



**STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF FACTORS THAT CONTRIBUTE TO DROP-OUTS
AT A SELECTED FET COLLEGE IN THE WESTERN CAPE**

By

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C Strumpher

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates students' perception of factors that contributed to dropouts at a selected FET college. Despite receiving government funding, drop-out continues to increase. An understanding of perceived factors influencing drop-out rate would help to develop and deploy retention strategy for FET college students. Previous studies on drop-out shows that students that have dropped out are more likely to be unemployed and living in poverty compared to those students that have successfully completed their programmes. In 2006 the Minister of Labour declared that FET Colleges in South Africa have a major role to play in assisting youth in gaining skills and thereby halving poverty and the unemployment rate by the year 2014. This declaration highlights the importance of FET colleges and amplifies the need for a strategy to maximise students' retention and minimise drop-out rate.

This study utilise a random sampling method to select respondents. Data were collected using a questionnaire with a quantitative approach and designed in a Likert scale format. The study was limited to students at West Coast FET College's campuses namely: Atlantis, Vredenburg, Malmesbury and Citrusdal. One hundred and fifty students were used as respondents and data were gathered from the questionnaires. The findings derived from the data revealed that multiple factors are perceived to be the cause of high student dropout. These factors are lack of finances for transport and accommodation especially for the first years and social context of individual learners.

The study concludes that although finance and social context of individual learner are perceived drop-out factors, other personal attributes like learners' attitude to learning and commitment also plays a role in students drop-out and drop-out intention.

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Definition of key words

Attrition: do not re-enrol in the consecutive terms

Drop-outs: do not attend classes on a regular basis and eventually do not return to the college

Dropping out: to quit a course or school without receiving a certificate or diploma

Dropout rate: calculation of how many students in a given time complete their studies and how many drop out.

Retention: the process of retaining students who enrol for a qualification and remain at the institution until their studies is completed for that specific course.

Completion: persistence until all subjects of the programme is passed and done.

FET College: Further Education and Training

Students: learners that have enrolled on a full time basis to attend the college until the completion of the programme

Skills gap: phrase used to describe the difference between the skills the employer wants as a requirement and those that are available from workers seeking employment

ETDP (SETA): Education and Training Practices Sector Education and Authority

NSFAS: National Student Financial Aid

CHAPTER ONE

1.1 Introduction and background

This study investigates students' perception of factors that contributed to and drop-out rates among National Certificate (Vocational) [NC (V)] students at a public Further Education and Training (FET) college in the Western Cape. With the merger according to Young and Gamble, (2006) of 150 Technical colleges to form 50 FET colleges, a new challenge of social and financial nature becomes evident. These challenges soon come to fore with noticeable drop-out rate of college students. Although the FET campuses are spread throughout South Africa: urban, semi-urban and deep rural areas, this study collect and analyse data from college students in FET located at the West Coast area of the Western Cape. To avoid competition amongst the FET colleges, the Department of Education recommended that each campus specialise in programmes according to the environmental factors in the area.

Further Education and Training colleges are aimed mainly at the youth to offer training programmes that are relevant to industry needs. The purpose of this training is to bridge the skills gap that exists in South Africa, thereby reducing unemployment and contributing to the country's economy. Naledi Pandor (2008) said " In Africa we face two huge challenges: the first is to be able to re-skill the existing workforce to meet new workplace needs and the second is to educate and train young people to meet new and high level skills demands. It is these challenges that place technical and vocational education at the centre of the skills development agency". Cooper (2011) states that there are too many unemployed school leavers and job seekers that is anxious to obtain employment.

The Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) offers funding to pay salaries and sustain public FET colleges. The National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS) offers bursaries to students that are faced with financial constraints regarding their studies. According to the Council of Higher Education (2001) large numbers of students drop out of the NC (V) system each year without completing their qualifications, especially students who had enrolled for the first time. Jama, Mapesela & Beylefeld (2008) mentioned that in a statement on Enrolment Planning, the former South African Minister of Education stated that 50% of the students registered at a FET college in 2000 had dropped out by 2003. Drop-out rates of

colleges vary from country to country and from province to province but it is still a problem that needs to be addressed by not only college administrators and parents but also by policy makers.

1.2 Background to the Study

Prior to the merging of the technical colleges' students were liable for their own class fees and text books – no financial aid was available. The National Plan for FET Colleges in South Africa (2009) states that students enrolling for a state-funded programme qualifies for a subsidy from the government of 80% and the difference of 20% is payable by the student or from a bursary obtained from National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS). The introduction of NSFAS to the FET colleges improved access to education especially to the previously disadvantaged communities. In his Budget Speech the Minister of Higher Education and Training, Blade Nzimande (2015) said that in addition to improve quality, breadth and relevance of the education in FET colleges, government has recognised the need to increase access entry into the colleges especially for youth coming from poor families.

Therefore in 2009 the bursary allocation for the FET colleges was R300-million and it was immediately increased to R318-million in 2010. From 2010 to 2011 bursary allocation money increased from R318-million to R1.235-billion in 2011. According to Blade Nzimande it is the single largest increase ever allowed in government funding of FET colleges. In 2012 the bursary allocation money again increased to R1.7-billion, thus making education for poor students free to study at FET colleges. Bursaries available cover all college fees such as accommodation, text books and transport costs. To be eligible for bursary money certain criteria has to be met. The availability of bursaries make it possible that students can choose any programme they want to study and there is no restriction as to the campus that they want to attend, be it close to their homes or not.

The National Certificate (Vocational) programmes are three-year full-time courses. Minimum entry is a Grade 9 qualification and upon completion of the course it is equivalent to a Grade 12 qualification. According to the Educational and Labour Relation Council (2007:8) NC (V) programmes consist of 21 subjects inclusive of the three fundamental subjects: Life Orientation; Mathematics or Mathematical Literacy and English. These subjects are for the three years and it is designed to give learners both theory and practical tuition in a simulated work environment or placed in a real workplace for experiential learning for a given period of time.

Despite all the government funding and transformation processes regarding FET colleges, the concern still lies ahead of the escalating college drop-out rates in South Africa, in general and Westcoast College in particular as being one of the colleges. In a newspaper article dated the 15th January 2012, Du Plessis (2012: 1) quoted “the majority of the 50 FET colleges in the country are mainly weak institutions because at their present capacity they can neither absorb significantly larger numbers of students nor achieve acceptable level of throughput”. Du Plessis also mentions that the drop-out rate in colleges is estimated to range between 13% and 25% and about 65% of students are unable to find workplace experience, which is required to complete certain diplomas.

According to the presentation done by Westcoast College to the Portfolio Committee (2014), it shows that the number of students in Level 2 that wrote exams for the end of 2013 totalled 1258 and only 750 students passed, being a total of 59.62% pass rate. The number of students in Level 2 passing the examination will determine the number of students that will go onto the next level. In January 2013 the Level 3 intake of students was 846 and of the total amount only 723 students wrote the final examination, making a difference of 15% not writing. The intake of the Level 4’s (being their last year), in January 2013 was 697 and for the final examination only 644 students wrote the exam, making a difference of 8% not writing.

The information below depicts an overview of the throughput rates at FET colleges per province as from 2007 to 2009 (Cosser, Kraak and Winnaar, 2011)

Table 1: A national overview of throughput rates per province at FET colleges in South Africa between 2007 and 2009

PROVINCE	No.of Colleges	2007 %	2008 %	2009 %	Throughput rate 2007-2009 %
Eastern Cape	8	15	20	24	23 average
Free State	4	18	19	21	19 average
Gauteng	8	56	38	41	50 average
Kwazulu Natal	9	24	26	31	28 average
Limpopo	7	24	29	44	32 average
Mpumalanga	3	40	42	54	45 average
Northern	2	Missing	Missing	Missing	Missing data

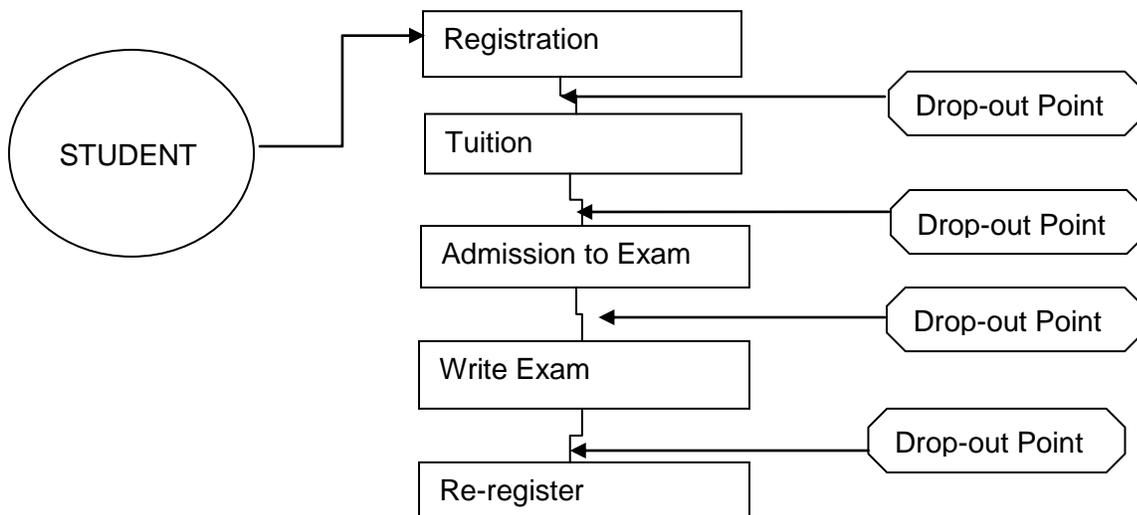
Cape		data	data	data	
North West	3	35	36	40	38 average
Western Cape	6	25	23	23	20 average
NATIONAL	50	29	28	34	30 average

Key to Table 1 – the throughput rate is the number of students that passed as a percentage of the number of students enrolled across all levels of all NC (V) programmes

The table above shows that the throughput rates for the national figures were 29% for 2007; 28% for 2008 and 34% for 2009 equalling an average of 30% throughput of students. The Western Cape throughputs were much lower: 25% for 2007; 23% for 2008 and 23% for 2009 equalling an average of 20% throughput of students. The results shows that of the students that had registered at the FET colleges in the Western Cape 80% had dropped out or students had failed and did not complete the qualification. Research on student retention by Lau (2003) indicates that most students drop out during their first year.

Gouws and Van Der Merwe (2004) refer to drop-out as formal cancellations, withdrawals and failure in examinations, which could be classified as forced drop-out or non-completion. For every drop-out there is cost factor linked to it for example, setting and printing of examination papers and thereafter setting up of supplementary examination question papers for those that had failed subjects. Studies show that the further the student advances in the study cycle the higher the cost risk for the institution. Gouws (2004) identifies critical drop-out points in the study cycle.

Figure 1: Student Study Cycle Drop-out points



Drop-out Point 1: students who formally cancel after registration

Drop-out Point 2: students who registered and started with the tuition phase but withdrew during the study cycle before admission to the examination

Drop-out Point 3: students who comply with the requirements for a valid year mark and are admitted to the examination but withdraw and do not write the examination

Drop-out Point 4: students who fail the examination

Martinez (1995) said that the level of non-completion in higher education was declared to be too high and was condemned as a substantial waste of national resources.

1.3 Statement of Research Problem

Despite high rate of dropout in FET colleges, limited information exists to support the dropout phenomenon. This study examines students' perception of factors contributing to dropout of selected FET colleges to develop a student retention strategy. Moxley, et al (2001:4) observed dropout trends and noted that retention of students in further education and training colleges is challenged by social economic factors. Understanding student's perception of these factors can help the development and implementation of retention strategies to improve throughput and reduce dropouts.

Background to the research problem

According to the Report prepared by Papier (2009:17), 26% of students that had enrolled for the year 2008 for level 2 had dropped out during their first year of study. It was also noted in the same report that the problem of poor performance and retention is also widespread across the nine provinces in South Africa. College students are made up of two fractions: those who passed the National Senior Certificate but were unable to enter Higher Education because of low matric marks and those students who either failed matric or dropped out of school in Grade 10 or 11. Taylor (2011:47) states that the foundation skills in language and mathematics are likely to be the lowest for students that have failed matric or dropped out of school. There are various contributing factors for low throughput rates and to students dropping out of colleges. Amongst these factors are:-

- Students coming from low socio-economic backgrounds, receiving poor marks and having to repeat a grade (DeReidder, 1991:45)
- Financial instability as referred by Tinto (1982:690) “finances have a greater impact upon dropout early in the educational career”
- Poor language development (Slavin, 1994:437)
- Students do not have sufficient time to practice the application of the theory they have acquired (Gewer, 2013:8)
- Traumatic experiences relating to sexual harassment, parental neglect, HIV/AIDS (Malaney, 2000)

The interest in doing this research is the concern of financial implications that FET colleges are experiencing because learners are not completing their three year NC (V) courses. The research is to identify students’ perception of factors for dropping out so that recommendations could be made to reduce the high drop-out rate prevalent at the Westcoast FET College.

In South Africa nearly one in every five school-leavers with a matric certificate enrolls at a higher education institution. Through research it was noted that 700 000 students in South Africa were studying at 23 different higher education institutions (Higher Education South Africa, 2008). Higher educational institutions such as FET colleges are faced with many challenges such as: language policies; issues of globalisation; transformation policies; increased competition; changes in government funding and emphasis on technology.

1.4 Significance of the study

This study seeks to understanding factors that contribute to high drop-out rates through students’ perception. It is hoped that this understanding would be used to develop retention strategy to reduce dropout of FET students. Chapman (1981) states that focus should be on significant persons and college efforts to communicate with students. According to Drew (1998:26-27) we should invest in the skills of all young people 14-18years old in full time education and equip them for the demands of working life in a rapidly changing highly

technological society. Higher educational institutions should be open to all races, ethnic and gender groups. Bursaries are granted to students provided they meet the access criteria and government funding formula should also be looked at. Referring to the speech of the Provincial Minister of Education, Mr Dugmore, 18 August 2004, “we are going to grow the Cape as a learning home for all, we need partners”.

1.5 Research questions

The topic of this study is “Students perception of factors that contribute to drop-outs” determining whether students complete their studies or whether they drop-out before the completion of their three year course. This study was based on the following research questions which act as guidelines as to what was being studied:

Research Question 1:

What factors influenced student’s choice of institution?

Research Question 2:

What factors influenced students’ choice of a specific campus relating to distance?

Research Question 3:

What factors influence the students’ decision to complete the three years of study?

Answers to the above research questions will to some extent highlight the current state of success of FET colleges with regards to the retention policy in particular.

1.6 The research purpose statement

This study aims to discover the extent to which perception of factors, as identified, are true. FET colleges and campuses are situated in different geographical areas with different environmental factors and therefore offer different specialised programmes according to the resources that they have. All FET campuses have its own historical background and are different from one another and therefore have its own unique characteristics. One of the biggest challenges facing the education sector is the high rate of drop-outs and failure of students, even though they have minimal financial constraints regarding educational fees.

The researcher's interest was motivated by a desire to identify what the factors in students' choice of study area were, what factors in students' decision to complete or drop-out were and what the factors students' considered when choosing a campus. Analysing data to determine the factors why students prefer studying at specific campuses would help to position colleges for growth and discovering student preferences would assist with student retention at the FET colleges.

A wrong choice of college and campus or even the wrong choice of programme made at the beginning of registration will inevitably lead to students' dropping out. The designated curriculum of the programme and how it is delivered, respect that students get and support that is offered to students are important aspects in making students stay at the campus. The shortage of managerial skills is a hurdle that needs to be overcome to enhance unemployment in South Africa.

1.7 Research objectives

The primary aim of the research is to investigate, to report and to interpret the possible factors contributing to the continuous high drop-out and high failure rates among students at Westcoast FET College.

Research Objective 1:

To identify the factors that influence student's choice of a FET college.

Research Objective 2:

To identify factors that influence students' choice of a specific campus of a FET college, relating to distance.

Research Objective 3:

To identify factors that influences the students' decision to complete their three years of study at the FET college.

1.8 Research methodology and design

A case study methodology was considered to be the most suitable for this study. According to Yin (2009) a case study methodology is a type of research inquiry that examines a real life contemporary phenomenon and it relies on multiple sources of evidence. According to Stake (2000) in a case study the researcher gathers data on the nature of the case, the historical background of the case, the location, the economical political and legal climate, as well as other cases through which the case is recognised and the individuals who can inform on the case.

A questionnaire was constructed using a 5-point interval Likert scale. The questions were structured so that it was easy to understand and that a true answer would be reflected. The definition of the Likert Scale according to the Business Dictionary is that it is a method of ascribing quantitative value to qualitative data to make it amenable to statistical analysis. According to Mcleod (2008) a likert-type scale assumes that the strength or intensity of experience is linear and makes the assumption that attitudes can be measured. Respondents may be offered a choice of five to seven or even nine pre-coded responses with the neutral point being neither agree nor disagree with a particular statement. The Likert scale used on the questionnaire ranges from 1 – 5 representing: 1 – strongly disagree; 2 – disagree; 3 – neutral; 4 – agree and 5 – strongly agree.

1.8.1 Primary data sources

The intention of the study was to identify and to reach conclusions regarding perceived factors that influence students dropping out of college. For the purpose of this study primary data was collected. Research studies have shown that there are two types of data namely primary and secondary data:

Primary data – is first hand information collected, the most original data in character and have not undergone any sort of statistical treatment.

Secondary data – second hand information which was already collected by someone / organization for some purpose and are available for present studies, they are not pure in character.

The participants who were chosen as respondents were randomly selected and they were spread between the 5 campuses of the Westcoast College. The researcher collected primary data from students that had dropped out of college as well as students still attending the college. Only 113 questionnaires were returned to the researcher.

1.8.2 The Research instrument and data collection techniques

The researcher requested permission from college management to issue out questionnaires and to visit campus sites on certain days. Telephonic permission was sought from lecturers from the other campuses to assist in ensuring that students were available and to help distribute the questionnaires to the students and collect it again a day later. Researcher was based at the Atlantis campus and a request was asked that lecturers at the other campuses collect and return the questionnaires back to researcher, as soon as a driver was available. Personal visits were done in Du Noon and Vredenburg areas where students that had dropped out were given the questionnaires to fill in. Ex-students (drop-outs) telephone numbers were given by current-attending students / friends in the college – a meeting was arranged and ex-students were visited at a central point, on specific dates and time-slots. The questionnaire consisted of thirteen questions – the first five questions were based on biographical information:

1. Name of College and campus
2. Gender – female or male
3. Age group : 16 -20; 21 -25; 26 -30 and older than 30
4. Marital status: Single; Married; Divorced
5. Dependents: None; 1x; 2x; 3x or more

The rest of the questions were based on perceptions:

6. Questions regarding enrolment
7. Factors influencing choice of campus
8. Final decision on choice of college was made by:
9. Induction /introduction to course

10. Negative academic factors that you have experienced
11. Positive academic factors that you have experienced
12. Social factors that you have experienced
13. Financial factors that you have experienced

1.8.3 Research population

According to Hassan (2015) the definition of research population is a study of a group of well-defined collection of individuals or objects taken from the general population. All individuals within a certain population usually have a common, binding characteristic or trait. A research population is generally a large collection of individuals or objects that is the main focus of a scientific query. It is for the benefit of the population that researches are done. Due to large sizes of populations researcher cannot test every individual in the population because it is too expensive and time consuming, therefore researchers rely on sampling techniques. The targeted population for this study was the students at the five campuses of Westcoast College.

1.8.4 The research sample

Sampling is when the researcher selects individuals from the population, from which to collect data. The sample size for this study purpose was set at 150 ($n = 150$) respondents, being students of the five various campuses, namely Atlantis, Malmesbury, Vredenburg, Citrusdal and Vredendal campus. The students that participated in responding to the questionnaire- some were currently attending the college while the other students were those that had dropped-out of college and were at home or working. The students currently attending college were only for those students who were in level 4, irrespective of what programme they were currently doing. Students that had dropped out of college (no time-lapse between registration and drop-out were taken into consideration) were contacted – the friends/family who were currently still at the college gave some of the names of the students that had dropped out, to the researcher. A meeting-place, date and time was set for the ex-students to meet.

1.8.4.1 The sampling procedure

Hassan (2015) states that there are two main types of sampling: probability and non-probability sampling. Probability sampling involves randomization – is when all members of the sampling frame have an equal opportunity of being selected for the study. Variations of probability sampling as stated by Hassan (2015) are:

- Random sampling – every member has an equal chance
- Stratified sampling – population divided into sub-groups
- Systematic sampling – uses a specific system to select members such as every 10th person on an alphabetical list
- Cluster random sampling – divides the population into clusters
- Multi-stage random sampling – a combination of one or more of the above methods

Non-probability sampling does not rely on the use of randomization techniques to select members. Different types of non-probability sampling are as follows:

- Convenience or accidental sampling – members are selected based on availability
- Purposive sampling – members of a particular group are purposely sought after
- Modal instance sampling – members are the most common within a defined group
- Expert sampling – members considered to be of high quality are chosen for participation

To obtain a suitable sample for this study, non-probability type of sampling was used and the method was the purposive sampling. Non-probability type of sampling was used because it can be regarded as the only sampling method that makes possible representative sampling design and purposive sampling method was chosen because the researcher was able to include participants according to the relevant criteria based on the research questions. This type of sampling was used because the researcher wanted first-hand information from participants and individuals about perceived factors for dropping out or wanting to drop-out of college. Structured questionnaires were issued to 150 respondents to complete and return to the researcher. The respondents were chosen from students that were currently still at the college and those that had dropped out of college and were still at home or working. No age limit of the student was attached to the questionnaire.

1.8.5 Research data analysis and presentations

According to Neuman (2006) data analysis is a technique for gathering and analysing the content of the text and it refers to words, meanings, ideas, themes or any message that can be communicated. Data collected were structured to address the main questions for this study which are the perceived factors students have for dropping out of college. According to Struwig and Stead (2001) there is a course of action that needs to take place for data analysing. For this study purposes questionnaires were categorised in order to identify themes.

Likert-type scales were used in this questionnaire. According to Allen and Seaman (2007) statisticians generally group data together from the questionnaires into a hierarchy of four levels of measurement:

- 1) Nominal data: the weakest level of measurement representing categories without numerical representation
- 2) Ordinal data: data in which an ordering or ranking of responses is possible but no measuring of distance is possible
- 3) Interval data: generally integer data in which ordering and distance measurements are possible
- 4) Ratio data: data in which meaningful ordering, distance, decimals and fractions between variables are possible.

Allen and Seaman (2007) states that data analyses using nominal, interval or ratio data are generally straightforward and transparent. Likert scales range from a group of categories, namely least to most – asking people to indicate how much do they agree or disagree, approve or disapprove, or believe to be true or false. According to Struwig and Stead (2001) data analysis methods should enable the researcher to organise and bring meaning to the gathered data and the course of action should be outlined.

For this study primary data was collected and analysed. The difference between primary and secondary data is that primary data are first hand information which is directly collected from a source, whereas secondary data have been obtained from other sources and are not pure in character.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Overview

Lots of literature can be found on student retention globally, but according to Wedekind (2008) only a relatively small group of researchers have done research on technical and vocational education in South Africa. He also states that further education and training colleges is a growing field but the research is relatively underdeveloped as it is dependent on funding.

FET Colleges are attracting students from a wide range of academic backgrounds but most of them do not complete their studies, according to the Department of Education (DHET, 2013). Despite the differing student backgrounds the trend is that students who enrol at the FET colleges are there because of circumstances - not being able to obtain their National Senior Certificate, unable to find a job or are unable to carry on to Higher Education (Gewe, 2010). According to the Minutes of Meeting that was chaired by Mr M Fransman on the 9th September 2009, it stated that FET colleges should be for the unemployed matriculants, unemployed young people with Grades 10 and 11 as well as for adults seeking specialist's schools. Attention must be paid to the job-market to ensure that students were equipped with the relevant skills and that lecturers were properly capacitated.

The Department of Education is responsible for the transformation and funding of FET colleges and The Department of Labour is responsible for identifying the skill needs of the economy and also for the funding of skills programmes and learnerships, through SETAs (Powell, 2013: 68). Magome, et al, (2013) states that many students enrol, pursuing a vocational qualification that will hopefully lead them to employment. The curriculum offered at the FET institutions distinguishes two features namely guiding learners towards higher education and towards employment (Young, 2006). According to Cooper (2010: 23) no matter how academically prepared students are for college, even well-constructed educational plans can be significantly altered by both unexpected life events and on-going personal problems.

According to Cloete and Wissink (2006:83) learner drop-outs creates underdeveloped, unskilled, illiterate and poorly educated citizens that are generally much younger, less mature and

unemployed adults. In the Western Cape, Papier (2009) did a study on possible reasons for learner failures and drop-outs, whereby she made clear distinctions between learner-related issues, programme-related issues, college-related issues and external systematic challenges that could have possibly played a role.

The youth of South Africa is increasingly being affected by poverty, the Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV), Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (AIDS), drug abuse and crime. The socio-economic development of South Africa is adversely affected by the learner drop-outs. Youth, instead of developing themselves academically, cannot contribute to the development of the community and the society at large because of their involvement with drugs and crime. Various educators tend to attribute learner dropout to the laziness of the student.

2.2 History of FET colleges

In South Africa, after 1994 the new government took over the education and training system which consisted of 152 colleges and were governed, managed and funded in different ways. In addition, these colleges also served different population groups and their location was determined by apartheid planning. In 1995, the first step in the transformation of vocational education was the establishment of a single National Qualifications Framework. Thereafter, the next step was to appoint the National Committee on Further Education. In 1998 the Further Education and Training Act was passed and it was used to guide and govern the development of the FET colleges' during the period of 1998 to 2006. According to the Government Gazette (2008) the FET Act of 1998 set out a broad and long-term national framework for the transformation of curricula, learning and teaching, qualifications, funding, quality assurance and new institutional arrangements.

All Further Educational and Training colleges have to register themselves through the Department of Higher Education except for private providers who offer short skill programmes. The Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET, 2011) is in possession of historical data that was received from the private FET sectors dating back to 1982. According to Akoojee (2005) the private FET sectors showed a massive growth in provider establishment of 70% from 1992 – 2001 as compared with 14% in the previous decade. Private FET colleges continued growth of 98% in a 10year period and a further 21% growth in a single year. See table below:

TABLE 2: Growth of the private FET Colleges

Growth of Private FET institutions	Number of providers established	Growth by %
Before 1982	35	
1982 – 1986	10	71
1987 – 1991	20	100
1992 – 1996	70	70
1997 – 2001	84	
TOTAL	219	
2011	434	98
2012	527	21

The years 2011 and 2012 is based on information from the Department of Higher Education and Training, Further Education and Training Colleges' Register for June 2011 and July 2012. Akoojee (2005) mentions that these enrolments were recorded in the absence of the current regulatory processes at the time. DHET made registration compulsory in 2005 so prior to that college's growth remained unconstrained by accreditation and registration processes.

2.3 Establishment

Provincial Departments of Education gave proposals on how to re-organize the teaching and training sector and in the year 2000 a National Landscape Task Team was established. The recommendations of the Task Team were published in July 2001 and the document recommended the establishment of only 50 public FET colleges to that of the 152 technical colleges. The document also recommended that the colleges be declared public colleges with new names and established councils. Further Education and Training colleges in South Africa derive its mandate from the Department of Higher Education and Training that is charged with the responsibility of implementing the legal framework, regulating the provision of qualifications. Constituting this legal Framework are the following:

- Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, Act, 1996 (Act No.108 of 1996)
- Further Education and Training Colleges Act, 2006 (Act No. 16 of 2006)

- Regulations for the Registration of Private Further Education and Training Colleges, 2007

According to the Constitution everyone has the right to establish and maintain at their own expense an independent educational institution only if:

- Do not discriminate on the basis of race
- are registered with the state/government
- maintain standards that are not inferior to standards at comparable public educational institutions

(DHET Registration of private FET colleges, booklet, 2009)

According to the research done by the ETDP SETA (2012) there seems to be a perception in the private sector that the South African's Education and Training Policies are being used increasingly in favour of the public FET colleges. Government resources and skills levy monies are being diverted to the public FET colleges and in the process it is compromising private institutions of education and training.

2.4 Qualification and Curriculum

In the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (Act 108 of 1996), Section 29(1), it states that everyone has the right to basic education including further education, through which the State must make progressively available and accessible through reasonable measures. Everyone has the right to receive their education in their official language or language of their choice in public educational institutions. According to Ntlatleng (2012) the details of the curriculum as stated in the green paper:

- 1) curriculum should be aimed primarily at students who have completed grade nine
- 2) curriculum should be aimed primarily at students who have completed grade 12, have additional entrance requirements for specific programmes

- 3) two types of curriculum programmes should be developed – an extended one aimed at grade nine pupils and a shorter one for those who have grade twelve certificates

In March 2006, the qualification and curriculum policy framework for the Department of Education programmes was gazetted. The National Certificate (Vocational) at Levels 2, 3 and 4 is equivalent to Grades 10, 11 and 12. Each level is for the duration of one year. In 2010, according to the Department of Higher Education and Training there were 13 programmes available at the various FET colleges throughout South Africa namely :-

- Civil Engineering Construction
- Electrical Infrastructure Construction
- Engineering & Related Design.
- Mechatronics
- Finance, economics & accounting
- Generic Management
- Hospitality
- IT & Computer Science
- Education & Development
- Marketing
- Office Administration
- Primary Agriculture
- Tourism

Learners are required to take a total of 7 subjects. The structure and rules of the combinations of subjects for NC (V) is applicable at every level of study i.e. level 2, level 3 and level 4.

Subjects - 3 compulsory subjects: -

- First additional – this must be one of the official languages in South Africa and should be offered as language of teaching and learning
- Mathematics or Mathematics Literacy
- Life Orientation

4 Vocational (core) subjects - Subjects must have been approved by the sub-field organization of the National Qualification Framework. The subject combinations in each of the programmes provide a high degree of specialization for a particular programme. There are 4 compulsory

vocational subjects, but the 4th subject may be chosen from any field to provide the student with high levels of specialization. On successful completion of each level of study a learner will be issued with a certificate.

2.5 Enrolments

Further Education and Training colleges can be referred to as post school education and training systems and the policy thereof is to offer quality education and training for adults and youth, whether employed or unemployed, within the public or the private sector, (Hammond 2010). FET colleges are intended for all learners from the ages of 16 years to mature adults. For entry into the National Certificate (Vocational) at NQF Level 2, requirements are:

- Year-end school report for grades 11 or 12 certificate or
- NQF Level 1 qualification
- Approved bridging programme designed for the specific purpose to access NQF Level 2
- Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) assessment to meet the basic requirements for access to NQF Level 2
- Grade 9 and grade 10 year-end school reports will be considered

Kruss, Aphane, Visser, Wildschut and Arends (2010) show data on the demographic profile of students enrolled as at the first quarter of the academic year 2010: in the Western Cape shows 52% Coloured and 36% African enrolments. Northlink College in Cape Town showed a 20% enrolments of white learners. Table 3 presents the figures of students enrolled at the FET colleges in Cape Town from 2007 – 2009

Table 3: The enrolment figures as in the Cape Town region of FET colleges

Name of College	Year - 2007	Year - 2008	Year - 2009
Boland	6 579	6 337	6 6681
Cape Town	11 024	11 598	10 832
False Bay	5 464	4 399	4 621
Northlink	11 212	11835	13 328

West Coast	2 457	2 313	3 204
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Source: HSRC database 2010

Referring to the above table an approximate annual intake of 39 000 students enrolled in the Cape Town region every year.

According to The National Plan for FET, gazetted in December 2008, the government has set out a proposed national enrolment figure (Table 3.1) and graph (Table 3.2) – below is the proposed increase of intake of students to the Further Education and Training Colleges.

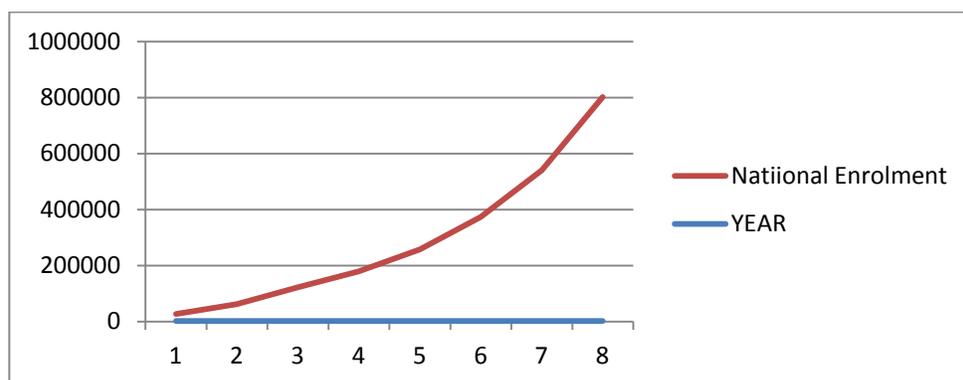
Table 3.1: National Enrolment Figures

YEAR	NATIONAL ENROLMENT
2007	25000
2008	60000
2009	120000
2010	177000
2011	256000
2012	371000
2013	538000
2014	800000

Source: National plan for FET Colleges

The Minister of Higher Education and Training proposes the increase of new students at FET colleges in the future years. Huge amounts of money are invested into FET colleges to make the system work and thereby not to deprive any student from furthering their education.

Graph 1: Proposed Expansion of Student Intake



Source: National Plan for FET Colleges

Referring to the above – the Minister of Higher Education and Training held a meeting with various stakeholders on the 20th January 2015 where he mentioned that FET colleges are meeting their targets of intake of students but he placed his concern as to the staggering number of drop-outs from students at FET colleges. Students enrol but there is no throughput to complete the programmes. To improve the retention of students at FET colleges the Minister announced that the department would be designing a new lecturer qualification which will be aimed at lecturers who have the knowledge but are struggling to communicate learning material effectively. Another new venture will be a new kind of institution that will be introduced in the year 2015, called the ‘Community College’ and it will offer short and medium term skills training. No academic record is required when applying for this course. Blade Nzimande says that he wants to open the doors to higher education for everyone therefore the government department wants to cater for the specific needs of the community.

2.6 Financing of Students

As stated in the National Norms and Standards for Funding FET Colleges (2009), learners attending public FET colleges are to receive government bursaries. Each student enrolled in a state-funded programme must be subsidised by the government at 80% of the total programme cost and the difference of 20% of the total programme cost must be recovered by the student. See Table below for the costs of state-funded NC (V) programmes for FET colleges in South Africa, for the year 2010, South Africa, Department of Education (2010).

Table 4: Costs Of State-funded NC (V) Programmes for the year 2010

PROGRAMMES	Total Cost	80%Government Subsidy	20%College Fees
Civil Engineering Construction	R35 175.00	R28 140.00	R7 035.00
Electrical Infrastructure Construction	R34 658.00	R27 726.00	R6 932.00
Engineering & Related design	R46 978.00	R37 582.00	R9 396.00
Mechatronics	R47 678.00	R38 142.00	R9 536.00
Finance, Economics & Accounting	R24 224.00	R19 379.00	R4 845.00
Generic Management	R25 283.00	R20 226.00	R5 057.00
Hospitality	R41 726.00	R33 381.00	R8 345.00
IT & computer Science	R33 175.00	R26 540.00	R6 635.00
Education & Development	R24 226.00	R19 381.00	R4 845.00
Marketing	R21 791.00	R17 433.00	R4 358.00
Office Administration	R21 707.00	R17 366.00	R4 341.00
Primary Agriculture	R57 949.00	R46 359.00	R11 590.00
Tourism	R32 960.00	R26 368.00	R6 592.00
Safety in Society	R22 665.00	R18 132.00	R4 533.00

Source: Guidelines for the Administration and Management of the DHET FET College Bursary Scheme -2010

The government in South Africa established the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS) which is set to financially aid students who cannot afford the 20% of the tuition fees (South Africa, Department of Education and Training 2006). Ishengoma (2002:5) explains that NSFAS seeks to impact on South Africa's racially skewed undergraduate and graduate populations by providing sustainable financial aid. For students to be eligible for bursary loans certain steps need to be followed and certain criteria are required. According to Kruss et al.

(2010) the financial year 2008/2009 saw the total budget for the Western Cape's six FET colleges at R367 million.

According to the Department of Education enrolment figures at FET colleges has grown from 427 435 in 2011 to 657 690 in 2012, being an increase of 54%. The increase in enrolment complimented an increase for funding to FET colleges from R3.8 billion in 2010 to R4.8 billion in 2012 and the amount is expected still to grow. Likewise the bursaries allocated to students at FET colleges also increased from R318 million in 2010 to R1.75billion in 2012.

2.7 Theoretical Models for Student Retention

Student retention is one of the most researched areas in higher education, globally. Many researched articles, books, journals and edited volumes can be found relating to this study topic. According to Tinto (2006) many institutions have been able to make substantial improvements in the rate at which their students' graduate and sadly other institutions have not, Tinto also states that although many research has been done on retention there is still much that is unknown and has to be explored. He says that despite many years of research more needs to be done to translate the research done into more theoretical effective practice.

2.7.1: Student Integration Model - by Vincent Tinto

This is the most commonly referred to model in the student retention literature and was first offered in a literature review, (Tinto, 1975). Tinto formulated his path model based on the work of Emile Durkheim's suicide theory (1951). The French philosopher and socialist, Emile Durkheim, had found that some people committed suicide because they lacked the values of the social system in which they participated and because they were not supported by friends.

Tinto's (1975) model posits that students enter the college with certain commitments, both to staying at the college and to finishing college. The interactional theory of student departure is the paradigm theory within its field – an explanatory, predictive model of the drop-out process which contains core concepts of academic and social integration. The model is longitudinal and considers drop-out behaviour as a result of the student's interaction with the academic and social systems of the college. According to Tinto individual characteristics of a student have an impact in the departure process, such as:

- Individual attributes, which can be race, gender, ability
- Family background which includes parental education level, schooling experiences and academic background for example the school grades

Considering the above factors it can be said that it will determine the level of initial commitment that an individual has to an institution and to their goal of graduation. Students enter an academic system that is characterised by grade performance and intellectual development, which together lead to academic integration – the greater the level of integration, the greater the likelihood the student will persist in the college. They enter a social system where peer group and faculty interactions lead to social integration. Academic and social integration work together to influence on-going goal and institutional commitment which later leads to the decision to remain or to leave the college. According to Tinto (1987) his integration model suggested that retention is related to the students' ability and actions to become an involved actor in his or her institution. There is a need for a match between the institutional environment and the student. A good match leads to higher student integration into the academic and social domains of the college and thus a greater probability of persistence, while a poor match will result in students dropping out.

Bean (1990, 171) agrees with Tinto on the necessity of integration as he states that “retention rates are related to the interaction between the students attending the college and the characteristics of the college”. Bean (1990) however deviates from Tinto's model and stresses that students' beliefs which subsequently shape their attitudes are the predictor of their persistence.

2.7.2: Student Attrition Model – by John Bean

A second theoretical model for student retention is from John Bean published in the 1980s. His model is originally based on turnover in work organizations. According to Bean (1990) students stay in college when they feel integrated into the academic and social communities of the institution. He found empirical evidence linking behaviours with attitudes and intentions and therefore certain behaviours show when a student's commitment to college is beginning to waver. Bean's attrition model includes a set of five facets:-

- routinization – the idea that student life becomes routine

- instrumental communication- how well an institution distributes information about student life
- participation in classroom decisions
- integration
- distributive justice- whether rewards are consistent with effort expended.

According to Koen (2007:74) more research results are required from retrospective surveys, detailed qualitative studies and longitudinal panel studies. Bean and Tinto differ from academic and social integration and that of full time and part-time undergraduate students. For them the study schedules of part-time students do not allow for high levels of social involvement at higher institutions, which means that their success or failure is more likely to relate to academic reasons.

2.8 Factors Affecting Student Retention at FET colleges

Retention of students plays a vital role for institutions as they can financially benefit from government if they retain their students. According to a report done by the State University (2009) it states that retaining a student is fundamental to the ability of an institution to carry out its mission and that a high rate of attrition (the opposite of retention) is not only a fiscal problem for schools, but a symbolic failure of an institution to achieve its purpose. Many studies have been done on factors affecting student retention at colleges and some of the analytic reasons students give for dropping out are:

1. *Academic Matters*- these include courses offered, positive interaction- in and out of the class, absenteeism, campus resources (library, computers, and sport's facility). According to Ramist (1981:3) this category of students includes poor grades, boredom with courses, change in career goals and ability to take desired programmes. Research studies have shown that if an individual is taught predominantly and later is said to use a method that they find hard to follow, then they would be more likely to quit their course. These reasons are given most often by men.
2. *Financial Difficulties*- this category of students is mostly women with poor high school records and temporary drop-outs. Ramist (1981:4) states that reports of financial difficulties could be partially due to the fact that financial reasons are more "socially acceptable".

According to Burger (2011) students using public FET colleges in South Africa have no reason to have financial difficulties as far as tuition fees is concerned. Astin (1975: 47) poses the question “should financial aid be administered through the institutions or should it be available directly to the students?”

3. *Personal Considerations*- this category of students include students with emotional problems, problems of adjusting to college life, marriage, pregnancy, family responsibilities and illnesses. Counsellors indicate that socio-emotional problems are the most important reasons for attrition (Ramist 1981).
4. *Dissatisfaction with the College*- many students are dissatisfied with the operations, regulations, lecturers, social academic environment and give this category as a reason to drop out (Astin 1975).
5. *Motivational Problems*-this category of students include uncertainty about educational and occupational goals, lack of interest in studies and unwillingness to study. It is cited particularly by academic drop-outs and by women with poor high school records. Spaulding (1992:3) describes motivated students as students who tend not to disrupt the instructional environment; they infrequently need to be disciplined; they listen when listening is appropriate because they are interested in what is being said; they discuss when discussion is appropriate because they want to share their thoughts with others.
6. *College related factors*-lack of recreational facilities, computer internet access, and comfortable spaces for after-hours study, appropriated selection and recruitment practices and the learning of language and teaching.
7. *family structures* – there are four structures that need to be looked at:
 - Single parents or both parents’ role in upbringing
 - Changes of structure e.g. divorcing over the course of students’ study at the college
 - Family income and resources
 - parental monitoring and parents participation in the progress of student at college
8. *Non-registration of first choice of institution* – according to studies it has been noted that students’ cannot exercise registration at their first choice of institution for reasons such as:

- Applying too late at universities
- lack of finances
- lack of knowledge
- lack of points
- lack of access to resources
- poor marks obtained from high school

In a meeting on the 20th September 2011, members of the Department of Higher Education and representatives of FET colleges, Mr Dikobo, pointed out, with regard to the issue of career guidance, students that were not accepted into university still had the option of entering an FET college.

9. *Student related factors* – engagement of activities outside the college setting. Most often they are associated with negative student behavior such as drug abuse, violent actions and/or aggressive behaviors. Research has found that students that dropped out were earlier noted to have excessive high levels of aggressiveness and low academic performance - a direct correlation between drop-outs and student behavior.

A study by Brindis and Philleben (1998:54) noted three distinct indicators of dropouts:

- Students' who associated themselves with other drop-outs had a higher incidence of dropping out
- Students who had low socio-economic status
- Early parenthood

The above three factors point to the negative cultural influences of peer groups and poverty, while early parenthood is present as a common factor in all socio-economic levels.

2.9 Student demographic factors that affect retention

2.9.1 Age

Ramist (1981:8) states that according to Kohen et al.(1978), Gable (1957) and Bragg (1956) research studies have shown that attrition rates are similar for young and old students. Kruss et al, (2010) state that the age profile of enrolments have shifted towards a younger age group. Table 6 below presents agegroup enrolments for FET colleges in the Western Cape Region for 2009 – May 2010.

Table 5 : Age-group of learners enrolled at FET colleges in the Western Cape

Colleges	Age 15-19	Age 20-24	Age 25-29	Age 30-34	Age 35-40	Above 40
Boland	1497	2747	587	392	395	454
Cape Town	1841	3768	915	457	404	417
False Bay	1336	1163	464	208	160	233
Northlink	2404	4718	1364	653	571	548
West Coast	1363	1420	326	128	66	60

Source: HSRC database 2010

The human Science Research Council Report (2007) states that lecturers have indicated that they are not trained to deal with disciplinary and academic development aspects of young students.

2.9.2 GENDER

Ramist (1981:8) explains that studies conclude that there are no drop-out differences between the sexes, that males drop out more or that females drop out more – five factors explain these conflicting results:-

- men are likely to drop out during their undergraduate years, but are likely to return and eventually graduate, therefore for the first year of study there is a high dropout rate for males
- women in four-year college programmes are more likely to transfer to another college (Timmons1978)
- in the last 10years the number of women entering higher education has increased rapidly, since women entrants used to be a more selective group, older studies that did not control for academic ability would have shown relatively lower female dropout rates than newer studies
- studies that focus only on voluntary withdrawals show women with relatively higher dropout rates than studies that do not distinguish between voluntary and involuntary withdrawals
- there are large differences between the sexes at different institutions, for example women are more likely to drop out when the ratio of men to women is high (Astin 1975).

According to Neild & Balfanz (2006) dropping out is a process that begins well before high school and students exhibit identifiable warning signs before they drop-out. They also state that students at-risk portray the following demographic characteristics:

- Being male
- Coming from low-income family
- Being members of racial or ethnic minority group
- Being older than average student in the class

Students at-risk portray the following performance characteristics:

- Poor attendance in class
- Failed mathematics and/or English in high school
- Receiving poor marks in the core subjects

2.9.3 Study Habits

According to Astin (1975) students with poor study habits are more likely to drop out than those who spend more time per week studying, they are more likely to stay. He also analysed two results:

- 1) students admitting to “careless mistakes on tests” were more likely to persist
- 2) students who “kept my desk or study neat” or who “carefully went over diagrams” tended to drop out - perhaps neatness means doing little or no homework.

Students that are highly involved at colleges are those that spend much energy on studying, participate actively in student organizations, spend time on campus and interact frequently with faculty members, whereas students that neglect their studies spend little time on campus and abstain from extracurricular activities, are the ones most likely to drop out from college (Astin 1975).

In an article dated 28th October 2007 Moeketsi Letseka, the senior researcher who conducted the study, noted that about 70% of students said that they had no siblings with university experience which suggests that they are first-generation college or university students in their families. This has an impact on their studies as most of them are not motivated to study after hours. A student that was interviewed said “In my family no one ever attained a degree in college or university level and even for me it looks impossible, but I am going to try”.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3. Introduction

This chapter is about the research methods and design that was used and how the research process unfolded. The Business Dictionary defines 'research methodology' as the process used to collect information and data for the purpose of making decisions. The researcher outlines the research approach, the research strategy, the ethical considerations and the research methods of data collection.

3.1 Research Questions

The topic of this study refers to students' perceptions of factors for dropping out of FET colleges, using Westcoast College as a case study. Three main questions were posed as the factors needed to be identified so as to improve on retention rates in the future.

Question 1 – What factors influenced student's choice of institution?

Question 2 – What factors influenced students' choice of a specific campus relating to distance?

Question 3 – What factors influenced the students' decision to complete the three years of study?

3.2 Objectives of the Research

The objective of this study is to collect the data and interpret the possible factors contributing to the continuous drop-out and high failure rates of students at the Westcoast FET College.

The three main objectives are:

- To identify the factors that influence student's choice of a FET college.

- To identify factors that influenced students' choice of a specific campus relating to distance.
- To identify the factors that influenced students' to remain at the college and complete their three years of study

3.3 Research Design

Quantitative method was used to collect data by means of a questionnaire. Quantitative research is concerned with the collection and analysis of data in a numeric form. It tends to emphasize relatively large-scale and representative sets of data and is often presented or perceived as being about the gathering of facts (Blaxter, Hughes, Tight, 1997:6).

3.4 Questionnaires

Questionnaires are the preferred type of data collection for this research purpose. Erwee (1994:59) says that questionnaires are the most common data collection technique which requires that the questions be asked exactly the same wording and in exactly the same sequence for all respondents. One set of questionnaire will be constructed with 13 questions on it, using a 5-point Likert scale. An advantage of constructing a questionnaire over interviews is that they are a relatively quick way of exploring the opinions of a large number of people, (Cowan 1990:60). Another reason is that information can be readily checked for its validity on the basis of non-verbal cues by the respondent (Erwee 1994:60). A disadvantage of questionnaires is that it usually contains less information than interviews because the probing of explanations and clarifications is not there (Adams 2004:17). Fink (1995) identifies four types of questionnaires namely self-administered questionnaires; interviews; structured record reviews and structured observations.

For the purpose of this data collection a self-administered structured questionnaire will be constructed. According to Bless et al (2009) self-administered questionnaires can be used without direct personal contact with the respondent.

Advantages of self-administered questionnaires are that:-

- A structured question format is drawn up
- Information can be more readily checked for its validity

- Questions will be standardized
- questions have been considered as enough knowledge is known about the study topic
- Least expensive means of gathering data
- Written questionnaires eliminates responses to be bias
- Sufficient time to consider answers before responding
- Simultaneously a large sample of the target population can be reached
- Requires little training for the researcher

Disadvantages of self-administered questionnaires are:-

- Deliberately providing incorrect information
- Potential problem exists in the interpretation of the responses
- Can be costly way to collect data from individual respondents
- Researcher not available to explain unclear questions
- Respondents can be few if some cannot read or write

3.5 Sample

Kerlinger (1986) says that sampling means taking any portion of a population or universe as representative of that population or universe. Arkavia and Lane (1983:27) explains that the term “universe” refers to all potential subjects who possess the attributes in which the researcher is interested and the term “population” on the other hand is a term that sets boundaries on the study units - it refers to individuals in the universe who possess specific characteristics.

West Coast FET College comprises of five campuses namely: - Atlantis, Vredenburg, Vredendal, Citrusdal and Malmesbury. Malmesbury is the central campus from where all administration work is done. The total student population registered for 2011, is 3 181 students and the total lecturer population for 2011 is 120 lecturers, according to the Statistics of Student Enrolment of

West Coast College, 2011. According to The Human Science Research Database (2010) student enrolment for the year 2010 at West Coast College was 3363 students.

The Breakdown of students' per level enrolment for 2011:-

- Level 2 students = 1 996
- Level 3 students = 673
- Level 4 students = 512

Breakdown of students per campus:-

Atlantis – 1 036; Citrusdal – 406; Malmesbury – 471; Vredenburg – 653; Vredendal - 615

Table 6: Breakdown of Students per NCV Programme 2011

NCV Programmes	Number of Students
Engineering and Related Design	1 234
Office Administration	1 069
Management	297
Education and Development	423
Hospitality	157

Source: West Coast Newsletter – March 2011

The sampling design for this population will be single-stage sampling. According to Creswell (2003:156) a single-stage sampling procedure is one in which the researcher has access to names in the population and can sample the people (or other elements) directly. Selection process of the sampling will take place using purposive random sampling. Purposive sampling is when each individual in the population has an equal probability of being selected, Creswell (2003:156).

3.5.1 Sample – students

The sample chosen is 150 students of the population of registered students for the year 2012 / 2013 - they should complete their programme by the end of year 2014 / 2015. Current students have to renew their registration every year to be eligible to start a new level. The Breakdown of existing students' per level enrolment for 2012 was: - Level 2 = 1930; Level 3 = 732; Level 4 = 518. A percentage of these students currently still at the college while others that have dropped out and am at home, will be used as a sample, totalling 150 students. Students will be randomly selected according to registration as per the different NCV Programmes.

3.6 Instrumentation

The survey instrument used to collect data in this research study is a questionnaire. This questionnaire is designed specifically for this project. The questions used are self-administered questions.

3.6.1 Survey Administration

The survey is cross-sectional: data will be collected at one point in time. A total of 150 questionnaires will be distributed to a sample population of 150 students at FET West Coast College. Students are the respondents to this research and the purpose of the questionnaires is to access their views and attitudes on factors affecting drop outs. The questionnaires used were in the form of hard copies. Atlantis campus was treated as the main campus from where all the questionnaires were distributed. Lecturers at Atlantis campus were informed face-to-face about the research and was asked to collect questionnaires from the respondents, on behalf of the researcher. A time limit of one week was given to complete and collect all questionnaires. Lecturers at the other campuses (Vredenburg, Vredendal, Malmesbury and Citrusdal) were telephonically informed about the research. Questionnaires were sent to respective lecturers, collected from respondents after a week and returned to researcher in Atlantis. Names and addresses of students that had dropped out of college were given to researcher and were included in the sample - areas of residence included Du Noon and Vredenburg.

3.7 Data Analysis

Data tabulation is the first step in the process whereby raw data are converted into the “list of required information”, Struwig and Stead (2001:150). They also mention that:-

- Firstly data has to be edited and encoded
- Place data into categories to facilitate their tabulation and interpretation
- Categories should deal satisfactorily with the different dimensions of the problem
- Categories should not overlap and should cover all possible answers
- Encode individual responses
- Type data onto a computer file
- Use Word Processor, a spreadsheet program or a database program or

3.9 Ethical Considerations

In the study of this research ethical consideration will be administered at all times:-

- No plagiarising the work of others
- No misleading or deceiving of respondents
- Permission will be requested from West Coast FET College to do research on “drop-out / retention”
- Offer to give report and feed-back to the college on research design
- Responses on questionnaires may remain anonymous
- Will state to respondents why the research is necessary
- Can guarantee confidentiality
- Informed consent of all respondents
- Will respect the diversity of the different cultures

3.10 Limitations of the Research

This study will focus on West Coast FET College, in the Western Cape Province only. The student sample will be limited to those students who had registered in the year 2012 / 2013 and the same students who had to re-register for the year 2013, 2014 and 2015. The student sample will be for level 4 students currently still attending and those that had dropped out of the college.

3.11 TIMEFRAME

The timeframe of this research is to complete it as soon as possible so that all data received can be analysed and the results thereof be given to the various FET colleges as a benefit tool to retain students, for the immediate future.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS OF THE FINDINGS

4 Introduction

This chapter presents the results of the study of student's perception of factors that contribute to dropping-out of college. Research findings and data collected will be analysed through the questionnaires. According to Struwig and Stead (2001) data analysis methods should enable the researcher to organise and bring meaning to the gathered data. The collected data should give insight into the perceived factors contributing to NC (V) students dropping out of college. There are three main questions in this research study:

- What factors influenced student's choice of institution?
- What factors influenced students' choice of a specific campus relating to distance?
- What factors influence the students' decision to complete the three years of study?

The case study was based on the FET College in the West Coast area. The total number of questionnaires sent out to respondents was 150, but only 113 were returned. Some students at the various campuses forgot to return the questionnaires. The data was collected from the various participants and the questions stated are categorised and analysed according to the quantitative findings. A 5-point Likert scale was used (1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neutral, 4 = agree, 5 = strongly agree). The results of the findings will be supplemented by a literature control.

4.1 FINDINGS

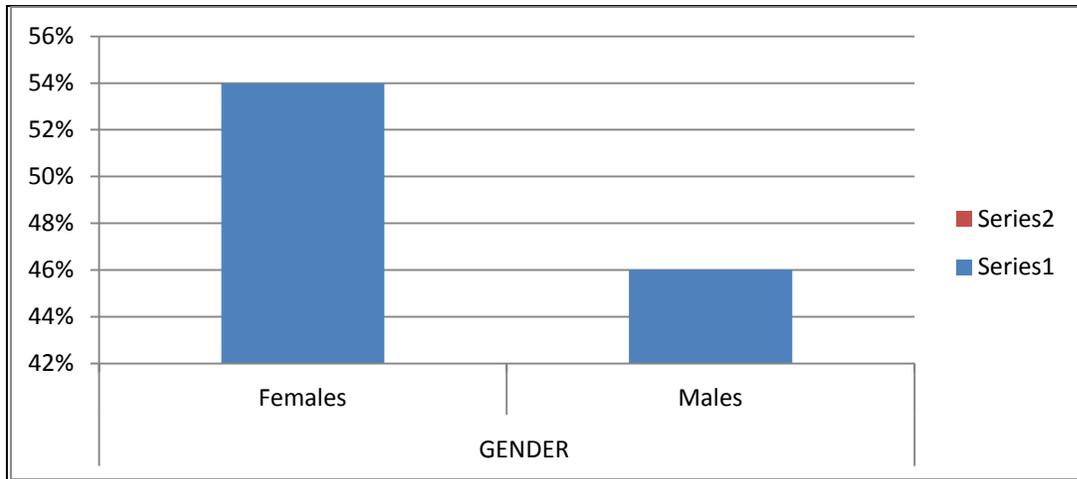
The total number of respondents who participated in this study totalled an amount of 113. Findings of the data collected from the questionnaires will be analysed and discussed.

4.1.1 Biographic details

Question 1 of the questionnaire refers to the name of the campus the respondent was or is still currently attending.

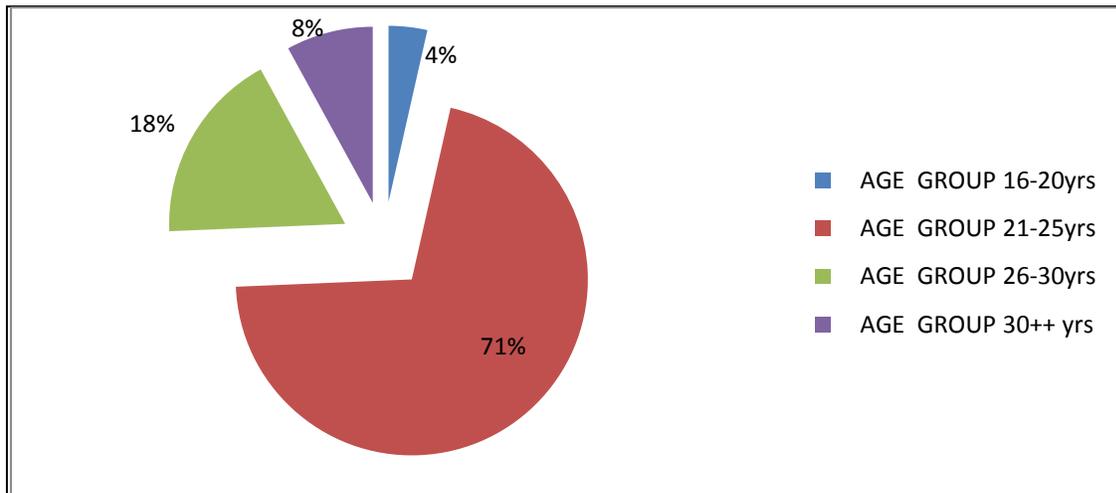
Question 2, 3, 4 and 5 refers to the biographical information of the respondent .

Graph 2: Gender of the respondents



The respondents to this questionnaire were 54% females whereas 46% were males.

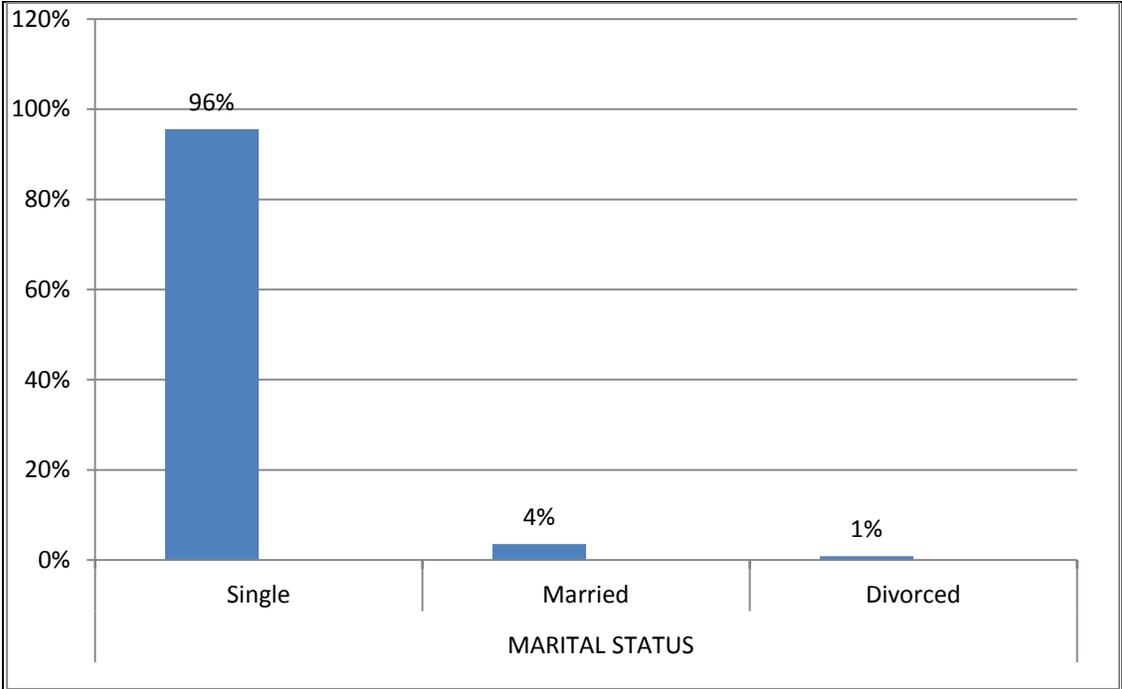
Graph 3: Age Group of the respondents.



Referring to the findings the majority of intake of students is between the ages of 21-25years that is 71%. 4% are between the ages of 16-20years which shows that students that had registered are direct school-leavers. The 18% of respondents could be students that had stayed

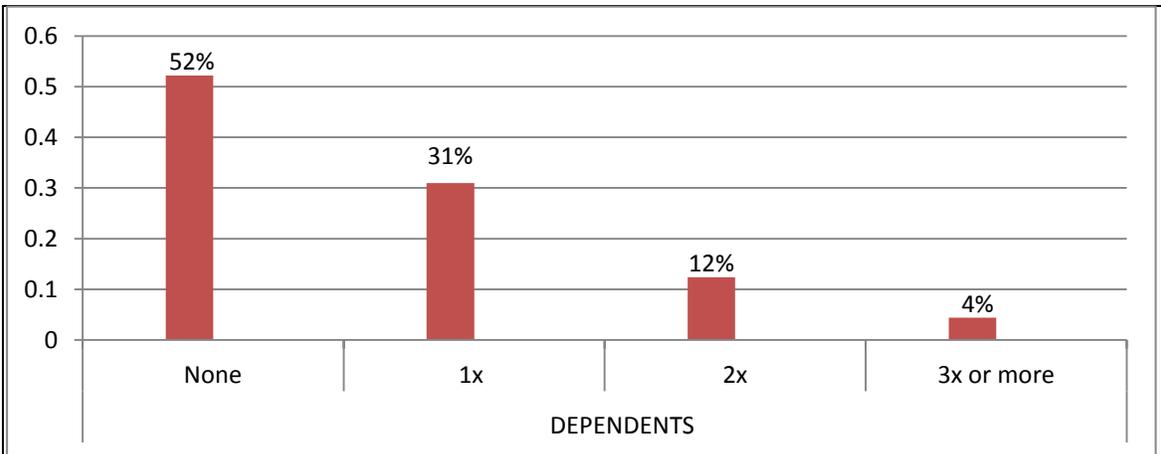
at home or had been working before making the choice of studying further. 8% of the respondents are between the ages of 30++ years.

Graph 4: Marital Status of respondents



The findings from the questionnaire show that the majority of students registering at Westcoast FET College are single persons (96%). According to the findings only 4% of the respondents are married and 1% of them are divorced.

Graph 5: Dependents (referring to siblings)



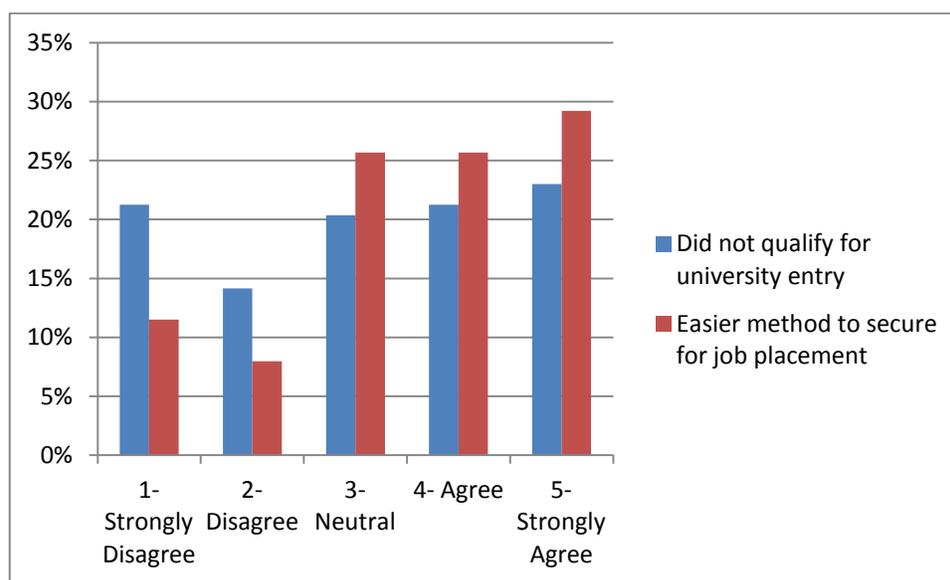
According to the findings 52% of the students have no dependents – they are young and have fewer responsibilities. 31% of the students have one dependent, 12% has two dependents and only 4% has three or more dependents.

4.2 Perceptions

According to the English Dictionary the word “perception” is a belief or opinion often held by many people and it is based on how things seem to be. The purpose of this study is to determine whether drop-outs are different in individual characteristics that are the ages, gender, and external factors such as family and organizational support. Drop outs and persistent learners have statistical differences in perceptions of family and organizational support.

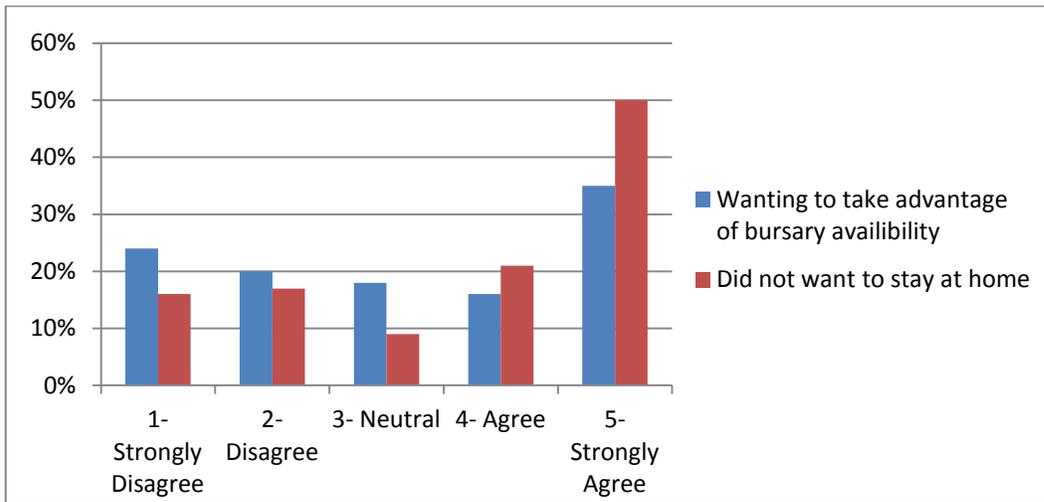
4.2.1 Enrolment

Graph 6: Questions regarding enrolment



According to the findings the majority of the students stated the reasons for registering at the FET college: 29% strongly agreed that it is an easier method to secure for job placement; 26% agreed to the statement and 26% was neutral towards the statement. 23% strongly agreed that they did not qualify for university entry while 21% of respondents strongly disagreed to the statement and 21% was neutral to the statement, could be that they never applied at a university.

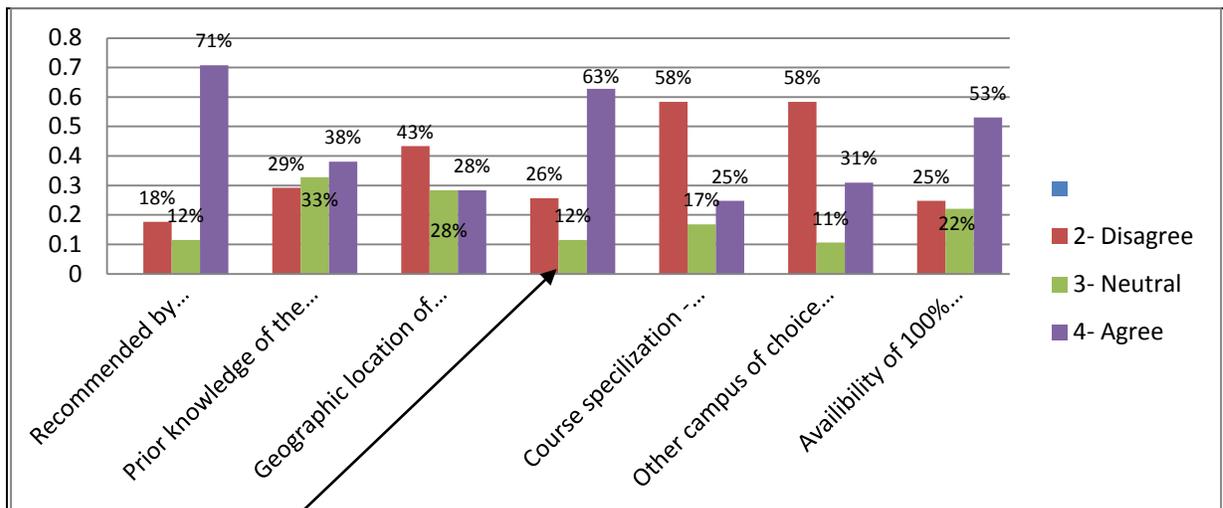
Questions regarding enrolment:



35% of the respondents strongly agreed and 16% agreed that they wanted to take advantage of bursary availability, whereas 24% strongly disagreed that they considered the availability of a bursary and 18% of the respondents were neutral to the statement. According to the analysis 50% of respondents strongly agree and 21% agree to the statement that they did not want to stay at home, while 16% strongly disagree and 17% disagree to the statement that they enrolled at the college because of reasons that they did not want to stay at home,

4.2.2 Choice of campus

Graph 7: Factors that influenced choice of campus



Key note – Heading “Availability of accommodation and transport (not inserted)

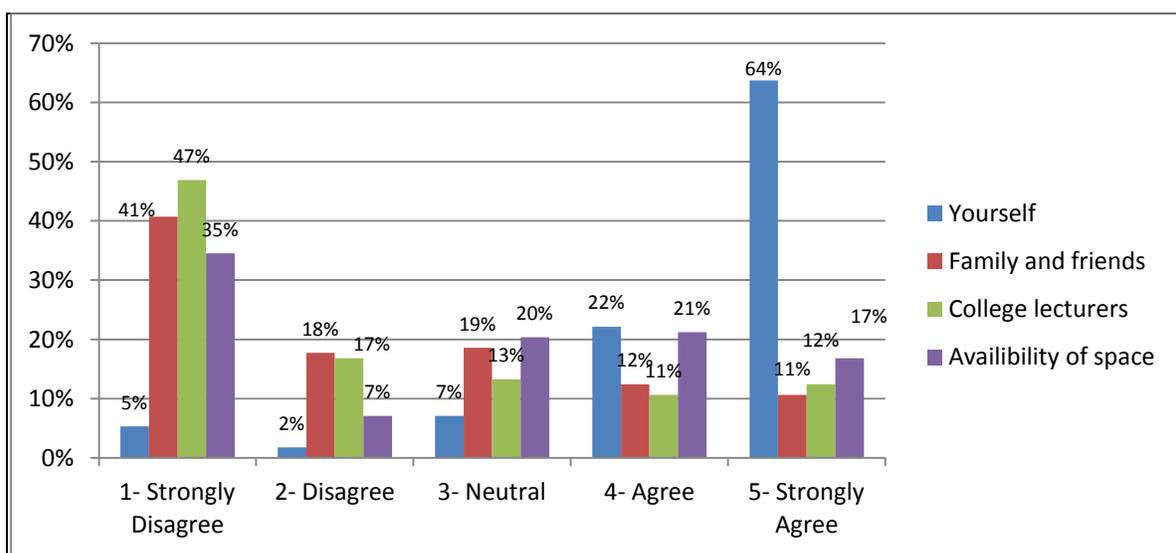
Referring to the chart above - the findings show that the majority (71%) of the respondents agree that they were recommended by friends, teachers or family members to attend a specific college and campus while only 18% disagreed to the factor and 12% of the respondents were neutral in answering the question. 63% agreed to attend specific college of choice because of the availability of transport and accommodation. The same percentage of respondents (58%) disagreed to the factors 1) that they only registered because of the course specialization 2) that the other FET colleges were already full.

The findings also show that 43% of the respondents disagree to the fact that the geographical location of the campus was considered and 28% agreed to the factor and 28% were also neutral to answering the question. Respondents 38% stated that they had prior knowledge of the college and campus, 29% disagreed to the fact and 33% remained neutral in their answer. Most of the respondents (55%) stated that they had registered at the college because of the 100% availability of bursary funds, 25% disagreed and 22% were neutral to answering the question.

4.2.2.1 Final decision on choice of campus

The question on final decision is about who concluded the decision to enrol at the specific campus of choice.

Graph 8: Final decision on choice of campus



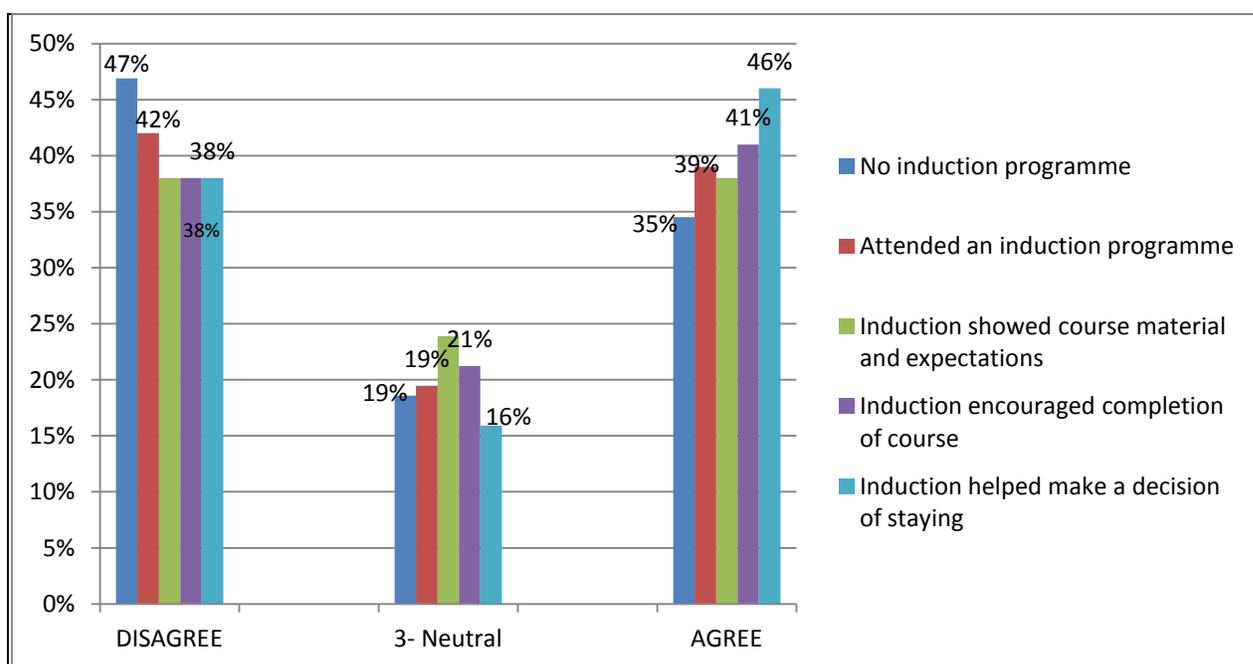
“Decision made by Yourself” - the findings show that 64% of the respondents strongly agreed and 22% agreed and 7% disagreed that they made the final decision as to what campus they wanted to attend whereas 7% were neutral in their answer. Decision assisted by college lecturers - 47% strongly disagreed that lecturers had an influence on their decision, 17% disagreed and 33% agreed that college lecturers had an influence on their choice of campus. Decision based on availability of space - result of the analysis shows that 35% strongly disagreed and 7% disagreed to the fact that the availability of space had an impact on their decision, while 38% agreed to the factor and 17% strongly agreed. 21% of the respondents were neutral to answering the question about the availability of space at the campus.

Family and friends influence on decision of choice of campus shows that 41% disagreed to the fact that family and friends influenced their choice of which campus to attend, 18% agreed, 12% agreed to the factor and only 11% strongly agreed that they had some influence on their decision-making.

4.3 Induction

According to the English Dictionary “induction” is a procedure or ceremony for introducing someone to a new job, organization or a new way of life.

Graph 9: Induction / Introduction to course



47% of the respondents disagreed to the fact that no induction programme took place; whereas 35% agreed to the fact no induction took place. At the same time 46% stated that induction helped them make a decision to stay at the college that they had chosen and 38% disagreed to that fact.

According to the findings: - 1) 38% disagreed to the factor that no induction took place
 2) 38% disagreed that induction encouraged completion of course
 3) 38% of respondents disagreed that induction showed course material and expectations.

39% of the respondents stated that they did attend an induction programme. Findings that showed neutral results are the students that could not remember whether induction programmes took place.

4.4 Negative factors

Relating to the question on negative factors is what the students perceived as being negative.

Table 7: Negative Factors experienced

FACTORS	Disagree %	Neutral %	Agree%
1. Disliked the lecturer/s	67%	17%	16%
2. Academic work too difficult	51%	29%	19%
3. Struggling with the language	67%	19%	14%
4. Disliked the subject/s	65%	24%	12%
5. Not talking about academic problems	50%	24%	26%
6. Not enough or inadequate lecturers	53%	18%	29%
7. Classrooms overcrowded	69%	12%	19%
8. Not enough textbooks	64%	11%	26%
9. No teacher/parent meetings	45%	12%	42%

Referring to the findings –The findings on the question “Negative Factors” there seems to be uncertainty in the answering – maybe the respondent was not sure about the question. The fact

that all disagreed percentages is higher than the agreed percentages shows that the college is improving in all aspects of the academic spheres. Most of the respondents disagree to all of the negative factors mentioned in the questionnaire: *no teacher/parent meetings taking place* - 45% of the respondents disagree to the fact,

42% agree to the same fact that indeed no teacher/parent meeting took place and 12% of the respondents neither agreed nor disagreed. 67% of the respondents disagreed to the factor that they disliked the lecturer, whereas 16% agreed. 67% of the respondents also disagreed to the factor that they were struggling with English as their First Additional Language, 14% of the respondents agreed to the factor. 69% of the respondents stated that the classrooms were not full but 19% agreed that it was overcrowded. Not enough text books were not an issue as 64% disagreed to the factor and only 26% agreed to the question.

4.5 Positive factors

Relating to the question on positive factors is what the students perceived as being positive.

Table 8: Positive Factors experienced

FACTORS	Disagree %	Neutral %	Agree %
1. Lecturer/Student Support Officer helped to feel sense of belonging	19%	24%	57%
2. Lecturers helped in a way that was easy to learning	8%	24%	68%
3. Received help/individual assistance in class	19%	25%	56%
4. Technical classes were more relevant than others	22%	27%	51%
5. Fitted in with other students in class	15%	24%	61%
6. Staying in the residence – involvement with other students	27%	23%	50%
7. Student Supporter always available to listen	27%	24%	49%
8. Student Supporter quickly resolves problems	40%	25%	35%

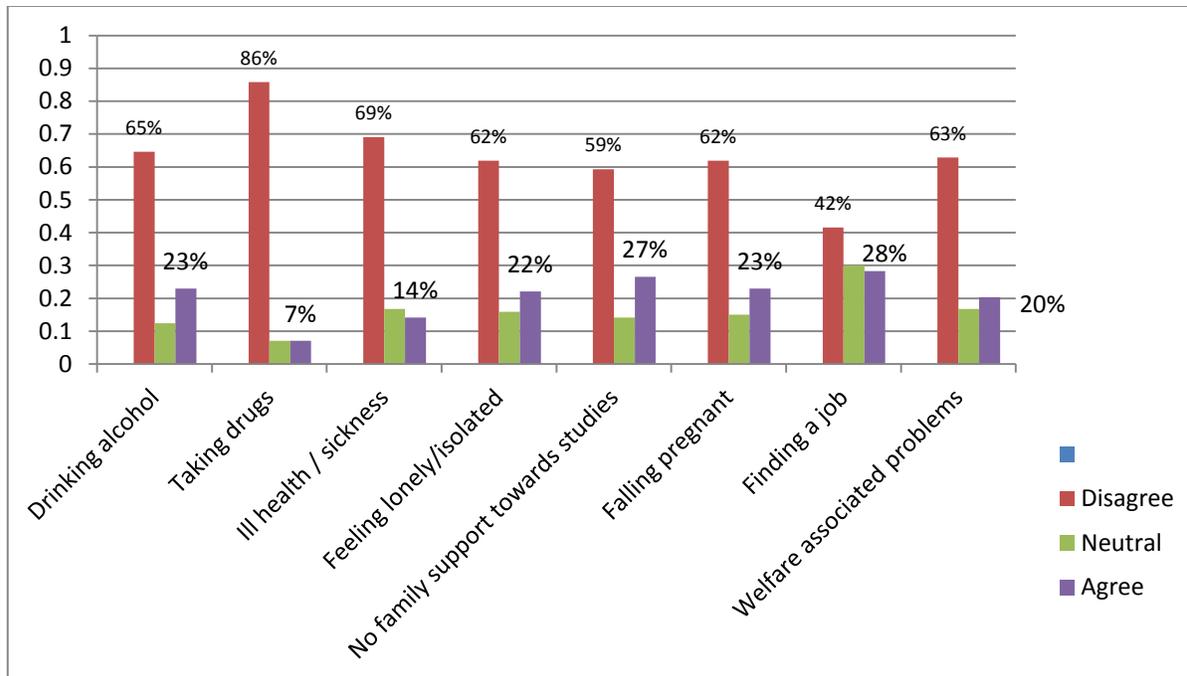
The findings clearly indicate that all factors mentioned were agreed upon by most of the respondents. Respondents agree that lecturers are helping learners to achieve academic results

– factor “received help/individual attention” has 56%, 19% disagreed and 25% referred to tick the neutral block. “Lecturers helped in a way that was easy to learn” 68% agreed, 8% disagreed and 24% disagreed to the factor. Factor = student supporter always available to listen 49% agree to the fact, whereas 27% disagree and 24% remained neutral to the question. Respondents (40%) disagree to the fact that student supporter quickly resolves problems and only 35% agree to the fact. Respondents all agree – 61% of them stated that they fitted in with other students in the class and 50% agreed that they communicate and are involved with other students in the residence. The results of the analysis shows that 51% stated that technical classes were more relevant than other classes but 22% disagree to that factor whereas 27% remained neutral in answering the question.

4.6 Social factors

The question on social factors is inclusive of different aspects. It is perceived as factors that could or was the reason for dropping out of college.

Graph 10: Social Factors experienced



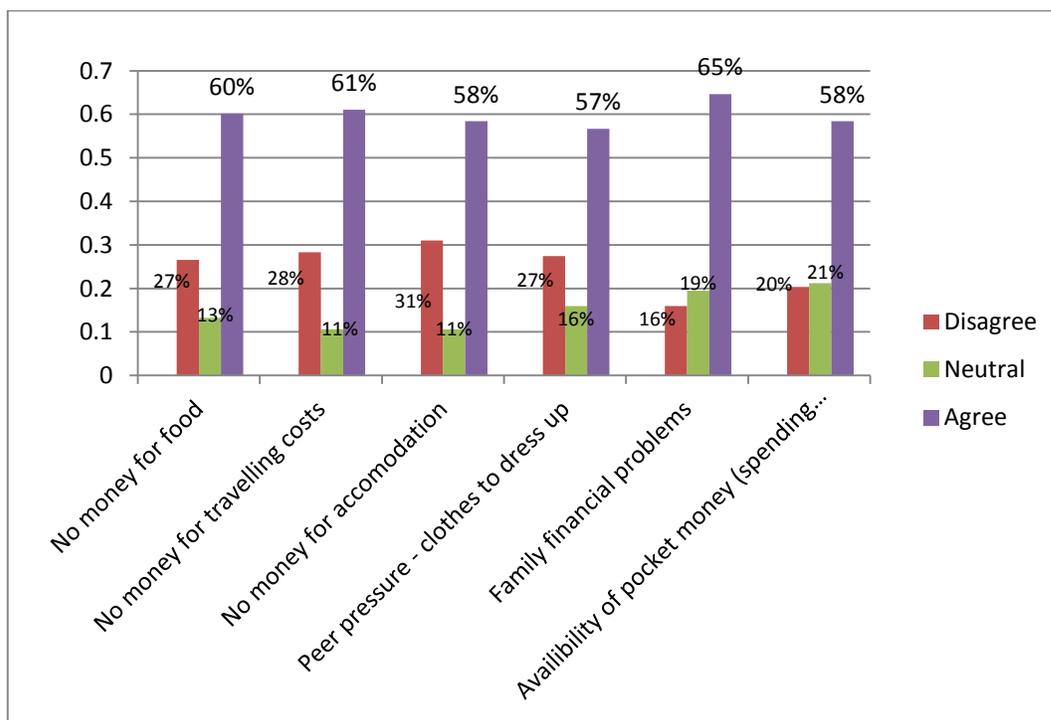
Most of the respondents disagreed to the factors mentioned in the question regarding their social life. The students staying in the residence all disagree to the factors - it has an impact on their

continued stay at the residence. Referring to the questions – according to finding some students are participating in substance abuse. Male respondents could not answer to the question about “falling pregnant”– 62% of the respondents disagreed to the factor while 23% agreed to the factor. 42% respondents stated that they were not looking for a job and 28% agreed that they were on the look-out for any job opportunities. 22% of the respondents agreed that they felt lonely and isolated while 62% disagreed to the factor. 27% agreed that they received no family support towards their studies whereas 59% disagreed to the factor. 7% agreed to taking drugs and 87% disagreed to taking them. 63% disagree to the fact that they are experiencing welfare problems and 20% agree that they are experiencing problems.

4.7 Financial factors

The question on financial factors is perceived by students to be the cause or reason for wanting to drop-out of college.

Graph 11: Financial Factors experienced



Results of the findings show that most of the respondents agree to the Financial Factors. The highest percentage agreed to is the factor “family financial problems” – 65%, 20% disagreed to the factor and 21% were neutral not agreeing nor disagreeing. 61% of the respondents agreed that they had no money for travelling costs, 28% disagree to the factor and 11% remained neutral. The findings = 60% of the factor “no money for food” – 27% disagree to the factor, 13% remained neutral. Factors 1) no money for accommodation = 58% agree, 31% disagree 11% were neutral in their answer and 2) availability of pocket money = 58%, 20% disagree and 21% remained neutral in their answer - both factors have the same percentages that agree. Factor “peer pressure – clothes to dress up” especially students staying in the residence – 57% agreed, 27% disagreed and 16% were neutral to answering the question on questionnaire.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION ON THE FINDINGS

The findings above confirm that there are factors that contribute to students dropping out of FET colleges. A Case Study was used and questionnaires were structured to elicit and investigate the factors of learner drop-outs. The findings of the study found several tendencies affecting drop-out rates - the major factors being financial difficulties and social problems emanating from family backgrounds. Crosling et al. (2009) states that students withdraw for reasons beyond the jurisdiction of the institution, being personal reasons and changed personal circumstances.

Learners spend a great deal of time in the college environment; therefore the educator has become an important role-player as to be the first person to observe a pattern of absenteeism. Educators are not necessarily equipped to give required assistance, therefore both educators and learners agree that a Student Support Department is essential in the college. In the findings it came out that student supporters do not spend enough time and that they should give more attention to the learners "problems".

5.1 Demographic Findings

Gender enrolment depends on the programmes students are registering for – females are increasing in numbers in electrical and engineering programmes which was seen as more male dominated programmes. De Jager & Du Plooy (2006) stated that in their research study it was noted that female students view security(safety) as a more important choice factor than their male counterparts. According to the Government News Agency(February 2013) President Jacob Zuma visited the college in Pretoria to get first-hand experience on what is on offer at the college and said it was exciting to see women studying in fields which were traditionally viewed as men's domain.

Given the high crime rate in South Africa, it is important that institutions ensure a safe and secure learning environment. Technologically advanced security methods can be implemented on campus and in classrooms. Electronic card systems can be used to monitor entrance onto campus and even into classrooms. Institutions can link safety and security to their image and promote themselves as a safe learning environment, especially when attracting female students.

Findings on the questions relating to *'student's marital status'* and *'dependents'* shows that the majority of students are single and that most of them do not have any children, therefore it can be derived that students register at the colleges with the intention of completing the programmes and to better their standard of living. A study that was done by The Department of Human Relations at the Michigan State University concluded that single people enrolling at a college are most likely to complete the course followed by married people and with divorced people coming in thirdly.

'Age' factor from the findings indicate that 68% of the age group is between 21 and 25 years of age. According to HSRC (2010) database it was noted that West Coast College particularly is enrolling students at a very young age – students enter the college directly from school after completing Grade 9 (youthful and immature). A class could have students with a wide variation of ages – 16years to 35years. In a meeting held with the Department of Education and FET Colleges on the 14th February 2012 Mr Qonde stated that an important aspect of career guidance was that around 60% of National Vocational Certificate (NVC) graduates were students who had passed Grade 12 and that he considers it to be a waste of government resources, because it effectively required students to do Grade 12 twice - it is important to focus on grade 9 students and attract them to the FET colleges. NC (V) intake of students is aimed at Grade 9 to Grade 11 learners – thus the reason for younger people enrolling at the college.

5.2 Factors that influenced choice of campus

The findings show that there are a variety of factors influencing student's choice of a FET College and also the specific campus which they want to attend. Bradshaw, Espinoza and Hausman (2001) identified five main factors considered by students when choosing an institution to further their studies, these include:

- Quality and responsiveness of staff
- Social opportunities
- Economic considerations
- Size of the institution
- Research activities

Previous studies have revealed that a variety of potential factors are considered by students when selecting a higher educational institution. In this case study the results show that the main reason for choice of college and campus is that students are well knowledgeable about the college and the campus. It can be derived that friends, parents, family members, etc. have a great influence on the majority of students' choice. Family interest in the student's college affairs, perceiving better job opportunities and choosing the college of choice due to its quality of affinity has a positive effect on the student's final choice of registration. The strong influence of family and friends can be concluded that students trust and respect the views of those who advise and encourage them to enroll for certain courses. Friends also play a significant role in persuading students to make the right choices – some of the friends have been at the college before. According to Chapman (1981) student's college choice is determined by the individual student's characteristics such as socio-economic status as well as by external influences.

5.3 Factors that influenced choice of campus relating to distance

Students enrol at the college knowingly that it is situated out of their geographical area. According to the findings on choice of campus this factor did not have much weight in influencing students' choice (43%) disagreed and only 28% agreed to the fact. Some campuses are situated near where students live whereas for others they have to make use of college-transport. Findings relating to this question of "students' choice of a specific campus relating to distance" is the availability of accommodation and transport. Most of the students that enrol at West Coast College come from rural areas where public transport is a major issue. Ngcobo (2010) found that students coming from rural areas, especially first year students experience financial problems which is not uncommon, looking at the high unemployment rate in South Africa. According to the REAP Report (2008) many students from rural areas do not have family and friends near the institution that they enrolled at and therefore has no-one who could assist with accommodation and transport – this impacts negatively on students.

Researchers in other contexts have shown that there is a link between education and socio-economic factors. Tinto (1987) suggests that non completion of courses is a result of a mismatch between the social and academic background, intentions and goals of the student and the institution's ability to meet these goals.

5.4 Factors that influence students' decision to complete their three years

Data collected and analysed showed positive answers to the questions on the questionnaires, especially the question on the "positive factors". Research done by Ngcobo (2009) identifies that once students have been admitted to a programme they have to make a decision on whether they are going to complete the course or drop-out. Factors can be attributed to teaching methods, availability of resources, socio-economic factors and the change of students' interest in the course.

According to Hawksley, Jacoby, Louw, Coetzee and Findlay (2002: 138) lecturers and parents need to be made aware that motivation in the home and school /college environment is an important factor in encouraging students to continue with their studies. Researchers state that studying should never be about getting a qualification for the sake of a qualification (degree) or because it is the expectation of someone else – studying should be something that you're passionate about because where there is passion there is motivation. Motivated students manage stress better, are eager to initiate learning activities, tend to be more willing to take risks, remain involved in learning tasks and are more committed learners (Hawksley, Jacoby, Louw, Coetzee and Findlay).

Final decision of choice of campus - the results of the analysis show that the majority of the respondents felt that they had control over the choice of campus they wanted to study at and that it was their final decision that counted. According to Burns (2006) research has shown that individuals will select a particular college if the benefits they perceive of attending outweigh the perceived benefits of attending other colleges. A number of variables influence the student's choice of college, namely college reputation, campus allocation, campus atmosphere, campus safety, college cultural uniqueness and costs (Urbanski, 2000).

5.5 Discussion on Induction

Some respondents claimed that they had no induction courses when they started whereas 56% of the respondents claimed that they did go on induction programmes. According to those that went on induction – it was very brief and they were not informative as expected.

When students are registering for the first time they have to attend a session of career guidance. Noel *et al.* (1991) states that effective career guidance at the start of an academic enrolment could be crucial in ensuring retention. Students are likely to achieve academically when they are

supported by colleges to make the correct programme choices. Pre-entry support that is offered by the student support officer for first-time students should include:

- Clear selection of programme and placement policy
- Code of Conduct to be explained
- Understanding administration systems of the college for tracking and appropriate reporting.
- Career guidance programmes
- Creating synergy between the various components of the college, i.e. student support
- financial aid and registration
- Integration and involvement of lecturing staff with academic support
- Appropriate staffing and training of student support officials
- Clear orientation programme to be done for all new entrants

5.6 Discussion on negative factors

Negative Factors - students agreed that there were negative factors that contributed to them dropping out or wanting to drop out, for example some respondents indicated that the language being their second or even third language was a challenge. In order to get meaning and gain understanding, language is a very important tool used for communication. When the language is not understood, wrong information can be exchanged and limited information can also be given. According to Ministry of Education (2002) language has been seen as a barrier to access and success in higher education mainly because African and other languages have not been developed as academic languages even though the majority of students entering a higher education are not fully proficient in English or Afrikaans.

Most of the respondents disagreed to the negative factors that were mentioned in the questionnaire showing that they could overcome the challenges that they were facing, for example:

- Dislike of the lecturer
- Academic work too difficult
- Struggling with the language
- Dislike the subjects
- Not talking about academic problems³
- Classrooms overcrowded
- Not enough textbooks

5.7 Discussion on positive factors

Positive Factors mentioned in the question had most of the respondents agreeing to the factors, meaning that students did experience good / positive factors at the college:

- *educators having patience to repeat lessons/assignments with students* - mismatches between teaching and learning are inevitable in learning institutions, that is, the amount of lecturers and their individual styles of lecturing. Theories that have been researched suggest that teachers, lecturers and tutors teach in their own personal style. Lecturers who exhibit a strong sense of professional commitment usually influence students towards higher levels.
- *educators prepared to give individual attention to learners as they needed it* - according to Bridgeland, Dilulio, and Balfanz (2009) it is expected that all students meet high academic standards therefore extra support should be provided to struggling students to help them meet those standards. Mismatches between teaching and learning include the amount of personal work students have to put in to succeed.
- Technical classes were more relevant than others
- *Fitted in with other students in the class* – research studies revealed opportunity for integration into the college system is by meeting other students, developing student

friendships, gaining information about social opportunities on campus with other students

- *availability of a Student Support Officer* and the assistance that they offer - according to The White Paper Framework for FET Colleges it includes Student Support Services as follows:
 - learner counselling and support services
 - Help new entrants to make meaningful choices about their direction of study
 - Ensure that all learners including previously disadvantaged groups are given every opportunity to succeed
 - Provide information regarding learning programmes
 - Provide information regarding education and training providers
 - Ensure that learners have access to up-to-date labour market trends in the job market
- the opportunity to stay at the residence and benefits associated with it:
 - Environment is safe
 - Opportunity to learn from other cultures and life styles
 - Form lifelong friendships and build memories
 - Learn concepts of self respect and respect for others
 - Practice tolerance and diversity
- Availability of college transport to and from the college

5.8 Discussion on Social factors

Social Factors - analysis of the findings of Social factors showed:-

- *Some females fell pregnant* and had no-one to help look after the infant. According to the National Research Council (1987) teenagers who are not

doing well in learning institutions and have lower educational aspirations are more likely to have sex during adolescence than those faring better in their studies – early sexual activity has shown to affect academic failure.

- *early parenthood is present* as a common factor in all socio-economic levels
- students experienced problems at home and felt that they should be at home to resolve these issues
- Students stated that they longed for their family at home, especially the younger ones who had left their hometown in the rural areas
- Research has proven that young people are under a lot of pressure and consequently they end up using drugs, smoking cigarettes and drinking alcohol.
- Students felt peer pressure in a sense that they could not keep up with the status of their friends. Some students are staying in the residence with no financial support from family members, they are on their own and they depend entirely on the bursary (NSFAS) funds. South Africa has a highly successful National Student Financial Aid Scheme which supports about 120 000 of the 735 000 university students. The bursary covers most of the costs of study but leaves a gap for living and other expenses.
- Parents not taking keen interest in the student's performance at the college – research studies have shown that the family is the strongest determining factor in a student's academic life, be it successful or failure. Parents do not monitor the student's college activities because of:
 - the living conditions that they find themselves in
 - provision and the relationship between the parent's educational level and the student's academic performance
 - family characteristics - the size and type of family
 - the existence of a history of school drop-out

- the socio-economic level of the family.
- Students looking out for jobs to help with an income – various studies have reported that students experiencing financial constraints feel compelled to seek employment be it part-time or full-time to help supplement an income, either to contribute to the family budget or to have their own money. Another reason arises for dropping out is when the student has to juggle between work and study.

5.9 Discussion on Financial factors

Referring to the analysis the biggest percentage of factors that contribute to students dropping out is the financial constraint. The results of the analysis show that most students do not have money and that they are coming from poor backgrounds. According to Macgregor (2007) her findings on why students were dropping out of college was for the lack of finances. Research studies have revealed that financial difficulties come from among the country's large pool of poor black students –they are the first generation students from a low-income and less educated family.

- Other students have to make use of their own transport to get to the college and they cannot always afford it while others have a far distance to walk and during winter months they are not by the means to make use of public transport – eventually they are absent for so long that they do not come back to college fearing the backlog of work.
- Some students have stated that they go hungry during the day and preferred to stay at home because their concentration become very low - they have to leave the house at about 6.00a.m to get the “college bus” without having eaten a meal the previous night and having no food for the day. Students' especially those staying in the residences experience peer pressure where clothing is concerned – they feel they cannot compete or keep up with their fellow learners as far as dressing-up is concerned.

CHAPTER SIX

RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

6.1 Recommendations

When students enrol at the college for the first time it would be beneficial for a college to offer a course or a programme dealing with various career issues. This programme could either be on its own or integrated into specific subjects, for instance into Life Orientation lessons.

Security and a safe learning environment is a very important aspect when making a choice of college. Technological advanced security methods such as electronic card systems can be implemented and used to monitor entrance onto campus and into classrooms. Colleges can link safety and security to their image and promote themselves as a safe learning environment.

Educators need to focus on teaching and learning and therefore it would be advisable to employ Career Guidance Counsellors. Career Guidance Counsellors could be retired professionals who would like to pass on their knowledge that they have gained throughout the years, to the learners. They would play a major role for the duration of the learner's time at the college – when learners come to the college and prior to the enrolment, career guidance counsellors can provide necessary inputs before choice of programme is made. Once programme has started career guidance counsellors are available to continuously engage with the students. This will highlight beforehand-problems-arising which can be dealt with in the early stages.

Lecturers play a vital role in the students “stay” at the college: -

- from start-off make students understand and applaud them for making the right decision to study further
- interactive teaching strategies to be practised to develop positive relationships with students
- learning to be made “fun” – more practical activities, for example quiz questions and / or “dressing-up” relating to topic discussions of the day

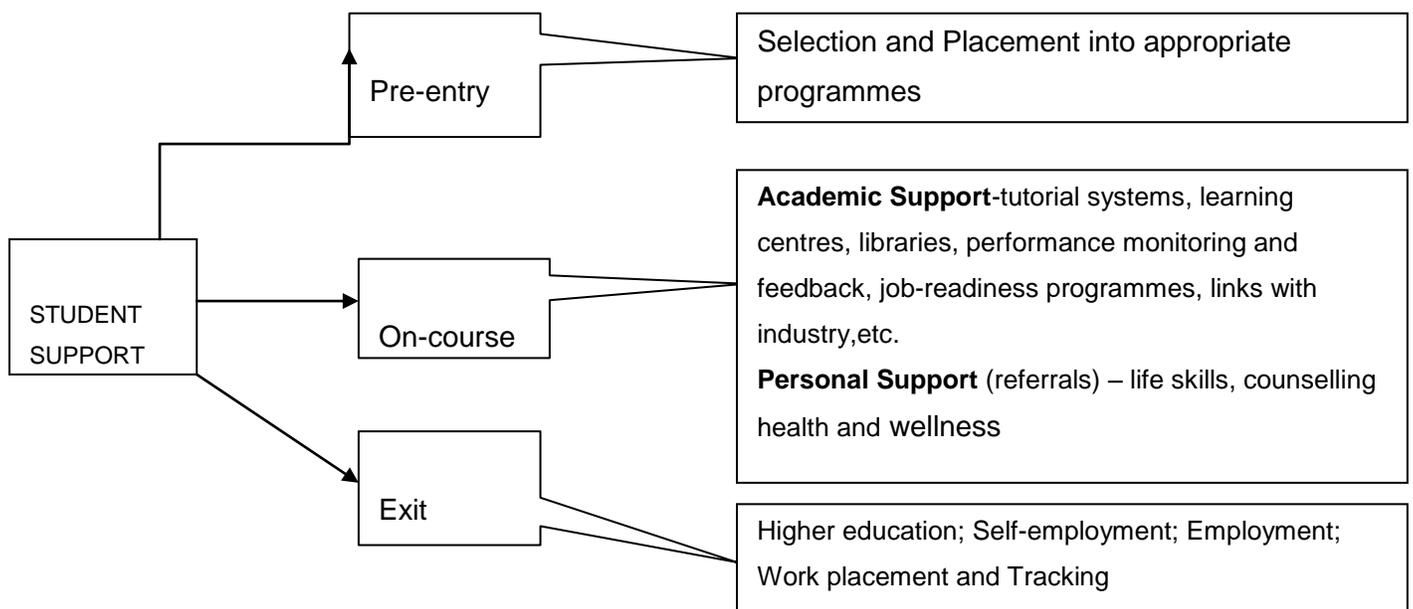
- practice respect and honesty towards the students(adults)
- intervene as early as possible when signs of continuous absenteeism is noted

Student Support Services at FET colleges should provide holistic services to students and such services are the responsibility of the entire college. Student Support Officers is an important component at the college:

- introduction to the department as soon as classes commence to ensure support throughout the duration of study
- counselling for students with social, family or personal problems
- Intervention such as communicating with student as soon as a referral is sent to the office

Institutions' capacity to retain students is directly related to its ability to reach out and make contact with students, (Tinto, 1987 pp. 180-181). Students are likely to achieve academically when they are supported by colleges to make the correct programme choices, properly orientated to the college, supported academically and provided with opportunities to participate in extra-curricular activities (DOE, 2008).

Figure 2: Student Support Framework



Source: Student Support Services Framework DoE 2008

The findings of this study show that financial factors play a major role in students dropping out of FET colleges:

- 1) government should look at the financial profile of each student
- 2) qualifying needy students to receive bursaries in the form of a stipend
- 3) stipend to be strictly monitored – less than a certain percentage attendance in a month forfeits 100% of the stipend, irrespective of the reason
- 4) students to give a donation per week/monthly towards daily meal/sandwich - to be monitored

Special programmes, such as study groups or peer support groups, should be put in place especially for first-year students' as a method of intervention for those who are showing early signs of "red flags": absenteeism, poor results, behavioural changes, weak writing and weak maths skills. Pre-enrolment data is to be used to identify at-risk candidates before they even arrive on campus. Tools such as the CAP Test (done at registration) and previous Academic Results must be used to monitor students more consistently and to respond more quickly to what is seen and heard, for example: students missing class, missing writing tests, poor results, etc..

6.2 Conclusion

According to Ramist (1981: 27) who states that while accepting the evidence that some students are more likely to persist than others and that some college environments are more conducive to persistence than others, most research has concluded that the fit between the student and the college is an important factor. This study shows that students enrol at the colleges with great enthusiasm and with the expectation to complete their three years of study. Though a great deal of sophisticated research has described the reasons for dropping out, with the exception of the very few students who leave due to circumstances beyond their control, the students reasons all stem from dissatisfaction with the academic or social life of the institution. Although lots of evidence has been presented associating many students and college characteristics with retention, there are substantial differences among institutions.

The words of Mandela (2000: 554) states that “education is the great engine of personal development and it is through education that the daughter of a peasant can become a doctor, that the son of a mineworker can become the head of the mine and that a child of a farm worker can become the president of a great nation. It is what we make out of what we have, not what we are given, that separates one person from another “.

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APPENDIX A - Questionnaire for the students



QUESTIONNAIRE

Dear respondents,

I am doing research on students' perception of factors that contribute to drop-out of college. This study is in part fulfilment of the requirement for the Master Degree in Business Administration. You have been selected to respond to this questionnaire. Please note that all information supplied will be treated with anonymity and confidentiality and will not be used for any other purpose other than this study.

Principal Researcher:

Corrina Strumpher

078 374 3214

QUESTIONS - BIOGRAPHICAL DETAILS

College attending / attended

NAME : _____ CAMPUS: _____

Please tick (✓) the appropriate columns

GENDER: female male

AGE GROUP: 16-20 21-25 26-30 older than 30

MARITAL STATUS: Single Married Divorced

DEPENDENTS : None 1 2 3 or more

Please answer the following question by placing a tick (✓) in the appropriate block

SCALE : 1 = Strongly Disagree

2 = Disagree

3 = Neutral

4 = Agree

5 = Strongly Agree

6. Questions regarding Enrolment	1	2	3	4	5
Did not qualify for university entry					
Easier method to secure for job placement					
Wanting to take advantage of bursary availability					
Did not want to stay at home					
7. Factors influencing choice of campus	1	2	3	4	5
Recommended by friends, family, teachers at school,etc.					
Prior knowledge of the college and campus					
Geographic location of the campus					
Availability of transport and accommodation at the campus					
Course specialization- only campus offering course					
Other campus of choice was already full					
Availability of 100percent bursary loans					

8. Final decision on choice of college was made by:	1	2	3	4	5
Yourself					
Family and friends					
College lecturers					
Availability of space					
9. Induction / introduction to course	1	2	3	4	5
No induction programme at college					
Attended an induction programme					
Induction programme showed course material					
Induction programme encouraged completion of course					
Induction programme helped to make a decision of staying					
10. Negative academic factors that you have experienced	1	2	3	4	5
Disliked the lecturer/s					
Academic work too difficult					
Struggling with the language of English					
Dislike the subject/s					
Talking about academic problems					

Enough or inadequate lecturer to classes					
Classrooms overcrowded					
Enough text books					
Teachers / parents meeting					
11. Positive academic factors that you have experienced	1	2	3	4	5
Student supporter helped to feel a sense of belonging					
Lecturers helped in a way that was easy to learn					
Lecturers gave individual assistance					
Technical classes were more relevant than other classes					
Fitted in with other students in class					
In residence – involvement with other students					
Student supporter always available to listen to any problems					
Student supporter quickly resolves problems					
12. Social factors that you may have experienced	1	2	3	4	5
Drinking alcohol					
Taking drugs					
Ill health / sickness					
Feeling all alone /isolated					

No family support towards study					
Falling pregnant					
Finding a job					
Welfare associated problems					
13. Financial factors that you may have experienced	1	2	3	4	5
No money for food					
No money for travelling costs					
No money for accomodation					
Peer pressure – to buy clothing for dressing up					
Family financial problems					
Availability of pocket money (spending money)					

THANK YOU