

FACTORS AFFECTING STD 6 ADJUSTMENT TO HIGH SCHOOL

BY

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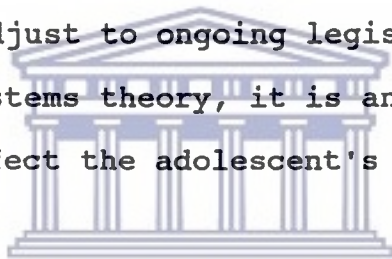
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## ABSTRACT

More emphasis has traditionally been placed on school readiness and adjustment at primary school level than at high school level. Many adolescents do, however, experience problems adjusting to the new high school environment when they enter Standard six. In the current South African climate these pupils not only have to adjust to a new stage in their life - adolescence - and a new school, but they also have to adjust to the context of an education system which itself has to adjust to ongoing legislative changes. In accordance with systems theory, it is anticipated that these changes will affect the adolescent's ability to adjust to high school.



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The purpose of this study was to identify factors which affect the Standard six pupil's adjustment to high school. It was envisaged that this research would inform a psychoeducation programme to facilitate more effective adjustment to high school.

Ninety pupils were sampled from Standard six classes in different types of English-medium high schools in the Cape Peninsula. Three psychometric instruments were used to identify factors associated with adjustment to high school. These were the High School Personality Questionnaire (HSPQ);

the Personal, Home, Social and Formal Relations Questionnaire (PHSF) and the South African School Adjustment Questionnaire. The latter was a questionnaire designed to collect demographic data and to assess whether factors related to the recent changes in the South African education system affect adjustment. An ex post facto design was used and the data was independently gathered. Two methods of analysis were used. Initially the data was analysed by means of multiple regression to establish which factors were good predictors of school adjustment. Subsequently the Hotelling's  $T^2$  test was used to establish a profile analysis of both good and weak adjustors.

The findings suggested that there are factors which affect an adolescent's adjustment to high school. These factors could be grouped into 3 areas and represented personal, family and social adjustment. Factors measured by the South African School Adjustment Questionnaire did not appear to significantly affect adjustment. Poor adjustors appeared to have less self-confidence and a lower self-esteem. They were more distrustful of others and tended to spend more time alone.

Although it is not possible to generalise the results of this study, the results do suggest that adjustment is difficult for some adolescents entering high school and that

a psychoeducation programme which addresses the factors of poor adjustment and fosters the factors associated with better adjustment, would be of value.



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**DECLARATION**

The author hereby declares that this whole thesis, unless specifically indicated to the contrary in the text, is her own original work.



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*Bulker*

April 1995

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## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 INTRODUCTION

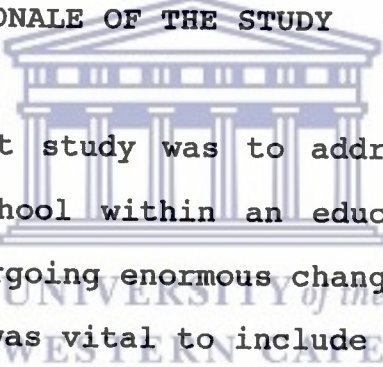
Much research has been conducted in the area of school readiness and the adjustment of children to primary school (Arnold, 1971; Boyer, 1991; Short, 1985) but little emphasis has been placed on the transition from primary school to high school. Many young adolescents entering high school for the first time experience adjustment problems in this new environment (Marais & Bornman, 1989; Seidman, 1991). This can result in both learning and behaviour problems (Maruyama, Ruben & Kingsbury, 1981). Adolescents have to move from a fairly familiar environment in primary school to an unfamiliar high school setting. This can lead to readjustments in peer groups and the development of new peer relationships.

In present day South Africa, high school pupils are having to adapt to situations in which there are young adolescents of different colour groups who sometimes speak a different home language. This situation is often unusual for these pupils. Some pupils have to travel long distances to get to a school that none of their friends or family attend and

have no opportunity for contact with school peers after school hours.

It may be anticipated that these adaptations that the young adolescents have to make in co-evolution with an educational system which is itself adapting to a changing policy, will affect their adjustment in high school. This study investigated adjustment to high school, specifically within the changing South African educational system.

## 1.2. THE AIM AND RATIONALE OF THE STUDY



The aim of the present study was to address the issue of adjustment to high school within an education system and country which are undergoing enormous change and adjustment. Within this change it was vital to include an examination of children and their needs. Burman (1986, p. 11) stated that in this

situation [of continual change] the discontinuities of experience between children and their parents or grandparents rob the younger generation of the role models so essential for the transmission of values and experience which have been found useful for dealing with their world.

In South Africa, the education system is undergoing massive and continual change. Currently the education system is in the process of amalgamating diverse education departments to form one united department. Schools are divided into public, private and state-aided schools. At this time pupils need a system which replaces the role models which they have lost. The final goal, therefore, was to inform the development of a psychoeducation programme designed to aid adjustment to high school.

Addressing topics such as adjustment to new and challenging situations, as is happening in the local education and government system's move to a democratic and multi-ethnic system, will promote an easier transition for high school pupils. Change at this level should radiate into other systems and cause change there too.

This study investigated general adjustment to high school. The focus may encourage educators to re-examine the education of adolescents in more than an academic light, thereby improving the general socialization of adolescents as well as their academic ability. Herman (1970) suggested that school influences the adolescent's entire personality development and includes relationships with teachers and peers, participation, social activities and the ideology of parents.

Using Wolff's intervention cube (1987), this study aimed to inform a psychoeducation programme targeted at an institutional group, with a developmental or empowering purpose, using both direct and indirect methods of intervention. The research done should be seen as a type of action research. It is a pilot study in which the sample was limited.

### 1.3 REVIEW OF CHAPTERS

Chapter 2 gives an overview of general systems theory and highlights Wolff's intervention cube (Wolff, 1987). The implementation of systems theory within the current study is furthermore explored and the South African educational structures used in the study are explained.

Chapter 3 addresses the concepts of adolescence and adjustment within the context of systems theory. High school adjustment is emphasized and its relationship to personal, family and social adjustment is discussed. Furthermore, Erik Erikson's developmental theory, specifically his adolescent stage of identity versus role confusion, is presented. Results from both South African and international studies of adolescent adjustment to high school are covered.

The research procedure used in this study is discussed in chapter 4. The research goals, design, sampling procedure and measuring instruments are explained as well as the process of data gathering and analysis.

Chapter 5 presents the results of the data analysis using multiple regression and Hotelling's  $T^2$ . The empirical results suggest that many adolescents entering Standard six for the first time do struggle to adjust and that their ability to adjust to school is affected by their personal, familial and social adjustment.

A discussion of the results follows in chapter 6. This chapter furthermore posits conclusions and recommendations generated by the present study. It also includes a critique of the study.

## CHAPTER TWO

### GENERAL SYSTEMS THEORY

#### 2.1 INTRODUCTION

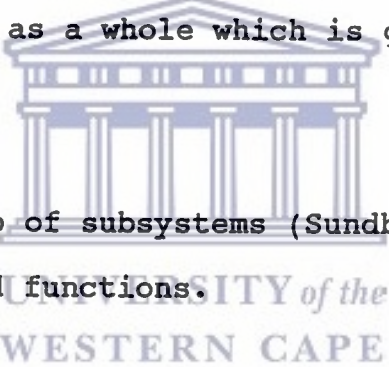
Human beings do not function in a vacuum. They are in continual interaction with other systems such as different groups of people, organizations and communities. Systems have variously been defined. Watzlawick, Helmick Beavin and Jackson defined them as 'two or more communicants in the process of, or at the level of, defining the nature of their relationship' (1968, p. 121); Sundberg as 'an organized unit of interacting parts embedded in larger systems of interaction' (1977, p. 12) and Allport as 'a complex of elements in mutual interaction' (1968, p. 344). Based on these definitions, human systems can simplistically be defined as groups of individuals in dynamic relationship with each other. Von Bertalanffy (1968) suggested that 'social science is the science of social systems' (p. 206). In the social sciences systems can be divided into seven hierarchical levels. These comprise respectively cells, organs, organisms, groups, organizations, communities and supra-national systems (Schoeman, undated; Wessels, 1991).



Grobler (1993) described certain characteristics and principles according to which systems operate.

## 2.2 THE CHARACTERISTICS OF SYSTEMS

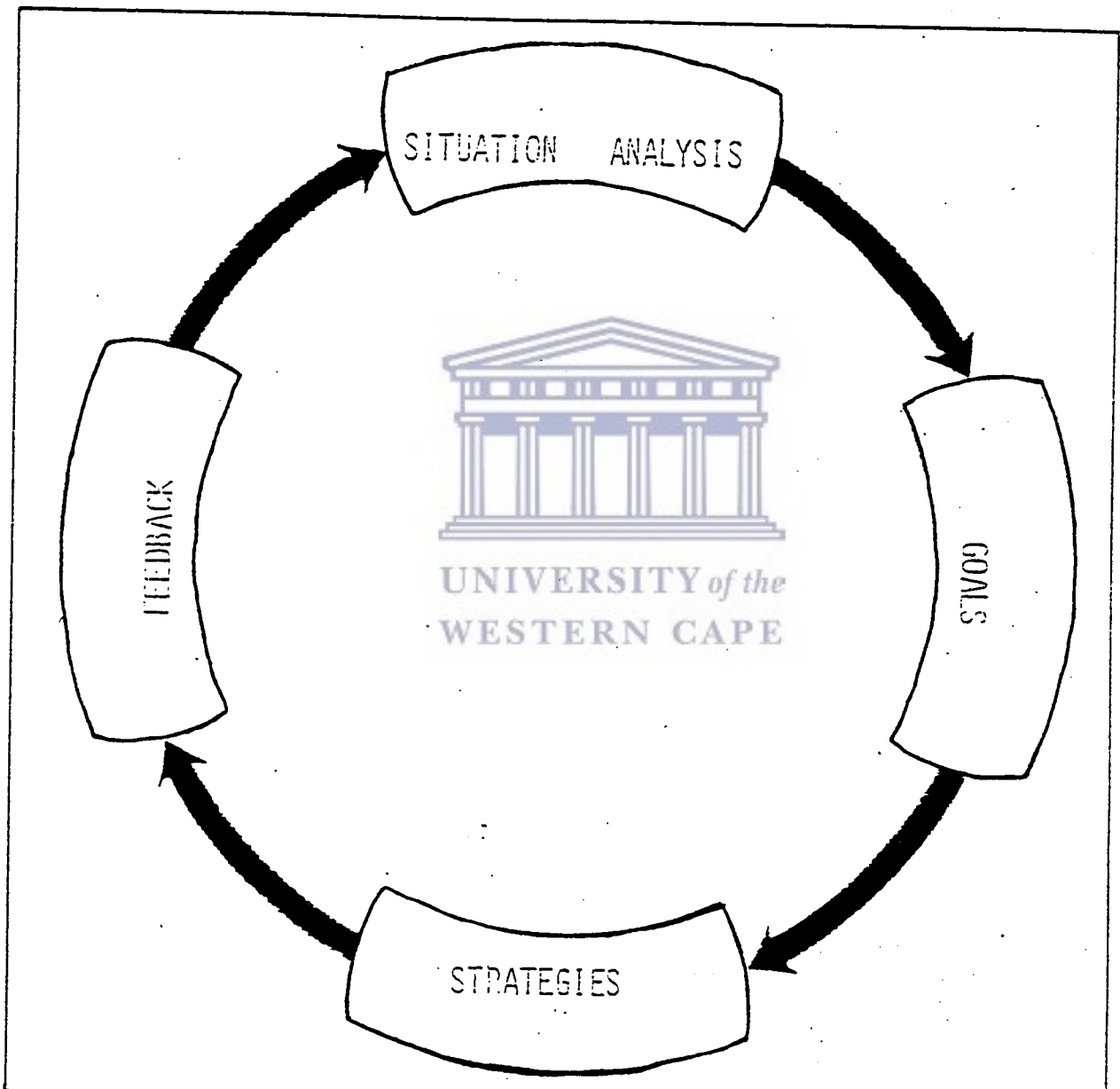
The characteristics of systems address the differentiation of functions, interactional relationships, boundaries, energy distribution, equilibrium, exchange of information and feedback. These aspects are briefly discussed below.

- 
- a) A system functions as a whole which is greater than the sum of its parts.
  - b) A system is made up of subsystems (Sundberg, 1977) which have differentiated functions.
  - c) Systems and subsystems are interdependent. There is an interactional relationship among subsystems. Change in one subsystem will effect change in at least one other subsystem, thereby effecting change in the whole system (Sundberg, Taplin & Tyler, 1983; Watzlawick et al., 1968).
  - d) Systems have boundaries which are imaginary and permeable (Rademeyer, 1978), changing and open or closed (Sundberg, 1977; Sundberg et al., 1983).

- e) Systems and subsystems exchange energy (Sundberg, 1977, 1983; Watzlawick et al., 1968). A build up of energy causes a critical level of tension if not allowed to flow into a system with a lower state of energy concentration (Rademeyer, 1978).
- f) Allport, Boulding and Von Bertalanffy concurred that the system is functioning optimally when all the subsystems within a system are in equilibrium with each other (Buckley, 1968; Sundberg, 1977, 1983; Watzlawick et al., 1968).
- g) In order to continue functioning effectively, systems need to also exchange information.
- h) Living systems are dependent on feedback for their dynamic interaction. Sundberg (1977) defined feedback as 'the return of information based on reactions of the environment to the actions of the system' (p. 12).

From the above it can be stated that living systems require an exchange of information or energy across boundaries in order to maintain a state of equilibrium. This exchange of energy as well as the feedback on which systems are dependent, form a cycle, a cybernetic system or a general system with self regulatory characteristics (Von

Bertalanffy, 1968). Schoeman (undated) schematically represented the cybernetic cycle in the following way (Figure 2.1).



SCHOEMAN'S CYBERNETIC CYCLE

Figure 2.1

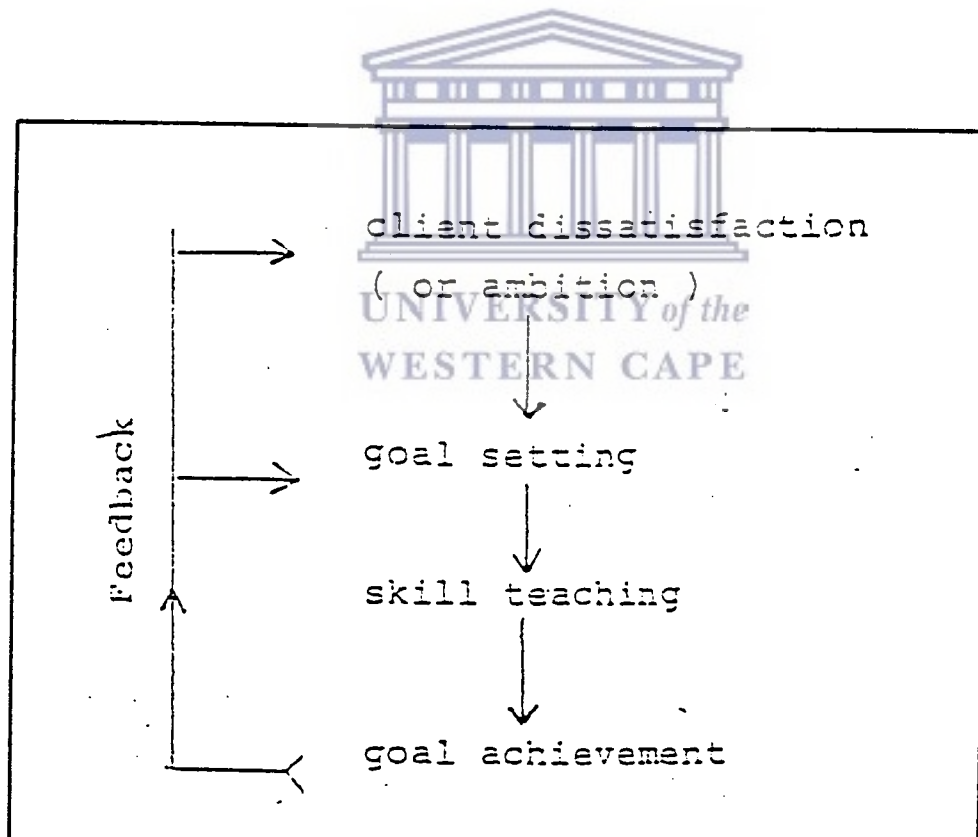
The above diagram shows a system in a state of equilibrium. If this state is disturbed the system is required to formulate goals in order to restore equilibrium. This is attained through the use of certain strategies or action plans. The system then receives feedback about the current state of equilibrium or disequilibrium.

The current education system's disequilibrium has been ascribed to 'the troubled history of South African education and training under White minority rule governments' (Government Gazette No. 15974, 23 September 1994). The previous emphasis on academic syllabi, rather than a more balanced approach to education (Government Gazette No. 15974, 23 September 1994), precluded full identity development, which is essential at adolescence. This has also contributed to the education system's disequilibrium. The introduction of psychoeducation programmes could begin to redress this imbalance. Psychoeducation programmes will empower the pupils, a subsystem of the educational system, to function in a new manner. Their new way of functioning, of adjusting, should provide feedback to the educational system. It may be expected that the education system will respond to the feedback provided to enhance its own equilibrium.

### 2.3 SYSTEMS THEORY AND PSYCHOEDUCATION

In an attempt to develop a compound applied model of psychoeducation, Schoeman (undated) disagreed with the traditional linear model which posits a sequence of abnormality - diagnosis - prescription - therapy - cure.

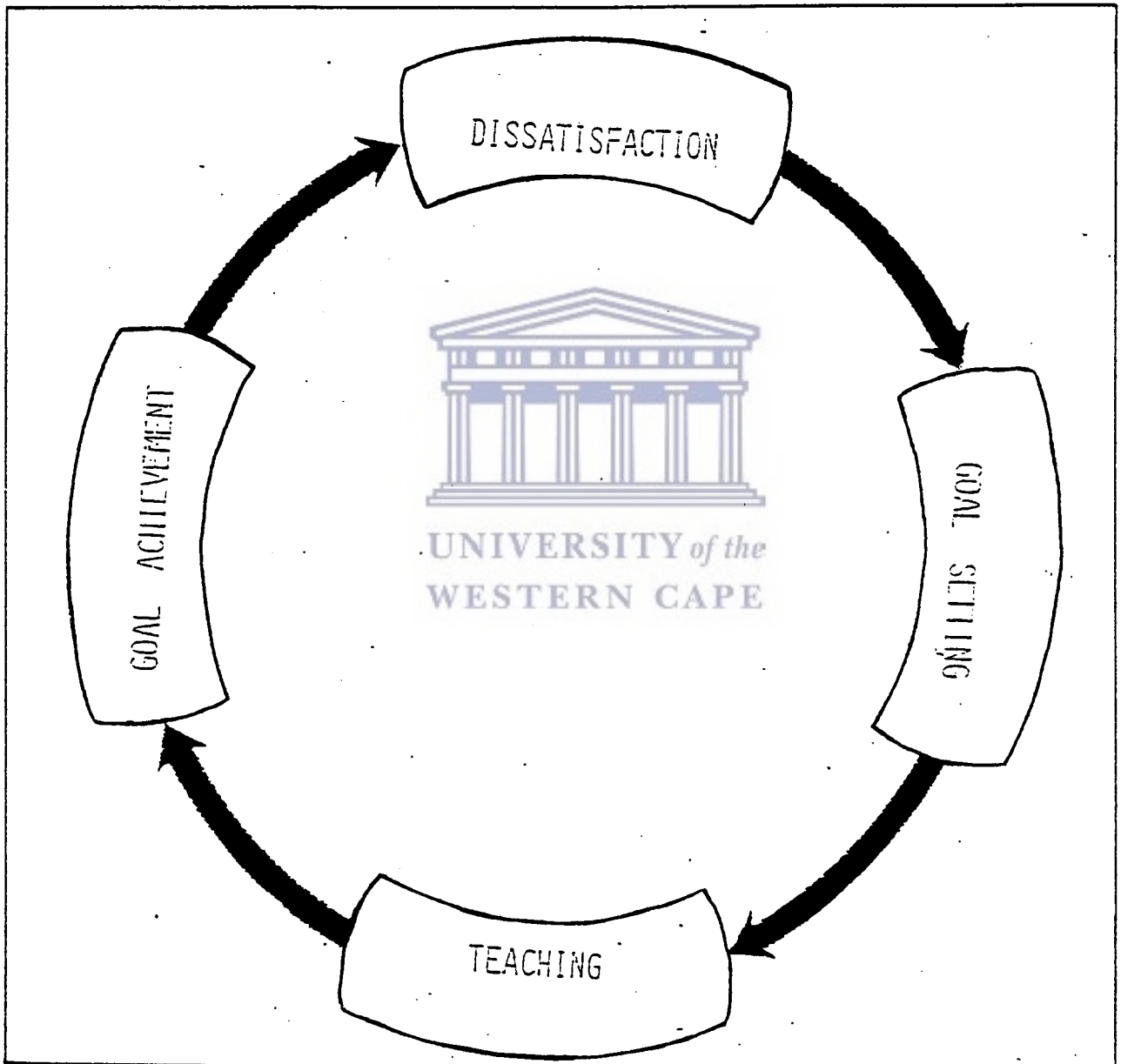
He preferred the cyclic model with a sequence of client dissatisfaction - goal setting - skill teaching - goal achievement. This is reproduced schematically in Figure 2.2.



A CYCLICAL REPRESENTATION OF PSYCHO-EDUCATION

Figure 2.2

This diagram shows many similarities to Schoeman's cybernetic cycle shown in Figure 2.1. He changed the cybernetic cycle as follows to represent the process of psychoeducation (Figure 2.3).



PSYCHO-EDUCATION AND THE CYBERNETIC CYCLE

Figure 2.3

As has been explained earlier, the South African education system is currently in a state of disequilibrium or dissatisfaction. Using Figure 2.3, the current study can be seen as 'goal setting' as it is intended to inform a psychoeducation programme which, when implemented, would form the 'teaching' part of Schoeman's model and would result in the achievement of the goal of more effective adjustment to high school.

Schoeman used a cubus model adapted from Morrill, Oetting and Hurst (1972) as a basis for a practice model of psychoeducation. Wolff (1987) has, however, expanded on this model which is represented in Figure 2.4.

#### 2.4 WOLFF'S INTERVENTION CUBE

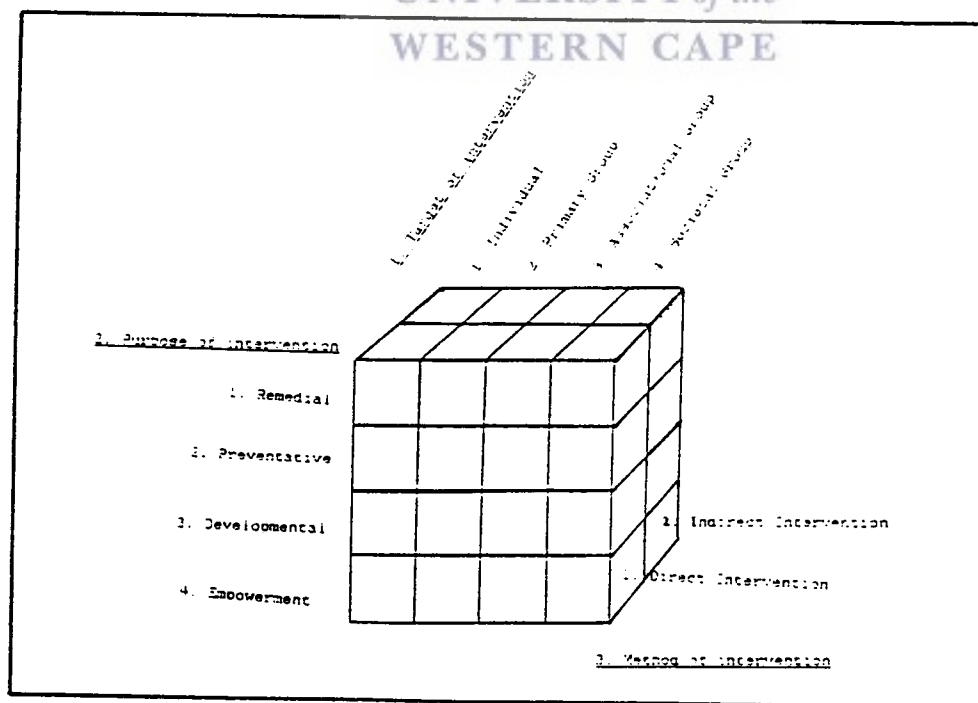


Figure 2.4

Wolff (1987) addressed the target of the intervention, the purpose of the intervention and the method of intervention in his representation of the cube. The target population is divided into four categories: (a) the individual; (b) her\* primary group; (c) her associational group; and (d) her institutional or societal group. The purpose of the intervention also consists of four categories: (a) remedial; (b) preventative; (c) developmental; and (d) empowerment. Finally, the method of intervention includes direct or professional intervention and indirect intervention employing paraprofessionals, self-help groups, social support and the media. This model may be used to determine and define the many roles and tasks of the psychoeducator - social and cognitive development in children, parent training programmes and the development of organizations and even of communities. When using this model with each of these groups, the psychoeducator can clearly define who the programme is aimed at, why it is needed and how it will be implemented. This would in turn, for example, inform goals, resources needed and how the programme will be evaluated. If one views this within the context of general systems theory it becomes clear that psychoeducation is a cyclic process and intervention at any level (individual, family, organizational or community) necessarily effects change at other levels.

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\* Note. All references to gender include both sexes unless the contrary is clear from the text.

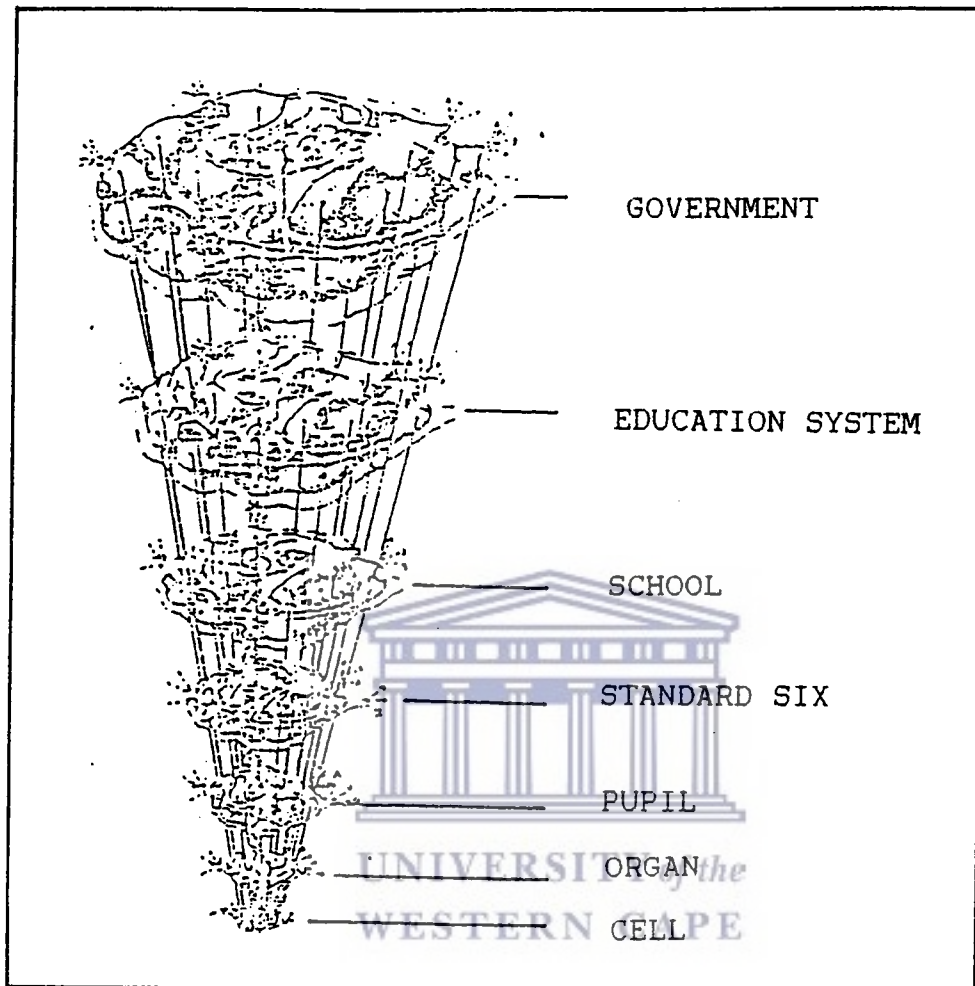


A psychoeducation programme which addresses adolescent adjustment to high school would fall into Wolff's categories of 'the individual' population with a developmental purpose. The method of intervention could either be direct when a psychologist presents the programme, or indirect, when teachers are trained to present the programme.

## 2.5 PSYCHOEDUCATION AND SYSTEMIC CHANGES IN THE SCHOOL SYSTEM

Within the current study, Standard six pupils were seen as the primary system, the individual pupil as the subsystem and the high school and education system as the supra-systems. Although this structure may appear to be a hierarchical one, Sundberg et al. (1983) implied that it may be viewed differently when they stated that 'influence and control extend in both directions' (p. 28). Changes at any level affect the functioning of both lower and higher levels. This is represented diagrammatically in Figure 2.5.

As has been discussed earlier, Figure 2.5 depicts an open system which attempts to maintain a state of equilibrium and in which change to any structure within the system will effect change throughout all structures.



### HIERARCHY OF SYSTEMS

Figure 2.5

The recent changes in the South African government have been felt in all aspects of life in South Africa. These changes have been more apparent, however, in formalized structures like the Education Department. In 1992 the state passed Act 39 of 1992 which amended Act 70 of 1988. This Act allowed

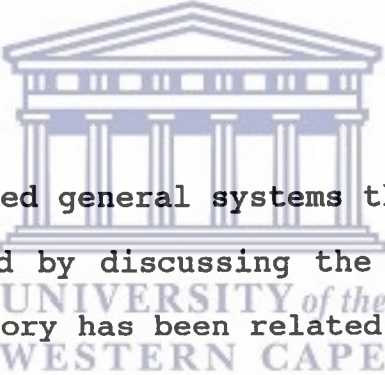
House of Assembly schools that had previously been public schools to become state-aided schools after having 'conducted an opinion poll among the parents of the pupils of that public school' (Government Gazette No. 13867, 20 March 1992, p. 5). This also meant that former public schools are managed and controlled by a governing body and may therefore become multi-ethnic. These changes affected what was previously known as "white" schools allowing them to admit children of different colour groups. Public schools falling under the House of Representatives and Private Schools were not affected by these changes as they were already multi-ethnic.

Since that time, the education system has been in a constant state of movement as the new government is in the process of forming one unified education department. These changes have previously impacted on and continue to have an impact on the subsystems within the education system. This study targets Standard six pupils as one of the subsystems that has been affected by the on-going changes and investigates how this may have affected their adjustment.

It may be that these changes, as well as changes within the pupil's personality, peer group and family, which are vital to the process of adolescence, may cause a disequilibrium or dissatisfaction within the adolescent. At this stage a psychoeducation programme can be introduced to the system in

order to help the pupil adapt more effectively. Such a programme would form an integral part of the curriculum in line with the Ministry of Education's proposal to 'explore a holistic and integrated approach to Education Support Services [in which it is recognized] that issues of health, social, psychological, academic and vocational development are inter-related' (Government Gazette No. 15974, 23 September 1994, pp. 15-16). One of the primary aims of this study is to inform such a programme.

## 2.6 SUMMARY

The logo of the University of the Western Cape is centered on the page. It features a classical building with a pediment and columns, rendered in a light blue color. Below the building, the text 'UNIVERSITY of the WESTERN CAPE' is written in a serif font, with 'UNIVERSITY' and 'WESTERN CAPE' in all caps and 'of the' in lowercase.

Chapter 2 has addressed general systems theory by attempting to define systems and by discussing the characteristics of systems. Systems theory has been related to, and integrated into, psychoeducation. Finally, the systemic changes in the South African education system and their implications for a psychoeducation programme which addresses adolescent adjustment to high school, have been discussed. Chapter 3 will more specifically focus on adolescent adjustment with reference to high school and its relationship to personal, social and family adjustment.

## CHAPTER THREE

### ADOLESCENT ADJUSTMENT TO HIGH SCHOOL

This chapter explores the theoretical factors associated with adolescent adjustment as it impacts on the adolescent's adjustment to school. The prominence of identity formation may be construed to indicate that the identity formed during adolescence, in high school, becomes the high school's systemic output to society.

#### 3.1 INTRODUCTION TO ADOLESCENCE

In the context of systems theory, as explored in the previous chapter, it is expected that adolescents will be in reciprocal interactional relationships with the systems in their contexts. Vygotsky argued that 'a child's development cannot be understood by a study of the individual; one must also examine the external social world in which that individual life has developed' (Tharp & Gallimore, 1991, p. 19).

Definitions of adolescence tend to focus on three specific areas: physical, psychological and social change or transition (Collins, 1986; Erikson, 1963; Manaster, 1977). The changes begin in the physiological subsystems within the

adolescent and radiate out causing changes in the systems (family, peer and school) in the adolescent's environment. The changes in the physiological subsystems are the qualitative changes which permeate the adolescent experience. It is generally seen as a developmental stage which bridges childhood and adulthood (Ambron, 1975; Gosling, 1975). It begins in puberty and ends with maturity in adulthood. It is first a period of physical and physiological change and later one of psychological change (Manaster, 1975).

Adolescence appears to be a time of discovery in which the individuals begin to define personal values and attitudes. They question and test society's beliefs and morals and establish themselves as unique individuals. They furthermore acquire a sense of belonging to a group (Ambron, 1975, Erikson, 1963, Manaster, 1977; Wolff, 1989).

Manaster (1977) suggested that, as with other developmental stages, adolescents need to negotiate certain life tasks in order to cope effectively with this stage of development. Manaster combined Havighurst's developmental tasks with his own life tasks in order to understand the process of adolescence. Some of these tasks are presented in table 3.1.

Table 3.1

DEVELOPMENTAL TASKS AND THEIR ASSOCIATED LIFE TASKS

Developmental Tasks	Life Tasks
Achieving new and more mature relations with age mates of both sexes	Friends and Community
Achieving emotional independence of parents and other adults	Self, Friends and Community
Acquiring a set of values and an ethical system as a guide to behaviour	Existential (Friends and Community)
Desiring and achieving socially responsible behaviour	Friends and Community, Work and School

For this study the tasks of achieving new and more mature relations with age mates of both sexes; achieving emotional independence of parents and other adults; acquiring a set of values and an ethical system as a guide to behaviour; and desiring and achieving socially responsible behaviour are primary. These tasks require adolescents to interact with the different systems such as family, peers, teachers and society in their context. Through this process of reciprocal interaction adolescents acquire an integrated and consistent identity in which a sense of adequacy and continuity is felt (Ausubel, Montemayor & Svajian, 1977; Manaster, 1977; Wolff, 1989). This socialization process allows particular social experiences to develop the mind, identity and personality of the adolescent. The effect of these interactional socialization experiences are carried



into the next developmental phase and into the future of society. The adolescent is socialized through membership of various groups. Social values develop alongside personal values (Havighurst & Neugartin, 1967). Different social groups and systems in the context of adolescents constantly provide new experiences enabling them to develop a consistent and effective way of adjusting to changes in themselves and their context.

The development of maturity in adolescence involves the relinquishment of dependency on the family and the establishment of a secure personal identity. This happens through the peer group. For most adolescents peer groups are formed in the school. Peer group dependency (Capes, 1975) thus, partially, substitutes for initial total dependence on the family. According to Ausubel et al. (1977) this process results in the inevitable change in attitudes 'toward self, parents, peers and elders' (p. 17). The family, the peer group and the school can therefore be seen as three of the major socializing agencies for adolescents (Havighurst & Neugartin, 1967).

### 3.2 ADJUSTMENT

Adjustment in adolescence can be defined as the ability to successfully adapt to and master the varying demands and challenges of daily living which includes entry into high school. This includes the ability to negotiate between



intra-systemic and inter-systemic demands and the ability to adapt to a changing context (Erikson, 1968; Fouche & Grobbelaar, 1971; Herman 1970; Reid, 1987). An important aspect of functional adjustment is the development of healthy relations with the self and between the self and other systems (Fouche & Grobbelaar, 1971).

Many adolescents see entrance to high school, a potentially major developmental task, as the beginning of their adolescent years and the end of their childhood (Phares, 1988). Although this is often experienced as an exciting change, it is also sometimes experienced as an insecure and confusing time (Erikson, 1968; Muuss, 1980). Effective adjustment, effective negotiation of systemic co-evolution in adolescence, can therefore be seen as an investment in successful negotiation of future developmental stages. High school adjustment is also considered by Ausubel et al. (1977), to be undoubtedly paramount in negotiating transition through adolescent socialization into mature personalities with individual identities.

### 3.3 HIGH SCHOOL ADJUSTMENT

In spite of Ausubel et al.'s (1977) assertion above, high school adjustment has often been defined in the literature as academic achievement (Maruyama et al., 1981), whereas

time spent at school and home in interaction with peers and teachers - where many social behaviours are developed and 'practiced' - cannot be negated (Mussen, Conger & Kagan, 1963). Muuss (1980) suggested that school plays a significant role in an adolescent's life 'as the meeting place for most of the social interactions of age mates' (p. 333). School is an important arena for social, athletic and academic interaction.

Low suggested that successful adjustment to high school requires that the child feels accepted within the family and peer group (Marais & Bornman, 1989). Social interactions with peers and adults, feelings of affirmation and rejection and experiences of success and failure are school experiences that influence the child's developing self-concept and sense of self-worth (Haynes, 1990). According to Benson and Weigel adolescents who feel unaccepted or have negative experiences often develop a negative self-concept which may affect their adjustment to school as well as their attitude to school (Marais & Bornman, 1989) and may eventually lead to them dropping out of school. Successful adjustment to high school therefore requires the development of healthy relations within the self, the family, the peer group and the formal school environment.

in academic underachievement and poor psychosocial adjustment (Haynes, 1990). Ausubel et al. (1977) also suggested that adolescents who are shy and introverted find adolescent adjustments in all spheres, more difficult.

### 3.3.2 Family/Home adjustment

Throughout an individual's childhood the family is the primary interactional system. It is the main source of love, nurturance and need fulfilment. The family also fulfils an educative purpose in that it provides a model of social relationships (Byng-Hall & Miller, 1975). When children reach adolescence they begin a process of "emancipation" from their parents in order to attain adulthood (Ausubel et al., 1977, Wolff, 1989). During this time the peer group becomes a more important socializing agent which encourages this move away from the family. Throughout adolescence, while individuals are experimenting with new systems involving different roles, feelings, ideas and rebellions as well as having to make adjustments to these new experiences and situations, they need to feel that their parents are united (Byng-Hall & Miller, 1975).

Scott and Scott (1989) suggested that adjustment to school should be assessed according to various criteria including academic performance, interpersonal relations, discipline problems and subjective satisfaction which are associated

with a 'common set of intellectual and personality characteristics, such as IQ, self-esteem, anxiety and depression' (p. 269). The authors stated that these characteristics have similar origins in the child's upbringing and current family relations. They conceptualize this relationship as depicted in Table 3.4. This is confirmed by Ausubel et al. (1977) who state that parental attitudes are important in the development of maturity in adolescence. The most important attitudes are 1) degree of protectiveness, 2) dominance, and 3) appreciation of the adolescence competence.

Table 3.4

THEORETICAL DETERMINANTS OF HIGH SCHOOL ADJUSTMENT

FAMILY	PERSONALITY	SCHOOL ADJUSTMENT
Permissiveness	Interpersonal competence	Popularity Satisfaction with friends
Nurturance	Self-esteem	Satisfaction with school
Solidarity	Emotional well-being	Subject performance
Punitiveness	Hostility Intellectual ability	Judged performance

Other authors (Ainley, Foreman & Sheret, 1991; Fouche & Grobbelaar, 1971) have suggested that socioeconomic status also affects adjustment. Orthner (1990) found that parental employment did not affect school adjustment and therefore was not an important indicator of socioeconomic status.

### 3.3.3 Social adjustment

As has been stated earlier, adolescence is a period when children move away from the security of their family towards more involvement in the peer group. Adolescents need the opportunities for experimentation with roles and transitional experiences that the peer group offers in order to establish themselves as separate individuals (Byng-Hall & Miller, 1975). The school environment is an ideal arena for this to happen. Not only are adolescents exposed to peers from whom they can acquire status as independent individuals but also from adults (teachers) other than their parents (Ausubel et al., 1977).

Within the South African school setting the peer group consists of individuals who have traditionally been seen as socially and culturally very different from one another. This situation appears to make the adolescent transition from family dependence to peer group dependence (Capes, 1975) more difficult. Adjustment to multi-ethnic high schools has been found to be problematic, for example, in

Israel. It was found necessary to develop a psychoeducation programme to facilitate entrance into ethnically integrated high schools (Schwarzwald, Hoffman & Rotem, 1988). These authors as well as Sharan and Rich (1984) suggested that peer relationships as well as relationships with authority figures at school are important for the development of a healthy school climate which in turn is vitally important for appropriate school adjustment.

#### 3.3.3.1 Southern African Research

Research done in Southern Africa also suggested that social and peer relationships are primary in developing effective adjustment in desegregated schools (Freer, 1991). Schools in Lesotho and Swaziland have a policy of encouraging pupils to learn about and understand each other's backgrounds and customs in order to facilitate social relatedness.

Gaganakis (1991) studied the concerns of pupils in desegregated elite private schools in South Africa. She found that some of the Black pupils' most important concerns included feelings of isolation within the home community and in the school. This was related to the struggle to adjust to the difference between the school's social structure and the structure at home. She stated that 'friendship choices and socializing with Whites out of school are constrained, not by 'cultural' factors but by having to live considerable distances from the school in segregated suburbs' (p. 82).

She also found that pupils experienced themselves as 'academically and socially handicapped' by being unable to speak English as competently as the other pupils. These results are confirmed by Ainley, Foreman and Sheret (1991) who, in a study done in the United Kingdom, found that non-English speaking background and lower socioeconomic status adversely affect adjustment.

These studies confirm that adjustment to high school is not only related to academic achievement but is also connected to the emotional, social and cognitive well-being of the pupil. They highlight the influence of social, personal and family adjustment in adequate school adjustment. It seems that adjustment is facilitated by a sense of belonging. The South African system has imposed its own idiosyncratic barriers to this sense of belonging through the previous policy of segregation as South African children of different colours have been unable to share a common language, neighbourhood and social circle.

#### 3.4 SUMMARY

This chapter has focussed on adjustment in adolescence, particularly adjustment to high school. Adolescents are seen as being in reciprocal interaction with systems within their environment. This interaction, according to Erikson, is vital to the process of identity formation. A discussion



of Erikson's life stages and the role that identity formation plays in them, was presented. The transition of the adolescent's primary system from the family to the peer group and the implications this holds for adjustment to high school was also discussed.

As indicated in the opening paragraphs of this chapter, the identity which adolescents form during high school, may be construed in systemic terms as the high school's output to society. Theoretical factors indicated to be of significance to high school adjustment include the family, the home and social relationships. Finally, research was presented which is specific to the South African situation.

The methodology, which is presented in the following chapter, was designed to identify factors which influence adjustment to high school now in the South African setting. The questionnaires investigate the adolescent subsystem as well as the family and social systems with which the adolescent is in relationship. It is aimed at informing a psychoeducation programme which will affect current and future healthy individual and school system output.



## CHAPTER FOUR

### THE RESEARCH PROCEDURE

#### 4.1 THE RESEARCH GOAL

The specific goal of this study was to establish the factors to which adolescents entering high school for the first time have particular trouble adjusting. The factors which have been identified in this study can form the basis for the subject matter of a psychoeducation programme. The areas covered in this study include relationship with self, relationship with family, health, relationship with peers, relationship with authority, and the influence that these relationships have on the adolescent's ability to adjust.

#### 4.2 THE RESEARCH DESIGN

In this study an ex post facto design was used. Kerlinger (1979) stated that 'nonexperimental, or ex post facto, research is any research in which it is not possible to manipulate variables or to assign subjects or conditions at random' (p. 116). The variables in this type of research occur naturally (Open University, 1979). As this study investigated the influence which numerous factors

had on pupil's adjustment to a new environment and these factors, in turn, were influenced by many variables it was impossible to control and manipulate specific independent variables. Although this method of research is not often considered to be empirically as strong as experimental research, Kerlinger (1979) considered it to be 'of high significance and importance [also, as] the basic logic of the inquiry is fundamentally the same' (p. 116).

#### 4.3 THE RESEARCH SAMPLE

The research sample consisted of 90 first time Standard six pupils from high schools in the Cape Peninsula.

The mean age of the pupils was 13 years 6 months. The pupils were taught in English and therefore tested in English. Their home languages were predominantly English (N = 83), but included Xhosa (N = 6) and German (N = 1). There were no Afrikaans mother-tongue speakers in the sample.

##### 4.3.1 The sampling procedure

One school was selected, on the basis of convenience, from each of the private, public school and state-aided school systems. A public school is one which is controlled and managed by the Department of Education. A state-aided school is one which is controlled and managed by a governing body (Statutes of the Republic of South Africa -

Education. Education Affairs Act (House of Assembly), No. 70 of 1988). A private high school means any high school other than a) a public school; b) a state-aided school; and c) a private school for specialized education (Statutes of the Republic of South Africa - Education. Private Schools Act (House of Assembly), Act No. 104 of 1986). Kerlinger suggested that although convenience or "accidental" sampling is the weakest form of sampling, it is the most frequently used form and is representative when used with 'reasonable knowledge and care' (1986, p. 120). At one of the schools the pupils were randomly selected from the entire Standard six class and at the other two schools one of the Standard six classes was randomly selected at each school. When all incomplete questionnaires (N = 7) were excluded the sample consisted of 48 boys, 42 girls. Table 4.1 presents the number of subjects tested in each of the schools.

TABLE 4.1

NUMBER OF SUBJECTS AT EACH OF THE THREE SCHOOLS

School type	Private	Public	State-aided
TOTAL	N = 26	N = 33	N = 31

## 4.4 THE MEASURING INSTRUMENTS

### 4.4.1 High School Personality Questionnaire (HSPQ)

This scale provides an objective measurement of the personality characteristics of high school children. It represents the intra-systemic factors of the adolescent adjusting to high school. The test consists of fourteen factorially independent personality dimensions or factors which are presented on a bipolar continuum with each pole representing an extreme (Madge & Du Toit, 1981). They are listed in Table 4.2. These poles are represented by descriptive terms, which should not be seen as opposites. They should rather be seen as a continuum on which the pupil's score represents a tendency to one or the other of the poles (Marais & Bornman, 1989). The results of the HSPQ are expressed in stens so that the pupil is placed relative to other pupils of a similar age and sex, with regard to the specific personality characteristics.

Alberts obtained a reliability coefficient of between 0,57 and 0,88 in 1974 for this questionnaire, when he used the test-retest method and validity coefficients based on equivalence coefficients of between 0,60 and 0,79 (Smit, 1983).

Table 4.2

FACTORS OF THE HIGH SCHOOL PERSONALITY QUESTIONNAIRE

FACTORS	BIPOLAR DESCRIPTION
A	Reserved vs warmhearted
B	Less intelligent vs more intelligent
C	Affected by feelings vs emotionally stable
D	Phlegmatic vs excitable
E	Submissive vs dominant
F	Sober vs enthusiastic
G	Expedient vs conscientious
H	Shy vs adventurous
I	Tough-minded vs tender-minded
J	Zestful vs circumspectly individualistic
O	Self-assured vs apprehensive
Q2	Sociably group-dependent vs self-sufficient
Q3	Uncontrolled vs controlled
Q4	Relaxed vs tense

#### 4.2.2 Personal, Home, Social and Formal Relations Questionnaire (PHSF)

This scale measures the personal, home, social and formal relations of high school pupils, students and adults in order to determine their level of adjustment in these areas. Adjustment is defined in the manual as the dynamic process by which individuals strive to attain an equilibrium between the self and the demands of the environment (Fouche & Grobbelaar, 1971). The scale consists of eleven components and a desirability scale which establishes the honesty of the responses. Each of the 11 components falls into one of the four adjustment areas. The scale represents the theoretical factors of systemic adjustment indicated in Chapter 3 on adolescence as a developmental phase. The components reflect a resemblance to the intra-systemic personal factors of the previous scale. The components are presented in Table 4.3.

The split-half method was used to establish reliability. Fouche and Grobbelaar (1971) developed reliability coefficients separately for boys and girls of different ages which range from 0,63 to 0,94 and stated that research done on the PHSF showed a high degree of construct validity as well as of concept validity.

Table 4.3.  
 COMPONENTS OF THE PERSONAL, HOME, SOCIAL AND  
 FORMAL RELATIONS QUESTIONNAIRE

ADJUSTMENT AREA	COMPONENT
Personal relations	Self-confidence Self-esteem Self-control Nervousness Health
Home relations	Family influences Personal freedom
Social relations	Sociability (G) Sociability (S) Moral sense
Formal relations	Formal relations

Although both the High School Personality Questionnaire and the Personal, Home, Social and Formal Relations Questionnaires are fairly old tests - one standardized in 1968 (PHSF) and the other in 1974 (HSPQ) - they were used as they there were few tests available. These were felt to be the most appropriate tests as they have been standardized on a South African population. Little information was given on the standardization sample. It is, however, expected that these tests were standardized on 'white' pupils. The problems that this created for the present study were somewhat overcome by using the median of the sample as the point of comparison rather than the mean.

#### 4.4.3 South African School Adjustment Questionnaire (SASAQ)

This questionnaire, presented in Appendix 1, was designed and used to collect demographic data and to assess whether factors related to the recent integration of high schools in South Africa affect adjustment. The various areas covered by the questionnaire include biographical data, language, transport and distance from home to school, friendships and peer relationships. These factors were also indicated in the South African studies reported in the literature (Freer, 1991; Gaganakis, 1991).

The questionnaire was designed using a semantic differential based on a 7 point Likert scale. Likert scales or summated rating scales consist of a set of items of equal value. Subjects are asked to respond to each item by indicating their degree of agreement or disagreement. The scores of these items are computed to give a total score. The advantage of this type of scale is that it allows for a greater variance in results (Kerlinger, 1986). Space was allowed for comments relating to specific items on the questionnaire. It was expected that these qualitative comments would confirm the quantitative data obtained from the questionnaire.



The information obtained from this questionnaire was used to make the quantitative data from the two standardized questionnaires more specific to the present South African situation.

#### 4.5 ADMINISTRATION OF THE QUESTIONNAIRES

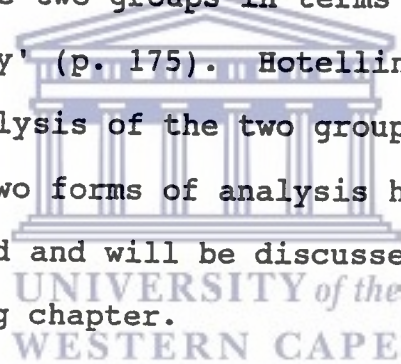
The data was collected by a qualified and independent psychometrist. He went to each of the schools on separate occasions at the end of the 1st term of 1994 and within a time span of 2 weeks. The questionnaires were administered to groups and each testing session lasted for 3 hours with a 20 minute break in the middle. All spoilt papers (N = 7) were then removed and the questionnaires were scored.

#### 4.6 DATA ANALYSIS

Two methods of analysis were used. Initially the data was analyzed by means of multiple regression in order to establish which of the factors measured in the study were good predictors of school adjustment. Multiple regression is a method for investigating the effects and the size of the effects of more than one independent variable on one dependent variable (Kerlinger, 1986; Miller, 1984;

Pedhazur, 1982). In this study school adjustment can be seen as the dependent variable with the other factors measured being the independent variables.

Subsequently, the data was analyzed using the Hotelling's  $T^2$  test, in which two groups are compared in terms of more than one outcome variable. In this study good and poor adjusters are compared in terms of various factors measured by each of the questionnaires. According to Pretorius (1995) 'Hotelling's  $T^2$  provides a test of the differences between the two groups in terms of all outcome measures simultaneously' (p. 175). Hotelling's  $T^2$  provides a profile analysis of the two groups. The results of these two forms of analysis have been combined and integrated and will be discussed in greater detail in the following chapter.



## CHAPTER FIVE

### RESULTS

As was mentioned in Chapter 4 the data obtained in this study was analyzed in two separate ways, namely by multiple regression and Hotelling's  $T^2$ . The results will therefore be presented in two sections: Factors identified as good predictors of school adjustment based on the multiple regression analysis and Factors which differentiate between good and bad adjustors based on the analysis using the Hotelling's  $T^2$  test.

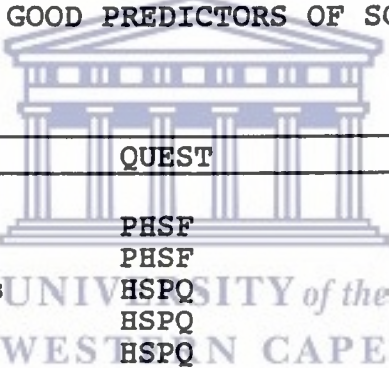
#### 5.1 FACTORS IDENTIFIED AS GOOD PREDICTORS OF SCHOOL ADJUSTMENT

In this study the dependent variable is school adjustment which is represented by the factor 'Formal Relations' on the Personal, Home, Social and Formal Relations Questionnaire (PHSF). The independent variables are all the other factors of the Personal, Home, Social and Formal Relations Questionnaire (PHSF), the High School Personality Questionnaire (HSPQ) and the South African School Adjustment Questionnaire (SASAQ). The results of this analysis

represent those factors which best predict school adjustment. It is important to note that it does not differentiate between whether the adjustment is good or bad. The factors identified by using this form of analysis as well as their respective  $R^2$  values are presented in Table 5.1.  $R^2$  represents the amount of variance the independent variables can explain in the dependent variable, or how much of a predictor of school adjustment are each of the factors.

Table 5.1

FACTORS IDENTIFIED AS GOOD PREDICTORS OF SCHOOL ADJUSTMENT



FACTORS	QUEST	$R^2$ VALUE
Family influences	PHSF	0.36
Sociability - group	PHSF	0.45
Expedient/conscientious	HSPQ	0.53
Self-esteem	HSPQ	0.57
Shy/adventurous	HSPQ	0.59
Moral sense	HSPQ	0.61

Note. PHSF: Personal, Home, Social and Formal Relations Questionnaire; HSPQ: High School Personality Questionnaire.

The  $R^2$  values represented in Table 5.1 are cumulative values and therefore 'family influences' is the best predictor of school adjustment, followed by sociability - group, expedient/conscientious, self-esteem, shy/adventurous and moral sense.

## 5.2 FACTORS WHICH DIFFERENTIATE BETWEEN GOOD AND BAD ADJUSTMENT

Whereas the previous analysis identifies predictors of adjustment, this method (Hotelling's  $T^2$  test) indicates the direction of the adjustment. The data was divided into two groups using this sample's median as the cutoff point. The two groups were defined as weak adjusters ( $N = 44$ ) and good adjusters ( $N = 38$ ). This form of analysis indicates those factors in which there is a significant difference

( $p < 0.05$ ) between weak adjusters and good adjusters. Table 5.2 represents all of the factors tested, the respective means for weak adjusters and for good adjusters and the  $T^2$  (separate) and  $T^2$  (pooled) P-values for each factor. The Hotelling's  $T^2$  test is significant on the Personal, Home, Social and Formal Relations Questionnaire

( $P = 0.0001$ ) and the High School Personality Questionnaire ( $p = 0.0028$ ). It is not significant on the South African School Adjustment Questionnaire ( $p = 0.1002$ ). These results of Table 5.2 are represented graphically in Tables 5.3, 5.4 and 5.5.

Table 5.2

## MEANS AND P-VALUES FOR ALL FACTORS

Factor	Mean		P-value	
	weak adjusters	good adjusters	separate	pooled
<b>PHSF</b>				
Self-confidence	23.11	27.45	0.0000	0.0000*
Self-esteem	20.95	24.50	0.0004	0.0005*
Self-control	23.64	24.32	0.4428	0.4465
Nervousness	22.95	25.97	0.0103	0.0108*
Health	26.09	30.97	0.0001	0.0001*
Fam. Influences	23.54	30.24	0.0000	0.0000*
Personal freedom	23.89	28.68	0.0016	0.0017*
Sociability - G	22.64	27.58	0.0003	0.0004*
Sociability - S	22.09	23.84	0.4031	0.3928
Moral Sense	26.93	30.89	0.0010	0.0011*
<b>HSPQ</b>				
Res/warmhearted	09.11	10.97	0.0077	0.0071*
Intelligence	06.39	06.74	0.2737	0.2720
Emotional stability	09.23	10.74	0.0245	0.0237*
Phleg/excitable	09.82	09.76	0.9334	0.9325
Submis/dominant	09.70	09.03	0.2297	0.2270
Sober/enthusiastic	10.14	10.71	0.5134	0.5078
Exped/conscientious	10.00	13.50	0.0000	0.0000*
Shy/adventurous	09.36	10.34	0.1420	0.1394
Tough/tender minded	11.11	12.13	0.1571	0.1537
Zest/circumspect	09.23	08.45	0.2009	0.2004
Self-ass/apprehen	12.59	10.89	0.0073	0.0070*
Group-dep/self-suff	08.93	08.16	0.2011	0.2048
Uncontrolled/cont	10.79	11.97	0.0880	0.0882
Relaxed/tense	11.04	11.08	0.9606	0.9599
<b>SASAQ</b>				
Language	18.86	18.37	0.6084	0.6115
Transport	17.89	18.45	0.5337	0.5355
Friends	11.52	09.76	0.0182	0.0169

Note. PHSF: Personal, Home, Social and Formal Relations Questionnaire; HSPQ: High School Personality Questionnaire; SASAQ: South African School Adjustment Questionnaire.

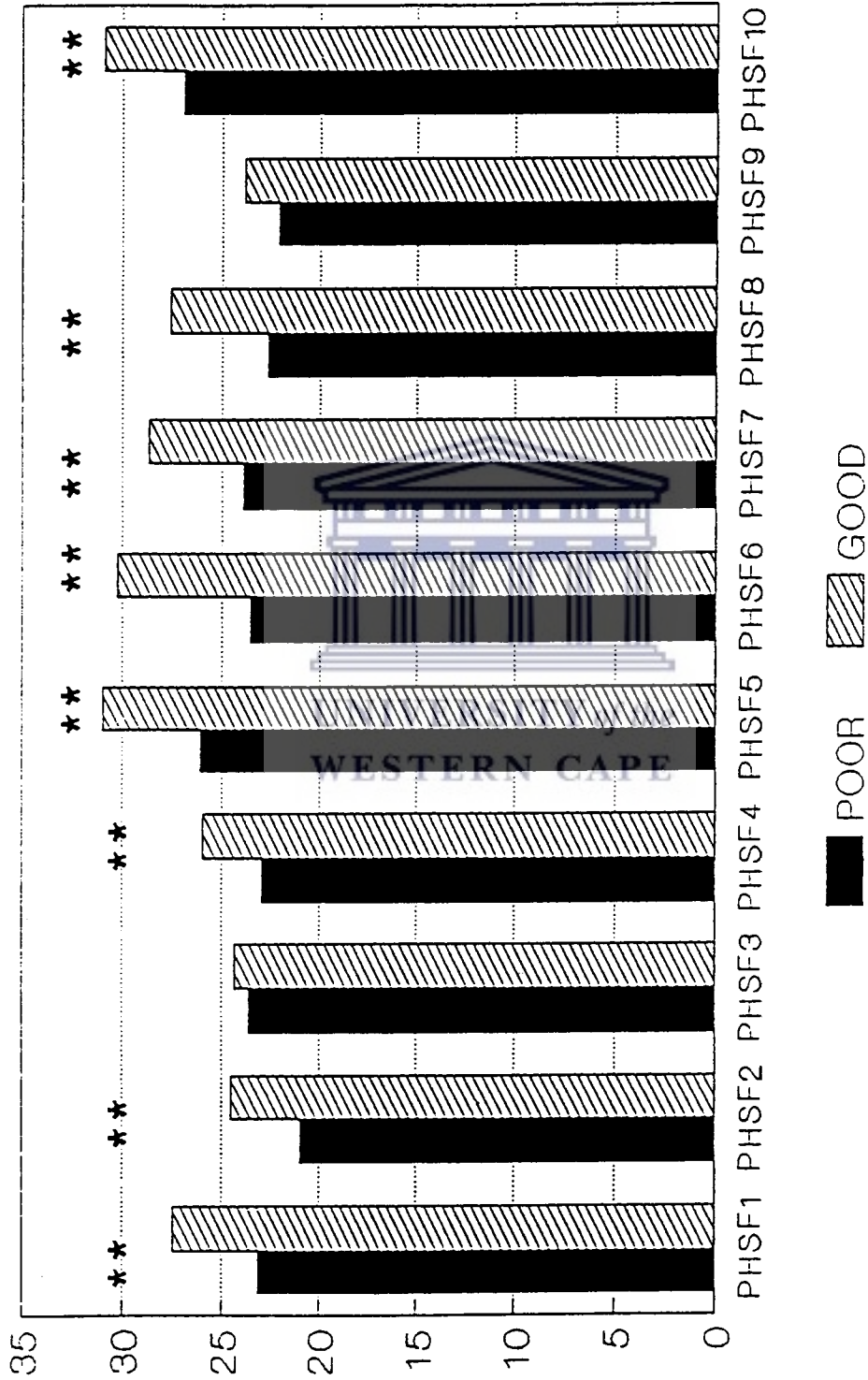
\*  $p < 0.05$

The eight significant factors of the PHSF (self-confidence, self-esteem, nervousness, health, family influences, personal freedom, sociability - group and moral sense) are represented in Table 5.6 with the four significant factors

# PROFILE POOR VS GOOD (PHSF)

## CUTPOINTS: MEDIAN

TABLE 5.3



\*\*\*=SIGN.

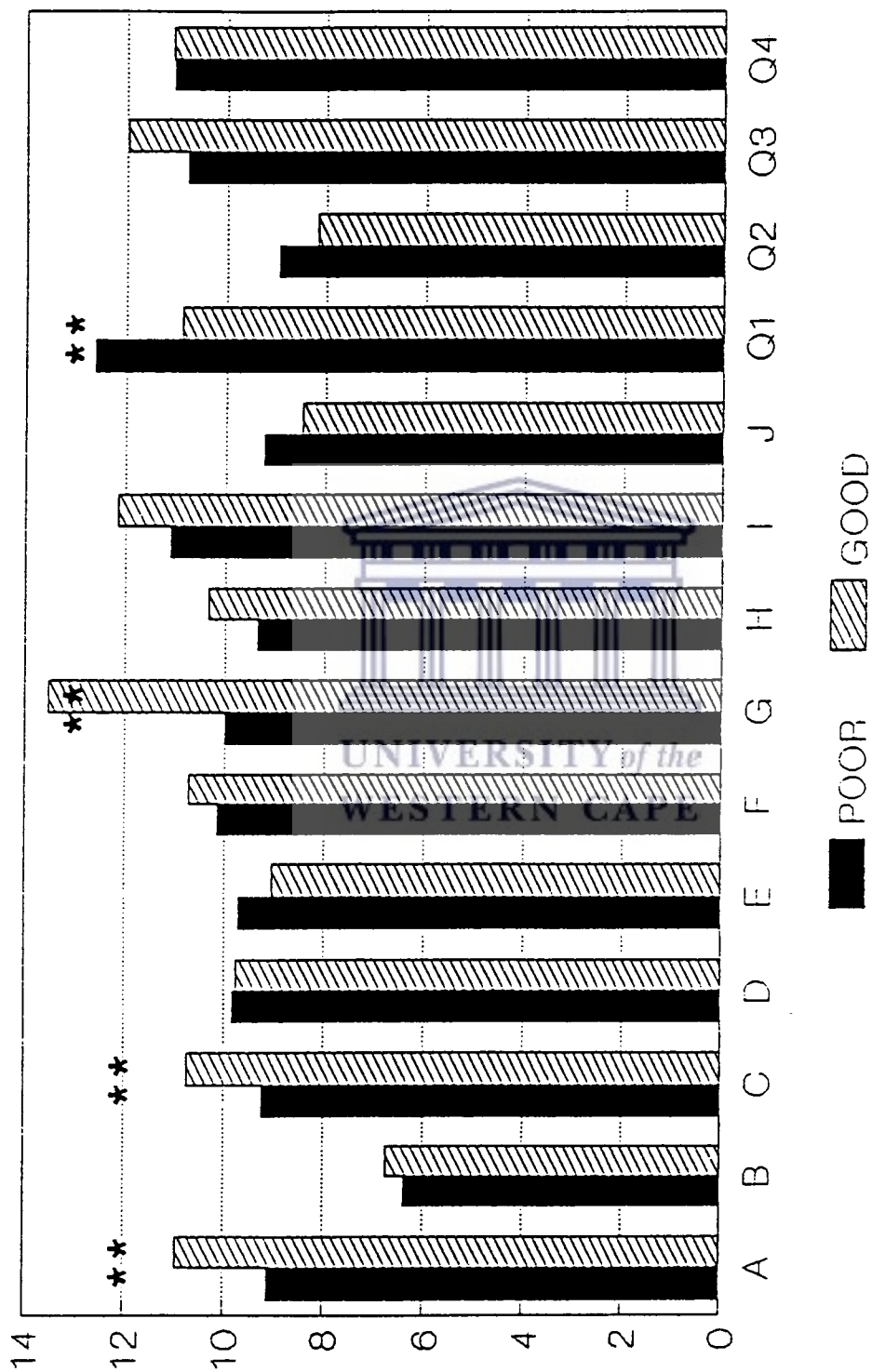
HOTELLING T<sup>2</sup>= SIGN.



# PROFILE POOR VS GOOD (PERS.)

## CUTPOINTS: MEDIAN

TABLE 5.4



HOTELLING  $T^2$  = SIGN.

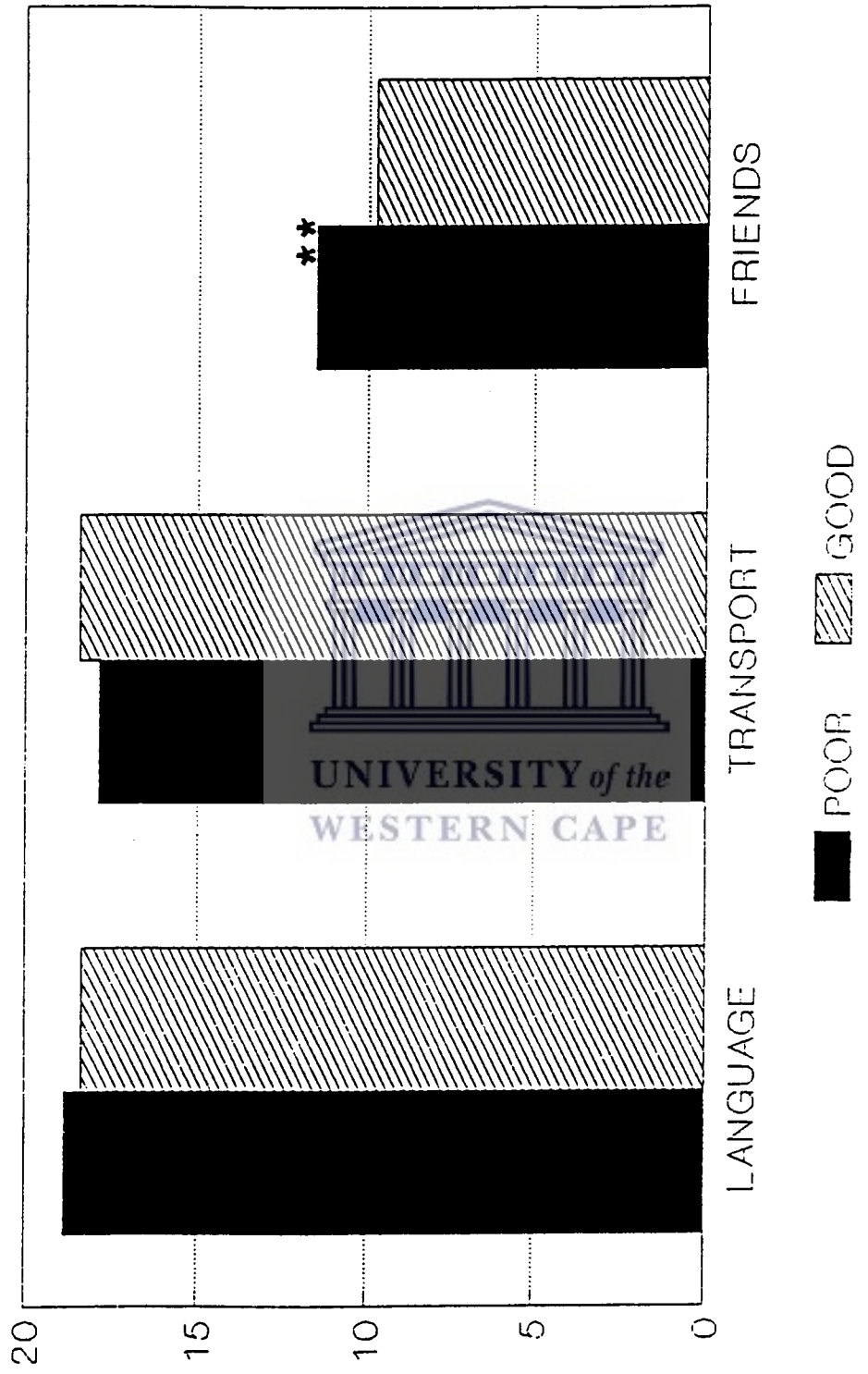
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# PROFILE POOR VS GOOD (DEMO)

## CUTPOINTS: MEDIAN

TABLE 5.5



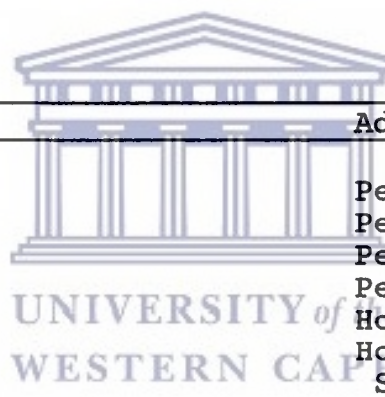
\*\*\*SIGN.

HOTELLING  $T^2$  = not sign.

of the HSPQ (reserved versus warmhearted, affected by feelings versus emotionally stable, expedient versus conscientious and self-assured versus apprehensive). Table 5.6 therefore represents the significant factors as well as the respective adjustment areas for these factors on the PHSF.

Table 5.6

SIGNIFICANT FACTORS



Factors	Adjustment Area
Self-confidence	Personal relations
Self-esteem	Personal relations
Nervousness	Personal relations
Health	Personal relations
Family influences	Home relations
Personal freedom	Home relations
Sociability - group	Social relations
Moral sense	Social relations
Reserved vs warmhearted	
Affected by feelings vs emotionally stable	
Expedient vs conscientious	
Self-assured vs apprehensive	

Although 'Friends', the last factor's, separate and pooled p-values are significant in Table 5.2 ( $p = 0.0182$  and  $p = 0.0169$ ) this factor can not be considered as the South African School Adjustment Questionnaire, as a whole was not significant ( $p = 0.1002$ ). Qualitative comments confirmed this as only 20 % of respondents actually provided comments.

When comments were provided they indicated apathy about these aspects. Table 5.7 presents some of the typical comments in response to the various questions. Typical comments are regarded as satisfactory for analysis of this kind (Miles & Huberman, 1984). The scarcity and quality of responses did not warrant further analysis.

TABLE 5.7  
TYPICAL RESPONSES TO QUALITATIVE QUESTIONS

Question	Response
2.1	'It is easy.'
	'I do not know.'
3.5	'I learn many things at school.'
	'That school is dirty.'
4.3	'I have friends at school.'
	'Because of the school.'
5.1	'To be studying.'
5.4	'Nothing.'

Note. For full questions refer to Appendix 1.

Other factors which were not significant are self-control, sociability - single, intelligence, phlegmatic versus excitable, submissive versus dominant, sober versus enthusiastic, shy versus adventurous, tough versus tender minded, zestful versus circumspect, group-dependent versus self-sufficient, uncontrolled versus controlled, relaxed versus tense, language and transport. These factors are represented in Table 5.8.

Table 5.8

NON-SIGNIFICANT FACTORS

Factor	Questionnaire
Self-control	PHSF
Sociability - single	PHSF
Intelligence	HSPQ
Phlegmatic vs excitable	HSPQ
Submissive vs dominant	HSPQ
Sober vs enthusiastic	HSPQ
Shy vs adventurous	HSPQ
Tough vs tender minded	HSPQ
Zestful vs circumspect	HSPQ
Group-dependent vs self-sufficient	HSPQ
Uncontrolled vs controlled	HSPQ
Relaxed vs tense	HSPQ
Language	SASAQ
Transport	SASAQ
Friends	SASAQ

Note. PHSF: Personal, Home, Social and Formal Relations Questionnaire; HSPQ: High School Personality Questionnaire; SASAQ: South African School Adjustment Questionnaire.

A combination of the two forms of analysis indicates which of the factors identified as being significantly different for weak and good adjustors also best predict high school adjustment. These factors are family influences, sociability - group, expedient/conscientious, self-esteem and moral sense. It is only the shy/adventurous factor on the High School Personality Questionnaire which is not represented.

These results suggest that some adolescents do struggle to adjust to a new environment when entering Standard six. Personal, home and social adjustment as well as certain

personality characteristics have been identified as significant factors determining whether an adolescent will make an effective adjustment to Standard six or not. These results as well as their implications will be discussed in Chapter 6. Recommendations and a critique of the present study will also be presented.



## CHAPTER SIX

### DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 6.1 INTRODUCTION

The results indicate that there are specific factors which affect an adolescent's adjustment to high school. The results suggest that high school adjustment is affected by personal adjustment, social adjustment and adjustment within the home. It does not appear to be affected by those factors measured by the South African School Adjustment Questionnaire - language, transport and friends.

This chapter will address each of the adjustment areas tested in this study. Various recommendations which may help to make Standard six adjustment to high school more effective will be proposed. These recommendations will focus specifically on implications for a psychoeducation programme and the contents of such a programme. Finally, a critique of the current study will be presented.

#### 6.2 PERSONAL ADJUSTMENT

Using the Hotelling's  $T^2$  analysis one of the components of the Personal, Home, Social and Formal Relations Questionnaire which is not indicated as significant is

'self-control'. This component measures 'the degree to which a person succeeds in controlling and channeling his emotions and needs in accordance with his principles and judgement' (Fouche & Grobbelaar, 1971, p. 7). An internal locus of control would be dependent on a relatively stable set of norms about which the adolescent has to decide. This is obviously very fluctuating in a society and educational system in transition. On the other hand, factors such as 'affected by feelings vs emotionally stable' as well as 'moral sense' may measure self-control more effectively and are represented amongst the significant factors.

Personal adjustment was measured in this study by the relevant components of the Personal, Home, Social and Formal Relations Questionnaire and the High School Personality Questionnaire. Fouche and Grobbelaar (1971) suggested that personal relations 'refers to the intra-personal relations which are of primary importance in adjustment' (p. 7). The factors that were significant on the Personal, Home, Social and Formal Relations Questionnaire are 'self-confidence', 'self-esteem', 'nervousness' and 'health'. These factors suggest that good adjustors are people who have confidence in themselves, are secure about their abilities and are not people who are particularly anxious and concerned about their behaviour or physical condition.

Using the High School Personality Questionnaire the factors which were identified as being significant in differentiating between good and bad adjustors are 'reserved vs warmhearted', 'affected by feelings vs emotionally stable', 'expedient vs conscientious' and 'self-assured vs apprehensive'. These factors combined with those of the PHSF give profiles for good and weak adjustors respectively.

Good adjustors therefore seem to be warm, easy-going people who are confident and secure about themselves and their abilities. They are able to face reality and take responsibility. They are aware of their own emotions and are able to deal with new people and situations in an emotionally mature and tolerant fashion. They take an interest in people and actively form groups. They are conscientious and persevering and unconcerned about adequacy. Madge and Du Toit (1981) stated that warmhearted people tend to be better social adjustors and that people that obtain high scores for conscientiousness show significant school achievement, interest in schoolwork and peers and popularity.

Poor adjustors seem to be people who spend more time alone, are more introspective and distrustful of others. They tend to be people who are easily upset or annoyed by changes, are self-indulgent and often undependable. They are often insecure, anxious or depressed. They are sensitive to



forming peer relationships. Adolescents also have to feel secure that they can return to the security of the family base when necessary and that they will be supported and comforted. They have to feel a sense of unity with other family members and that the family as a whole is united and that there are relatively good relationships among all family members (Scott & Scott, 1989). As adolescents move away from the family they need to feel supported in their actions and that they have a certain amount of personal freedom - that they are not too restricted by their parents (Ausubel et al., 1977; Scott & Scott, 1989).

Home relations is measured on the Personal, Home, Social and Formal Relations Questionnaire by the components 'family influences' and 'personal freedom'. Both of these components were found to be significant in this study. This suggests that adolescents who feel comfortable with their relationships at home, feel that they can approach their parents and will be supported, seem to carry this sense of security into their relationships at school.

Fouche and Grobbelaar (1971) suggested that 'family influences' among others, measures the influence of socioeconomic factors on the person's sense of dependence within the home. This confirms findings by Ainley et al. (1991) who found that lower socioeconomic status adversely affects adjustment. Although socioeconomic status was not

recorded or specifically investigated in this study, this suggests that adolescents from poor socioeconomic backgrounds may struggle to adjust adequately to school or at least that they are slightly disadvantaged when measuring high school adjustment. The effect of socioeconomic status on adjustment to high school in South Africa requires further research, particularly at present when the education system is changing in such a way as to allow children of lower socioeconomic status more access to high schools. Research done on parental employment suggested that this does not affect the academic, emotional, social or cognitive well-being of adolescents (Orthner, 1990). This suggests that parental employment or unemployment is not an important aspect of socioeconomic status.

  
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#### 6.4 SOCIAL ADJUSTMENT

Social adjustment is measured on the PHSF by the components 'sociability - group', 'sociability - single' and 'moral sense'. This adjustment area 'refers to the manner in which a person engages in harmonious and informal relations within the social environment' (Fouche & Grobbelaar, 1971, p. 7). The two components that were significant are 'sociability - group' and 'moral sense'. This correlates well with the profiles discussed under personal adjustment. It suggests that people who are more outgoing, participate actively in social group interaction and are more interested in people

and therefore accepted by others, tend to be better socially adjusted and therefore, adjust more effectively to school (Marais & Bornman, 1989). Included in this group are those adolescents who are more concerned about moral standards and rules and who have integrated and accepted society's and the school's norms.

Fouche and Grobbelaar (1971) describe 'sociability - single' as 'the degree to which a person has a need for sociable interaction with a specific person of the opposite sex' (p. 7). The fact that 'sociability - single' is not significant suggests that Standard six pupils are more concerned with their position within their peer group and personal issues than relationships with specific members of the opposite sex. This may be reflective of their stage of adolescent development in which children move away from their families towards the peer group in general (Ausubel et al., 1977; Capes, 1975) before developing individual relationships with members of the opposite sex.

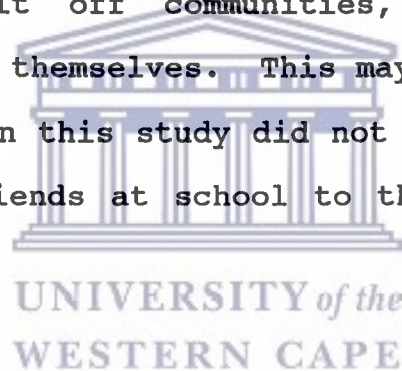
#### 6.5 FACTORS MEASURED BY THE SOUTH AFRICAN SCHOOL ADJUSTMENT QUESTIONNAIRE

The fact that the factors of the South African School Adjustment Questionnaire are not significant may be because the questionnaire was not in any way standardized or tested for reliability or validity. This is particularly important

as other research (Freer, 1991; Gaganakis, 1991) quoted in this study suggested that these factors would be significant.

#### 6.5.1 Friends

South Africa's history of apartheid has forced South Africans to live in a country where groups of individuals and amenities have been separate. A consequence of this reign of separation is that the majority of South Africans have learnt to split off communities, experiences and perhaps even parts of themselves. This may also be a reason why the adolescents in this study did not find it difficult to have different friends at school to those they have at home.



#### 6.5.2 Transport

It is hypothesized that those adolescents who had to travel long distances to get to school are the adolescents who have always had to travel long distances as amenities have traditionally not been available to them. As these adolescents are used to travelling long distances they may not consider it as something to which they must adjust. This may explain why it was not empirically indicated as significant.

### X 6.5.3 Language

The adolescents discussed above are generally the same adolescents who are being taught in a language other than their home language. They are also the ones who have had to learn a second language because their home language was not considered to be an official language. The fact that all schools that participated in this study used English as their language medium rather than Afrikaans, may also have affected the results. Afrikaans has been considered the language of the oppressor and pupils speaking an African language have fought for the right to be taught in English (Essop, 1992). Attending a school where they are taught in English and not their home language may, therefore, not be particularly difficult for the adolescents to adjust to.

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### 6.6 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The results of this study clearly show that many adolescents struggle to adjust adequately to entering high school. This adjustment may take place at a later time. I, however, feel that the sooner and the smoother this adjustment takes place, the better for the adolescent and the school system. This would then free the adolescent to concentrate on academic considerations as well as the important task of identity formation within a relatively secure and comfortable environment.

As has been stated earlier the school plays an important role as a socializing agent in an adolescent's life (Havighurst & Neugartin, 1967; Haynes, 1990). Not only do adolescents spend much time at school, the school is also an arena for the initiation of many of their social interactions. For this reason it is vitaly important that adolescents feel not only contained, but also supported by the school environment which includes principal, teachers and peers (Schwarzwald et al., 1988; Sharan & Rich, 1984). Ausubel et al. (1977) <sup>in his paper</sup> feel that the school should address problems of adjustment as well as issues of education.

#### 6.6.1 Psychoeducational implications

The school provides an ideal setting in which to introduce a psychoeducation programme which addresses the factors which have been highlighted by this study. The programme could be designed in such a way that each of the significant factors are addressed. The programme could consist of nine modules: self awareness, communication skills, identifying emotions, family relationships, peer pressure, assertiveness training, goal setting, anger management and adolescent moral dilemmas - sexual decisions and alcohol and drug abuse. The significant factors 'self-confidence' and 'self-esteem' would be covered by the modules on self awareness and identifying emotions, 'nervousness' would be covered by the module assertiveness training, 'reserved versus warmhearted' would be covered by communication and listening skills,

'affected by feelings versus emotionally stable' would be covered by identifying emotions and anger management, 'expedient versus conscientious' by goal setting, 'self-assured versus apprehensive' by assertiveness training, 'health' by self-awareness and general education about sex, drugs and alcohol, 'family influences' by family relationships and communication skills, 'personal freedom' by family relationships, peer pressure and moral issues; 'sociability - group' by communication skills and peer pressure; and 'moral sense' would be covered by the modules on peer pressure and moral issues. The significant factors and a psychoeducation programme's possible content are presented in Table 6.1.

This could be a forum from which adolescents could learn to express themselves and could promote and encourage discussion between adolescents and their peers as well as adolescents and staff. It may also indirectly improve relationships within families. Berkovitz, Carr and Anderson (1983) found in a study on desegregation that all students benefitted from group discussions and improvements in their communication skills.



Table 6.1

## CONTENTS OF A PSYCHOEDUCATION PROGRAMME

SIGNIFICANT FACTORS	PROGRAMME CONTENT
Self-confidence	Self awareness (strengths/weaknesses), Identifying emotions, Image/identity awareness
Self-esteem	
Nervousness	Assertiveness training
Reserved vs warmhearted	Communication/listening skills
Affected by feelings vs emotionally stable	Identifying emotions, anger management
Expedient vs conscientious	Goal setting
Self-assured vs apprehensive	Assertiveness training
Health	Sex education (physiological changes), drugs, alcohol
Family influences	Family relationships, communication skills
Personal freedom	Family vs peer group, ethical dilemmas
Sociability - group	Communication skills, peer pressure
Moral sense	Ethical decisions (sex, drugs, alcohol), peer pressure



Introducing such a programme at the beginning of Standard six would lay the foundations for well adjusted high school pupils. Berkovitz et al. (1983, p. 474) stated

Young people in junior high schools can benefit from assistance for emotional needs possibly more than any other age group. This is so especially because this age (11 - 14) involves setting a foundation for future attitudes to learning, peer relating, appreciation of self and others, attending school and use of violent or peaceful expression of aggression.

The programme in itself would improve communications and hopefully promote an open and secure classroom and school environment. Discussions generated by such a programme may also help teachers to identify pupils who may have specific problems that need individual attention. These problems can then be identified and 'treated' early in the adolescent's high school career.

The introduction of a programme designed to result in improvement in the adolescent system would necessarily result in changes in the systems within the adolescent's context (Grobler, 1993; Sundberg et al., 1983; Watzlawick et al., 1968). Not only would such a programme promote more effective adjustment in adolescents and their systems and suprasystems, it would also have longer term benefits in

that it would equip adolescents with a method of approaching problems later in their lives. This could play a powerful role in the government's desire to empower people through an education system using principles of lifelong learning 'to participate effectively in all the processes of democratic society, economic activity, cultural expression, and community life' (Government Gazette, No. 15974, 23 September 1994, Notice 1030 of 1994, p. 10).

#### 6.7 CRITIQUE OF STUDY

One criticism of this study is the fact that the South African School Adjustment Questionnaire was not standardized and no analyses of reliability or validity were done. The Personal, Home, Social and Formal Relations Questionnaire and the High School Personality Questionnaire also have certain limitations in terms of their standardization. This is a continuous and frustrating problem in clinical practice and when doing research in South Africa.

Another important criticism of this study is that it is a very open study with many variables uncontrolled for. These variables include gender, home language, socioeconomic status and the type and atmosphere of the primary schools from which the Standard six pupil has come. This study was purposefully broad in order to make it as relevant as possible. The sample is, however, relatively small and

specific results, therefore, cannot be generalized to other populations. As stated in the introduction to this thesis, this research should be considered a pilot study. The results, of which, indicated that adolescents do struggle to adjust to high school and that the research was, therefore, useful. It is felt that this type of investigation should be done on a national level in order to facilitate the adolescents adjustment to high school and the country's democratic process in which communication and interaction is encouraged.



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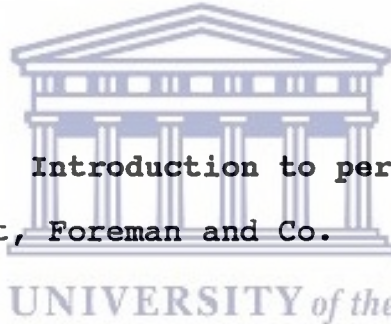
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# Appendix 1

## BIOGRAPHICAL DATA AND QUALITATIVE QUESTIONNAIRE

### 1. Biographical data:

- 1.1 Name/number:.....
- 1.2 age:.....
- 1.3 school:.....
- 1.4 home address:.....

### 2. Language:

#### 2.1 How much is language a problem for you at school?

- 1 no prob
- 2
- 3
- 4 sometimes
- 5
- 6
- 7 big prob

2.1.1 If 1-3, why?.....

2.1.2 If 5-6 why?.....

2.2 Is the language in which you are taught at present the same as your home language? NO YES

2.3 Is the language in which you are taught at present the same as the language in which you were taught in Std 5? NO YES

2.4 My teachers do not understand me because I speak a different language to them.

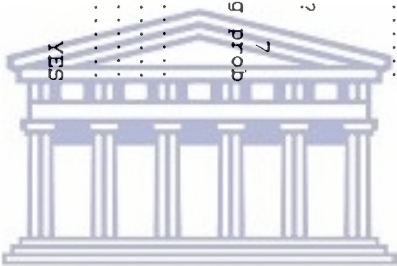
- 1 always
- 2
- 3
- 4 sometimes
- 5
- 6
- 7 never

2.5 My real friends are those who speak the same language as I do.

- 7 never
- 6
- 5
- 4 sometimes
- 3
- 2
- 1 always

2.6 I understand the language in which I am now taught.

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4 50%
- 5
- 6
- 7 0%



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2.7 I have difficulty expressing myself in a language other than my home language.

- 1 always
- 2
- 3
- 4 sometimes
- 5
- 6
- 7 never

### 3. Transport:

3.1 To what extent is the distance from home to school a problem for you?

- 1 no problem
- 2
- 3
- 4 medium
- 5
- 6 big prob.
- 7

3.2 How far do you live from school?

- 7 0-1km
- 6 1-3km
- 5 3-5km
- 4 5-7km
- 3 7-10km
- 2 10-15km
- 1 +15km

3.3 How do you come to school?

- 1 foot
- 2 bicycle
- 3 train
- 4 bus
- 5 taxi
- 6 parents
- 7 lift

3.4 How long does it take you to get to school?

- 1 0-5m
- 2 5-10m
- 3 10-20m
- 4 20-30m
- 5 30m-1hr
- 6 1-2hrs
- 7 +2hrs

3.5 I would prefer to go to school closer to home.

- 7 not at all
- 6
- 5
- 4 sometimes
- 3
- 2 definitely
- 1

3.5.1 If 1-3, why?.....

3.5.2 If 5-7, why?.....

3.6 My real friends are those who live in the same area as I do.

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4 50%
- 5
- 6
- 7 0%

3.6.1 If 1-3, why? .....  
3.6.2 If 5-7, why? .....

4. Friendships:

4.1 Most of my friends from home attend this school.  
7 6 5 4 3 2  
0% 50% 100%

4.2 How easy was it for you to make friends at this school?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7  
easy medium difficult

4.3 How popular are you with your classmates?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7  
very pop. medium unpop.

4.3.1 Why do you think you are unpopular/popular?  
.....

5. Miscellaneous:

5.1 I would prefer to be at another school.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7  
not at all sometimes definitely

5.1.1 If 1-3, why? .....

5.1.2 If 5-7, why? .....

5.2 How difficult was it for you to change from primary school to high school?  
1 2 3 4 5 6 7  
very diff medium easy

5.3 How important are your other problems in relation to your school work?  
7 6 5 4 3 2 1  
less NB same more NB

5.4 The most difficult thing for me about starting Std 6 was:  
.....

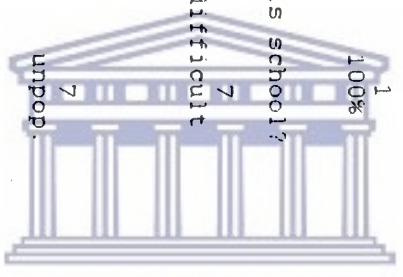
5.5 The easiest thing for me about starting Std 6 was:  
.....

5.6 Things I would like to have changed about starting Std 6 are:  
.....

5.7 Do you think an orientation programme to introduce you to high school and to the people in your class would have helped you cope better with Std 6?  
NO YES

5.7.1 If yes, why? .....

5.7.2 If no, why? .....



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