programmes opened opportunities for mostly students who were capable for success. On the other hand such admission criteria minimize access opportunities for other students.

The difference in completion rates between three-year and four-year programmes in the Faculty of Community and Health Sciences need to be highlighted. In 3-year programmes the completion rate was 19% while in 4-year programmes the completion rate was 56%.

Table 4.16: The total number of dropouts in the Faculty of Community and Health Sciences in 4-year programmes, 2001 -2004

Year	Total enrolled	Drop outs	
2001	277	29	10%
2002	251	19	7%
2003	237	15	5%
2004	221	-	-
Total		63	23%

Table 4.16 highlights that the drop out rate in the Faculty of Community and Health Sciences was low. Of the 277 commencing students, 63 (or 23%) dropped out. The low failure rate and low exclusion rate in the Faculty of Community and Health Sciences in 4-year programmes implies that most of the students coped with their demands. However, the qualitative data indicated a different perspective. One student registered for B.Sc Dietetics complained about heavy work load. The table below presents the data on change of programmes.

Table 4.17: The total number of students changing programmes of study in the Faculty of Community and Health sciences in 4- year programmes, 2001 -2004

Year	Total enrolled	Change of programmes	
2001	277		
2002	251	4	
2003	237	1	
2004	221	0	
Total		5	2%

Source: University of the Western Cape student enrolment for 2001 to 2004

According to Table 4.17 above change of programmes of study was significantly low; only 5 students changed their programmes. Of the 5 students, 3 changed from B. Sc Dietetics to B.Sc (Occupational Therapy), B.Sc 1 and B.Sc (Applied Biotechnology) while the other 2 students changed from B.A (Social Work) to B. (Psychology).

4.5 Summary and discussions

4.5.1 Change of programmes

The study revealed that change of programmes of study was significantly low in the Faculties of

Arts and Community and Health Sciences in both 3-year and 4-year programmes. In the Faculty of Arts in 3-year programmes, 25 (or 6%) changed programmes. In 4-year programmes, out of the total of 41 students who enrolled in 2001, 4 (or 10%) changed their programmes. In the Faculty of Community and Health Sciences in 3-year and 4-year programmes the total number of students who changed programmes was 3 (or 5%) and 5 (or 2%) respectively. Significant change of programmes of study happened in the Faculty of Economics and Management Sciences. Of the total of 565 students enrolled in the Faculty of Economics and Management Sciences in 2001, the total of (101) 18% changed their programmes between 2001 and 2004. In all the faculties change of programmes happened mostly within the faculty and most students changed their programmes in the second year of study. The data also showed that some students changed their programmes without failure while other students changed their programmes due to failure. Failure and academic exclusion could be associated with change of programmes.

According to the interviews, failure as a factor influencing change of programmes was predominantly high amongst the students registered in EMS. The faculty rule emphasised that a student who fails to meet the requirements for promotion twice may not be allowed to continue with the same course without the authorization from the Senate. The responses from three students confirmed.

> I did it first year then I failed it, I started in my second year with B.Com Economics. During my first year I was doing B.Com (Accounting) and I passed my first year. In my second year I passed all my subjects except Financial Accounting. I did Financial Accounting twice and now then I had to find a second choice. Because accounting I do not know if it was me who did not understand it. But what I know is that I did my best. What went wrong I do not know? **(S1).**

In agreement, **S5** responded:

> You write the first day you fail it, the next day you pass, the 3rd test you fail it. Go EMS if you fail something they will exclude you academically. In 2003, I changed to B.Com (Commerce). If you fail a module you cannot continue with anything second semester. Then when I changed I was on the 2nd year B.Com (Accounting). You just continue with other modules and some second year modules half-second year and half-third year. Some other modules you can't do if you did not do second year.

One student from CHS shared the same viewpoint. However, the student changed because of fear of exclusion. The student changed before being excluded.

> It is the failing otherwise I was just "gonna" do. Just continue. I was failing and stuff and they were talking about if you "gonna" fail and stuff you are going to be excluded and I said let me finish the first year. The whole year I failed. Second term, 3rd term, 4th term I failed. The whole year I failed. I failed some modules and the stuff. I did them the following year and I didn't pass all of them, I switched on to Medical Bioscience. **(S4).**

When I asked a follow up question trying to investigate more on the factors that resulted into failure, the students also complained about heavy workload and unclear structure of the examination papers. Another student indicated that some examination questions were based on the concepts that have not been explained clearly.

S1 Explained:

> I do not know, I do not think there was too much work. It is the way they set the paper because in B.Com (Accounting) they want you to explain the new things on the paper. It is unlike in Economics, in Economics you know that you are going to write what you have studied. In Financial Accounting you can study but they may be a certain transaction you could have done this way. The way you were never taught in the class. I think is the trickiness.

Concerning heavy workload, it appeared from the student responses that there was interaction of many factors, inability to balance the social life with academic work and peer pressure. The student replied as follows:

> There was too much work in Dietetics and I was too playful also. I was too playful. In first year I was parting. Yaa! I think is peer pressure that made me fail a lot because my God! I was parting. I was parting a lot just peer pressure that made me to fail. You know when I got here I did not have boyfriend my boyfriend was at home. I did not know a lot of people on campus so I was always in my room. I was studying my books and so I passed. Second term I started to know a lot of people so I did not study. I was not disciplined. I am too lazy that's why I quitted. I said this course is too much a lot of presentations, assignments tests all at the same time. I failed first year I said no I won't go on with this again Yoo! **(S4).**

Yorke and Longden (2004) argue that students' lack of maturity to handle freedom affects their progress and results to failure or dropout. They categorise lack of maturity under adventitious events, indicating that it is not a major problem in HE; it only affects certain students.

Tinto's (1975) theory takes a holistic approach in addressing attrition in HE. The theory shows that students' progression in HE institutions is influenced by the interaction between family background, secondary schooling and students' personal attributes. According to Tinto the students should be committed to their studies and form a balance between social and academic activities. The model also highlights that there should be interaction between faculties. All these efforts should aim at reducing dropout rate. Tinto's theory could also be used in analyzing change of programmes of study. The analysis moves from taking the problem as an individual responsibility. Being sociological in nature, Tinto's theory uses a more similar perspective to structuration and symbolic interactionism theories (Giddens, 1984; Hall, 1992). The structures shape the type of decisions made by individuals. Giddens (1984) emphasizes that the structures should not always be associated with negative decisions but looked in the perspective that they can be enabling as well. Horvat (2001) emphasizes the point of focusing the attention on the admission realities and other structures that impact on choice.

Various studies at institutional and national level attempted to investigate the issue of low completion rates but the studies have not incorporated change of programmes into this major problem. I believe that it is a challenge for HE institutions to try to document the data of students changing programmes and identify a link between change of programmes and low completion rates. In UWC there is a challenge to address all negative factors associate with change of programmes of study for example: high failure rate.

4.5.2 Failure, exclusion and dropout

Figure 4.2: Total percentage of failure rates in EMS, ARTS and CHS faculties from 2001 to 2004.
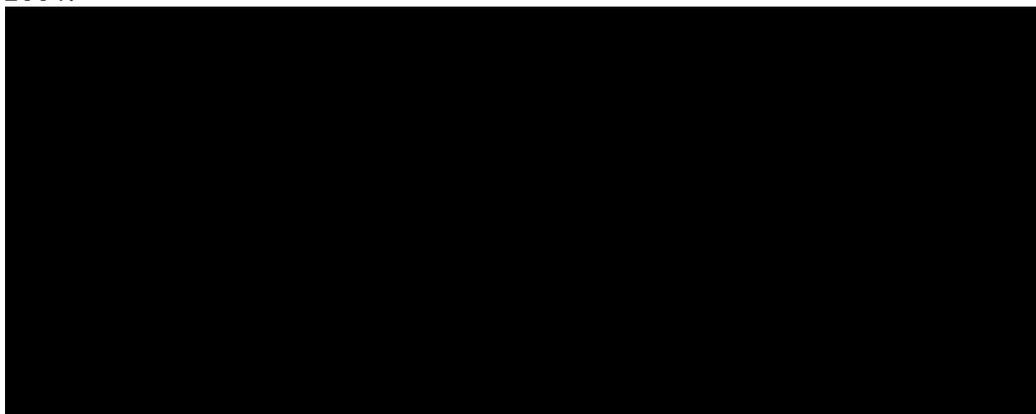
The figure above shows that in 2001 EMS faculty had the lowest failure rate of 5%. The failure rate increased gradually to 17% in 2004. In comparison with other faculties EMS had lowest failure rate. CHS, 4-year also had lower failure rate.   In the Faculty of Arts both 3-year and 4-year programmes and in CHS, 4- year programmes the failure rate was high in the first year of study and declined slightly in the subsequent years. The Faculty of Arts in 4-year programmes and CHS, 3-year programmes had the highest failure rate.   In Arts failure rate was high in the first year while in CHS, failure rate was high in the final year. The figure shows an overall of high failure rate: Out of 1336 students new entering students, 309 (or 22%) failed in 2001.

Figure4.3: Total percentage of exclusion rates in the EMS, ARTS and CHS faculties from 2001 to 2004
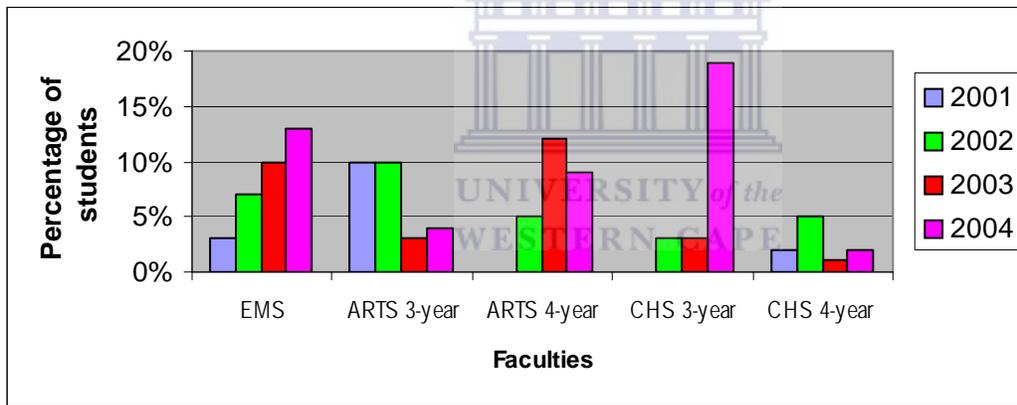
Source: UWC statistical records, 2004

Figure 4.4: Total percentage of dropout rates in the EMS, ARTS and CHS faculties from 2001 to 2003
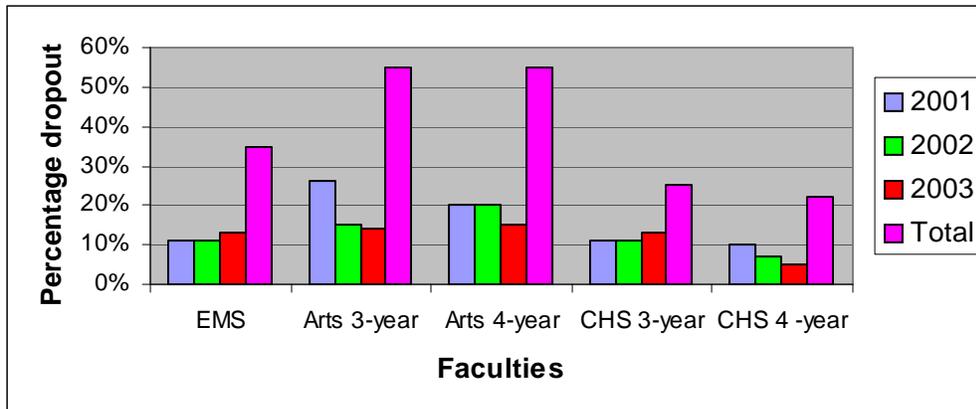
Source: UWC statistical records, 2004

Figure 4.4 shows significantly high dropout rates in all the faculties. Amongst the cohort of 1436 students who enrolled in 2001, after four years 570 or 40% dropped out. Out of these total 311 (or 22%) were excluded. The Faculty of Arts had the highest dropout rate of 55%, Economics and Management Science had dropout rate of 35% while Community and Health Sciences had dropout rate of 30%. Similar with change of programmes, dropout rate was higher in the second year of study.

The national statistics show high drop out rates and low throughput rates in the entire HE system in South Africa (Bitzer, 2003; Eiselen and Geyser, 2003; Gouws and Van der Merwe, 2004; Bunting, 2004; Naidoo, 2005). Dropout and failure is a source of wastage of national resources: both financial and human resources (Bitzer, 2003; Eiselen and Geyser, 2003; Gouws and Van der Merwe, 2004). Gouws and Van der Merwe (2004) estimate that about R1.3-million is spent for 20% dropout rate. Bitzer (2003:164) indicates "the money estimated to about R1500 million is spent annually on dropout and failure."   The factors influencing failure and low completion rates at UWC have been extensively investigated. The findings of this study document similar problems, which persist to exist at UWC (Koen, 2001; Koen, 2003; Barnes, 2004). Unless UWC reduces the level of dropout of students who are excluded because of failing to meet the minimum requirements for promotion, it will be difficult to increase retention and completion rates.

We need to estimate the money that is spent for students who drop out at UWC. It is necessary that UWC should investigate the factors influencing successful undergraduate students to

dropout. UWC should also investigate whether these students dropout or transfer to other universities.

Budlender et al. (2002) conducted a similar study in other universities in South Africa. According to the study, financial problem is the main factor that the students highlight. Other personal problems such as sickness and family commitment also contribute to non-completion.

As I have indicated in Chapter One, the main concern of the *National Plan for Higher Education* (DoE, 2001) is that HE institutions should reduce dropout and failure rate and increase their completion rates.

4.5.3 Completion

Of the 565 students who enrolled in the Faculty of Economics and Management Sciences in 2001, 23% (or 19%, if calculating from the initial total enrolled) completed after three years. A total of 283 (or 61%) students were still enrolled for undergraduate programmes in 2004.   In the Faculty of Arts in 3-year programmes when dividing graduates by the total enrolments in that year the completion rate was 32% which is high. However, the cohort completion was low, 20% graduated in record time. The difference of graduation based on the two methods is caused by high drop out.   About 55% of the students dropped out.

The completion rates of 56% (or 45%) in Community and Health Sciences could be regarded as significantly high. However, these findings do not indicate that when taking the total enrolments of UWC students the completion rates were above the benchmarks of the *National Plan for Higher Education* (DoE, 2001). In the three- year programmes out of 1018 students the total of 215 students or (21%) completed on record time. The completion rate is below the bench marks. Although the findings are based on a sample which excludes other faculties, there is   similarity with previous studies .The 2001 graduation data shows that out of about 10731 students enrolled in UWC, the completion rate was 17% (Koen, 2003:12).

In four –year programmes the total number of new entering students in 2001 was 318. Amongst that number 125 students or (39%) completed in the minimum time. The completion rate may seem to be higher but the highest completion rate was in the Faculty of Community and Health Sciences. The Arts faculty had only one student who completed in 2004.

 It was evident from the study that most students do not complete on record time. Some students take   four years or more years to complete 3-year undergraduate programmes. In the third year of enrolment some students were still in the first year of their degrees. The interviews showed that nine interviewees who changed their programmes exceeded the minimum time for completing their studies. The students enrolled for three-year and four- year programmes in 2001

but some indicated that in 2006 they were going to enroll, extending their time to six years. This finding is similar to what the statistics at national level revealed. Naidoo indicates that about 28% of students were still registered in the first-degree programmes, five years after enrolment (The Mercury, November 2005).

Makinen et al. (2004:174) argue that higher education institutions face a challenge of students who prolong studies. Some students take more than seven years to complete a three-year undergraduate programme.

The challenge of low completion rates is a concern in South Africa and internationally. Taking into perspective that funding in HE in south Africa will be based on completion rates, I need to emphasize that unless UWC balances access with retention and completion rates, it will be difficult for UWC to attract sufficient government funding (DoE, 2001).

Bunting (2004) argues that to address any problem in the HE in South Africa, especially retention, the historical context in which the institutions were established should always be taken into consideration. Historically advantaged institutions have a history of good performance in retention and completion rates while the historically disadvantaged institutions have a history of poor performance in terms of both completion and retention rates. The imbalances in terms of teaching and learning resources have a large impact between the two types of institutions.

CHAPTER FIVE

PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF QUALITATIVE RESULTS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the results of the qualitative data. As indicated in earlier chapters, the data was gathered through semi-structured interviews. The main purpose of the qualitative data was to investigate possible range of factors that influence change of programmes of study amongst University of the Western Cape (UWC) undergraduate students. Factors influencing choice to study at UWC and choice of programmes contributed to the understanding of change of

programmes.

5.2 Basic and demographic profile of the participating students

The students participating in the interviews were given identities of **S 1** to **S 9** to ensure confidentiality and anonymity. Amongst the participants, seven students were in the final year of study. Of the seven students, two students from the Faculty of Economics and Management Sciences indicated that they were not going to complete their degrees because of the modules they had not completed. The students indicated a possibility of enrollment at UWC in 2006 to complete their degrees. Of the two students who were not in their final year of study, one student was in the second year while the other student was in the third year of B.A (Social Work).

Table 5.1 below illustrates the demographic profile of the students in terms of age, gender and programmes of study.

Demographic profile of the students		
Age		
21 to 25 = 4	26 to 30 = 3	31-35 = 2
Gender		
4 Males		5 females
Faculties		
EMS =3	CHS =3	ARTS =3

5.3   The factors and conditions influencing choice and change of programmes

I asked the students to indicate the factors that influenced their choice to study at UWC, choice of programmes of study and the factors influencing change of programmes. Finance, influence by family and friends and the issue of quality of teaching and learning appeared in all the three aspects. Possibility of admission at UWC and the fact that the students wanted to study far from home influenced choice to study at UWC while career guidance and secondary school choice appeared to have great influence on choice of programmes. With regard to change of programmes some students also cited problems with choice of programmes and changing to preferred programmes. These factors suggest inadequate career guidance at both secondary school and at UWC. Although each of the students emphasised one main reason for choice or change of programmes, there were other contributory factors that shaped students' choices. The tables below show the main themes that illustrate what the interviewed students felt as a group. I highlight how these factors influenced the students basing the discussion on the main themes.

Table5.2: The factors and conditions influencing students' choice to study at UWC

Factors associated with choice to study at UWC	Number of students
Financial support	4
Quality of teaching and learning	6
Family, friends and peers	5
Possibility of admission at UWC	2
Studying far from home	4

Table 5.3: The factors and conditions influencing students' choice of programmes of study

Factors associated with choice of programmes	Number of students
Perceived job benefits	3
Family and friends	4
High school subject choice	5
Secondary subjects choice and career guidance	8
Political and religious influence	1

Table 5.4: The factors and conditions influencing change of programmes of study

Factors and conditions influencing change of programmes	Number of students
Lack of financial support	1
Failure and academic exclusion	3
Family, friends and peers	2
Problem with choice of programmes	2
Changing to preferred programmes	1

5.3.1 Financial support

It appeared from the interviews that financial support affected choice of institutions and change of programmes of study. Concerning choice to study at UWC, financial support emerged as a major concern for four of the students. Two students indicated that they considered availability of funding when choosing to study at UWC. Through the publicity from advertisements and also from relatives and friends who studied at UWC, the students were aware that UWC provided financial aid. **S 6** indicated**:** "I looked at support in terms of finance."

Another student (**S1**) whose brother and sisters were studying at UWC at the time of application responded:

> Just like is the one that I got the profound information, like the real information. Because I know that the Durban Westville existed but I did not know how they did supply financial aid. But I knew about okay how UWC.I knew all about that.

On the contrary some students **S2** complained about unfair distribution of funding at UWC. The student indicated that funding was not allocated to financially needy students and to the students registered in the programmes that required more resources.

> The major point could be financial support how it is channeled here on school. I do not think it is channeled in the proper way. If it could be channeled the proper way to students who really deserve in that programme for example, it could help you know!

Also considering the fact that the majority of UWC students come from disadvantaged backgrounds, there is a high possibility for students to consider financial support (Barnes, 2004). In supporting the argument **S 4** explained:

> We come from different backgrounds where you will find that the only breadwinner is your grandmother who is not working but getting money from the government: that R700. You cannot expect from that
> R700 to get food, pay the fees and the 'res'. Remember also that if you owe more than R10 000 you do not get a 'res'. If they could give more funds maybe it could be better.

What the student pointed out is that UWC should increase the amount of money provided for financial aid, considering the problems of students from low socio-economic backgrounds. Mji (2002) indicates that students from disadvantaged backgrounds face so many problems that need further research if inequalities of the past are to be addressed sufficiently.

The finding of basing choice of HE institution on financial factors corresponds with earlier studies conducted in South Africa. The findings from Cloete et al. (2006) show that most of black students from the sample of secondary school leavers in the Eastern Cape were not intending to enter HE because of financial constraints. Amongst those who were considering studying further, they chose institutions that charged lower fees such as Border Technikon and Fort Hare. Finance as a determining factor for choice of institution was also highlighted in

Cosser and du Toit (2002) and in Cosser, du Toit and Visser (2004). The studies revealed that students consider the reputation of the institution in terms of availability of resources and financial support. Imenda et al. (2004) affirmed that finance shaped student choice: students indicated that their choice to study at Peninsula Technikon was based on the fact that the institution had accessible financial aid. Imenda, et al. (2004) ranked financial influence on the third level.

Other studies point out that financial incentives increase accessibility of HE institutions to students from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds (Vossenteyn, 2000; Ball et al. 2002; David et al.2004; Hatt, 2005). After 1994, the provision of financial aid (TEFSA) increased mobility amongst economically disadvantaged students in South Africa. More students got opportunities to enter different institutions of their choice in the country. However, one student complained that the government financial aid was insufficient. The student indicated that the amount of money given to students was not sufficient to cover all the expenses such as food and books. **S 4** expressed the dissatisfaction in the following statement:

> If you do not have a bursary here there is no way of surviving. That's the first thing I want to specify. Because you see they can provide with TEFSA, TEFSA is not enough to cover what you expect them to cover so is like is the survival of the fittest. So is not easy to cope. Even if they give you money for books, they give you a small amount: they only give R1500, which is not enough to cover books. You find in the bookshop the book cost R500 you only can buy three books with that R1500.

The findings of basing choice of institution on financial support could also imply that the institutions that charge lower fees or provide bursaries may attract many students from disadvantaged backgrounds. However, the institutions should ensure fair distribution by prioritizing financially needy students. My argument is based on the responses from two students who argued about unfair distribution of funding at UWC. If funding is allocated on the basis of performance, universities should also take into consideration the impact of schooling in the historically disadvantaged schools such as: lack of qualified teachers, scarcity of resources and school curriculum which in turn impacts on students' academic performance (Kallaway, 2002).

Lack of financial support also affected change of programmes of study amongst some students. One student pointed out that it was impossible to carry out all the requirements of B. Sc

Computer Science without financial support.

The student replied:

> Honestly there isn't much support given to Computer Science students. There wasn't much support financially and obviously you have to have finance. Obviously you consider the opportunities for applying for scholarships until you are exhaust because in Computer Science you can not work without resources because most of the courses will require you to go and work at your own home and when you come home you find that you do not have something to work on. I think is not a bad programme. I did not do terrible on it. Hence I said some of the work will require you to go and work outside the classroom and if you do not have resources you will be left behind. **(S2).**

It is not a new finding that students associated course change with financial problems. McMillan (2005) cited similar finding although this factor affected a small percentage of students, only 6%. Other factors such as interest in the course, work related problems and study load and performance were more influential.

5.3.2 Perceived job benefits

With regard to choice of programmes of study, students perceived some job benefits. Two students from the EMS faculty indicated that they believed that by qualifying for B.Com (Accounting) they increased the possibility of finding employment in high paying jobs. Some students cited perceived job benefits such as housing, car subsidies and medical insurance. **S1** stated:

> I wanted a qualification, like I wanted to be a CA (chartered accountant) working in the financial field. The one that came first is that they earn a lot of money. What else? I think that one was the only one.

S 5 supported by indicating:

> I decided that if I studied accounting I am going to have a bright future. I also considered benefits. If I go to a company then I will get my car allowance, housing allowance and medical allowance.

While **S 3** indicated:

> Yaa! Job opportunities even money wise. These dieticians were like in demand at that time. I do not know now. That's what she told me "if you can go for it you are going to get a job."

One student studying BA Human Ecology believed that university education gives people opportunities to achieve their goals in various ways such as self-employment. The argument affirms that students perceive university education as offering opportunities for self-development (Mji, 2002).

According to Makinen et al. (2004: 174) students' study orientations vary. "Application-directed orientation students are interested in concrete applications and the use of knowledge in vocational settings". It appears that **S.8** was application oriented**.** The student answered:

> I am intending to be self-employed. I have realized that my course is going to equip me with the skills that I am going to use in the future. In my course we do a lot of practical work like sewing and cooking. You see like I do not want to be employed. I never intended in my life that I would be employed. You know I am business minded. For me coming to university I consider as a stepping-stone of what I want to do.

The notion of choosing the programme based on job opportunities goes along with the view of the increasing orientation of HE towards the market. Those who support this view argue that in order for the students to succeed they should study science, business and technology (Bertelsen, 2001; Castells, 2001).

Cosser and du Toit (2004) also found out that majority of the students were intending to study science, business and technology. However, the follow up study confirmed that the students did not register for these courses due to their poor performance at secondary level. On this regard Ball et al. (2002) argue that high performance at secondary school maximises the possibility for students to enrol in high status and professional courses.

Singh (2001) argues that the emphasis on market-oriented courses should not undermine other aspects of democratic development such as social and political accountability. Students should also have value for philosophy, history and literature and these skills be emphasised to develop critical thinking. Another critique of enhancing democracy through HE is to integrate business, mathematics and technology with humanities and social sciences. South African HE institutions should promote a multidisciplinary curriculum (Waghid, 2001). The studies further argue that the humanities have a role to play in helping people to connect the past and the future.

Although the understanding of enhancing democracy and development through studying arts and humanities is diminishing amongst younger students, one student who was more mature when compared to other respondents was more religious and politically orientated. The student embraced the importance of education contributing towards political and social development. This student responded as follows with regard to choice of programmes of study:

> I actually wanted to study Xhosa. I say Xhosa because I mean we come from a struggle we need to embrace each other's language and learn because we do not know whether things are gonna change. **(S9).**

According to Brooks (2003), students form subject hierarchy based on various perspectives. The subject hierarchy is influential in both choice of institution and course. One student ranked history and politics highly. The argument of choosing these courses was based on the fact that they open up opportunities for different careers. This suggests the link between the responses of the student, **S9** with the international perspective. In both cases political and historical influence was a matter of concern for only one student. Other students ranked the professional courses such as Law and Medicine highly basing their argument on the fact that those are the courses that society regards highly. Other students associate subject hierarchy with availability of job opportunities.

The differing viewpoints between the older student and younger students, shows that while most students in South Africa contributed to the political struggle during apartheid, the interest is diminishing in the post apartheid: students are becoming more orientated towards self-development and economic empowerment. This lack of interest is also evident from the UWC enrolments which show that EMS comprises highest enrolments. According to Zunker (1998), the environmental conditions, social, cultural, political, economic factors, natural forces and natural resources influence choice. Hodkinson et al. (1996:349) assent to the same opinion that people base their actions on the particular time in which they are living in.

5.3.3 Quality of teaching and learning

The students cited quality of teaching and learning highlighting availability of resources, quality of teaching staff and quality of degrees obtained. I attempt to present the students' views under these key themes. The students emphasised quality as the major influence of choice to study at

UWC and choice of programmes. Concerning change of programmes the students were directly affected by failure and academic exclusion. As the students argued this could also be a matter of scarcity of resources. The students complained about overcrowded lecture theaters and under qualified teaching staff.

According to Gildersleeve (2003), choice to study HE involves a search phase where students assess institutions in terms of reputation and other institutional characteristics. It is therefore after taking this assessment that students will choose institutions.

Teaching and learning resources

The students considered resources not only in terms of financial aid but also availability of teaching and learning resources in general. One student (**S7)** responded: "It is a place to study at and it has fair recourses to support learning". Another student believed that UWC was better resourced when compared to University of Fort Hare. **S 6** indicated: "Is because it was not historically black. So I thought that it had more resources when compared to Fort Hare. According to the student the concept of "historically black" indicates a historically black institution designated for Africans unlike UWC which was designated for Coloured students (apartheid classification).

In previous study the students did not choose to study at University of Transkei (UNITRA) and Peninsula Technikon because of quality of academic staff and facilities. UNITRA was rather valued on the basis that it was closer to home for many students, while at Peninsula Technikon the students considered accessible financial aid. Only at Rhodes University (RU), learning facilities and teaching staff influenced students' choice of institutions. The findings could imply that RU as a historically advantaged institution was valued more for its resources rather than other factors (Imenda et al. 2004). According to Cloete et al. (2006), quality of institution was the most influential factor that the students cited for choosing an institution.

The students who compared UWC with the historically advantaged institutions noted that UWC had fewer resources: one student, **(S 4)** commended "I just said this university. Just going back to

UOFS was like UOFS it was better than UWC with resources but I decided to come to UWC."
The students hold the view that the historically disadvantaged institutions are less resourced
when compared to the historically advantaged institutions.

Academic staff

Another student who focused on quality of teaching staff believed that UWC had inexperienced
and less qualified lecturers in comparison with University of Cape Town (UCT) and University
of the Witwatersrand (WITS). **S5** indicated, "UCT and WITS are getting the best lecturers we
don't." The same student commended "As I said my concern is being given first-time lecturers to
senior students." The quotations from **S.4, S5** and **S 4** above highlight that the historical contexts
of institutions have influence on the choices of HE institutions. While students rate UWC quality
of resources to be higher when compared to disadvantaged institutions, they rate historically
advantaged institutions higher in terms of quality.

It also appeared from the response given by one student that there is lack of satisfaction about
support given to students by lecturers. The student associated lack of support with failure,
exclusion and consequently change of programme. What the student tried to emphasize that the
lecturers did not motivate and help each an every student to succeed. The main factor that causes
this problem is overcrowded lecture theatres. This might also imply that there is too much
workload for the lecturers as well. **S 5** indicated:

> But as I said UWC we do not have good lecturers. The lecturers tell you 'I can see there
> are 140 students, only 40% of you are going to pass" What's that?

The following extract support dissatisfaction of students on high students' lecturer ratio.

> There are up to 300 students in a classroom. The Lecture doesn't even see you, let alone
> know your name. When you consult with them, they say " I haven't seen you in class",
> but how are they to see you with 299 other students crowding into the lecture theatre? **ID
> 5** (Barnes, 2004).

The finding about overcrowded lecture halls at UWC is not new. The findings from Barnes
(2004) quoted above revealed the same problem.

Quality of qualifications obtained at UWC

Three students indicated that perception about the quality of degrees offered by UWC influenced their choices of institution. **S7** expressed the view as follows**:** "Because the course I wanted to study is more recognized than in other institutions." **S 8** indicated: "It offered the course I am enrolling as I heard from my friend." Another student supported the argument that graduates from UWC were more recognized by community and get opportunities for better job positions. The quotation from **S 6** below highlights:

> UWC is a good place for Social Workers. Even in other faculties I can mention one young man I liked at UWC. Currently he is a director. What I am trying to tell you is that even in other departments they are excellent. Even in Law I can mention. There are many people from UWC who are CEO's. So I can say that it is a place of quality, it is a place to grow. We are growing.

The finding affirms what Koen (2003) argued that employers perceive UWC degrees highly. However, two students gave different viewpoints concerning the quality of education at UWC. The students argued that students who studied at UWC acquire more knowledge of social skills such as negotiation skills and sense of responsibility rather than academic skills. **S 3** indicated:

> You know you will be a fool if you go through UWC and you have not learned anything. Not academic wise though. I am talking in general. You will be a fool if you go through your whole academic programme and you have not learned a small thing.

In support of the argument, **S 5** responded as follows:

> I know that people who have studied at UCT in terms of knowledge wise they are equipped for us we are not that much equipped but if you take a student from UCT and a student from UWC to go and study from outside I am telling you that this one who studied at UCT "gonna" suffer. Is not easy for us to live here. You have to do things on your own and   you have to find equipment on your own.

Bunting (2004:19) indicates that when addressing the problems in the public higher education in South Africa, the historical context under which the universities were established should be taken into consideration. The inequalities and inequities in terms of resources, teaching staff, student enrolments, curriculum, language, race and different aspects are thoroughly documented (Subotzky, 1997; Cooper and Subotzky, 2001; Cloete et al. 2002; Thaver, 2003). Gibbon and Kabaki (2002:211), highlight the fact that the historically white universities have more staff with doctoral and masters qualifications compared to the historically disadvantaged institutions.

5.3.4 Family, friends and relatives

The students did not emphasize influence by family and friends as the primary reason for choosing to study at UWC. However, from their responses it was clear that family and friends also shaped their choices of institutions, programmes and change of programmes.

Concerning choice to study at UWC, **S8** indicated: "I was introduced by my aunt who was also studying at UWC". To support the argument, another student responded:

> What happened is that there was someone who was studying at UWC, the brother of my high school teacher. He is the one who told me but he had already completed his degree. I sent my paper to him. He is the one who applied for me. **(S3).**

The findings suggest high possibility of influence by relatives or friends. This finding contradicts with previous studies conducted in South Africa. Cosser and du Toit (2004) explained that only about 2% of the students were influenced by their parents or relatives to choose an institution. Imenda et al. (2004) indicate that the majority of students, 67% to 82% made their own choices of institutions while 3% to 23% of the students indicated that their parents or guardian chose the institutions for them.

However, other studies from the international perspective argue that families, friends and peers influence students' strongly on choice of HE institutions. Female students are mostly influenced by parents and friends in choice process when compared to male students. The male students on the other hand tend to be more individualistic and dependent in choice of HE (Brooks 2003; David et al. 2003). The studies further argue that female parents are more involved in education of their children when compared to male parents. David et al. (2003) further argues that economic-status of parents have much impact on parental involvement and support. Parents of students from professional middle class had the perception that HE open up opportunities for the job market. Because of this perception the parents were more involved and supportive to their children. On the other hand, the students from working class indicated that their parents had less exposure to HE environment. As a result, the students were mostly independent on their choices.

Family, friends, peers and role models also appeared to be influential in choice and change of programmes of study. The role models were people in the community. Hall (1992:276) indicates

that our identities are developed as we interact and engage with other people in dialogue and in social activities. The extracts from the students below suggest how the students felt about choice of programmes:

> No I just loved it, there is that other lady who came to our school I was staying at the hostel so she was going to promote food and stuff, she told us she is a dietician and stuff. So like I got interested about the things she was saying then I asked "What do you need, which subjects do I need to do if I want to be a dietician? Do you need maths or biology what?" So I ticked those subjects. So I really wanted to be a dietician even now I still want to be a dietician but I am now lazy to study. **(S 4)**

> When I was choosing nursing I just saw that uniform and I did not know about Social Work but now I can see that when I say I am doing Social Work at UWC the community puts me in more status than the nurses or everyone in the community. Even those who are educated in the community they give me high status better than nursing. **(S 6)**

> My aunt studied Library Science at UWC and now she is a Librarian. She is the one who encourages me educationally and guides me with anything I want to do. **(S7).**

Similarly the extracts below show that family, friends and peers influenced the students to change their programmes:

> This other friend of mine from the same school she came here 1999.I came 2000. She was doing it and she told me that after doing it I can do like medicine because I was accepted for Medicine at UOFS. She said it's a good thing because you are failing now you can switch into this degree that I am doing because I also want to do medicine. I said Ok that's where I got to know Medical Bioscience. **(S4).**

Other students shared the viewpoint as follows:

> My roommate was doing it. I just saw her and I decided that I am going to do Social Work. I did not like it for the first time but now I can say that I like it. **(S 6)**

> Oh! Okay! You know Economics, Okay! Now I am doing Economics but I am enjoying Economics. Because I remember it was also my mother. There is this friend of my father, so he did Economics so when I was changing from B.Com Acc to B.Com (Economics) she was telling me about this friend of my father who has done Economics but I am enjoying Economics. **(S1).**

I argued earlier that friends and relatives influence educational choices that students make. Yorke and Longden (2004) recommend a sociological model of factors affecting students' progress in higher education. Their model was adopted from Tinto (1975). Yorke and Longden place the student at the center surrounded in the immediate environment by the institutional context and

broadly surrounded by broader society. Both the society and the institutional context influence the psychology of the student.

5.3.5 Secondary school subject choice and career guidance

Of the nine participants five indicated that they also chose their programmes of study based on the subjects that they studied at secondary school. The following quotations from the interviews highlight students' opinions about choice of their programmes: **S1** indicated, "So with numbers since I enjoyed working with numbers." Similarly, **S 5** replied, "In high school I was doing Accounting".

To support **S2** replied:

> Oh! I did Computer Studies in High School and I was interested in pursuing a career that could relate more into computers. I did B. Sc Computer Science because it related to computers.
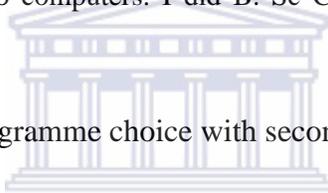
S4 also made the connection of programme choice with secondary school subject:

> Let me put it in this way, the person who applied for me told me that I can also do a B.Sc since that I was doing Maths, Biology and Physics at High school. So he told me that I can continue with Maths and Physics and other subjects. That's why I knew about B.Sc but I did not know what B.Sc is all about, I only found out when I arrived here what B.Sc is all about.

Although the students based their choice on high school subjects, it was clear that the students did not know broader programmes offered in university related to the subjects that they studied at high school. We need to take into consideration that some of the students who participated in this research came from low socio- economic back grounds and that they were the first generation in their families to enter university. As a result the students were unfamiliar with the mechanisms of HE including courses, subjects and study methods.

The findings proved that some of the students were the first generation in their families to go to university. The students were not familiar with different programmes offered in HE institutions. The following quotations from two students, **S4** and **S1** adhere to the opinion:

> I did not know about other "B.Coms" I thought that may be it was only B.Com (Acc) that must be

done by someone who has done Accounting I only knew about the other degrees when I got here…. on my first year we had a orientation group. So the PF will say "all the B.Com (Acc) students, All the B.Com (Gen)". Then is the time I started to ask about this B.Com (Gen). What course is that? **(S1)**

The fact that students choose their programmes based on secondary school subjects suggests a greater need for schools to help students to choose their school subjects carefully. Accordingly, to support learners' choice of subjects, schools and universities should engage in collaboration where universities get the opportunity to publicise to students the courses they offer. Apart from the information that different institutions provide on their calendars, they should find alternative ways of marketing their courses. Currently UWC through the Schools Liaison Unit has an out-reach programme which reaches the schools in the Western Cape with career exhibitions and career couselling.

Schools and HE institutions should also ensure enhance career guidance. Career guidance and counseling is a necessity for both high school and university students. It helps those students who are undecided about career but the students who are certain about choice of programmes and careers need guidance and couselling as well. In South Africa counselling should be accessible to all students entering HE institutions and be compulsory as part of the curriculum (Gordon 2000).

With regard to a follow up question which asked whether the students received career guidance at high school and at UWC, some students indicated that the guidance at high school was satisfactory. However, the students gave contradictory information showing lack of understanding about career guidance. One student, **S5** responded:

> At high school we attended career guidance. All the institutions were there except UWC. They have career center. You go there they give you pamphlets and you ask questions.

The response of **S3** below adheres to the same opinion:

> It was fine actually because I didn't know a lot about career guidance at that time. Now

because I know a lot I think it was worth it. What ever they taught it was enough. **(S 3)**.

On the other hand, some students indicated that they received career guidance at high school but the career guidance was inadequate. The students complained of not getting enough information about different programmes related to the subjects that they were studying at high school. The students' responses pose a question of whether teachers are well informed about programmes offered at universities. The response from **S1** follows:

> I did not know about other "B.Coms" I thought that may be it was only B.Com (Acc) that must be done by someone who has done Accounting I only knew about the other degrees when I got here…. on my first year we had a orientation group. So the PF (peer facilitator) will say "all the B.Com (Acc) students, All the B.Com (GEN)". Then is the time I started to ask about this B.Com (Gen). What course is that?

S 4 supported, he indicated:

> It was because also the person who was trying to explain to us you know like high school teachers how they are especially if you are from the "location" because I studied in "location". So he was not good at all. In terms of …Even though she was trying to explain. We were expecting her to tell us what career guidance was all about. She was not good at all. She was very lazy. I think the whole year she only came once. Just imagine. It was one of the teachers she was selected amongst the other teachers.

The students complained about inadequate career guidance. This could also suggest lack of expertise amongst the teachers who provide guidance and couselling. Ferreira (2002) supports a learning orientated student counseling service. Principles of a learning orientated student counseling are as follows:

1. Students learning and personal development are the primary goals of student counselling programmes and services.
2. Resources are allocated to encourage student learning and personal development
3. Student counselling professionals collaborate with other institutional agents and agencies to promote student learning and personal development.
4. Students' couselling policies and programmes are based on promising practices from the research on student learning and specific assessment data.
5. The division of student counselling include staff who are experts on students development. (Ferreira, 2002:101)

In addition, one student pointed out that career guidance at high school channels students to

science. The student pointed out that the teachers do not take into consideration the fact that students differ in skills and talents. The student indicated that channeling all the students into science subjects is discouraging the students who would like to go for other careers or those who would perform better in non-scientific courses. The response from **S 2** indicated:

> I do not think the career exhibition or the career guide programmes we get in high school are helping such that they focus more on scientific study. Science they tell you that if you do not do science you probably not have the future. In high school you are sort of blind folded, if you do not choose science your career is not a career. Hence, you find some other people when they come here they only choose science because they were told in high school to choose science so if all the career programmes they offer in High school or in pre higher institution they could focus on each an every individual capabilities …Because you find that people go to science programme because they think is the only programme while there are other programmes which are as good as science for example, B.Com.

Teachers seem to be aware of the changing policies of HE. The ongoing debate in the HE transformation as indicated earlier is how should the universities serve as markets and simultaneously work for the public good (Singh, 2001; Waghid, 2001; Van Der Merwe, 2004). Based on the point that **S 2** indicated, channeling all students to science without considering all the factors important for students' success is problematic. The Cosser, du Toit and Visser (2004) study revealed that although the majority of Grade Twelve learners had indicated that they would enroll in the fields of business, commerce and management studies, engineering and technology and physical sciences, their goals were not achieved. Most students did not pass high school mathematics and science satisfactorily i.e. most students did mathematics on Standard Grade rather than on Higher Grade.

The students complained as well about career guidance at UWC. Six students indicated that they attended orientation. However, the students pointed out that they did not get sufficient guidance on choice of courses. **S 7** indicated:

> They are not giving students enough information when they are choosing programmes even the students assistants they do not know what they are telling you.   The options are just so narrowed.

In support**, S1** answered:

> I remember is like I did not because is like… I remember people who got guidance were people who were registered for B. Com (Gen). Since me I was accepted for B. Com

(Acc), it was like all the students who registered for B.Com Acc this side and they will tell the B Com (Gen) students that you have a choice of B.Com (IS), B. Com (Economics) in your second year or B.Com Management. For B.Com (Acc) it was just like it is Ok! It is B.Com (Acc)**.**

On the one hand, one student (**S 9**) who indicated that career guidance at UWC was sufficient raised a contradictory argument:

> Yes it was given it was very fine. I think everything was clear. Everything was clear because I also went to some other students to ask more so that they can explain more on certain things that I did not understand but it was very clear that's why I say it was satisfactory.

Inadequate career guidance and support at UWC could be associated with change of programmes of study. My argument is based on the fact that two students showed uncertainty with course choice and grouping. **S 6** indicated that she changed her first programme because of moving to preferred programme. She lamented as follows:

> I knew when I came here that I was not admitted for Nursing. I just came and do B.A plain. Just B.A then I asked those people who were helping with registration in feeling that form for modules ' I asked please can you give the other modules that are similar or will help me to do Nursing. They chose Psychology and English. I was expecting to change from that B.A to B.Cur but I was not accepted. In fact I applied in two departments Nursing and Social Work. Because they did not accept me in 2001 I just decided to do B.A plain so that in 2002 I can do B.Cur but they did not accept me. They accepted me to do B.A Social Work.

Another student presented an answer related more to exploring, but at the same time it could imply inadequate information about grouping of courses. This could be a general problem across faculties or it could also indicate a problem specifically at faculty level. **S.5** indicated:

> I did Physics and Anatomy and you see at the Faculty they did not know how to call it because even my lecturers they were surprised how it is possible that I can register those subjects because they were not mixing actually those two were okay but Physics it was impossible. I had to do Maths. Even my lecturers told me there is not that kind of combination you see. I think at that time it was only two of us with friend of mine who were doing that thing at UWC at that time. I actually wanted to do Nuclear Medicine but along the way I realized that it was going to take me sometime to do what I want. Then I decided to drop Physics. I noticed if I have to do Physiology I had to group Microbiology so that they can mix very well. I decided to change. Actually I changed to B.Sc (Physiotherapy).

According to Christie et al (2004) poor choice .of a course increases the possibility for

non-completion. The students who are uncertain about their majors or courses are likely to drop out or change their courses. In this view students are likely to succeed if they choose the courses that correspond with their learning orientations Makinen et al. (2004). Tinto's model also highlights the connection between school and HE. According to the model students come to university from various school and family backgrounds and with different attributes. The institutions should be committed to supporting the students in the same way the students should be committed to their goals.

McMillan (2005) regards changing to preferred programmes as change for positive reasons. But the fact remains that sometimes changing a programme is the result of lack of guidance. Moreover, changing programmes delays the students' possibility to complete the degree. For example, a student spent a full year doing the programme and in the next year instead of proceeding, the student register for another programme.

Similar to the issue of changing to preferred degrees, exploring can be regarded as a positive reason for changing programme of study. However, changing could also be caused by the fact that the students have not gained a sense of what really interest them. McMillan (2005) cited similar problem where 60% of the students changed their programmes because of interest and course preferences. The students mentioned the following problems: The course turned out not to be what the students wanted, some students lost interest in the first course, for some students the first course was the prerequisite for the second course while other students never really intended to complete the first course. Such problems may be associated with inability to decide on a career. Gordon (2000) indicates that career indecision could be regarded as permanent problem among other students while for some students it is temporary. The study further identified the problems of career indecision in a psychological perspective: indicating a combination of psychological and social factors. "Some of the students who are undecided about their careers need counselling while others will cope with their decisions when reality demands it on them (Gordon, 2000:3).

5.3.6 Studying far away from home

A very small number of students indicated that they would like to stay near home. Four

respondents participating in this study indicated that they wanted to study in Cape Town because it is far from home. The students had different reasons for their choice. Two respondents indicated that staying far away from home help students to gain a sense of responsibility and learn to take care of themselves. Staying away from home was also identified as a way of getting possibility of meeting new people and getting new ideas. The students indicated that studying closer to home deny students the opportunity to be independent. One student pointed out that students also get freedom to engage in social activities that are not acceptable to their parents for example, going to parties. The interest of staying in Cape Town and studying far away from home was expressed in the following quotations: **S4** said, "Actually I wanted to study in Cape Town, just to be in Cape Town. To support, **S 2** indicated "just that I wanted to be away from home so I had to come to Cape Town."

When I asked the students to elaborate on why they would not like to study in institutions closer to home **S 4** gave the reason of exploring.
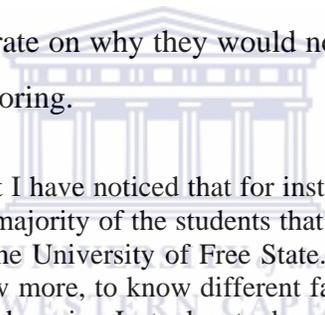
> The reason why is that I have noticed that for instance if I have to consider university of Free State I think the majority of the students that I studied with at High School they are all intended to go to the University of Free State. So I actually just wanted to be away, just to explore to know more, to know different faces to see other people actually not to see one face time and again. Just also to be slightly away from parents just to be independent. If I was gonna be in the Free State I was not going to be independent other wise I was going to rely on parents.

On the other hand, the response from **S3** emphasised interest in social life:

> Oh no! I haven't thought of like going back to UOFS is like is close to home. I do not want parents to come. I want to enjoy life and enjoy my self and learn a lot about myself. If you are always close to your parents you are not "gonna" learn any thing they are going to teach you a lot of stuff you are not "gonna" do. There are a lot of stuff you are not going to do**.**

According to **S3**, staying with parents was restricting and intimidating. This could imply that students need freedom for positive and negative reasons. Taking into consideration that some students enter universities at the ages between sixteen and twenty-one, too much freedom at that age may lead to irresponsible behavior. Consequently students may fail to integrate social and academic life. As mentioned earlier Tinto's (1975) model of attrition highlights that failure to

integrate academic and social life is associated with dropping out of HE

Cosser and du Toit (2002) study showed a differing viewpoint. Among the ten top categories of factors influencing choice of institutions, the fact that the institution was far away from home was ranked higher. Thus, the factor was placed on number eight on the scale. According Imenda et al. (2004) the students preferred to study at UNITRA because it was closer to their homes. But the perspective was different: the students wanted to reduce their financial expenses.

The perception about studying far from home changed when students were already at UWC. One student indicated that staying away from home was disadvantageous. The student complained that there were different challenges to deal with. The student emphasized among other challenges that making new friendships has possible negative consequences. Another challenge was lack of support from family members and relatives. Contrary to what the student thought before coming to UWC, **S 5** indicated:
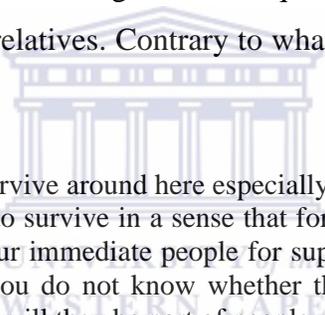
> It's a tough place to survive around here especially if you don't know any one. You know it's not an easy place to survive in a sense that for an example you are far from home or from very far from your immediate people for support and everything. You have to start making new friends you do not know whether those people will they contribute good things into your life or will they be part of people who track you down?

The above argument is substantiated by the extract from Barnes (2004).

> Students are first and foremost human beings who interact with other human beings. Therefore relations are crucial to success or failure. When you come here, you already have baggage. Then you are still without family and friends. You have to be mother, father, everything to yourself. Then you make new friends. Your only survival mechanism is your friends. And not everyone has a positive influence on you (**ID 1**) Barnes (2004).

5.3.7 Possibility of admission at UWC

The fact that UWC considered different alternatives for admission rather than Matric Exemption (ME) influenced choice to study at UWC amongst some students. One student **(S 6)** who had been admitted through Mature Age Exemption indicated: "I saw that advert that it can take people without Matriculation Exemption so is the other thing that made me to apply to UWC. I

was old and I was accepted on age exemption." Another student, **S 9** indicated, "UWC takes students with minimum qualifications" while **S8** said, "I looked at possibility of admission at UWC". Horvat (2001) indicates that research in higher education should focus on the context under which students make choices. In other words, we should pay closer attention to the admission realities and the policies that guide choice.

Students looked at admission criteria from different perspectives. Another student **(S5)** indicated that the late closing date for application at UWC helped her to get admission at UWC while it was going to be difficult to get admission at other institutions.

The extract below highlights what **S 5** said:

> I had no option. I took for granted that I had to apply to study. I think 2000 the closing date for application was on 18 February. UWC was the one, which had latest closing date. I was accepted on the 17 and I just came the next day to collect my student number.

As **S 5** indicated, other institutions had early closing dates for application. Cosser and du Toit (2002:97) indicate that the universities in South Africa do not adhere to standard closing dates for applications. Accordingly, lack of uniformity on closing dates for applications causes problems for some students. Most of the students do not get information about closing dates on time. Cosser and du Toit (2002) indicate that the problem persists because none of the professional bodies governing universities take responsibility to make information about closing dates accessible to the public.

The fact that **S 5** did not prepare in advance to enter university showed could also show inconsistency with the Hossler and Gallagher's three-phase model of college choice. According to the model, choice to enter higher education is a three-stage process. The sequential stages include: predisposition, search and choice. The first stage of the model is where students decide whether they will proceed to higher education, in the second stage students gather information about universities and finally based on the information gathered, students make choices of universities (Gildersleeve, 2003). The response from **S 5** indicated clearly that she did not plan in advance and gather information about different universities

However, for the majority of the students the model applied because the students had at least two alternatives of universities where they had applied for admission. It implies therefore that the students gathered information about different institutions. **S 2** said "I could study at Pretoria University where I was accepted or I could come this side but I felt coming down to Cape Town would be much important for me." **S 4** indicated I came when my sister was coming for orientation and that's when I started to apply otherwise if they had not taken me I was "gonna" go back to UOFS."

5.4 Conclusion

Students interviewed as part of this study considered finance, quality of teaching and learning and family, friends and peer influence as the most crucial factors for choice of HE institutions, programmes and change of programmes. With regard to choice of HE institutions, the students also cited the fact that UWC was far from home. Because of the contradictory viewpoints, it is not clear from the study whether studying far from home has positive or negative effects on the students experience of HE and for their success. However, it could be recommended that support for the new entering students should encompass academic, social and emotional skills.

The themes that emerged in choice of programmes of study included: choice of secondary school subjects, career guidance, perceived job benefits, role models and political and religious influence. As I pointed out in Chapter Two, to understand choice, we need to focus our attention on the factors within society, higher education institutions, family and the job market. The findings from the study support the argument. We also need to point out that inadequacy of career guidance at high school puts students in a disadvantage. Therefore, it is the responsibility of UWC and other institutions to provide enough guidance and assistance to new entering undergraduate students so that the students can choose the programmes in which they are going to progress successfully and achieve their goals**.** I now focus on the factors and conditions that influence change of programmes of study, taking into consideration that change of programmes can be either positive or negative.

The study revealed consistency with previous studies McMillan (2005). The responses of students revealed the following factors and conditions influencing change of programmes of

study: failure, academic exclusion, lack of financial support, changing to preferred programme and exploring.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Introduction

This chapter summarizes the research findings and proposes recommendations for future research. The study investigated both explanatory and descriptive questions. As indicated earlier, the general aim of the study was to investigate possible factors and conditions that influence change of programmes of study amongst University of the Western Cape (UWC) undergraduate students.

6.2 Research findings and discussions

The section presents the summary of the research findings and integrates the findings with the literature. The themes that emerged from each of the main objectives are highlighted in connection with the literature. Conceptualization of this study was based on both international and national literature. Various models and theories of understanding student choice emerged from the literature on HE and sociology.

6.2.1 Factors and conditions influencing choice to study at UWC

Regarding the factors and conditions influencing choice to study at UWC, the interviewees felt as a group that they considered the following factors: financial assistance, studying far away from home, interest to stay in Cape Town, influence by relatives and friends, possibility of admission at UWC and perception of degrees offered by UWC. These findings were not new in the South African literature (Cosser and du Toit, 2002; Koen, 2003; Cosser et al. 2004; Imenda et al. 2004; Cloete et al.2006). However, in each of these studies the extent to which each of the factors influenced student choice differed slightly. According to Cloete et al. (2006), most of the students cited quality as the main factor that influenced their choice of institution. Similarly in this study it appears that students regard resources highly important for success in their studies.

In Imenda et al. (2004), availability of resources did not have much influence on choice of institution.

It also appeared from the study that there were contradictory opinions amongst the interviewees regarding the quality of degrees offered by UWC. Some students' supported Koen (2003) that employers perceive UWC degrees highly. Other students argued that the quality of education acquired at UWC is lower. These contradictory views imply that it is necessary to find the gap between the student expectations and what UWC offers. Alternatively, taking into perspective that the historical context of the university appeared to have influence on the choice of institution, this doubt about quality of UWC degrees might justify that students unconsciously accept that the systems have not changed. Horvat (2001:206) argues that accepting the hierarchy without questioning the status quo perpetuates inequality and domination.

The factors influencing university choice are also widely documented in the international literature (Horvat, 2001; Foskett and Hemsley Brown, 2001; Ball et al. 2002; David et al. 2003; Gildersleeve, 2003; Des Jardins, 2003). The findings from these international studies do not differ in perspective with the South African literature.

6.2.2 Factors and conditions influencing choice of programmes of study

The main factors and conditions that the students indicated regarding choice of programmes of study were: choice based secondary school subjects, influence by role models, parents and relatives, peer pressure and influence by friends, perceived job benefits after completing degrees, career guidance at secondary school, guidance and support at UWC and political and religious influence. Each of the themes is discussed in relation to the literature.

Secondary school subject choice and career guidance

The results of the study suggest a link between the subjects that the students studied at secondary school and choice of programmes of study at UWC. Of the nine students who were interviewed, five students indicated that they based their choice of programmes of study on the subjects that they studied at high school. Consequently, guidance on choice of high school

subjects and good performance could be identified as critical factors that maximize the chances for students to enroll in the programmes of their choice and to succeed in their studies when they enter HE institutions. Mji (2002) argues that high performance maximizes possibility to choose high status courses. The supposed link between secondary school subjects and choice of programmes at university is not a surprising finding. In the regional study conducted in South Africa, Cosser and du Toit (2002:105) found out that the largest group of the learners (about 40%) wished to study science and technology related subjects while the lowest percentage of the learners (about 18%) chose humanities. However, some students did not achieve their goals, as indicated on the follow up study. Social sciences and humanities had the highest enrolments but fewer students enrolled in science, technology and in commercial subjects. The problem resulted from poor performance in mathematics, science and doing mathematics and science on Standard Grade rather than on Higher Grade in secondary school (Cosser et al. 2004:32). As I have argued earlier high performance at secondary school increases the possibility of students to accomplish their goals. Collaboration between schools and higher education institutions is very important. Universities should publicize the degrees that they offer and their admission requirements. Many institutions do publish this information on their calenders but the information is presented in a very difficult way to understand. It is important that institutions should also consider other marketing strategies. This could help students to prepare for university and make informed decision of subject choice.

The analysis of the interviews also brought into perspective that some students did not receive career guidance at secondary school while other students pointed out that career guidance provided at secondary school was inadequate. The problems that the students cited concerning insufficient career guidance included: lack of information about various programmes offered by HE institutions, teachers not providing enough time for career guidance and counselling and channeling of all students to science subjects without considering their different skills and talents. Secondary school teachers encouraged students to focus their attention on science. This implies that teachers are aware of the requirements for transformation in HE. The objective stipulated by the *National Plan for Higher Education* (DoE, 2001) is "to shift the enrolments away from humanities towards business, science and technology."

The literature acknowledges that science, business and technology are important for the purpose of economic development (Bertelsen, 1998, Imenda et al, 2004). However, some scholars the importance of humanities and social sciences should not be undermined: these subjects contribute towards social development and democratic citizenship (Singh, 2001; Waghid, 2001; Van Der Merwe, 2004).

Career guidance and support at UWC

The interviewees indicated that UWC provides students with guidance and support to choose courses and programmes although the support and guidance is inadequate. The students pointed out that student assistants who provide the guidance are less informed about the study programmes. Another problem resulted from the presumption that students registered in other programmes do not need support with choice of courses. As one of the students indicated "For B.Com (Acc) it was just like it is Ok! It is B.Com (Acc). The findings of this study confirm that support with career guidance should be extended over a longer period of time and not only to be limited to the one week of orientation (Barnes, 2004). UWC should also adopt the strategies that improve career guidance. For example, Ferreira (2002) outlines some of the principles of a learning orientated student counselling.

As I indicated previously, interactions between institutions and schools may possibly enhance career guidance and counselling. It is through collaboration that the gap between school education and HE can be minimized. I have argued earlier that Bitzer (2003:165) emphasizes a need for assessment of new entering students so that HE institutions can determine their input value on these students. McMillan (2005) emphasise the importance of ensuring that the students who enter HE have necessary prerequisite skills or institutions should provide students early with opportunities to acquire these skills.

According to Gordon (2001), career decision-making is very complex and problematic. Some students can easily choose their careers while others encounter problems in deciding on their careers. The problems that students encounter in career decision-making differ. For people with temporary problems to make career decision, intervention with career guidance and counselling can help to enhance their choices while permanent career decision problems may not be easily solved by career guidance and counselling.

Influence by family, friends and peers

The analysis of the interviews show that influence by parents, relatives and other people in the society appeared to be a major factor influencing choice of programmes of study. This study differed slightly from previous studies in that it was partly qualitative and used a small sample while previous research was predominantly based on survey design. Due to the limitations caused by the nature of the study, particularly the sample size, the influence by relatives and parents was not analyzed in terms of gender and racial profiles as in previous studies. Furthermore, the study did not attempt to find the link between the socio-economic status of family and parental influence in choice of programmes of study.

However, from previous studies, it appears that parents and relatives influence higher education students' choice (Ball et al. 2002; David et al. 2003). The findings of this study and the previous studies concur with the sociological reasoning. Giddens (2001: 5) argues, "The social contexts of our lives shape our social actions". Hall (1992:276) indicates that identity is formed in the interaction between individual and society.

In conclusion, choice of programmes of study is not an individual decision-making process and it should be understood and enhanced in such contexts. When conceptualizing choice Hodkinson et al. (1996:349) indicates:

> Individual action, belief and therefore choice must always be culturally and socially situated, for we are all born into a social setting. We cannot, therefore, act or think other than as a person of particular gender, race, class, nation etc … living in a particular period of time. The 'dispositions' that make the individual subjective perceptions are located within objective 'positions' or social structures.

The opinion shared by some of the interviewed students was that friends influenced their choice of programmes of study. Brooks (2003:283) argues, "While families have a strong influence on young people's conceptualization of the HE sector, friends and peers play an important role in informing decisions about what constitutes a feasible choice". The findings from Cosser and du Toit (2002) study, also confirm that friends have influence on student choice of programmes although other factors may be more influential.

Economic and social factors

The group of four students amongst the interviewees indicated that they chose their programmes of study because of perceived job benefits after gaining HE qualification. These findings were consistent with the literature. Waghid (2001:107) argue that higher education qualifications create opportunities for individuals to succeed in the job market. However, "larger repertoire of skills and greater capacity for learning" are necessary. HE qualification does not create guaranteed employment and equal opportunities for success for all graduates. Mji (2002) indicates that students perceive university education as offering opportunities for self-development.

Religious and political context also influenced choice of programmes of study. The influence by religious and political believes was not common in the South African and the international literature. However, sociologists argue that we think as people of particular nation, living in a particular period. Some of the students indicated that the historical context of UWC influenced their choice. It confirms that students understand and are aware of the political context in South Africa. We should consider that most of the changes in the HE in South Africa have been influenced partly by students' persistent protest and struggles (Cloete et al. 2002)

The themes that emerged from this study have been mapped on to the model of student choice within the completion of their degrees highlighted in Chapter Two. According to the model, factors and conditions within society, job market, family, previous schooling and HE institution context influence student choice. Tinto (1975); Makinen et al. (2004); Yorke and Longden (2004) proposed the models that could be used to understand the progress of students in HE. Although they address this issue from different perspectives, a common understanding is that interaction between students and their peers, parents and other members of society influence students' progress. Other factors such as race, gender, language, culture, socio-economic factors cannot be underestimated in influencing student choice of programmes and progress in HE. The structure/agency concept seems to be very relevant in explaining student choice. Horvat (2001) argues that in student college choice we should focus our attention on how student' choices are structured by societal and organizational forces.

> We would examine individual, family, and high school context within which these choices were made. Moreover, our analysis would be situated in the context of college

and university admission realities and the field of higher education more generally (Horvat, 2001:202).

6.2.3 Change of programmes of study

The part of the study investigating change of programmes of study was based on qualitative and quantitative approaches. As I indicated earlier, the statistical data showed that the number of students changing their programmes of study was minimal at UWC in general. In the Faculty of Arts, about 2% of the students changed their programmes of study and change occurred mostly in the second year of study. Similarly, in the Faculty of Community and Health Sciences quiet insignificant number of students changed their programmes: approximately 4% of the students.

The significant change of programmes of study happened amongst the students registered in the Faculty of Economics and Management Sciences. Out of 565 new entering students who enrolled in 2001, the total of 101(or 18%) changed their programmes of study. Most students changing their programmes were registered for B. Admin and B.Com (Accounting). The students who changed from B. Admin changed in the second year of study due to other factors rather than failure while the students registered for B. Com (Accounting) changed mainly in the third year of study and due to failure and academic exclusion. A larger number of students in the Faculty of Economics and Management Sciences changed their programmes within the faculty. Three students who indicated that they changed their programmes of study because of failure and academic exclusion confirmed that failure could be associated with change of programmes of study. The statistical data showed that there is a high failure rate in all three faculties but higher in the Faculty of Arts in 4-year programmes and the Faculty of Community and Health Sciences in three-year programmes.

The follow up interviews investigated the factors and conditions influencing students to change their programmes of study. Except for failure, and academic exclusion, which were revealed by the quantitative data, the students indicated that factors such as financial problems, poor grouping of courses, exploring and changing to preferred programmes influenced them to change their programmes of study.

Some of the factors were consistent with the results from McMillan (2005) survey study. The following themes emerged: interests and course preferences, career and work, study load and results and financial and other problems such health, personal reasons. However, the study revealed other factors such as parents' education, secondary school type and school achievement. Students whose parents obtained degrees were more likely to change programmes, students who performed well at secondary school also changed programmes more when compared to low achievers.

McMillan (2005) points out that the research focusing on factors that influence students to change their programmes of study is very limited. One of the problems that he indicates is that universities do not keep records of the students who change their programmes of study. Documenting the statistical data of students who change programmes of study at UWC could be regarded a foundation for broader research on this area.

6.2.4 Failure, exclusion and dropout

Because the study tracked the enrolments of the students from 2001 to 2004, other categories emerged from the pathways that the students followed through the four-year period. The problems that I need to highlight include high failure, exclusion and dropout rates at UWC in all the faculties but predominantly higher in the Faculty of Arts and Economics and Management Sciences. The table below summarizes the total exclusion and dropout rates.

Table 6.1: Total exclusion and dropout rates in Economics and Management Science,
*   Community and Health Sciences and Arts 2001-2004*

Faculties	Total enrolment		Exclusion		Dropout	
EMS	565	100%	141	25%	195	35%
ARTS 3-year	490	100%	127	26%	268	55%
ARTS 4-year	41	100%	10	17%	22	55%
CHS 3-year	63	100%	10	16%	22	35%
CHS.4-year	277	100%	26	9%	63	23%
Total	1436	100	314	22%	570	40%

The factors influencing students to drop out are thoroughly documented in the international literature and the research in this area has long been given attention (Tinto, 1975; Yorke, 1999; Brunsden and Davies 2000; Taylor and Bedford, 2004; Christie, Munro and Fisher, 2004; Makinen et al. 2004; Yorke and Longden 2004).

In South Africa the research investigating dropout rates is still limited and the *National Plan for Higher Education* (DoE, 2001) emphasizes a need to focus research on the area of retention and throughput. The literature focusing on the South African context highlights factors such as financial problems, combining of studies with part-time employment, failure, lack of commitment to studies, administrative problems, students being unprepared for HE, family commitments, health conditions, poor choice of programmes and to some extent personal problems (Budlender et al. 2002; Koen, 2001 and 2003;Bunting, 2004).

6.2.5 Completion

When analyzing the statistical data it also appeared that throughput rates at UWC calculated from the students who re-registered were not very low with the exception of the Faculty of Arts, 4-year programmes in which only 1 student or 5% completed on time. The completion rates in other faculties were as follows: CHS 4- year 56%, Arts-3 year 31%, EMS 23% and CHS 3-year 19%. However, calculating completion rate from the initial total of the students who registered in 2001 the percentage is lower: in CHS 4 year, 45%, Arts 3 year, 20%, EMS, 19%, CHS 3-year, 14% and Arts 4-year is 2%. This method is widely used by the Department of Education and

other HE institutions. The *National Plan for Higher Education* (DoE, 2001) emphasizes the importance of balancing enrolments with throughput rates. According to the study, UWC needs to focus attention on achieving this policy goal. More emphasis should be put on reducing failure rate which leads to exclusion and consequently high dropout rates. The group of interviewees raised their concern about quality of teaching staff, over crowding of lecture rooms, unclear structure of examination questions and heavy workload. While I highlight these problems that pertain to the institutional context, I understand the potential role of students' commitment, dedication and hard work in enhancing performance.

6.3 Recommendations

Choice of programmes seemed to be a serious challenge especially when we take into consideration the students responses of inadequate career guidance at secondary school. The responses of students also illustrate lack of exposure to different programmes offered at university. The recommendation that I would like to indicate is that HE institutions should publicise their programmes not only on their calendars but also consider marketing their programmes in different ways. These marketing strategies should aim at reaching majority of learners from disadvantaged backgrounds.

To emphasise on what previous 'studies (Barnes 2004; Bitzer 2003) pointed out, this study suggest that assessment of new entering students is important. At UWC much focus should be directed to the Faculty of Economics of Management Sciences. Assessment should be done with the aim to support students to choose programmes according to their abilities and qualifications. This will in turn reduce the subsequent changes of programmes. It is also essential that UWC should keep record of students' data not only in throughput and dropout rates but also the data of students changing courses. Despite the fact that programme change appeared to be very minimal at UWC, it is wasteful and needs to be taken into serious attention.

Moreover, it is important that further research should investigate the types of academic support that the students get per faculty and the extent to which the support maximizes the success rate of the students.

The students pointed out that finance was very essential in enhancing successful progress with their studies. However, the students complained that at UWC funding was not enough and not allocated fairly. Additionally, it appeared from the interviews that some students changed their programmes of study because of lack of financial support. It is therefore recommended that future research should focus on evaluating the allocation of NFSAS funding at UWC and the success rate of the students receiving the funding. Similar research had been conducted in some of the universities in South Africa but the research focused mainly on why some academically successful students dropout (Budlender et al. 2002).

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Available :http://www.iol.co.za/index.php?set_id=1&click_id=105&art_id=vn200511290705107 79C105636

University of the Western Cape General Calendar (2004, 2005).

Appendix (i)

This questionnaire is intended to investigate the factors and conditions influencing University of the Western Cape (UWC) undergraduate students to change their programmes of study.

PART A: Basic and demographic information

1) Student code ……………

2) Gender:

Female	1
Male	2

3) Age category:

16 to 20	1
21 to 25	2
26 to 30	3
31 to 35	4
36 and above	5

4) Racial group:

African	1
White	2
Indian	3
Coloured	4
Other:	5
Specify	

PART B: Choice of university and programme of study

5) What were your main reasons for choosing to study at UWC?

………………………………………………………………………………………

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………………………………………………………………………………………

Reputation of the university	1
Parents /relatives studied at UWC	2
Parents/relatives recommended it	3
Friends recommended it	4
Friends attending at UWC	5
UWC staff recommended it	6
It is near home	7
It is far away from home	8
Want to live in residence while studying	9
Awarded scholarship to study at UWC	10
The fees are lower than at other universities	11
Better recreation facilities	12
Personal reasons	13
Other: Specify	14

6) What were your general perceptions about UWC at that time?

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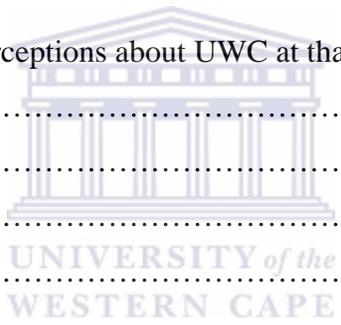
7) Now that you are studying at UWC how far have these perceptions changed?

………………………………………………………………………………………

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…………………………………………………………………………………

…………………………………………………………………………………

………………………………………………………………………………….

8) Would you recommend to others that they should study at UWC?

Yes	1
No	2

Please give reasons

 ……………………………………………………………………………………………
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9) Indicate the programmes of study that you applied for at UWC:

First choice	
Second choice	

10) Were you admitted to your first choice programme?

Yes	1
No	2

11) If no please give reasons.

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12) Did you register for your second choice programme?

Yes	1
No	2

Please give reasons

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……………………………………………………………………………………

13) In which faculty did you registered in your first enrolment at UWC

Arts	1
Science	2
Law	3
Economics and Management Sciences	4
Community and Health Sciences	5

14) For which programme of study did you register:

15) How did you come to know about the programme that you applied for?
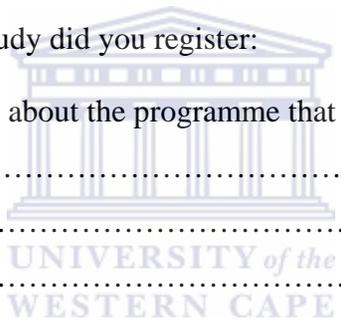
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Family member	1
Friends	2
People who studied at UWC	3
School career guidance	4
UWC out reach programmes	5
UWC publishing	6
UWC staff	7
Media: Specify	8
Other: Specify	9

16) How did you come to know about the programme that you are currently registered for?

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Family member	1
Friends	2
People who studied at UWC	3
School career guidance	4
UWC out reach programmes	5
UWC publishing	6
UWC staff	7
Media:	8
Other:	9

17) How would you rate your knowledge about programmes of study offered in higher education institutions before you registered at UWC?

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Very well informed	1
Moderately informed	2
Informed	3
Less informed	4
Not informed	5
Do not know	6

18) Are any of your family members studying at a university or technikon?

Yes	1
No	2

Please give details

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19) Are any of your family members graduates of a university or technikon?

Yes	1
No	2

Please give details

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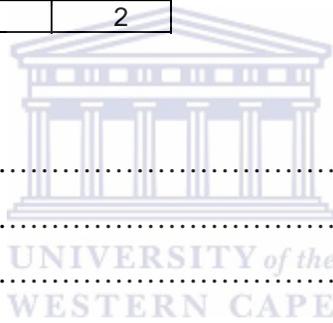
20) Did you receive career guidance from your secondary school?

Yes	1
No	2

Please give details

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21) Was the career guidance satisfactory?

Yes	1
No	2

Please give details

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22) Did you receive guidance from UWC in choosing your programme
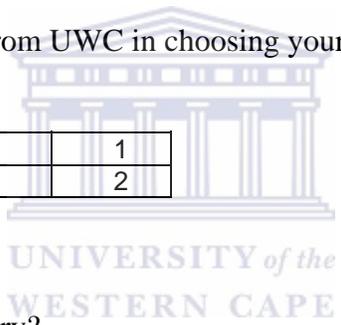
of study?

Yes	1
No	2

23) Was the guidance satisfactory?

Yes	1
No	2

 Please give details

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24) What factors did you consider most important in choosing your programme of study?

	Most important	Important	Less Important	Not Important	Do not Know
Job opportunities available					
Getting high salary					
Getting funding to do the programme					

Possibility of admission at UWC					
Duration of the programme					
Family member studied in the programme					
Family member recommended the programme					
Role models who studied in the programme					
Role models recommended the programme					
Status given to the programme					
Teaching quality at UWC					
Good reputation of the faculty in which the programme is offered					
Personal interest					
Other:					

25) Were you satisfied with your programme?

Yes	1
No	2

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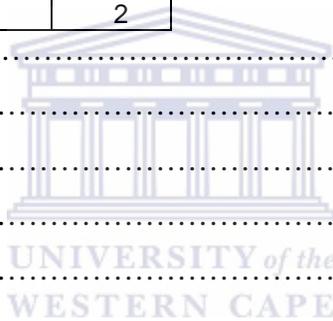
26) Did you ever consider changing your programme of study?

Yes	1
No	2

27) To which programme have you changed?

………………………………………………………………………

28) What factors influenced you to consider changing   your programme of study?

Not satisfied with the programme	1
Not satisfied with structure of the programme	2
Not satisfied with the quality of teaching	2
Too much work	3
Family member recommendation	4
Lack of support from family	5
Peer pressure	6
Job opportunities related to other programmes	7

Got funding to do another programme	8
Lack of support from lectures	9
Lack of support from other students	10
Got advice to change the programme from friends	11
Failed the programme	12
Lack of finance	13
Family problems	14
Personal problems	15
Other:	16
Specify:	17

PART C: Student progress at UWC

23) Have you ever dropped out or considered dropping out?

Yes	1
No	2

24) Which factors influenced you to drop out or to consider dropping out?

Not interested in the programme	1
Not feeling prepared for university	2
Not satisfied with the quality of teaching	3
The programme was not as I had expected	4
Not satisfied with structure of the programme	5
Too much work	6
Lack of support from lectures	7
Lack of support from other students	8
Lack of support from family	9
Failed the programme	10
Financial problems	11
Family problems	12
Health problems	13
Accommodation problems	14
Offered a job	15
Personal problems	16
Other	17

20) How can you rate your commitment to your studies?

……………………………………………………………………………………………

……………………………………………………………………………………………

Very committed	1
Committed	2
Less committed	3
Not committed	4
Do not Know	5

21. Could you please give any additional information that you think might be

necessary?……………………………………………………………………………………

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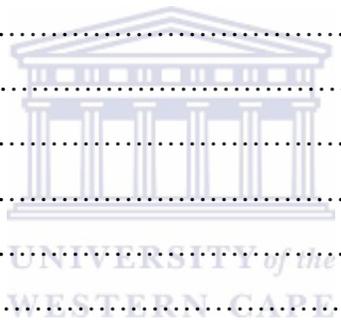
Thank you very much for your support in answering the questions.

UNIVERSITY *of the* WESTERN CAPE
DEPARTMENT OF RESEARCH DEVELOPMENT

SR1

1.1 UWC RESEARCH PROJECT REGISTRATION AND ETHICS CLEARANCE APPLICATION FORM

This application will be considered by UWC Faculty Board Research and Ethics Committees, then by the UWC Senate Research Committee, which may also consult outsiders on ethics questions, or consult the UWC ethics subcommittees, before registration of the project and clearance of the ethics. No project should proceed before project registration and ethical clearance has been granted.

A. PARTICULARS OF INDIVIDUAL APPLICANT		
NAME: **Kefuoehape Evodia Lenepa** TITLE: **MS**		
DEPARTMENT: **Centre for the Study of Higher Education** FACULTY: **Education**		
FIELD OF STUDY: **Higher Education Studies: Policy Analysis, Leadership and Management (PALM)**		

ARE YOU:			
A member of UWC academic staff?	Yes		No
A member of UWC support staff?	Yes		No
A registered UWC student?	Yes	X	No
From outside UWC, wishing to research at or with UWC?	Yes		No

1.2

B. PARTICULARS OF PROJECT

1.3   PROJECT NUMBER: TO BE ALLOCATED BY SENATE RESEARCH COMMITTEE:

1.4   EXPECTED COMPLETION DATE: November 2005

PROJECT TITLE:

Student choice: What factors and conditions influence University of the Western Cape undergraduate students' change of programmes of study?

THREE KEY WORDS DESCRIBING PROJECT: Efficiency, Student choice, change of programmes

PURPOSE OF THE PROJECT:

M-DEGREE: Yes   D-DEGREE:

POST GRADUATE RESEARCH:

UNIVERSITY *of the*
WESTERN CAPE

C. GENERAL INFORMATION

STUDY LEAVE TO BE TAKEN DURING PROECT (days):

IS IT INTENDED THAT THE OUTCOME WILL BE SUBMITTED FOR PEER REVIEWED PUBLICATION?
                                          YES   NO

COMMENTS: DEPARTMENTAL CHAIRPERSON:

SIGNATURE OF THESIS STUDENT RESEARCHER – WHERE APPROPRIATE:

DATE

SIGNATURE OF THESIS SUPERVISOR – WHERE APPROPRIATE:

DATE

SIGNATURE OF PRINCIPAL RESEARCHER – WHERE APROPRIATE:

DATE:

SIGNATURE OF DEPARTMENTAL CHAIRPERSON:

DATE:

NOTE: THESE SIGNATURES IMPLY AN UNDERTAKING *BY THE RESEARCHERS*, TO CONDUCT THE
RESEARCH ETHICALLY, AND AN UNDERTAKING BY THE THESIS SUPERVISOR (WHERE
APPROPRIATE), AND THE DEPARTMENTAL CHAIRPERSON, TO MAINTAIN A RESPONSIBLE
OVERSIGHT OVER THE ETHICAL CONDUCT OF THE RESEARCH.
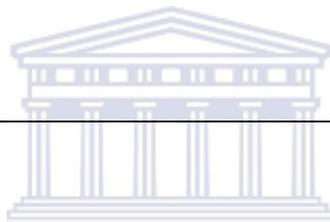
Ethics Statement

Strict confidentiality will be maintained and all records of the interviews, the transcriptions and the report will be
securely stored and written up so as to maintain confidentiality. The interviewees will sign informed consent
forms (see below) and the research will be conducted according a Code of Research Ethics Statement (see
below), which will be shown to them.

Code of Research Ethics Statement

This Code of Research Ethics Statement is derived from the American Sociological Association Code of Ethics, accessed
http://www.asanet.org/members/ecostand.html#11, 20 September 2003. This Statement comprises sections of the A
Code of Ethics relevant to the conduct of this research and provides the framework of professional ethics in terms of wh
the research will be conducted.

Professional and Scientific Standards

Sociologists adhere to the highest possible technical standards that are reasonable and responsible in their resear
teaching, practice, and service activities. They rely on scientifically and professionally derived knowledge; act with hone
and integrity; and avoid untrue, deceptive, or undocumented statements in undertaking work-related functions or activiti

Adherence to Professional Standards

Irrespective of their personal or financial interests or those of their employers or clients, sociologists adhere to professio
and scientific standards in (1) the collection, analysis, or interpretation of data; (2) the reporting of research; (3) t
teaching, professional presentation, or public dissemination of sociological knowledge; and (4) the identification

implementation of appropriate contractual, consulting, or service activities.

Confidentiality

Sociologists have an obligation to ensure that confidential information is protected. They do so to ensure the integrity [of] research and the open communication with research participants and to protect sensitive information obtained in research, teaching, practice, and service. When gathering confidential information, sociologists should take into account the long-term uses of the information, including its potential placement in public archives or the examination of the information by other researchers or practitioners.

Maintaining Confidentiality

(a) Sociologists take reasonable precautions to protect the confidentiality rights of research participants, students, employees, clients, or others. (b) Confidential information provided by research participants, students, employees, clients, or others is treated as such by sociologists even if there is no legal protection or privilege to do so. Sociologists have [an] obligation to protect confidential information, and not allow information gained in confidence from being used in ways that would unfairly compromise research participants, students, employees, clients, or others. (d) Sociologists maintain the integrity of confidential deliberations, activities, or roles, including, where applicable, that of professional committees, review panels, or advisory groups (e.g., the ASA Committee on Professional Ethics). (f) The obligation to maintain confidentiality extends to members of research or training teams and collaborating organizations who have access to the information. To ensure that access to confidential information is restricted, it is the responsibility of researchers, administrators, and principal investigators to instruct staff to take the steps necessary to protect confidentiality. (g) When using private information about individuals collected by other persons or institutions, sociologists protect the confidentiality of individually identifiable information. Information is private when an individual can reasonably expect that the information will not be made public with personal identifiers (e.g., medical or employment records).

Electronic Transmission of Confidential Information

Sociologists use extreme care in delivering or transferring any confidential data, information, or communication over public computer networks. Sociologists are attentive to the problems of maintaining confidentiality and control over sensitive material and data when use of technological innovations, such as public computer networks, may open their professional and scientific communication to unauthorized persons.

Anonymity of Sources

(a) Sociologists do not disclose in their writings, lectures, or other public media confidential, personally identifiable information concerning their research participants, students, individual or organizational clients, or other recipients of their service which is obtained during the course of their work, unless consent from individuals or their legal representatives has been obtained. (b) When confidential information is used in scientific and professional presentations, sociologists disguise the identity of research participants, students, individual or organizational clients, or other recipients of their service.

Preservation of Confidential Information

(a) Sociologists take reasonable steps to ensure that records, data, or information are preserved in a confidential manner consistent with the requirements of this Code of Ethics, recognizing that ownership of records, data, or information may also be governed by law or institutional principles. (b) Sociologists plan so that confidentiality of records, data, [or] information is protected in the event of the sociologist's death, incapacity, or withdrawal from the position or practice. [(c)] When sociologists transfer confidential records, data, or information to other persons or organizations, they obtain assurances that the recipients of the records, data, or information will employ measures to protect confidentiality at least equal to those originally pledged.

Informed Consent

Informed consent is a basic ethical tenet of scientific research on human populations. Sociologists do not involve a human being as a subject in research without the informed consent of the subject or the subject's legally authorized

representative, except as otherwise specified in this Code. Sociologists recognize the possibility of undue influence or su
pressures on subjects that may derive from researchers' expertise or authority, and they take this into account in design
informed consent procedures.

Informed Consent Process

(a) When informed consent is required, sociologists enter into an agreement with research participants or their le
representatives that clarifies the nature of the research and the responsibilities of the investigator prior to conducting t
research. (b) When informed consent is required, sociologists use language that is understandable to and respectful
research participants or their legal representatives. (c) When informed consent is required, sociologists provide resea
participants or their legal representatives with the opportunity to ask questions about any aspect of the research, at a
time during or after their participation in the research. (d) When informed consent is required, sociologists inform resea
participants or their legal representatives of the nature of the research; they indicate to participants that their participat
or continued participation is voluntary; they inform participants of significant factors that may be expected to influer
their willingness to participate (e.g., possible risks and benefits of their participation); and they explain other aspects of t
research and respond to questions from prospective participants. Also, if relevant, sociologists explain that refusal
participate or withdrawal from participation in the research involves no penalty, and they explain any foreseea
consequences of declining or withdrawing. Sociologists explicitly discuss confidentiality. (e) When informed consent
required, sociologists keep records regarding said consent. They recognize that consent is a process that involves o
and/or written consent. (f) Sociologists honor all commitments they have made to research participants as part of t
informed consent process except where unanticipated circumstances demand otherwise.

Use of Recording Technology

Sociologists obtain informed consent from research participants, students, employees, clients, or others prior
videotaping, filming, or recording them in any form, unless these activities involve simply naturalistic observations in pub
places and it is not anticipated that the recording will be used in a manner that could cause personal identification or har

Research Planning, Implementation, and Dissemination

Sociologists have an obligation to promote the integrity of research and to ensure that they comply with the ethical ten
of science in the planning, implementation, and dissemination of research. They do so in order to advance knowledge,
minimize the possibility that results will be misleading, and to protect the rights of research participants.

Planning and Implementation

(a) In planning and implementing research, sociologists minimize the possibility that results will be misleading.
Sociologists take steps to implement protections for the rights and welfare of research participants and other pers
affected by the research. (c) In their research, sociologists do not encourage activities or themselves behave in ways th
are health- or life-threatening to research participants or others. (d) In planning and implementing research, sociologi
consult those with expertise concerning any special population under investigation or likely to be affected. (e) In plann
and implementing research, sociologists consider its ethical acceptability as set forth in the Code of Ethics. If the b
ethical practice is unclear, sociologists consult with institutional review boards or, in the absence of such review proces
with another authoritative body with expertise on the ethics of research. (f) Sociologists are responsible for the eth
conduct of research conducted by them or by others under their supervision or authority.

Offering Inducements for Research Participants

Sociologists do not offer excessive or inappropriate financial or other inducements to obtain the participation of resea
participants, particularly when it might coerce participation. Sociologists may provide incentives to the extent that resour
are available and appropriate.

Reporting on Research

(a) Sociologists disseminate their research findings except where unanticipated circumstances (e.g., the health of t

researcher) or proprietary agreements with employers, contractors, or clients preclude such dissemination. (b) Sociologi
do not fabricate data or falsify results in their publications or presentations. (c) In presenting their work, sociologists rep
their findings fully and do not omit relevant data. They report results whether they support or contradict the expect
outcomes. (d) Sociologists take particular care to state all relevant qualifications on the findings and interpretation of th
research. Sociologists also disclose underlying assumptions, theories, methods, measures, and research designs that mig
bear upon findings and interpretations of their work. (e) Consistent with the spirit of full disclosure of methods a
analyses, once findings are publicly disseminated, sociologists permit their open assessment and verification by oth
responsible researchers with appropriate safeguards, where applicable, to protect the anonymity of research participar
(f) If sociologists discover significant errors in their publication or presentation of data, they take reasonable steps
correct such errors in a correction, a retraction, published errata, or other public fora as appropriate. (g) Sociologists rep
sources of financial support in their written papers and note any special relations to any sponsor. In special circumstanc
sociologists may withhold the names of specific sponsors if they provide an adequate and full description of the nature a
interest of the sponsor. (h) Sociologists take special care to report accurately the results of others' scholarship by us
correct information and citations when presenting the work of others in publications, teaching, practice, and serv
settings.

Data Sharing

(a) Sociologists share data and pertinent documentation as a regular practice. Sociologists make their data available aft
completion of the project or its major publications, except where proprietary agreements with employers, contractors,
clients preclude such accessibility or when it is impossible to share data and protect the confidentiality of the data or t
anonymity of research participants (e.g., raw field notes or detailed information from ethnographic interviews).
Sociologists anticipate data sharing as an integral part of a research plan whenever data sharing is feasible. (c) Sociologi
share data in a form that is consonant with research participants' interests and protect the confidentiality of the informat
they have been given. They maintain the confidentiality of data, whether legally required or not; remove perso
identifiers before data are shared; and if necessary use other disclosure avoidance techniques. (d) Sociologists who do r
otherwise place data in public archives keep data available and retain documentation relating to the research for
reasonable period of time after publication or dissemination of results. (e) Sociologists may ask persons who request th
data for further analysis to bear the associated incremental costs, if necessary. (f) Sociologists who use data from oth
for further analyses explicitly acknowledge the contribution of the initial researchers. (Adapted from Subotzky, 2003).

Interview Consent form

I understand that this research will attempt to explore the factors influencing undergraduate students to change programn
of study at UWC.

I understand that the information gathered from this study will be presented in the form of a mini-thesis by the researcher.

I will participate in an interview to discuss my views and experiences on the topic outlined above.

I understand that information from the interview will be aggregated for the purposes outlined above.

I understand that the interview will be recorded and transcribed, and the interviewer will take notes. My personal identi
my views and experiences expressed in the interview will remain strictly anonymous. I will not have any views direc
attributed to me in any paper, report or publication that may be produced from the interviews. The tapes, transcription a
notes will remain confidential. No identification of the interviewee will be possible on any of these. Only the researcher v
have access to the list of interviewees, which will be kept secure.

I understand that if I decide to participate in this interview, my participation is free and voluntary and I have the right

withdraw my consent to take part or to stop my participation at any time without penalty or negative consequences.

If I have any questions about my rights as an interviewee, I may discuss these or any other related matters with interviewer.

I agree to participate in this interview on the conditions above.

Name: _____

Institution: _____

Signature: _____   Date: _____

Timeframe

The interviews will be conducted during August and September, after which the transcriptions, analysis and reporting will be done in time for presentation in the mini-thesis format as it is the requirement for fulfilment of Masters Degree at UWC.

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WESTERN CAPE
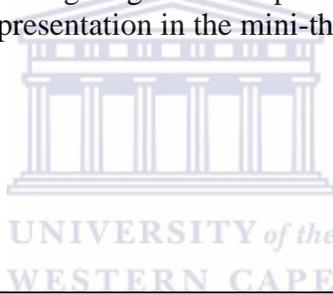
Appendix (iii)

University of the Western Cape
Private Bag X65
Bellville 7535

22 July 2004

The Quality Manager
University of the Western Cape

Dear Sir

REQUEST FOR UWC STATISTICAL DATA FOR   2000 to 2004

Following the telephone conversation that you had on 16th July, 2004 with Professor George Subotzky, who is my supervisor, I would highly appreciate it if your office could provide me with statistical data for UWC undergraduate students who changed programmes of study.

The data is required for the purpose of fulfillment of my research in Masters in Education in the programme of Higher Education Studies: *Policy Analysis, Leadership and Management* (PALM) for which I am registered in the Faculty of Education.

The title of my mini thesis is: *Student Choice: What factors and conditions influence University of the Western Cape (UWC) undergraduate students to choose and change their programmes of study?* The key objective of gathering the requested data is: "To quantify the extent of change of programmes of study among undergraduate students at UWC". In-depth interviews with a sample of these students will also be conducted with the aim to understand better the patterns of changes and the reasons for these. I believe the findings would be of interest to the University in framing its policies and improving the efficiency of student throughput.

I would be very grateful if the data could be organized as follows:

1. The number of students who changed programmes of study within and across faculties in the years from 2001 to 2004
2. The data should be disaggregated if possible according to:

   a) Faculty; b) Race; c) Gender; and d) Age

It will be highly appreciated if you could set up a short meeting or a follow up telephone conversation with Professor Subotzky and I to discuss the availability of the data outlined above.

Your support in conducting this research will be sincerely appreciated.

Yours faithfully

Kefuoehape Lenepa (Student number 2112437)