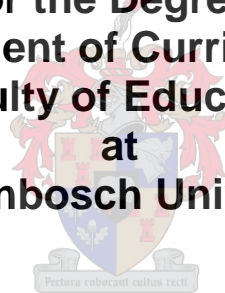


**FACTORS IMPACTING ON FIRST-YEAR STUDENTS'
ACADEMIC PROGRESS AT A SOUTH AFRICAN UNIVERSITY**

By

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**Dissertation presented for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy
in the Department of Curriculum Studies,
Faculty of Education
at
Stellenbosch University**



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March 2012

DECLARATION

By submitting this dissertation, I declare that the entirety of the work contained therein is my own original work, that I am the owner of the copyright thereof (unless to the extent explicitly otherwise stated) and that I have not previously in its entirety or in part submitted it for obtaining any qualification.

Signature:..... **Date:**.....

SUMMARY: ENGLISH

This research project explored the learning experiences of two groups of first-year students in the Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences, University of the Western Cape during the course of 2009/2010. The aim was to obtain insight into the learning challenges that these students encountered and the reasons why some of them were less successful in the learning process, while others were successful. The perspective of this study was therefore student centred. The project was undertaken against the backdrop of a higher education institution that caters mainly for so-called 'disadvantaged' and 'underprepared' students. Such students come predominantly from marginalised and poorly resourced education environments and socio-economic backgrounds, which suggests that they would find higher learning challenging and, as a result, would most likely experience failure in the learning process.

The objective of the research project was two-fold: firstly, to identify and determine which factors have an impact on failure or successful completion of the first year of study in this faculty; and secondly, to derive from the data a socially situated, supportive and holistic learning approach that could assist more students to be successful in the learning process. The argument in the study was that learning is socially situated and constructed. To realise the objective, Vygotsky's social cultural theory and Bandura's social cognitive theory were used as theoretical orientation of the study.

This qualitative, interpretive inquiry was characterised by multiple data collection methods. Qualitative data concerning the perceptions of the participants were generated via written reflective pieces, a questionnaire and individual interviews and content analysis. In addition, quantitative data were collected and this further contributed to the triangulation of rich, in-depth data.

An 'open coding' strategy for the content analysis was used, but the approach for the analysis was not purely inductive. A student-centred analytical framework based in part on theories and findings of five studies conducted on student learning, failures and dropouts, and the context of UWC as HBU served as a framework for the analysis but new sub-themes also emerged from the data collected.

The results of these two Case studies revealed that some of the students experienced multiple learning challenges simultaneously which increased in severity during the course of the academic year, and that, in Case 1, these challenges became too overwhelming and severe for the students and that was why they were less successful; while in Case 2, the students managed to overcome and deal with these challenges successfully. The findings of this project, while specific to the context in which it was undertaken, contribute to the growing body of knowledge in the field of higher education and in the identification of enabling factors that could assist more students to be successful in their first year of study at a higher education institution. The findings provide guidelines for a socially situated, supportive and holistic learning approach that could help higher education institutions to mitigate the cumulative effects of learning on students' personal, academic and social lives.

OPSOMMING: AFRIKAANS

Hierdie navorsingsprojek ondersoek twee groepe eerstejaarstudente se leerervaring gedurende 2009/2010 in die Fakulteit Ekonomiese en Bestuurswetenskappe aan die UWK. Die doel was om insig te verkry in die leeruitdagings waarvoor hierdie studente te staan gekom het en die redes hoekom party van hulle min sukses in die leerproses behaal het, terwyl ander suksesvol was. Die perspektief in die projek was daarom gerig op die studente en hoe hulle die leerproses ondervind. Die projek is onderneem teen die agtergrond van 'n instelling van hoër onderwys wat hoofsaaklik vir sogenaamd 'benadeelde' en 'swak voorbereide' studente voorsien. Sulke studente kom meestal uit 'n gemarginaliseerde opvoedkundige en sosio-ekonomiese agtergrond met gebrekkige bronne, wat daarop dui dat hoër onderwys vir hulle 'n uitdagings sal wees en dat hulle gevolglik heelwaarskynlik in die leerproses sal misluk.

Die doelwit van die navorsingsprojek was tweevoudig: eerstens, om te bepaal watter faktore 'n invloed het op die mislukking of geslaagde voltooiing van die eerste studiejaar aan hierdie fakulteit; tweedens, om uit die inligting 'n sosiale gestruktureerde, ondersteunende en holistiese leerbenadering af te lei wat meer studente kan help om in die leerproses sukses te behaal. Die projek berus op die uitgangspunt dat die leerproses 'n sosiaal gebaseerde en gestruktureerde proses is. Die teoretiese raamwerk was daarom gebaseer op Vygotsky se sosiale kulturele teorie en Bandura se sosiale kognitiewe teorie.

Hierdie kwalitatiewe, vertolkende ondersoek word deur veelvoudige metodes van inligtinginsameling gekenmerk. Kwalitatiewe inligting oor die deelnemers se waarnemings is verkry deur middel van nadenkende skryfwerk, 'n vraelys en individuele onderhoude, en die ontleding van die inhoud daarvan. Ook kwantitatiewe inligting is ingesamel, wat tot die triangulering van ryk, diepgaande inligting bygedra het.

Daar is 'n 'oorkode'-strategie vir die ontleding van die inhoud gebruik, maar die ontledingsbenadering was nie suiwer induktief nie. Ontleding het plaasgevind binne 'n studente gebaseerde ontledingsraamwerk wat gegrond is op teorieë en bevindings uit vyf studies oor leer, mislukking en uitsakking onder studente asook die konteks van die UWK as historiese Swart inrigting. Unieke temas het ook uit die inligting in hierdie studie na vore gekom het.

Die resultate van hierdie twee gevallestudies het getoon dat studente veelvoudige leeruitdagings tegelykertyd ervaar het wat al hoe meer geword het deur die loop van die jaar en dat hierdie uitdagings in die een geval te oorweldigend en straf vir die studente geraak het, sodat hulle min sukses behaal het. In die ander geval het die studente daarin geslaag om hierdie uitdagings te hanteer en dit suksesvol te oorkom. Hoewel die bevindings van hierdie projek gekoppel is aan die konteks waarin dit onderneem is, dra dit nietemin by tot die groeiende kennisbasis oor die terrein van hoër onderwys en oor die bepaling van bemagtigende faktore wat meer studente sou kon help om in hulle eerste studiejaar aan 'n instelling van hoër onderwys sukses te behaal. Die bevindings bied riglyne vir 'n sosiale ondersteunende holistiese leerbenadering vir akademiese steun wat instellings van hoër onderwys moontlik sal help om die kumulatiewe effek op die studente se persoonlike, akademiese en sosiale lewens in die leerproses te help verlig.

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All my other friends, colleagues and everyone who supported and encouraged me along the way - I thank you all.

My prayer is that this dissertation will have a positive impact on student learning, and that it will enable more students to complete their undergraduate studies successfully.

I remain humble and intensely cautious, using the words from a great philosopher that “the more I know, the more I realise how little I know”; therefore, the learning journey will continue...

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ADD	:	Academic Development Department
ACM	:	Accounting for Management
ALC	:	Academic Literacy for Commerce
Bus Stats	:	Business Statistics
CSSS	:	Centre for Student Support Services
ASPs	:	Academic Support Programmes
CHE	:	Council on Higher Education
DEC	:	Department of Education and Culture
DET	:	Department of Education and Training
DoE	:	Department of Education
EMS	:	Economic and Management Sciences (Faculty)
ECO	:	Economics
ESL	:	English second language
FIA	:	Financial Accounting
FET	:	Further Education and Training Band
GET	:	General Education and Training Band
HET	:	Higher Education and Training Band
HEIs	:	Higher education institutions
HBU	:	Historically black universities
HWUs	:	Historically white universities
IFS	:	Information Systems
IPS	:	Industrial Psychology
Man	:	Management
Maths	:	Mathematics
Maths Eco	:	Mathematical Economics
NACWC	:	National Access Consortium Western Cape
NSFAS	:	National Student Financial Assistance Scheme
NPHE	:	National Plan for Higher Education
NQF	:	National Qualifications Framework
PUA	:	Public Administration
Pol Stud	:	Political Studies
QSC	:	Quantitative Skills for Commerce

QSF	:	Quantitative Skills for Foundation
RAD	:	Research and Academic Development
REAP	:	Rural Education Access Programme
SA	:	South Africa
SA Pol & Gov:		South African Politics and Government
SAQA	:	South African Qualification Authority
Stats	:	Statistics
UWC	:	University of the Western Cape

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND AND EDUCATIONAL CONTEXT

This study is located in the Academic Development Department (ADD), Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences (EMS), University of the Western Cape (UWC), where I am a lecturer and an academic development practitioner. I teach academic literacy courses to first-year students in both the three-year degree and the four-year degree programmes. The Department was established to provide academic development support to staff members and students in the undergraduate degree programmes in the Faculty (Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences 1999). Because of the fact that UWC was (and still is) an academic institution that catered for students who attended historically black schools and who typically had a senior certificate average of a D or E symbol, it was decided that academic development support was required (Academic Development Centre, University of the Western Cape 1995, 1996, 1997). Moreover, UWC was one of only a few black universities (referred to as historically black universities) that black students could attend in the *apartheid* era. In 1982, African students comprised 2% of the student population (the rest were 'coloured' students) and this grew steadily to more than 55% by 2005 (University of the Western Cape 2005b) (see Section 3.3.1).

To address the injustices of the *apartheid* era, the new democratic government sought to drastically transform the educational landscape of South Africa (Council on Higher Education 2004; Ministry of Education 2001; Wedekind 2002). The government's objectives through the National Plan for Higher Education (NPHE) were, firstly, to transform the economic, social and political needs of the South African society, with the intention of developing a non-racial, tolerant and equal democratic system for all citizens. Secondly, to transform what was regarded as 'valuable and appropriate knowledge' in order for students to not only learn what is important to one race or one culture or one language, but also that education should include acknowledgement of and respect for all races, cultures, languages, beliefs, norms and traditions. Lastly, to transform the economic needs of the country to produce skilled citizens who can compete with the rest of the world in the areas of technology, communication, numeracy and mathematics, and the natural, economic and management sciences (Ministry of Education 2001).

Two goals in the NPHE are most relevant to this study. The first is goal number two, namely the promotion of equity of access and a fair chance of success for all. This goal states that “the NPHE is to promote equity of access and fair chances for success to all who are seeking to realize their potential through higher education, while eradicating all forms of unfair discrimination and advancing redress for past inequalities” (Ministry of Education 2001:19). The second is goal number five, which is a coordinated national higher education system that has as its aim to “build new institutional and organisational forms and new institutional identities and cultures as integral components of a single coordinated national higher education system” (Ministry of Education 2001:19). The implementation of these two goals meant that all universities had to grant fair and equal access to all citizens regardless of race, gender or disability; that all forms of discrimination had to stop; and that students entering higher educational institutions would be supported and assisted by these institutions in order to be successful in the learning process.

1.2 DESCRIPTION OF THE PROBLEM

Because of the effect of *apartheid* on the economic, social and political situations of many black South Africans, black students entering higher education remain ‘disadvantaged’ and ‘underprepared’(Bunting 2004; Webb 2002). The result is that they are underperforming and dropping out of the system at an alarming rate. In the NPHE the Ministry of Education talks about “wastage of resources, both human and financial”, and that the proportion of students (50%) dropping out and not graduating is an unacceptable one (Ministry of Education 2001:21). In this regard, Louw (2005:1) states that it is a costly matter to have students who dropout, and that there is concern about the high dropout rate of students at higher education institutions globally. Many studies conducted internationally confirm Louw’s concern (Brown 2002; Kuh, Kinzie, Schuh, Whitt & Associates 2005; Peelo 2002; Yorke 1999). Kuh *et al.* (2005:7) state, for example, that “...everyone agrees that persistence and educational attainment rates, as well as the quality of student learning, must improve if post-secondary education is to meet the needs of our nation and our world”.

It is mostly black students who are dropping out in South Africa and this has serious implications for the state, the economy, academic institutions and the youth (Bunting 2004; Louw 2005; Scott 2006, 2009a). Research conducted on the success of first-year students at higher education institutions indicates that one out of every three students will have dropped out of university by the end of their first year (Groenewald 2005; Scott, Yeld &

Hendry 2007). This fact was reconfirmed and highlighted in a recent study conducted by a team of researchers under the Rural Education Access Programme (REAP) and the consultancy Research and Academic Development (RAD) from April 2007 to May 2008 (Rural Education Access Programme & Research and Academic Development 2008). The dean of the EMS faculty at UWC also made mention of this fact in his annual dean's report for the 2007 academic year (Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences 2007). Scott (2009a:23) states that "Improving graduate output, in terms of numbers, mix and quality, is essential for South Africa's future". Thus, new first-year students' adjustment and successful transition from high school to university is of great concern, both nationally and internationally (Beyer, Gillmore & Fisher 2007; CHE 2004, 2007, 2009; Kuh *et al.* 2005).

The need for more local empirical research on the testing of the Department of Education and Training (DET) schooling has been identified by many researchers (Boughey 2000; Smout, 2005; Leibowitz 2001), and I respond to this need in this study. In 2003/2004 I undertook a research project that investigated the writing difficulties that first-year students who are second-language speakers of English experience in the learning process (Smith 2006 – my former surname). Another research project was conducted in 2005/2006 on the impact that learning in English had on the ability to read and write for academic purposes of first-year, second-language-speaking students of English (McGhie 2007). I realised from these two research projects that there was a gap in the literature and that more institution specific research was needed to develop a holistic learning approach to support first-year students in the EMS faculty. Such an approach would seek to improve and enhance the successful completion of the first year of study for students and, in so doing, lower the failure and dropout rates of the Faculty and increase the overall throughput rate of first-year students. This study is therefore an investigation into the progress of two groups of new first-year students in the three-year degree programme in the EMS faculty during the 2009 academic year (the aim and objective of the study are described in Section 1.3).

Since UWC is continuing to provide formal access to previously 'disadvantaged' students, and because of the perceived gap in the literature, the need for an in-depth investigation of student failure and success is important and urgent in that the findings can assist staff in the Academic Development Department, and the Faculty as a whole, to better support and provide for the needs of first-year students (Beyer *et al.* 2007:20-21; Strydom & Mentz 2010:4). I am of the opinion that the students and the institution that admits them are two of the most important role players in the learning process. Much research had been

conducted on both these two role players already (Biggs 1999, Bitzer 2009; Walker 2004, 2006; Willams, 1997) but in this study, the focus is only on the students and their experiences of the first year of study in the EMS faculty at UWC. I concur with Beyeret *al.* (2007: 20) in this regard. I also focus on the first year of study because it had been identified by many researchers in higher education that success in the first year of study is a determiner for success in the subsequent years of study (Baijnath 1997; Leibowitz 1994, 2001; Louw 2005; Scott 2009a). Van Schalkwyk, Leibowitz and Van der Merwe (2009:3) put it in this way: “It is little wonder then, that with the increase in student diversity internationally, educationists who seek to enhance student success should pay attention to the moment of greatest transition, the first year of study”.

The main research question consequently is:

What factors emerge as the primary drivers of success in the first year of the three-year degree programme of study for students registered in the EMS faculty at UWC?

The sub-questions are:

1. Who is the UWC student in the EMS faculty?
2. What are the challenges to learning for a UWC student in the EMS faculty?
3. How do these challenges to learning influence student performance?
4. Why do some students within the same context achieve success and others do not?

Flick (2009:98) states that “[r]esearch questions do not come from nowhere. In many cases their origin lies in the researchers’ personal biographies and their social contexts. The decision about a specific question mostly depends on the researchers’ practical interests and their involvement in certain social and historical contexts”. I can concur with him, because I work with first-year students, and their well-being and success are my top priority. I therefore wanted to listen to students and allow them to explain what the challenges to learning that they were struggling with were and how they attempted to deal with and overcome them. Equally important to this purpose was the fact that the identification of the challenges and the enabling factors would direct the staff in ADD and the Faculty as to how assist first-year students could be assisted in the learning process. With this study, I wanted to afford the students an opportunity to share their experiences of what it was to be a first-year student in the EMS faculty at UWC.

1.3 AIM AND OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

Given the context which I have described above, the aim of the study was to investigate factors that had an impact on the successful completion of the first year of study by registered first-year students in the three-year degree programme in the EMS faculty. The objective of the study was twofold: firstly, to determine which factors impacted on failure or successful completion of the first year of study in the faculty; and secondly, to derive from the data a socially situated, supportive and holistic learning approach which could assist more students to be successful in the learning process.

1.4 THEORETICAL ORIENTATION

In order to arrive at a socially situated, supportive and holistic learning approach, the theoretical orientation in this study is based on Vygotsky's (1979, 1994) social cultural theory and Bandura's (1986, 2001) social cognitive theory. Vygotsky (1979:131) views learning "as a profoundly social process" and explains that his social cultural theory is centred around the notion that the environment in which human beings live and function is the source of development of their personalities and characteristics which ultimately reflects their historical and cultural contexts. Bandura (1986:18) adds to the social nature of human beings' development where he explains human functioning "[i]n terms of a model of triadic reciprocity in which behavior, cognitive and other personal factors, and environmental events all operate as interacting determinants of each other". Bandura (1986:51) argues that "[l]earning is largely an information-processing activity" and that human beings acquire behaviour patterns from people whom they observe. His theory "[s]ubscribes to a model of emergent interactive agency" which in turn differentiates among three different modes of agency, namely personal, proxy and collective agency (Bandura, 2001:13). I am of the opinion that these two theories complement each other in that they demonstrate how the social situatedness of development and learning is manifested in the lives of human beings as collective (Vygotsky), and as individuals (Bandura). Because these two theories approach and regard human development, and therefore learning, as a social practice, I decided to use them as the theoretical orientation of this study because I, too, regard learning as a socially situated and constructed practice. I therefore argue that these two theories are best suited for achieving the objective of this study – which is to arrive at a socially situated, supportive and holistic learning approach. A detailed discussion on selected theories on learning including these two theories is presented in the next chapter under Sections 2.2 and 2.3.

1.5 RESEARCH APPROACH

This study is set in a qualitative paradigm in search for an understanding of a specific phenomenon. Thus, the study is interpretive in nature. Denzin and Lincoln (2000:19) argue that “All research is interpretive; it is guided by a set of beliefs and feelings about the world and how it should be understood and studied”. To this end, Creswell (2007:42) states that

We conduct qualitative research because a problem or issue needs to be explored. ...We also conduct qualitative research because we need a complex, detailed understanding of the issue. ...We conduct qualitative research when we want to empower individuals to share their stories, hear their voices, and allowing them to tell the stories unencumbered by what we expect to find or what we have read in the literature. ...We conduct qualitative research because we want to understand the contexts or settings in which participants in a study address a problem or issue.

My intention is to attempt an understanding of the context in which new first-year students in the EMS faculty learn, and what the challenges to learning and enabling factors were for a specific group of students; an understanding, thus, of the who, the where, the what, the why and the how of these students (Gubrium & Holstein 2000). Gubrium and Holstein (2000:488) state that “Interpretive practice engages both the hows and the whats of social reality; it is centered both in how people methodologically construct their experiences and their worlds and in the configurations of meaning”. The perspective in this dissertation is therefore from the students and about the students only. I wanted to empower new first-year students to ‘share their stories, to hear their voices, and to allow them to tell their stories in the form of written reflections, a questionnaire and individual interviews unencumbered by what I expect to find or what I have read in the literature’, as Creswell states above. I have done so by gathering extensive data from the two groups of students, and I used Henning’s (2004) three stages of open coding strategy to unpack the data. Analysing the data assisted me to not only understand the issues that the students have to face in the learning process, but to identify the challenges to learning and the reasons why some of them failed their modules. It also assisted me to identify the enabling factors and why some of them passed all their modules. The students’ responses obtained from the data elicited devices assisted me to present a composite picture that included factors for failure and success that were not only located in the student or the institution, but formed a complex and layered image of student failure and success. Because of that I could make recommendations in Chapter 7 for a socially situated, supportive and holistic learning approach for new first-year students in this Faculty.

1.6 RESEARCH DESIGN

I used a case study research design for the study because it focused on a specific faculty and a specific cohort of students. Leibowitz (2001:66) strongly argues for the use of case study research (while paraphrasing Yin, 1995), because it allows for an in-depth study that focuses on specific factors, and not general ones, and allows for the use of “multiple sources of evidence”. Holliday (2001:80) states that “...thick description generates a richness of perceptions while reflecting and exploring data records’, ‘discovering patterns and constructing and exploring impressions’...” in small case studies. Researchers such as Creswell (2007), Flick (2009), Henning (2004), Stake (1995) and Yin (2009) hold similar views on the usefulness of case study designs. Using a case study research design enabled me to identify the first-year students’ specific needs in the learning process and environment, and the factors that impact positively and negatively on their progress. It is important to note here that my role in this process varied from researcher (outsider) to co-participant (insider) because I collected the data myself and the students became known to me on a personal level (Babbie & Mouton 2001; Chilisa & Preece 2005; Henning 2004). I was also one of the lecturers teaching one of the modules that the students must do in their first year of study in this Faculty.

At the start of the research project in April, 2009, participants were two groups of 20 first-year students each, with a variety of Grade 12 results. The one group, referred to as Case 1, comprised students who were less successful in the subjects that they were registered for in 2009. The other group, referred to as Case 2, was successful in all the subjects that they were registered for in 2009. These two groups were purposively selected through an intensity sampling strategy (Patton 1990, 2008). Patton (1990:182) states that an intensity sampling strategy allows for “information-rich cases that manifest the phenomenon intensely, but not extremely, such as good students/poor students/above average/below average”. Students with a variety of Grade 12 results were also representative of the different kinds of students UWC admits. The groups were selected at the beginning of Term 2, in the first semester of 2009, when there was a reasonable indication of the students’ progress, since they had completed their coursework components in Term 1 and received feedback on how they performed.

1.6.1 Data collection process

A case study design requires the use of multiple sources of evidence in order to enhance reliability and validity (Stake 1995, 2006; Yin 2009). I therefore used both quantitative and

qualitative data gathering devices. The reason why I used quantitative data gathering devices was to triangulate and validate the qualitative data sets. The data sets were collected in three phases, namely an initial phase, a core phase, and a final phase (Van Schalkwyk 2008). Each phase contained two data sets. The data for the initial phase consisted of one qualitative set (Data set no. 1 - Written reflection 1), in which the students identified what was positive about their studies so far, how they were doing in their different subjects and what the challenges to learning were, and suggestions on how to overcome the challenges. I used this data set to select the two groups of students in April, 2009. The second data set (Data set no. 2) was a quantitative factual data set (the biographical and geographical information of the students that was obtained from the University's official database in May 2009). These two sets of data were gathered during Term 2 of the first semester of 2009 and provided answers to the first two sub-questions.

Data for the core phase consisted of a second written reflection (qualitative Data set no. 3), in which the students identified what the enabling factors were that allowed them to pass their semester modules, and what the reasons were why some of them failed some or all of their first-semester modules and why some of them passed some modules. This data set was gathered at the beginning of Term 3 in July, 2009. Data set no. 4 consisted of a questionnaire (both quantitative and qualitative in nature) that the students completed in order to determine whether or not they received support from their family and friends, what the enabling factors were, what their challenges to learning were at that stage of the process and suggestions on how they could overcome these challenges. This data set was gathered towards the end of Term 4 in October, 2009. These data sets provided answers to sub-questions 1, 2, 3 and 4.

Data for the final phase consisted of one quantitative and one qualitative set. The quantitative data set (Data set no. 5) consisted of the students' final results and their promotion status. This data set was obtained from the University's official database during Term 1 in March 2010. The last data set (Data set no. 6) consisted of the students' written responses to questions asked during individual interviews conducted with them, also in March, Term 1, 2010. The questions asked in the interview attempted to find answers to whether or not the students were the first in their families to study at a university, if they were affected by HIV/AIDS and, lastly, what advice (in the form of suggestions) they would give to prospective first-year students. Data set no. 6 also provided answers to sub-

questions 2, 3, and 4. Data set no. 5 (the students' results) was used to triangulate and validate all four qualitative data sets.

1.6.2 Data analysis

As mentioned above, content analysis was used to work through the qualitative data sets. I follow Babbie and Mouton (2001), Henning (2004) and Yin (2009) in this regard, which allowed me to identify categories, themes and sub-themes in the data. I used an 'open coding' strategy for the content analysis process (Henning 2004:104-109). I decided to use 'open coding' for two reasons; firstly, because it involves three different stages of working through the data, and that assisted me to work through the written information and to move back and forth in the process. Secondly, 'open coding' allows for an inductive approach for analysing qualitative data, and this was advisable from the literature, as will be discussed in Chapter 4. As Creswell (2007:38) suggests, "Qualitative researchers build their patterns, categories and themes from the 'bottom up', by organizing the data into increasingly more abstract units of information. This inductive process involves researchers working back and forth between the themes and the database until they establish a comprehensive set of themes".

The first process of 'open coding' involved first a general reading of the data per data set, which allowed me to orient myself and to get a general 'sense' of what the students were saying. I also noted each response and comment made (verbatim) in this stage. A second reading was done to identify 'units of meaning', which were categorised and grouped into the four themes in the analytical framework. In this stage I moved back and forth in the data, trying to identify and group the units of meaning appropriately until I was 'reasonably' certain that a level of consistency was emerging. The third process involved grouping related categories and themes together into sub-themes (Henning 2004:104-109). It should be noted here that I did not follow a purely inductive approach in the analysis of the data. I had some ideas already on what to look for in the data, based on the theories and the findings from the five studies conducted on student learning, failures and dropouts that I discuss in Chapter 3. As will be seen in Chapter 3, Section 3, 5, I arrived at a student centred augmented analytical framework and used the themes and sub-themes in the framework as a guide and organizing principle for the analysis of the data. Doing it this way assisted me to identify sub-themes that were similar to the ones in the framework, as well as sub-themes that were not already in the framework. I started the analysis process in November 2009 and completed it at the end of April 2010.

1.7 DEFINITION OF KEY CONCEPTS USED

There are two key concepts used throughout this dissertation, namely 'disadvantaged' and 'underprepared' students. I must make it clear at this point that I do not subscribe to these two concepts, but that they are used in this study because they are commonly known and used in the South African context. These concepts are therefore in single inverted commas throughout the dissertation. A detailed discussion on these two concepts is provided in Section 3.3.3. For clarity and better understanding, other key concepts that are used in the dissertation will now be defined.

1.7.1 Black students

The concept 'black students' refers to the terminology used in the *apartheid* era and includes students who are African, Indian and coloured. It is used because it is required by the DoE when pass and failure rates are reported and the term is not intended to be degrading or discriminatory in any way.

1.7.2 Successful learning and failure

The concept of 'successful learning' is a complex one. However, in the context of this dissertation it is used to indicate that a student had passed all the required modules in the first year, and is promoted to the second year of study. It also means that such a student did not deregister some of the modules during the course of the academic year or replaced these with other modules in order to pass and be promoted to the second year of study.

'Failure' in the context of this dissertation means that a student did not pass all the required modules in the first year of study. Because of this, a student's promotion could be failed or academically excluded. 'Failure' is also used to include students who failed some of the compulsory modules in the first semester and who have to register for the same modules in the second semester in order to be promoted to the next year of study. This implies that such a student has to deregister some of the electives at the beginning of the second semester in order to re-register for the ones that were failed in the first semester (Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences 2009b). Lastly, the concept 'failure' is also used more broadly to include a student who managed to pass some of the modules and was promoted to the next year of study. However, because the student failed some of the required first year modules, such a student will not be able to complete his/her degree in the required three years of study since he/she has to repeat modules in the second and subsequent years.

1.7.3 Challenges to learning

The concept 'challenges to learning' is used and understood in this dissertation to mean any difficulty that students encounter in the learning process; therefore, any factor or issue that is a barrier to learning and that could prevent a student from being successful in the learning process.

1.7.4 Enabling factors

'Enabling factors' are understood in this study as any issues or factors that fulfil a supporting and enabling role in the learning process. Therefore, 'enabling factors' are factors such as learning strategies that a student uses to overcome the challenges in order for successful learning to occur.

1.7.5 Modules

The concept 'modules' is the term that the Faculty uses to refer to subjects or learning areas in the different disciplines in the Faculty. They are divided into first-semester modules and second-semester modules and have a credit value of 15 credits attached to each in the first year of study. First-year students are required to register and pass eight modules in the first year of study with a total value of 120 credits. Six of the eight are compulsory modules and the remaining two are electives. When students do not pass some of the compulsory modules in the first semester, they are given another chance to re-register for these at the beginning of the second semester. However, when this happens, the students are forced to deregister the electives, and carry these over to the next year of study, which means that they will not be able to complete their degrees in the prescribed time of three years (Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences 2009b).

1.8 POSITIONING THE STUDY

As described in Section 1.5 above, this study is positioned within an interpretative paradigm. The focus of this study is on new students' learning experiences in their first year of study in the EMS faculty at UWC. The premise of this study is therefore student-centred — only the students' experiences, feelings and perceptions were examined and reported. This study could therefore be regarded as limited in that it did not take the views and perceptions of the institution into consideration (the limitations of the study are noted in Section 7.7).

I have explained in Section 1.2 that education in general, and higher education in particular, is in urgent need of more institution specific research on how students learn and what the enabling factors are that will allow for the successful learning and retention of student cohorts nationally. I therefore use a socially situated theoretical orientation to analyse the issues identified and reported on by the students in Chapters 5 and 6. The social situated theoretical orientation assisted me to demonstrate the interconnectedness and interdependency of the themes and sub-themes analysed and discussed, and the social embeddedness of the learning process.

The findings and recommendations of this study could therefore contribute to the growing body of knowledge with regard to higher education and successful student learning. While many studies have already identified challenges to learning and factors that influence student failure and dropout rates, the findings and recommendations of my study could shed further light on the interaction and dynamics of the challenges experienced (Haggis 2009), and on what the enabling factors ought to be for successful learning, especially for black students at institutions of higher learning in South Africa.

Lastly, since I was also involved in the teaching of one of the modules that the students must register for and pass in their first year of study, my role in this process varied between researcher (outsider) and co-participant (insider) as the discussions and explanations unfolded (Babbie & Mouton 2001:53). My involvement in the research process could therefore raise the issue of objectivity and subjectivity in the way I presented and interpreted the data in this dissertation. To this end, Patton (1990:55) states that the “terms objectivity and subjectivity have become ideological ammunition in the paradigm debate. The ideals of absolute objectivity and value-free science are impossible to attain in practice and of questionable desirability in the first place because they ignore the intrinsically social nature and human purposes of research”. Holliday (2001) also discusses the issue of objectivity in research designs, and concludes that there is no such thing as a purely objective research design. Gillham (2000:28) states that “[o]bjectivity’ in the absolute sense may be impossibility but that doesn’t mean that you immerse yourself in an uncritical subjectivity. You strive for a level of detached honesty which acknowledges your own place in the scheme of things”. Henning (2004:26) adds that it “[d]oes not mean that bias by definition is a negative notion, it means that the point of entry into the research is different and needs to be made explicit”. For me, the best way that one could try to ensure an accepted level of objectivity or to validate your research findings is, following

Holliday (2001:47), “to show the workings, to reveal how [I] have managed the subjectivity inherent within [my] research”. This, according to him, “is the major way in which rigour can be maintained, and makes the writing of the research a central element in achieving accountability” (Holliday 2001:47). I have attempted to do this by being candid here in Chapter 1 about my two roles and by ‘showing the workings where I have tried to give reasons and supporting evidence in the form of references to discussions, decisions made, actions taken and procedures followed throughout this dissertation (Gillham 2000; Holliday 2001).

1.9 DISSERTATION STRUCTURE

This chapter provided an outline of the study that is comprehensively described in the six chapters that follow. Chapter 2 discusses the theoretical orientation of this study together with selected learning theories, and five research studies that were conducted on student learning, failure and dropouts. Chapter 3 provides contextual background on higher education in South Africa and its impact on UWC as higher education institution, UWC’s role in academic development, its admission policy, and the type of students that it admits. Based on the discussions in these two chapters, a student centred augmented analytical framework was arrived at (see Section 3.5) and used as a guide and organising principle for the analysis of the data.

Chapter 4 is the methodology chapter in which the research approach, the research design, the research participants, the data gathering and the analytical process followed are described. In each instance, the different decisions for action taken are explained and justified on the basis of the existing body of knowledge in the field of qualitative research. Chapter 5 and 6 are the two analytical chapters in which the data of the two Cases are analysed. Chapter 5 deals with Case 1, the group of students who were less successful in their first year of study in 2009, while Chapter 6 deals with Case 2, the group of students who were successful.

Finally, Chapter 7, the concluding chapter of this dissertation, draws together all the discussions of the previous chapters. The findings of both Cases are synthesised, compared and related to the existing theories discussed in Chapter 2. These findings enabled recommendations for a socially situated, supportive and holistic learning approach for the EMS faculty, the Academic Development Department and the University. I conclude

this chapter and the dissertation with comments on opportunities for further research, the noting of the limitations of the study and a final reflection on what this study meant to me.

CHAPTER 2

THEORETICAL ORIENTATION

2.1 INTRODUCTION

My departure point in this study as stated in Section 1.4 is that learning is socially situated and constructed. I therefore acknowledge that the learning process is multilayered and complex; and that successful learning depends on many different role players, different variables and different historical and contextual factors. The complexity of the learning process accentuates the social nature thereof and because of this, I opted to use Vygotsky's social cultural theory and Bandura's social cognitive theory as theoretical orientation for the study. Through a discussion of these two social theories, I am able to demonstrate the social situatedness of learning and how the students who are the main participants in this study function therein. This forms the foundation for the analysis of the data as presented in Chapters 5 and 6.

I begin with a brief overview of how learning theories have evolved over the years and then I present a detailed discussion of the social cultural and social cognitive theories. Thereafter, I discuss the challenges that emerge from the literature as having an influence on students' learning, and this I do through reviewing five research studies that were conducted on student learning, failure and dropout rates. The synthesis of the findings from these studies assisted me in identifying possible gaps in the literature that this study could address and to which it could make a contribution. I then conclude this chapter with a personal reflection of what was discussed in this chapter.

2.2 AN OVERVIEW OF HOW LEARNING THEORIES EVOLVED

Learning theories have evolved over centuries through the work of research and education pioneers, and various attempts have been made to categorise them (see, for example, Ornstein and Levine's 1985 discussion of twelve educational pioneers, from which twelve learning theories originated, in their book *An Introduction to the Foundations of Education*). Based on these categories, Schunk (2008) for example, distinguishes between two over-arching groupings, namely behavioural learning theories and cognitive learning theories. He (2008:16) states that "[b]ehavioral theories view learning as a change in the rate, frequency of occurrence, or form of behaviour or response, which occurs primarily as a function of environmental factors. Behavioral theories contend that learning involves the

formation of associations between stimuli and response”. He classifies Pavlov’s classical conditioning and Skinner’s conditioning theories as behavioural theories. Cognitive theories, on the other hand, according to Schunk (2008:16-27) “[s]tress the acquisition of knowledge and skills, the formation of mental structures, and the processing of information and beliefs”. These two groupings provide some insight into the early research that was carried out by researchers about how people learn. Much research and many experiments were conducted that gave prominence and validity to these two over-arching groupings of how people learn (Schunk 2008).

However, these theories were contested and critics thereof highlighted the fact that they were very limited in their application, and did not consider other factors that could influence learning (Schunk 2008). I, too, find the fact that these theorists exclude other factors that could influence learning and thereby presenting their theories independently, problematic. However, I am reviewing them here because I believe that there is some merit in both of them. When new knowledge is constructed, a change in behaviour ought to occur (which could be based on an intrinsic or extrinsic stimulus) and it would result in personal growth and development (Killen 2000, 2005; Nieman 2006). The motivation to learn and to continue learning could be based on environment factors (e.g. a scheduled test) as Pavlov and Skinner rightly argued, but it could equally be based on other factors such as, for example, intrinsic motivation, role models, and the need for self-actualization (Biggs 1999; Maslow 1954, 1971; Schunk, Pintrich & Meece 2008). It is the same for the cognitive theories - the acquisition of new knowledge does involve cognition and the extent to which one is able to use and apply one’s cognitive skills (Marton & Booth 2005; Monteith 1996). Criticism of cognitive theories is therefore justified because there are other factors that also contribute to successful learning as Killen (2000, 2005), Kuh *et al.*(2005), Landsberg (2005) and Strydom and Mentz (2010) advocate.

Three other researchers, Bransford, Brown and Cocking (1999), describe concepts of learning under five areas based on research that was generated in the last 30 years. According to Bransford *et al* (1999) the five areas of learning are memory and the structure of knowledge, analysis of problem solving and reasoning, early foundations, metacognitive processes and self-regulatory capabilities, and cultural experience and community participation. They(1999) state that there was a move away from teacher-centred learning to how students understand and apply learned knowledge, thus a move to student-centred learning. These areas resonate with mainstream theories (to which I subscribe) that

learning is socially situated. The most important of these for this study are Bandura (1986:51), Barton (1994, 2007:34), Gee (2008:3-4), Street (1995:141; 2003:77-78) and Vygotsky (1979:131), among others.

Lastly, Illeris (2002) describes learning under three dimensions, namely cognitive, emotional and social. By integrating the cognitive, behavioural and social dimensions of learning, Illeris provides a more holistic representation of how learning occurs. He (2002:18) states that, within the cognitive dimension, learning is seen to include both knowledge and motor learning skills that are controlled by the central nervous system and that forms part of the cognitive process. The second dimension implies that learning is an emotional process, or what psychologists will refer to as a psychodynamic process involving psychological energy, transmitted by feelings, emotions, attitudes and motivations, which combine and, at the same time, are conditions that may be influenced and developed through learning. The third and last dimension portrays learning as a social process, taking place in the interaction between the individual and her surroundings, and thus in the final analysis a process dependent on historical and societal influences. In the section that follows, I discuss Vygotsky's (1979, 1994) social cultural theory and Bandura's (1986) social cognitive theory and will show how the learning theories already discussed resonate with these two theories.

2.3 THE SOCIAL SITUATEDNESS OF LEARNING

A discussion of Vygotsky's social cultural theory is presented first and thereafter, Bandura's cognitive social theory. Both these theories approach human development and human learning from a social perspective and reflect the social embeddedness of learning aptly.

2.3.1 Vygotsky's social cultural theory

Vygotsky (1994:352) argues that the environment in which human beings operate is the source of development of their personalities and characteristics. This environment includes a membership of belonging to a specific social group, living in a specific historical period and in specific historical circumstances. He (1994:175-176) explains: "As an individual only exists as a social being, as a member of some social group within whose context he follows the road of his historical development, the composition of his personality and the structure of his behaviour turn out to be a quantity which is dependent on social evolution and whose main aspects are determined by the latter". To this extent

he (1979:131) argues “[h]uman beings actively realize and change themselves in the varied contexts of culture and history”. This is how he arrives at his historical cultural approach of human development. Vygotsky (1979:131) views learning “as a profoundly social process” and advances the “zone of proximal development” which according to him (1979:131) “is the distance between the [child’s] actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers”. Learning then “is a necessary and universal aspect of the process of developing culturally organized, specifically human, psychological functions” (Vygotsky 1979:91).

Vygotsky (1994:176) also states that the development of human beings gave rise to the underpinnings of capitalism: the division between intellectual and physical labour, the separation between town and country, the exploitation of child and female labour, poverty and the unequal development of human beings’ potential as one extreme thereof. The other extreme according to him (1994:176) idleness and luxury, resulted not only in the single human type becoming differentiated and fragmented into many different social class types (such as very rich, rich, middle class, working class and the poor) and disparity, but also in the corruption and distortion of the human personality and its subjection to inappropriate one-sided development within all these different modifications of the human type. Vygotsky (1994:178) concludes by stating “As a result of capitalism, the development of material production simultaneously brought with it the progressive division of labour and the constantly growing distorted development of the human potential”. It is this “constantly growing distorted development of the human potential” that is evident among most of the undergraduate students that UWC admits in that they are entering higher education as ‘disadvantaged’ and ‘underprepared’ (Letseka, Cosser, Breier & Visser 2010:25) (see discussion in Section 3.3.4).

‘Disadvantaged’ and ‘underprepared’ because as Vygotsky explains above, South Africa is a good example of how capitalism and the division of human beings into different social class categories impacted on its citizens. The *apartheid* ideology of the South African government pre-1994 resulted in an uneven and unfair distribution of economic, social and political power (Letseka *et al.* 2010:25). The social theorist Bourdieu (1993:37-40) refers to this power as the “field of cultural production”, and the “field of power” when he discusses the role of culture in the reproduction of social structures, and the way in which unequal

power relations, unrecognised as such and thus accepted as legitimate, are embedded in the systems of classification used to describe and discuss everyday life, as well as in cultural practices and in the ways of perceiving reality that are taken for granted by the members of society. I would argue that there is just one exception in Bourdieu's theory as far as South Africa is concerned — the unequal power relations in South Africa were not unrecognised, but explicit and made legal through the *apartheid* government's ideology of separateness and white superiority. It is in response to the dismantling of this *apartheid* ideology that the current transformation process in education is taking place in South Africa. One could argue that the democratic government is on a mission to foster social justice and social reconstruction (see discussion of the transformation process in higher learning under Section 3.2.2).

In this context (social justice and social reconstruction), Vygotsky's social cultural theory encompasses three important factors about human development and human learning. The first factor is that Vygotsky acknowledges that human development and learning does not occur in isolation, but within a social network of family, friends, communities and the broader environment. Barton's (2007) views on an ecological approach to literacy resonates with this factor of Vygotsky in that Barton (2007:34) states that an ecological approach to literacy starts from people's everyday activities and that they are constructed by their literacy events and literacy practices in the environment in which they function. From this one could infer that human beings' development and learning is constructed and influenced by the family's background, beliefs, culture, language and socio-economic status. The second factor is that Vygotsky's theory explains that learning is developmental and that human beings, and thus students, need guidance and assistance in the learning process in order to develop their full potential in his "zone of proximal development" (Vygotsky 1979:131). These are also the views of researchers such as Killen (2000, 2005), Kuh *et al.* (2005) and Strydom and Mentz (2010). The third and last factor is that Vygotsky's theory also accounts for the differences in socio-economic and political power and why there is a huge disparity in the labour force of a country and in the spread of wealth and resources in his explanation of the consequences of capitalism. Bourdieu's (1993) works on the field of cultural production is also applicable to this factor.

2.3.2 Bandura's social cognitive theory

To this end, Bandura (1986:18) explains human functioning "[i]n terms of a model of triadic reciprocity in which behavior, cognitive and other personal factors, and

environmental events all operate as interacting determinants of each other” — this he describes as his social cognitive theory. This description resonates with Bransford *et al.*'s(1999) five areas of learning and Illeris's (2002) three dimensions of learning. Bandura (1986:18-21) defines the nature of human beings in terms of five basic capabilities, namely “[s]ymbolizing capability, forethought capability, vicarious capability (observation and modeling), self-regulatory capability and self-reflective capability”. Symbolizing capability refers to human beings' capacity to use symbols – “[t]hrough symbols people process and transform transient experiences into internal models that serve as guides for future action” (Bandura 1986:18). Bandura (1986:19) further explains that human beings' behaviour is regulated by forethought and “[t]hrough exercise of forethought, people motivate themselves and guide their actions anticipatorily”. Vicarious capability is human beings' ability to learn by observing others (Bandura 1986:19). Self-regulatory capability is derived from how human beings motivate themselves based on their internal values and self-evaluative feedback to their own actions (Bandura 1986:20). Lastly, self-reflective capability is human beings' ability for reflective self-consciousness. It allows human beings to analyse their experiences and to reflect on their own thought processes. By reflecting on their experiences and on what they know, they can obtain basic knowledge about themselves and the world around them (Bandura 1986:21).

According to Bandura (1986:51) “[l]earning is largely an information-processing activity in which information about the structure of behaviour and about environmental events is transformed into symbolic representations that serve as guides for action”. He (1986:47) is of the opinion that most human behaviour is learned by observation through modeling (vicarious capability). This implies that when we observe others, we form rules of behaviour, and on future occasions this coded information serves as a guide for our own actions. Thus, having a vicarious capability enables people to expand their knowledge and skills on the basis of information demonstrated and authored by others. For Bandura (1986:47), social learning is fostered by observing the actual performance of others and the consequences of their actions and then adjusting one's own behaviour accordingly.

Bandura explains further how the historical and cultural context constructs and impacts human beings' behaviour. He (1986:454) states: “Behaviour is, therefore, a product of both self-generated and external sources of influence”. According to him (1986:454), most external influences affect behaviour through intermediary cognitive processes in that cognitive factors to a certain extent determine which environmental occurrences will be

observed, what meaning will be derived from them, whether they leave any lasting effects, what valence and value they will have, and how the information they communicate will be organised for future use. By symbolically controlling the information derived from personal and observed experiences, people can understand behaviour and generate new knowledge based on the observed experiences of other people. This could mean that, in the context of the learning process, students would observe the behaviour of others (family members, peers, lecturers and role models) in order to determine how to act and what could work for them.

Lastly, Bandura's explanation of self-regulatory and self-reflective capabilities, which he says has to do with human beings' perceived self-efficacy, shifts the focus from the collective to the individual. Bandura (1986:391) defines perceived self-efficacy "[a]s people's judgments of their capabilities to organize and execute courses of action required to attain designated types of performance. It is concerned not with the skills one has but with judgments of what one can do with whatever skills one possesses". He (1986:391) is of the opinion that perceived self-efficacy is an important determinant of performance that operates to a certain extent independently of underlying skills. He (1986:391) makes a distinction between competent functioning and operative efficacy and explains that competent functioning needs both skills and self-beliefs of efficacy to be effective. Operative efficacy on the other hand, according to him, calls for continually improvising multiple sub-skills to manage changing circumstances, most of which contain unclear, unpredictable, and often demanding factors (see also Schunk *et al.* 2008:122-123, 139-146).

To this extent, Bandura (2001:4) explains that his social cognitive theory "[s]ubscribes to a model of emergent interactive agency" which in turn differentiates among three different modes of agency, namely personal, proxy and collective agency (Bandura 2001:13). Personal agency refers to the cognitive, motivational, affective and choice processes of individuals; proxy agency refers to the social conditions and institutional practices that affect people's everyday lives. Bandura (2001:13) explains that people rely on other people who are in position of power to act on their behalf and to secure the outcome they want (proxy agency). Collective agency refers to people's shared belief in their collective power to produce wanted results and it serves the same role of personal efficacy beliefs and functions through similar processes (Bandura 2001:14). This explanation of Bandura moves away from the collective and brings the focus on the individual and, in the context

of this study, it would mean the individual students and how they would use their personal, proxy and collective agencies to assist them in the learning process. However, Leibowitz (2009: 96) states “[i]t is the responsibility of the institution to ensure that material, structural and affective conditions exist for individuals to exercise agency”. This statement thus implies that students will not be able to exercise their agency (successfully) unless the institution provides a conducive and supportive learning environment.

The choice processes in personal agency resonate for me with what Barnett (2007) explains about the notion of “will” in learning. Barnett (2007) takes a philosophical approach to student learning in the higher education context in his book *A Will to Learn: Being a Student in an Age of Uncertainty*, and makes the student central to the learning process. Barnett (2007:15) states “[w]ill is the most important concept in education. Without a will, nothing is possible. At any level of education, a pupil, a student cannot make serious progress unless she has a will to do so”. He provides two reasons for making this claim, firstly by explaining that students are adults and are at university out of their own “wittingness”, and secondly, that they are commencing “on a major personal project of their own” (Barnett 2007:15). Barnett (2007:16) further states that the student is making a commitment “to herself and of herself”, and that “[i]t is a matter of the student having a will to learn, and that will being sustained over time”. The commitment “to herself and of herself” is a “double commitment” that the student makes. Barnett (2007:16) explains that the first commitment is a “practical” commitment — the student is committing herself to making the time to study, while the second commitment is “an ontological” commitment — “[t]he student wills herself to accept the discipline that her studies will bring”. This could imply that the student is willingly and consciously making the choice to study and to succeed in the learning process. I would argue that such a choice is an important one to make for any student who wants to be successful in his/her studies because it would be the ‘will to learn’ that would compel a student to apply his or her agency effectively and that would assist the student to persevere when the challenges arise.

Thus, the focus of this study is exactly that: how first-year students experience and act in the learning process (what they do and not do). It is therefore important to restate at this point, while I acknowledge the importance of the other role players in the learning process, the many different variables, historical and contextual factors; the main focus in this study

is on the students and how they experience the learning process. The aim for doing this, as stated in Section 1.3, was to investigate factors that have an impact on the successful completion of the first year of study by registered first-year students in the three-year degree programme in the EMS faculty. The objective was twofold: first, to determine which factors have an impact on failure or successful completion of the first year of study in this faculty; and second, to derive from the data a socially situated, supportive and holistic learning approach that could help the University to assist more students to be successful in the learning process. Having discussed the two social theories separately, I now compare and conclude the discussion on the two theories in the section that follows next.

2.3.3 Comparison of Vygotsky and Bandura's social theories

From the discussion of these two social theories, there are at least three similarities and one difference discernible between them. The first similarity could be found in Vygotsky's discussion of human beings' personalities and characteristics and Bandura's explanation of the five basic capabilities which human beings have. The basic capabilities would form part of human beings' personalities and characteristics. The second similarity relates to the membership of belonging to a specific social group that functions within a specific historical period and specific historical circumstances for which Vygotsky argues. The specific social group that functions within a specific and historical period and specific historical circumstances resonates with Bandura's description of the environmental factors which influence human behaviour. The third similarity lies in the fact that both theories acknowledge that human beings' development and functioning in the world, and therefore learning, are based on social situatedness; they are social beings that function within a socially and culturally constructed environment. This means that their behaviour, how they act and how they develop and learn is constructed and influenced by the communities in which they live and function.

The difference lies in the perspectives from which they argue: a social cultural perspective (Vygotsky) and a social cognitive perspective (Bandura). Vygotsky explains how the historical and cultural experiences of human beings impact on their personalities and characteristics, and their behaviour and development. His perspective is therefore on the collective and the impact thereof. Bandura, on the other hand, focuses on the individual and explains how the experiences and influences are manifested in the cognition of individuals and how that shapes their thinking patterns, behaviour, development and

learning. However, I would argue that this difference is not a contested one, but rather that these two theories complement each other in that they demonstrate how the social situatedness of development and learning is manifested in the lives of human beings as collective (Vygotsky) and as individuals (Bandura). The two theories therefore provide a perspective of how an individual functions within a broader social and cultural context.

Following Vygotsky and Bandura then, the social situatedness of the learning process could be explained within four layers which are interconnected and interrelated. The learning process takes place within a formal social structure: in this case, an institution of higher learning (UWC). This institution is governed and functions within the higher education and training band (HET) in the country and alongside other institutions of higher learning. The HET in turn is governed and functions under the government of the country and within a global higher education context (Smout, 2005; Gultig 2002). These are the first and second over-arching layers of the social embeddedness of learning.

The third layer is the specific institution of higher learning, its social and cultural orientation, its institutional practices, its resources (both human and otherwise) and its students (CHE 2010). The higher learning institution in which the learning process is taking place in this study is UWC. UWC's history and culture is that of an historically black university that caters mainly for the working class and less wealthy sectors in South Africa (CHE 2010; Leibowitz 2001; Walker & Badsha 1993). This layer is situated and functions within the first two layers of the social situatedness of the learning process. Thus, UWC will not only be influenced by the global and national higher education contexts, but also by its own historical, cultural and ideological context that will be different from those of other higher education institutions.

The fourth and last layer in the social situatedness of learning is the students whom I regard as one of the main participants in the learning process. The students bring with them Vygotsky's class character, class nature and class distinctions, as well as Bandura's five basic capabilities which are rooted in the social and cultural environments from where they come and are part of. Because the students that UWC admits come mainly from the working class and less wealthy sectors of society (as already mentioned above), the majority of them come from what came to be known in South Africa as 'disadvantaged' and 'underprepared' environments (see discussion in Section 3.3.4). The students function within all three layers in the learning process and their learning experiences will

be influenced by these three layers of social situatedness. Walker (2006:12) explains it as follows:

Teaching approaches or methods and student learning are therefore socially inflected by the identities of teacher and students, institutionally situated, and influenced by curricular aims and design. It is an interactive, relational space between lecturers and students, and students and students, where knowledge is mediated, where power circulates, and social and institutional structures penetrate. How to teach (and what to teach) is furthermore a practical expression of whether existing cultural, economic and political patterns in any society ought to be reproduced or transformed.

She not only explains the relationship among the layers but she also contextualises the learning process within the broader societal framework which reinforces the social embeddedness of learning as illustrated in Figure 2.1 below.

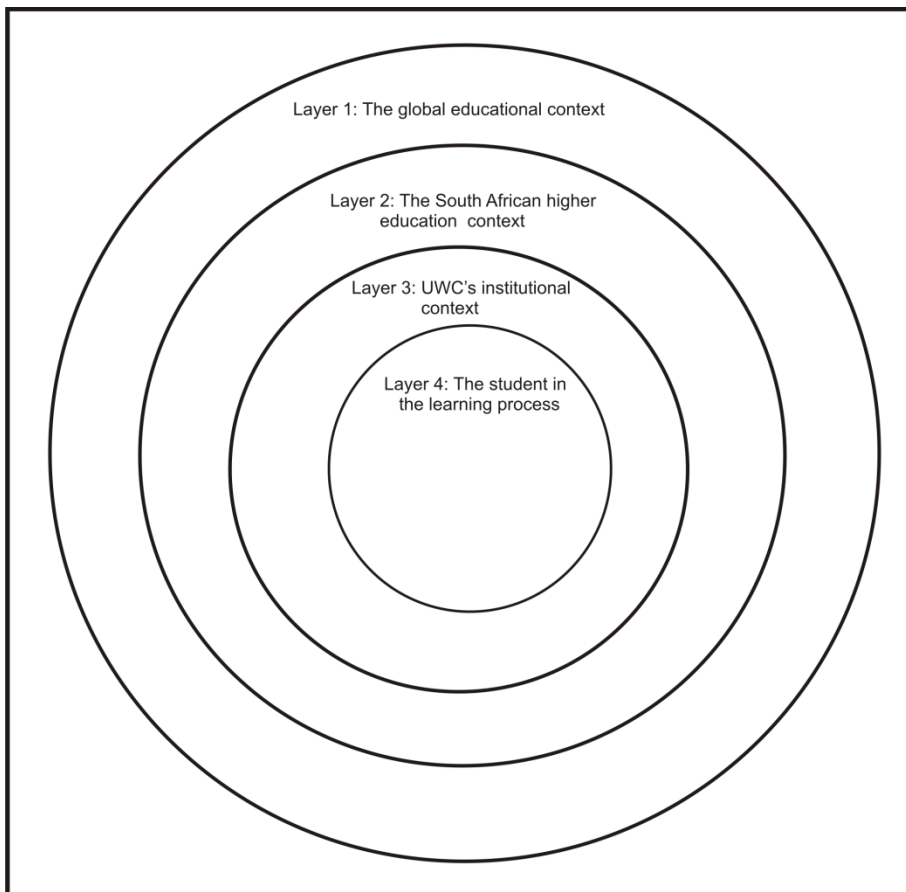


Figure 2.1 The social embeddedness of the learning process

Therefore, because these two social theories depict human development and learning as the interplay and interconnectivity of human behaviours and actions in the environment in which they live and function, I use them as a foundation for my investigation into the

“ecology” of challenges which students face in the learning process (Barton2007:29) and as the basis for the analysis of the data in Chapters 5 and 6.

2.4 CHALLENGES TO LEARNING

The social embeddedness of learning and the many different factors, variables and role players in the learning process make learning complex and challenging. Because of this, many studies conducted on student learning have revealed the different challenges to learning that are major causes for high failure and dropout rates. One such challenge is financial assistance or the lack of it (De Beer 2006:32; Letseka *et al.* 2010:34). A second challenge is the transition from a high school environment to a university environment (CHE 2010:41), while another is that students are not adequately prepared in high school (Bunting 2004:24; Strydom & Mentz 2010:4). It therefore is necessary to explore these and other challenges to learning and how they manifest in the lives of the students. Boughey (2002:305), in her discussion of students’ learning, states that if “SA is to create a more equal society, the crucial issue is not of granting formal access to the institution, but rather of granting epistemological access [ways of knowing] to the process of knowledge construction which sustain it”. This granting of epistemological access to the process of knowledge construction is also what Morrow (1993) is concerned about regarding students that are being admitted to undergraduate degree programmes at UWC (see discussion in Section 3.3.4). And this epistemological access is the main challenge that many first-year students at universities face today. As a result, one could ask the question, how responsive are universities in terms of ensuring epistemological access for their students?

To answer the question, I review findings from five studies conducted on challenges to learning for students at higher education institutions. I selected these five studies because the challenges were placed in a framework based on empirical studies, and these frameworks proved to be useful in identifying learning challenges that students experience in the learning process. The first study is that of Tinto’s (1975) student integration model that he developed after research conducted at various higher education institutions abroad. The other four studies were conducted at higher education institutions in South Africa from 2000 onwards. I review Tinto’s student integration model because his model is widely regarded as the dominant sociological theory of how students find their way and deal with the demands of academe (Swail Redd & Perna 2003:1). It is also one of the most studied models in the field of higher education (Baird 2000:62; Braxton 2000:2; Braxton & Hirschy 2004:89).I acknowledge that there is some criticism against Tinto’s model (see

Section 2.4.1 below), but his model is reasonably comprehensive and provides a useful starting point for an understanding of the kind of challenges that students are faced with and have to overcome in the learning process.

Louw's (2005) study was conducted at four South African higher education institutions in 2005 and is included in the review of the literature because he regards Tinto's student integration model as the model that gives an holistic view of student learning and dropout rates, and Tinto's model assisted Louw to arrive at a more refined conceptual model of the causes that influence students' failure and dropout rates. The categories, themes and sub-themes in Louw's model assisted me to arrive at an augmented student centred analytical framework and it was for these reasons that I deemed it important to include Louw's study as part of the literature review. The other three studies, that of the DoE (2000-2004), the Rural Education Access Programme (REAP) and Research and Academic Development (RAD) study (2007-2008), and Bozalek (2009), are included in the review process because they not only deal with challenges to learning for students at higher education institutions in South Africa, but UWC was also part of the sample in all three. I therefore deem the inclusion of these studies to be relevant and important to this study. I start with Tinto's model because, as stated in the introduction, I am systematically building an understanding of students' challenges to learning in order to identify possible gaps to which this study could make a contribution.

2.4.1 Tinto's student integration model

Tinto formulated a 'student integration model' in 1975 after research that he and a team conducted on students dropping out of higher education institutions abroad. According to Swail *et al.* (2003), Tinto's model is based in part on Durkeim's (1897) theory of suicide (the suicide theory suggests that suicide is more probable when individuals are poorly integrated into the shared structure of an institution) and Tinto argues that the social integration of students increases their institutional commitment and that, in turn, will ultimately reduce student dropout rates. The social integration of students in an institution is important because it refers back to the social embeddedness of learning as discussed in the previous two sections above.

Tinto's (1975) student integration model consists of six characteristics:

1. pre-entry attributes (how the student develops before matriculation to post-secondary education with regard to family background, skills and abilities, and prior schooling);
2. the student's intentions, goals and commitment;
3. how the student experiences the institution with regard to the academic system (academic performance, interaction with staff and faculty) and the social system (extra-curricular activities and peer group interaction);
4. how integration is taking place (both academic and social integration);
5. the student's intentions, goals, institutional commitment and external commitments; and
6. the outcome (decision by the student to remain or to depart).

Tinto is of the opinion that the match between student characteristics and the institution shapes student goals and commitments which, in turn, influence persistence. Criticism of Tinto's model includes the fact that it did not include the interactions of students' off-campus academic and social factors such as finances, family obligations, and external peer groups, while others argue that academic integration does not play a very important part in the success rate of students (Baird 2000; Braxton & Lien 2000; Swail *et al.* 2003). I would argue, however, that the factors identified by the critics are implicit in characteristic number three: the social system (extra-curricular activities and peer group interaction) and characteristic number five: the external commitments. I am also of the opinion that social integration into academic life is an important factor in successful learning based on the social nature of learning. The important contribution for me is that Tinto's model is based, not only on the relationship (that I preferred to call a partnership) between the student and the institution, but it also acknowledges the social embeddedness of learning. These six characteristics also support the argument in this dissertation, which is that learning is socially situated and constructed, and that it involves a complex and dynamic process.

2.4.2 Louw's conceptual framework

Louw (2005) uses Tinto's model as an interpretative framework in his study on first-year student dropout rates at four South African higher education institutions. Building on Tinto's model, his study identifies eight indicators in the academic dimension and four social dimensions that might potentially influence student departure.

The academic indicators are:

1. unclear study goals of students and, related to this, lowered levels of motivation;
2. unrealistic student perceptions of what higher education studies require;
3. Substantial gaps in students' foundational and declarative knowledge;

4. inability of students to adjust academically, mainly due to the difference between expectations at the schooling and higher education levels of study;
5. perceived wrong programme choices, mainly related to poor information or weak student counselling;
6. language difficulties, particularly in cases where the language of instruction was different from the students' home or school language;
7. the level of difficulty or complexity concerning course and learning materials; and
8. access granted to students who did not meet the required access requirements.

Indicators in the social dimension are:

1. inadequate financial provision, accommodation and facilities;
2. institutional information to students that was inadequate or was seen as inadequate;
3. student involvement in 'unhealthy' social activities, such as excessive drinking and 'partying'; and
4. students' inability to manage their time effectively and efficiently.

Based on these risk indicators, Louw proposes a conceptual framework (presented below in Table 2.1) which points to three sets of factors that could potentially contribute to early student departure.

Table 2.1 Louw's conceptual framework model

Student background factors	Student factors	Institutional factors
Self-perceptions of competence Historical experiences School support Academic support Self-confidence Learning style Study skills Options and choices	<p>Academic factors: Perceived low level of academic integration Learning backlogs Heavy workload Inadequate study skills Lacking foundational knowledge Lack of commitment Lack of confidence</p> <p>Social factors: Perceived low level of social integration Academic/social imbalance Language difficulties Financial constraints Lack of family support</p>	<p>Academic factors: Inadequate learning support Inadequate language and communication in classes Large classes Inadequate facilities Inefficient administration Skewed access measures Inadequate teaching Type of assessment Inadequate/wrong course information</p> <p>Social factors: Limited opportunities Limited facilities Inadequate accommodation</p>

Louw (2005:267-270) concludes his study by suggesting that appropriate attention to these risk indicators could limit dropout rates and early departure from higher education institutions in the future. Where Tinto's model did not identify some factors explicitly, and in some cases the characteristics overlapped, Louw's conceptual framework not only identified and made explicit the factors that could potentially be challenges to students in

the learning process, but he also grouped the factors that are related in a way that acknowledges the social nature of learning by identifying the social dimension for the student and the institution. To this end, Louw's conceptual framework augments Tinto's model, and it represents the factors that could influence student learning in a systematic way. What is perhaps lacking in Louw's interpretation of 'background' factors for the students is the fact that he does not relate the factors to the students' social and cultural contexts. For me, factors such as 'historical experiences, school and academic support, and options and choices' form part of the environmental factors that Vygotsky and Bandura discuss which alludes to the social and cultural contexts which are an integral part of students' being. Therefore, by identifying factors as 'background', the social situatedness of student learning is not acknowledged fully; a large part of why students' dropout should thus be understood in terms of the broader socio-economic and cultural forces which are at play in society. However, the two fundamental principles that Tinto introduced, the existence of a relationship between the student and the institution, and the social embeddedness of learning, remain Tinto's most valuable contributions.

2.4.3 The DoE cohort study

Study number three is the cohort study conducted nationally for the period 2000 to 2004 by the DoE (Macfarlane 2006). An important reason why this study is included in the review process is because it includes data from both HWUs and HBUs, and it identifies a social issue that will become more and more prominent and relevant in the future — the threat that HIV/AIDS holds for successful learning in the South African context. One of the findings of this cohort study (Macfarlane 2006) is that 50% of undergraduate students in SA fail to complete their degrees and diplomas, while another is the extent of the dropout rate: one in three university students, and one in two technikon¹ students. The findings, however, also reveal the huge difference in the performance between white and black students in that it is the black student cohort that is part of the 50% for students not completing their studies, and for those dropping out. This is similar to the findings of the research study conducted by Scott *et al.* in 2007. The findings also indicate that there were four reasons for the dropout figures, namely:

1. poor schooling preparation;
2. lack of finances;
3. lack of proper accommodation; and
4. the impact that HIV/AIDS had on some families.

¹ The term 'technikon' refers to former higher education institution in South Africa and these institutions are now called 'universities of technologies' since 2005 (Council on Higher Education 2004).

The first three findings correspond with some of Tinto's characteristics and with Louw's conceptual framework with regard to student factors, but the last finding is a new addition to the challenges that students face in the learning process. An obvious reason why Tinto did not identify or mention this challenge could be that, in the period when he conducted his research, HIV/AIDS had not been identified, while a possible reason for Louw not including it could have been that HIV/AIDS did not have an impact on any of his participants, nor was it mentioned or indicated in the research data. However, the threat of HIV/AIDS is one that cannot be ignored any more, and it will pose a serious challenge to some students today, and in the future in South Africa. All four findings point to the historical social context that mainly black students are coming from. These findings draw again attention to the social nature of the learning process and reinforce the theoretical orientation of this dissertation. The findings signal that I might find similar results since the students that UWC admits generally fall into this category, and it is these students that I focus on and use as research participants.

2.4.4 The REAP and RAD study

While the study conducted by the DoE included data from both HWUs and HBUs nationally, the study conducted by the Rural Education Access Programme (REAP) and Research and Academic Development (RAD) between April 2007 and May 2008 focused only on the five higher education institutions in the Western Cape. In addition, this study investigated factors that facilitate success for 'disadvantaged' higher education students coming from rural communities. The term 'disadvantaged' was understood in the REAP and RAD study in terms of geography (the living areas where the students came from); financial resources (which was limited to non-existent in some cases); schooling background (ex-DET and so-called coloured schools where most of these students received their primary and secondary schooling); language of instruction (the fact that English was the second, third or fourth language for most of these students); and other socio-cultural factors, such as leadership abilities, behavioural and attitudinal qualities, internal drive and motivation, career and course guidance, and family and community support.

Four findings were identified:

1. there was a gap between the vision and mission statements of these institutions and what was implemented and practised;
2. disadvantaged students face a greater number of challenges than advantaged students;

3. there is a complex interplay between financial factors, academic factors and socio-cultural factors; and
4. challenges are likely to be felt more intensively especially if there is no immediate support for the students.

The research team concluded that there is a gap between institutional intention and experienced reality, and that there is a need for strong, sustainable partnerships within and across institutions and between institutions and a range of stakeholders, including the national Department of Education, the schooling sector, higher education institutions, the private sector and organisations such as REAP and NSFAS (Rural Education Access Programme (REAP) and Research and Academic Development (RAD) Team 2008). The latter two findings correspond with Tinto's model and Louw's conceptual framework, as well as with the first three findings of the DoE study.

The REAP and RAD study, as was the case with Tinto and Louw, did not mention the threat of HIV/AIDS, and a possible reason could be that they did not make mention of HIV/AIDS to the participants because it was not the focus of the research, and therefore it was not mentioned by any of the participants in the research data. However, the first two findings are different from the other studies, and identify two important factors, namely the gap between institutional intention and experienced reality, and the fact that students who were at a disadvantage as a result of poor schooling and poor economic and social backgrounds face more challenges to learning than students from better schooling and economic and social conditions (Rural Education Access Programme (REAP) and Research and Academic Development (RAD) Team 2008). The first finding draws attention to the fact that higher education institutions in general set out very well-defined mission and vision statements, policy statements and institutional plans on how they intend to adhere to the DoE's goals and objectives for education transformation. Unfortunately, most of these remain as theory on paper. The REAP and RAD study indicates that what is experienced by the students at these institutions is different from what is stated on paper. This finding is also in line with the reports by various organisations and institutions on the progress towards transformation and social inclusion (as discussed in Section 3.3.3). The second finding is a good example of the social situatedness of the learning process in that they resonate with Vygotsky's (1979, 1994) discussion concerning membership of a specific social group that functions within a specific historical period and specific historical circumstances. It also realised Barton's (2007) social domains and networks that are not equal and the 'participatory parity' for

which Leibowitz (2009:87) argues. These findings are very important to this study because, as discussed in Chapter 3, Section 3.3.3, the students that UWC admits would generally come from poor schooling and poor economic and social backgrounds. It thus suggests that first-year students at UWC will face similar challenges in the learning process.

2.4.5 Study conducted at UWC

The last study that I review is an initial study that was conducted in 2008 by the Director of Teaching and Learning at UWC among second-year students on their learning experiences in their first year of study in three of the seven faculties (including EMS) (Bozalek 2009). A questionnaire and smaller group discussions were used with more than six hundred students to investigate their perceptions of, and attitudes towards, tertiary study, and the nature of their relationships with the teaching staff.

Themes that were focused on in the questionnaire included:

- student perceptions and attitudes towards learning orientation experiences;
- the communication they received from the University and lecturers;
- their experiences of admission processes;
- their experiences in the classrooms and with lecturers;
- their own forms of resistance to university study;
- misunderstanding with the University with regard to what they think is required of them; and
- mis-recognition with regard to the degree of alienation and/or inclusion felt by students in relation to the institution.

The themes indicate that this study was attempting to uncover both what the students felt and perceived as being important to them in the learning process, as well as what the staff (both administrative and academic) were doing to assist the students in the learning process. It therefore corresponds mostly with the issues that Tinto identifies and some of the student factors and institutional factors in Louw's conceptual framework. It is also similar in that it does not mention HIV/AIDS as a possible challenge. A possible reason why HIV/AIDS was not included in the report could (again) be that it was not the focus of the investigation, and was not mentioned to the participants and therefore was not identified or mentioned in the data. This study is a work in progress and a follow-up study is envisaged (Bozalek 2009).

2.4.6 Summary of findings

In summary, in the review of the five research studies discussed above, it was found that Tinto's student integration model identified and acknowledged the relationship that exists between students and institutions of higher learning and it also draws attention to the social embeddedness of the learning process. Louw builds on this model and refines it with his conceptual framework, while the other three studies correspond to a certain extent with the findings in these two models, with the exception of the DoE study, which had one finding that was different from both Tinto and Louw's models, and the REAP and RAD study, which had two different findings. The table below is a summary of the similarities and differences in the findings of the studies reviewed.

Table 2.2 Summary of findings

Similarities: Tinto, Louw, DoE, REAP and RAD, three faculties at UWC	Differences
Student background factors Student academic and social factors Institutional factors (academic and social)	DoE: The impact of HIV/AIDS on students in the learning process
	REAP and RAD: Intention of the institution and the experienced reality of students Disadvantaged students will have more challenges than advantaged students

The findings draw attention to at least two questions: why did they emerge in the way they did and what is it saying about higher education in general? These questions could be answered by directing attention to the global educational context in which universities must function as businesses where it is about audits and accounting regulatory cultures (Walker 2006:6); about throughput and how fast students could move through the system (De Beer 2006:37); and about producing skilled and competent people who could enhance economic growth (Moll 2004:2; Walker 2006:8). The problem lies in the fact that it seems as if the student's voice and the student as a human being is lost in this context. There seems to be no real engagement and validation of the student as a human being who has a democratic right of access to education (De Beer 2006:39). Strydom and Mentz (2010:3) state "Attempting to understand the complex nature of the student experience can be overwhelming, even paralysing, as it entails a network of societal, institutional, group and individual factors." The findings suggest that higher education is failing the students and that institutions are not responsive enough to the needs of a diverse student body (Bunting

2004; Moll 2004). All the findings position the student centrally in the learning process and highlight the need for institutions to commit themselves to 'real' epistemological access (Morrow, 1993) through student engagement (Kuh *et al.* 2005; Strydom & Mentz 2010). Strydom and Mentz (2010:3) state that student engagement was identified as one possible factor which could strengthen students' chances at success in the learning process. Their views are based on research conducted by Kuh *et al.* (2005) among higher education institutions in the United States. Another factor that could also strengthen students' chances of success is what Moll (2004:15) refers to as a "multiple-level model of curriculum responsiveness" which takes into account "[t]he curriculum and its delivery that simultaneously can answer to macro-social, institutional and individual learning imperatives" (Moll 2004:16). Walker (2006:17) in her argument for a "capability approach as a central framing idea of higher education pedagogy" wishes such a pedagogy to "address engaged learning, agency, and change, and a deep ethical concern with the development of each and every student as an end in themselves". These views I support and that is why I am looking at the institution from the students' perspective and how they experience the learning process.

In conclusion, the similarities identified in all five studies reinforce the social embeddedness of the learning process and it directed the development of the research instruments which in turn determined the data that will emerge. The one difference that the DoE study identified and the two identified in the REAP and RAD study were helpful and directed me to include questions pertaining to these issues in the questionnaire and the individual interviews for the students in order to determine whether or not I will generate similar findings in my study. These three differences constitute the first gap that I could identify in Tinto's student integration model and Louw's conceptual framework. The second gap that I could identify is the fact that the factors are presented in a de-contextualised manner, suggesting that the factors are static and, for example, once a student has been identified as financially stable, such a situation will remain the case throughout a particular academic year. The third gap is the fact that none of the studies focused on students who are successful in the learning process and what such students do to achieve that success. This is the area that I propose my study will make a contribution to: the identification of enabling factors that result in successful learning by students, because my study focuses not only on why students fail, but equally and more importantly on why and how students coming from the same background and circumstances pass and succeed in the learning process. Thus, to answer the question posed at the start of this section, it seems as if

epistemological access for students would be possible if institutions would acknowledge the social nature of the learning process, and if they then construct and formulate their interventions (addressing and solving the identified risk indicators, knowing and implementing the enabling factors, and creating a conducive and supporting learning environment) around socio-cultural and socio-cognitive theories where the student's well-being is placed first.

2.5 CONCLUDING SUMMARY

In this chapter I have discussed the theoretical orientation of this study and I opted to use Vygotsky's social cultural theory and Bandura's social cognitive learning theories for this purpose. I then discussed and compared five different research studies that were conducted on challenges to learning that students face at higher education institutions. This was done to conceptualise the learning process, and to identify factors that could be challenges to learning and thus impacting on successful learning for students. The factors identified in the findings of all five studies direct attention to the social embeddedness of learning and strengthen the theoretical orientation of the study; and it assisted me in identifying possible gaps to which this study could make a contribution.

Reading through and reflecting on Vygotsky and Bandura's social theories enabled me to gain a deeper understanding of, and appreciation for human development and human learning. I came to the realisation that everything we do and how we conduct ourselves, in the end, are influenced by our histories, surroundings and our environments in which we live and function. It is a complex and dynamic interplay of many different variables and factors. In addition, the challenges to learning identified opened my eyes to the difficulties which students have to deal with in the learning process and filled me with more empathy and respect for every single student who overcomes the challenges and successfully completes his or her study journey. I now move to Chapter 3 in which I contextualise UWC as research site of this study.

CHAPTER 3

CONTEXTUALISING UWC AS RESEARCH SITE

3.1 INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter I discussed selected theories on learning, the theoretical orientation of the study and the challenges to learning identified from research conducted in five different studies on student failure and dropout rates. After synthesising the findings, I was able to identify the contribution that my study could make to the body of knowledge in higher education research. In this chapter I provide a brief overview of education in South Africa (SA) pre-1994 and then I outline the impact of education transformation in a post-*apartheid* SA. Thereafter, I discuss UWC's role in academic development (AD), UWC's admission policy and the students that it admits into the undergraduate degree programmes. This is followed by a discussion of how the EMS faculty is structured, the subjects for which first-year students must register and what the Faculty does to support its students. All of this I do in order to contextualise UWC as research site of this study. Lastly, based on the findings of the five studies reviewed in Chapter 2 and the contextual factors discussed in this chapter, I constructed a student centred analytical framework that I used as a guide for the analysis of the data and as an organising principle for the discussion of the data in Chapters 5 and 6.

3.2 HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OF EDUCATION IN SOUTH AFRICA

In order to provide an historical overview of education in SA, the discussion that follows is presented chronologically, starting with formal education in the context of *apartheid* and the influence thereof on education in SA. Thereafter, I provide a brief overview of what happened to education in post-1994 and the transformation process that is currently taking place in the country.

3.2.1 The *apartheid* era and how it influenced education in South Africa

Formal education in (SA) was initially promoted by missionary bodies (1799-1925), similar to the case in many other parts of the world where European colonialism had an impact on indigenous life (Brock-Utne & Hopson 2005; November 1991). November (1991:54-61) describes the process of formal education in South Africa as follows: When the Union of South Africa was established in 1910, formal education was still in the hands of religious

missionaries. However, education became increasingly dependent on the financial assistance of the various provincial governments: the Cape Province, Natal Province, Orange Free State Province and Transvaal Province. By 1925, education was mostly funded by the Minister of Native Affairs of the government of the Union of South Africa, while the administration of education remained within each province. When the Afrikaner-dominated National Party won the elections in 1948, they appointed the Esselen Commission to promote the Afrikaans language from its position of inferiority with respect to English. With the Afrikaners' elevation to political power, the Afrikaner power structure committed itself to challenging the monopoly of the English language and to promoting the use of Afrikaans to ensure equal status for Afrikaans with English under the law. Afrikaans and English became the official languages in the language policy of South Africa. The Esselen Commission was tasked, first, with formulating principles and aims for the education of Natives as an independent race; and, second, to institutionalise a centralised system with educational control exercised through local Bantu² authorities (November 1991).

The education system, like everything else, was divided into a National Education Department for whites, an education department for coloureds and Asians, named the Department of Education and Culture (DEC), and an education department for black Africans, named the Department of Education and Training (DET) (National Education Co-ordinating Committee 1993; Walker & Badsha 1993; November 1991). Finance, resources and everything else related to education were divided into three sections where the whites were privileged and received the most and best of everything, and the coloureds and Asians who received far less than the whites but a little more than the Africans, who received the least of everything (Du Toit 1996). That is how the terms 'disadvantaged' and 'underprepared' originated because the effects of these policy decisions still affect education to this day (Letseka & Maile 2008). It was because of this *apartheid* ideology that the struggle for freedom began (Boughey 2000; Jack 1996; Walker & Badsha 1993). This struggle for freedom was fought for 45 years in South Africa and led to the historic and important election in 1994, in which a new democratic government was elected and when a new era of a free and just society began.

² The term "Bantu" was used by the *apartheid* South African Government as the official term when referring to Black South Africans who were not classified as Coloured or Asian. The word "Bantu" also described the group of languages spoken by African people in South Africa (November, 1991).

3.2.2 The impact of education transformation in post-apartheid SA

Education transformation was high on the agenda of the newly constituted democratic government in 1994 because of the injustice in every sector of black South Africans' lives. The three separate education departments were abolished and one uniform, national Department of Education (DoE) was instituted (Department of Education 1995). Furthermore, new policies with regard to education in SA were formulated and conceptualised through policy-framing documents such as the National Commission on Higher Education Report: A Framework for Transformation; Education White Paper 3: A Programme for the Transformation of Higher Education (Department of Education 1995, 1997a) and the National Plan for Higher Education (NPHE) (Ministry of Education 2001).

The first step in the transformation of education was taken through the government's policy decision to set up a National Qualifications Framework (NQF). This framework sets up ways in which standards for education and training are developed and ways in which qualifications can be put together. There were two important aims of the NQF: firstly, to open up the system of qualifications and the learning and career paths to learners, and secondly, to promote education and training that is broader and more relevant to today's needs (Smout, 2005; Panday 2000).

The second step was the replacement of the old schooling system with an outcomes-based approach to education and training that would allow learning opportunities for all, regardless of age, circumstances, and the level of education and training that one might have (Panday 2000). Under this new approach, education and training were divided into three main groupings or bands, namely:

- The General Education and Training Band (GET);
- The Further Education and Training Band (FET); and
- The Higher Education and Training Band (HET) (Gultig 2002; Panday 2000).

The third step was a restructuring and merging process of the HET band during which the 23 universities and 15 technikons evolved into 11 universities, six comprehensive universities and six universities of technology (Council on Higher Education 2004). The aims of the restructuring and merging process were to eradicate the historical inequalities of standards and provision; the lack of access and representivity; the inefficiency and

ineffectiveness (high failure and drop-out rates, especially for black students); and poor management and the irrelevance of curricula (Griesel 2004).

Fourthly, the NPHE identified five goals and sixteen outcomes to be pursued in higher education institutions in SA in order to realise the aims and objectives of the transformation process (Ministry of Education 2001: 19). The government's intention was that all educational institutions had to adhere to the directives set by the DoE and the values and assumptions underpinning these directives. One of the most important values and assumptions — the realisation of democracy, liberty, equality, justice and peace (SA National Education Policy Act of 1996: Values and Principles) meant that no institution could refuse anyone³ who qualified for admission to different schools, and/or university programmes (Ministry of Education 2001). It also meant that the previously exclusive (and mainly white) institutions had to open their doors to all races and had to become inclusive, both with regard to learners and staff (Ministry of Education 2001). This value further implies that all educational institutions were now required to respect people's diverse religious, cultural and language traditions and backgrounds. In addition, it meant that all institutions had to review and effect change to their mission/vision statements, their aims and objectives, their policies and regulations, and their curricula in order to promote the values underlying the democratic processes of the rule of law and the exercise of civic responsibility, and by teaching values and skills for conflict management and conflict resolution, the importance of mediation, and the benefits of tolerance and co-operation (Ministry of Education 2001; Parker 2002).

Lastly, the government funding formulas also changed, and institutions had to adjust and find other ways in which they could further subsidise their income. Higher education institutions in particular had to submit rolling plans with projections and strategic operational plans that indicated how they would go about addressing the issues identified by the NPHE (Council on Higher Education 2004; Ministry of Education 2001).

To conclude, from the discussion on the educational transformation process that the DoE put in motion in SA after 1994, one can deduce that we still have a long way to go. However, I would argue that this is not unusual, but understandable, if one takes into account that South Africans experienced and were indoctrinated into polarisation for more

³ The South African Schools Act, Section 5 (1) states "A public school must admit learners and their educational requirements without unfairly discriminating in any way" (SA National Education Policy Act of 1996).

than forty-five years. Only seventeen years have passed since 1994 and although the pace is slow and frustrating and painful for many, successful integration and social cohesion for all South Africans will (hopefully) happen in the end. The UWC as a higher education institution in SA is discussed next.

3.3 HIGHER EDUCATION AT THE UNIVERSITY OF THE WESTERN CAPE (UWC)

I begin this discussion with an overview of UWC's background and how it resisted the *apartheid* ideology. This is followed by a description of the role UWC played in the field of Academic Development (AD) and thereafter, a detailed discussion on its admission policy and the students who are being admitted into the undergraduate degree programmes is presented. I close with a brief overview of the structure of the Economic and Management Sciences (EMS) faculty, the undergraduate degree programmes offered in the Faculty and the forms of support offered to students in the Faculty.

3.3.1 UWC's background and how it resisted the *apartheid* ideology

The UWC was regarded as one of the historically disadvantaged institutions, and was initially created in 1959 and started in 1960 as an institution for the so-called coloured population in South Africa. It resisted the ideology of separateness and division, and went from 'bush college' to 'struggle university' to 'university of the working class' to the 'home of the intellectual left' (CHE 2010: 126; Letseka *et al.* 2010: 54). Twenty years later, UWC had undergone a dramatic transformation, most especially in replacing the ideological grounds on which it was established, with a determined commitment to non-racism and justice. A shift to a concern for the "development of Third World communities in Southern Africa" (University of the Western Cape 1982: Mission Statement) has seen changes in the staff and student profile; attempts to democratise university governance, including the administration, academic departments, and the Senate; and a concern for curriculum review and changed methods of teaching (CHE 2010; Leibowitz 2001; Walker & Badsha 1993). One fundamental change was its admission policy — a total change to 'access to all', in direct contrast to the existing statute, in order to allow other ethnic groups access to the University (CHE 2010; Walker & Badsha 1993). UWC adopted the slogan, *The Doors Of Learning Shall be Open*, which was in line with the National Access Consortium Western Cape's (NACWC) slogan, *Open The Doors Of Learning*. The Consortium was set up out of a concern to build a new institutional forum which could broaden and expand access to education and training and, at the same time, could transform education and

training practices that were underpinned by *apartheid* philosophies at that time (Holtman, Marshall & Linder 2004; Leibowitz 2001; Volbrecht 2002). The NACWC's overall aim was "to enhance the contribution that education and training could make to combating poverty, unemployment, crime, ignorance and frustration" (The National Access Consortium Western Cape 2001:7). UWC, too, wanted to enhance the contribution that education and training could make to the broader society and not only to the coloured communities.

In 1982, African students comprised 2% of the student population and this grew steadily to more than 55% by 2005 (University of the Western Cape: 2005b). At the beginning of 2009, the total number of registered undergraduate students was as follows: 6 236 (50.1%) coloured students, 4 838 (39%) African students, 764 (6.1%) Asian students, 399 (3.2%) White students and other (which refers to foreign students) 205 (1.6%) (University of the Western Cape: 2009d). As a result of UWC's *access to all* policy, the language of teaching and learning (which had been Afrikaans) was changed to a bilingual system consisting of both Afrikaans and English, because of the increasing numbers of speakers of African languages (Leibowitz 2001; Volbrecht 2002).

However, there was a gradual move to English as the language of teaching and learning, but not without disparity, concern and dichotomy among the University management and staff, especially in 1991 and 1992, when the language policy issue came to the fore. Both the University management and the staff were concerned that a move to English would alienate the coloured communities because Afrikaans was the first language for many; but, at the same time, the continued use of Afrikaans in the lectures, in a situation where Afrikaans was perceived to be 'the language of the oppressor' by the African students, was also problematic for the University management (Leibowitz 2001; Volbrecht 2002). To overcome this dichotomy, the University management accepted a bilingual approach at its Council meeting held in August 1992: "Since the University gives instruction in both Afrikaans and English, students should be entitled to use either of these two languages for academic purposes" (Volbrecht 2002: 217). By the end of 1992, however, the University had shifted overwhelmingly to English as the main medium of instruction or, as termed in this dissertation, the language of teaching and learning (Academic Development Centre 1998).

Today, UWC's slogan is *A Place Of Quality, A Place To Grow, From Hope To Action Through Knowledge* (CHE 2010: 126; UWC General Calendar 2009c). It continues with its 'access to all' policy in relation to the students that it admits. The UWC Teaching and Learning Strategic Plan (University of the Western Cape 2006b:2) sets out the University's development as an inclusive and highly flexible higher education institution that aims to "provide students at UWC with an excellent teaching and learning experience that is contextually responsive to the challenges of globalization and the needs of a society in transition". However, UWC realises that there are many challenges that need to be overcome if this aim is to be achieved (UWC Teaching and Learning Strategic Plan 2006b:6). One of the most important challenges that UWC faces is the profile of the students it admits — the predominantly working class students who are in need of financial support, have fewer resources and who had inadequate schooling preparation (CHE 2010:8; Letseka & Maile 2008:4-5). It was for this reason that UWC had a central Academic Development Unit which provided academic support to staff and students.

3.3.2 Academic Development (AD) at UWC: A brief history

In the light of UWC's 'open door' admission policy and, because of the fact that most of its students came from the former DEC and DET schooling systems, UWC acknowledged that they had to provide 'an adequate bridge' from school to university for students to better their chances for academic success, and to provide their students with a quality education reflected in the attainment of standards deserving of respect from fellow universities and industry (Bajjnath 1997; Volbrecht 2002; Walker & Badsha 1993). Morrow (1993) conceptualised this as ensuring 'epistemological access' once formal admission has been secured. What did 'epistemological access' mean to institutions of higher education? For the historically white institutions (also known as historically advantaged institutions) such as the University of Cape Town and the University of the Witwatersrand, 'epistemological access' was conceptualized as 'academic support' for educationally disadvantaged students (which, in most cases, were a small group of students who were coming from the DEC and DET schooling systems) whom these institutions perceived to have a 'reasonable chance at success', provided that they receive adequate 'academic support' (Walker & Badsha 1993:4). Scott (2009b:25) argues that the "mainstream understanding" of academic support programmes during the 1980s was "superficial or minimalist" because what was required to solve the problem was "tutorial support" and "some language intervention for English second-language students".

A range of ASP interventions was developed, and implemented by these historically white institutions in the context of meeting the perceived needs of this small number of elected educationally disadvantaged students functioning within the traditional university framework (Scott 2009b). Critics of these academic support programmes argued that it was not 'a student-only problem' as these institutions appeared to make it out to be, but a rather narrow-minded approach of addressing a problem that was much broader than individual students and that begged for a much more integrated and holistic approach of academic development (McKenna 2004; Scott 2009b; Volbrecht 2002).

Academic development represented a shift of emphasis from the student to the curriculum as a whole and, hence, to the University. This conceptual change emerged out of debates within the South African Association for Academic Development (SAAAD). SAAAD was established in 1986 and grew out of dissatisfaction with the ASP movement for not addressing the concerns of the black campuses that had to cope with large numbers of students from educationally impoverished backgrounds. However, the emphasis at these black campuses was still on a limited form of staff development in the form of training in teaching methods and the development of educational technology. Curriculum review and development aimed at building an appropriate teaching and learning environment for large numbers of educationally disadvantaged students was still mostly lacking (Walker & Badsha 1993:6).

UWC, as one of the historically black universities, was the exception. Educational transformation was high on the agenda by the mid to late 1980s (Walker & Badsha 1993). They opted for an 'infused' academic development model/programme that recognizes that the problem was not only located in the individual student, but also in the curriculum as a whole (AD Issues 1995:3-5; Baijnath 1995:7; Volbrecht 2002:130; Walker & Badsha 1993: 6). This model, as Moulder (in Walker & Badsha 1993:6) notes, puts the problems of under-prepared students in the hands of all academics. He states that "academics are employed to teach all the students who register for a course. They aren't employed to teach only those students who have the knowledge and skills they would like them to have". An infused academic development approach requires curriculum review and development by lecturers and whole departments, supported by university policies and structures (AD Issues 1995; Volbrecht 2002).

UWC and the other black higher education institutions such as the University of Fort Hare and the University of Limpopo⁴ were trying to respond to these trends in higher education to which Volbrecht refers. UWC formally adopted this infused academic development programme at the end of 1990. The programme was adopted to contribute towards quality teaching and learning at UWC through supporting staff and student development, and institutional change and transformation. The programme intended to address the needs of students and staff, raising and addressing questions concerning curriculum development and philosophies and pedagogy (AD Issues 1995; 1996; 1997; 1998).

Overall, UWC recognized that nearly all students entering the University still had to acquire particular patterns of logical reasoning and critical thinking, independent study, and academic literacy skills specific to the higher education context (Walker & Badsha 1993: 7). The academic development programme was underpinned by two structural pillars: a central Academic Development Centre (ADC), and elected Faculty Academic Development Committees (FADCs). The FADCs were faculty committees comprising representatives from each department as well as the dean and student representatives. Their function was to initiate, co-ordinate and monitor the academic development activities in each faculty, developing policy-in-action, taking into account shifting environmental factors and institutional developments (AD Issues 1995, 1996, 1997).

The ADC had a number of functions, some of which overlapped with those of the FADCs. The ADC co-ordinated academic development on a university-wide basis; developed a network to share educational expertise and experiences across faculties; promoted research-based development; built a database of the UWC student profile; raised funds; and co-ordinated project evaluation. This infused academic development model also had five umbrella projects: firstly, the Language Project that dealt with language policy issues and curriculum development about language issues that was spearheaded by the proposed development of faculty specific English for Educational Development (EED) courses; secondly, a Research Project that facilitated research-based development; thirdly, the Admissions Project that collected, monitored and analysed data on student selection; fourthly, the Academic Counselling that coordinated a peer group learning project involving students in university residences; and, lastly, the Computer Supported

⁴ The University of Limpopo was previously known as the University of the North and this name change happened after the merger in 2005.

Education Project that advised on the use of software and hardware across the campus for academic development purposes (Volbrecht 2002). The academic development programme was the responsibility of the Senate Academic Development Steering Committee, chaired by a vice-rector and on which the FADCs and ADC were jointly represented (Walker & Badsha 1993: 7-8). For UWC, academic development was as much about institutional change and capacity building as individual development of lecturers, other staff and students. Academic development was seen as second-order change (Sarason 1990). It aimed at bringing together curriculum development, student learning, staff development, and organizational development in an integrated process at departmental and faculty level. The ADC purpose went beyond single innovations — its concern was for a sustainable learning organization having the capacity for continual and long term improvement, and centrally concerned with student engagement and learning for the development of students' full potential (Walker & Badsha 1993:11).

In summary, UWC's academic development programme and approach were multi-faceted. It included the development of students' academic skills; it encompassed the individual and collective professional development of academic staff; it demanded the development of UWC's capacity, as an organization, to improve, thereby meeting their stated objective of contributing to transformative educational change (AD Issues 1995, 1996, 1997, Volbrecht2002; Walker & Badsha 1993). Unfortunately, this multi-faceted approach of UWC's academic development programme was not appreciated by everyone at UWC at that stage (Volbrecht 2002). In 1996, a four-year review process was begun to determine how the ADC was functioning within the University. According to Volbrecht (2002:189-192), there was a negative attitude on the part of some members of management towards the ADC. The then vice-rector wrote a proposal in which it was recommended that the ADC be 'decentralised', with most of the ADC staff being redeployed in faculties. Based on this proposal, a Review Committee was convened to look at the issue of closing the ADC. Volbrecht questioned the whole process and the fairness, research methods and ethics that were employed by the UWC management during this time. The ADC was closed down at the end of 1999 and the 'AD specialists' had to work within the different faculties (Volbrecht 2002).

The closure of the ADC was a loss to those in the University who were committed to student learning and development, and staff development, curriculum development, and

institutional development (Volbrecht 2002). The closure also meant that there was no longer an umbrella functioning as central body that could monitor and work with the FADCs, or co-ordinate and steer academic development in the University (Volbrecht 2002). However, the University is still trying to make provision for academic development of students through the Academic Literacy courses that form part of the curricula in the different undergraduate degree programmes since 2000. A detailed discussion on the students that UWC admits to these programmes is presented next.

3.3.3 The students that UWC admits: Clarifying the terms ‘disadvantaged’ and ‘underprepared’

As discussed in Section 3.3.2 above, with its ‘access to all’ policy, UWC started to admit more students from former DEC and DET schooling in the 1980s (Leibowitz 2001; Volbrecht 2002). The criterion was that they would admit any student who met the statutory requirement of matriculation exemption, regardless of ethnic group (Leibowitz 2001). Because of this policy, UWC received thousands of applications each year, and grew rapidly. However, resource constraints, arising from the state’s corrective subsidy forced the University to limit its undergraduate student numbers (Walker & Badsha 1993). From the late 1990s to 2008, it also became practice that all new applicants had to write a test that was used either as an additional admission and placement tool and/or a placement tool after the student qualified on the basis of the statutory requirement of matriculation exemption and the Faculty-specific criteria.

From 2009, the admission criteria are based on the new points system for the revised curriculum and the specific requirements set by each faculty. In 2009, in the EMS faculty, students were admitted to the different degree programmes based on a total number of at least 27 points that they scored across the learning areas (these students were the first cohort of outcomes-based education), and with the proviso that they meet the requirements of Mathematics on at least level 4 (50% - 59%) or Maths Literacy on at least level 5 (60% - 69%) and English at level 4 (50% - 59%) or another language at level 3 (40% - 49%) for the B.Com. Accounting, B.Com. General and B.Com. Law Degrees (Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences, University of the Western Cape 2009b:23). The same admission criteria apply to the B.Admin. Degree, with the exception that students could have a level 3 (40% - 49%) in Mathematics. (Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences, University of the Western Cape 2009b:19). In

addition to the admission requirements, all students had to write the AARP test (Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences, University of the Western Cape 2009b:20 & 24).

Throughout the years, the admission criteria allowed for a 20% 'manual' selection option, where faculties could look at individual applicants that were not selected by the system because of not 'meeting the selection criteria' (University of the Western Cape 2000). Selecting the learners manually allowed the selection committees in the different faculties to look at other factors such as where the school was situated (demographically), what type of school it was (former black, coloured or white school) and whether or not the school was in a position to provide the necessary resources such as textbooks, computer facilities, libraries and qualified teaching staff (National Education Co-ordinating Committee 1993). It was argued that learners coming from these schooling backgrounds and these conditions had potential since they managed to pass the senior certificate examination and should be given a chance to further their education at university level (National Education Co-ordinating Committee 1993).

The learning conditions that these learners had to endure in the construction of knowledge and the development of their potential are the premises for the terms 'underprepared' and 'disadvantaged'. But, in addition to these schooling conditions mentioned above, most of these learners were also economically and socially deprived in that their parents and families were mainly from the working class and unschooled themselves because of *apartheid* (Bunting 2004; Letseka & Maile 2008; Webb 2002). As a consequence, the majority of the students that UWC admitted, and is admitting to its undergraduate programmes in all the faculties are economically, socially and educationally 'disadvantaged' and 'underprepared'. These social class categories are examples of the class divisions and unequal power relations that Vygotsky (1994) refers to (see Section 2.3). But these terms are problematic and contentious on at least four different levels.

3.3.3.1 Academic proficiency deficit and socio-economic factors

The concepts 'disadvantaged' and 'underprepared' are understood to mean (in most instances) that the students have some academic proficiency 'deficit', and need 'academic support' (see discussion earlier under Section 3.3.2). Boughey (2009:2-3) refers to this mode of thinking as "an 'autonomous' model which locates the capacity to learn within individuals". As mentioned already in Section 3.3.2, the critics of this assumption argued that it was not 'a student-only problem' as some historically white universities wanted to

make it out to be, but a rather 'narrow-minded approach' to address a problem that was much broader than individual students and that required a more integrated and holistic approach to academic development and successful student learning (Boughey 2000, 2009; Leibowitz 2001; McKenna 2004; Volbrecht & Boughey 2004).

Moreover, because the terms 'disadvantaged' and 'underprepared' are understood to mean a 'deficit' on the side of the students, the real cause of the problem — the socio-economic factors and, to a larger extent, the power relations between the subordinate and dominant groups in South African society are overlooked (Masenya 1995). Masenya (1995:101) challenges what he refers to as "...the superficial issues relating to the academic underachievement or cognitive deficiencies of black students as emanating only from *apartheid* education". Masenya (1995:101) argues that it goes much deeper and that the root of the problem lies within the *apartheid* ideology in terms of which white people were viewed as being superior to black people, and where the whites had, and controlled, the economic, social and political power in SA (see also Letseka & Maile 2008:4-5). It is the same power relations that exist in capitalism that Vygotsky (1994) describes (see Section 2.3).

In addition, Boughey (2009:8) states that Bourdieu's early works on the construct of "cultural capital" that include the knowledge, practices and values that allow people to access and succeed in prominent social groups and institutions, provides a good explanation of why there are such major differences in the success and graduation rates between white and black students in South Africa. Berger (2000:97) adds that Bourdieu's theory "...lays out several constructs that can be used to explain student attrition at institutions of higher education". What Bourdieu's theory of social reproduction implies is that a student's success or failure in the learning process can be ascribed to the student's cultural and economic capital history. Bunting (2004:20) raises the same issue where he states, "[t]he racial composition of the different groupings of institutions is a major element in the differences in retention performance. In the current South African context, white students continue to be more privileged than the majority of black students, in terms of both educational and socio-economic background". Similarly, Scull and Cuthill (2010:61) state that students "[f]rom low socio-economic backgrounds might lack the social and cultural capital required" to adhere to the demands made by academe. The educational and socio-economic backgrounds are inclusive of the students' schooling histories, their family situations, their skills and abilities, their levels of self-confidence, their options and

choices, and their home language (Berger 2000; Bunting 2004; Scull & Cuthill 2010). It is the same social construction and the influence thereof that Vygotsky (1994) and Bandura (1986) explain in their respective social theories.

For many white students, these elements (education and socio-economic status) are in place and serve as support structures and enabling factors for success in the learning process. Unfortunately, the same cannot be said for the majority of black students. Many black students, because of the schooling system and social and economic conditions that they are coming from are 'disadvantaged' and 'underprepared' and, because of *apartheid* and the deprivation of economical and societal resources, they are growing up in households and families with limited options and choices, and limited resources (CHE 2010; Letseka & Maile 2008). Within this context, most black students' pre-university circumstances are already an indication that they will experience more challenges to learning than their white counterparts (Bunting 2004:20) and that some of them will not be successful in the learning process.

This supports Masenya's (1995) argument that the terms 'disadvantaged' and 'underprepared' are the end results of a deeply rooted problem that had to do with the moral, social, economic and political powers that were withheld from the majority of South Africans during *apartheid*. Webb (2002:9) expresses the same sentiments in his discussion of the non-democratisation of knowledge and skills in South Africa and points out that the educational development of the majority of black South African learners was far below its potential during *apartheid*, and that this is still the case for many today. Webb (2002:9) provides reasons for what he calls the "distressing situation" and starts with the "...enormous impact of colonialism and *apartheid* on the belief of black youth in their own abilities...the fact that many school children grew up in an illiterate or semi-literate environment with almost no exposure to the world of learning...". In short, *apartheid* and its effects on every sphere of black South Africans' lives could be blamed for the current state of affairs in education which black South Africans find themselves in (Letseka *et al.* 2010:32).

3.3.3.2 The role of language development in the debate about 'disadvantaged'

The majority of Black students are further 'disadvantaged' in that they have to construct meaning in a second and/or additional language, i.e. English, since this is the language of teaching and learning at UWC and many other institutions of higher learning in South

Africa (Dalvit, Murray & Terzoli 2009). When we learn, we construct meaning that is realized through language, (Eggins 1994; Gibbons 2002; Halliday 1985, 1994; Hyland 2006). Thus, how we perceive and experience the world will be influenced by the way in which we create and construct meaning (Eggins 1994; Fraser 2006; Gibbons 2002; Halliday 1985, 1994; Hodge & Kress 1993). The way we perceive and experience the world is, in turn, influenced by our backgrounds, our upbringing, our beliefs, norms and values, our cultures and religions, our languages and the communities in which we live (Bandura 1986; Vygotsky 1979). Janks (1993a: 5) expresses the same sentiments when she says that “we think, feel and reason the way we do because of who we are and what we believe” (see also Boughey 2000:24; Hymes 1996:4 and Nieman 2006:25).

Many students at UWC have to learn and construct meaning by using English as a language of learning, a language that they do not ‘know’ well enough. What does knowing a language mean? According to the NEPI report on language (National Education Coordinating Committee 1992:7), it includes a wide range of components, such as the ability to read and listen with understanding; to speak and write intelligibly; to have knowledge of vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation and spelling; to be familiar with norms of politeness and social appropriateness and with characteristics of the discourse features of various spoken and written genres; and to understand the cultural references and connotations not only of words, but also of accents and verbal styles. These elements are what Gee (1996:40-41, 2008:92-97) refers to as “social languages”. Constructing meaning in a language therefore means that one knows the language and everything that is associated with ‘knowing’.

Furthermore, Gough (1996) strongly argues the point that second- or additional-language speaking students of English are “disadvantaged” in his discussion about multilingualism at UWC. He (Gough 1996:17) states that “multilingualism as a resource is a kind of romantic, rainbow nation notion and the complexity isn’t fully explored — but if you are not proficient in the dominant language, you are handicapped and there is no getting away from it”. I fully support his stance. Being a second-language speaker of English myself, both as student and staff member, I can bear testimony to the difficulty of having to learn and construct new and advanced knowledge in English.

Consequently, it is clear that knowing a language means much more than knowing the basic grammar, or the knowledge gained from being taught a second or third language in a

formal setting (schooling). It is an integration of different elements and socially constructed discourse practices which will make the process complex and challenging (Gee 1996, 2008; Street 2001, 2005). Ongoing language development and support and continued exposure to the target language will therefore be needed (Gibbons 2002; Hyland 2006; Nieman 2006). This implies that it will be far more complicated and challenging to create and construct meaning in the English language for second or additional language speaking students than for students whose first language is English (Cummins 1984, 2000).

3.3.3.3 The role of discourse

Moreover, Black students share the 'disadvantages' of all first-year students. All students who enter universities for the first time have to be inducted into the academic discourse, i.e. the ways of 'being' and 'doing' at university level. I use the term 'discourse' here in the way Gee (2008:155) defines it, namely "...a socially accepted association among ways of using language, of thinking, feeling, believing, valuing, and of acting that can be used to identify oneself as a member of a socially meaningful group or 'social network', or to signal a socially meaningful role" Jaffer (1996:7) adds to this definition by stating that, "[w]hen talking of academic discourse we are referring to ways of expressing meanings and values validated by academic institutions. We are referring to certain rules and conventions that form the context in which reading and writing is embedded". These rules and conventions can lead to what Bourdieu, Passeron and De Saint Martin (1994:3-6) refer to as "linguistic misunderstanding". They (1994:6) state "[t]eaching depends for its effectiveness on a variety of inputs, with material conditions in the first rank" and "the operation of a code" (Bourdieu *et al.* 1994:4-5). They (1994:4-5) explain that "[i]f academics nourished illusions only about the quantity of information that students were capable of learning or retaining, the impact on the teaching relationship would be less serious than the presumption that students know — because they ought to know — the underlying code of professional message". It is learning how this "code" operates at university that Leibowitz (2001:17) is saying the students find "overwhelming", while McKenna (2004:60) states that the students are the "outsiders of the academic discourse" and they therefore need to be inducted into the "code". However, many academic staff members expect the students to know what is required of them without inducting them into the appropriate academic discourse.

Higher learning institutions attempt to induct the students into this discourse through their academic literacy courses. While there are many different approaches and schools of thought about literacy (see for example, Gee 2008; Kalantzis and Cope 2001; and Street

2001) Barton's (2007:32) ecological approach to literacy explains very aptly how literacy "[i]s embedded in human behaviour and its environment, and its place in history, in language and in learning". Barton (2007:29) states that the 'ecological metaphor' originated in biology and refers to the study of the interrelationship of a living being and its environment. According to him (2007:29), when one applies this metaphor to people, it refers to the interrelationship of an area of human activity (which is literacy and thus learning, in this case) and its environment. This explanation of an ecological approach to literacy resonates with Vygotsky's social cultural and Bandura's social cognitive theories in that it acknowledges the interrelationship of literacy/learning and the environment in which human beings live and function.

Thus, one has to appreciate the fact that learning and acquiring the ways of 'being' and 'doing' at university level will be a complex and challenging process for all students, and especially new first-year students (Boughey 2000, 2009; Leibowitz 2001; McKenna 2004).

3.3.3.4 Final thoughts about 'disadvantaged' and 'underprepared'

The above discussion of the different meanings and interpretations of the terms 'disadvantaged' and 'underprepared' highlight and reinforce the way in which social and academic factors are interrelated and interdependent, underscoring the social situatedness of learning. Unfortunately, there are only a few 'enabling factors' for most of the students that UWC admits, and it therefore is an uphill battle for the students which results in many of them failing at first attempt, some taking a longer time to complete their degree programmes, and for many others, dropping out of the University completely (Webb 2002). Evidence of this is clear when one looks at most of the research conducted nationally on the success rates of black students at universities, and the fact that their performance (as a group) is far below that of white students; moreover, their completion times and dropout rates are much higher than that of white students (Bunting 2004:20; Scott 2009a:19). The terms 'disadvantaged' and 'underprepared' are thus used in this dissertation on the basis of the above discussion of the four contentious meanings. It is also important to note here that the terms are used because they are commonly known and used in the South African context, as stated in Section 1.7, and that the use of these terms in this dissertation is in no way intended to label the students as having a deficit of any sort. One can therefore conclude that human learning is an 'ecology' of socially embedded processes (Barton 2007).

I turn now to a discussion of the EMS faculty where these students spend a fair amount of their time.

3.4 THE EMS FACULTY AT UWC

In this section, a brief overview of the structure and the subjects offered in the first year of study is presented first, and thereafter, a discussion on the forms of support that are offered to new first-year students in this Faculty.

3.4.1 The Faculty structure and the subjects for which first-year students must register

The Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences (EMS) is the biggest faculty at UWC (Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences, Dean's annual report 2009c). It comprises of six departments (Academic Development, Accounting, Economics, Industrial Psychology, Information Systems and Political Studies); two schools (School of Business and Finance which includes Management and School of Government which includes Public Administration) and one unit named Programme for Land and Agrarian Studies (Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences, EMS Calendar 2009b).

The Faculty offers both three- and four-year degree programmes. There are two four-year degree programmes (B.Com. General and B.Com. Accounting) and four three-year degree programmes (B.Com. Accounting, B.Com. Law, B.Com. General and B.Admin). This study is concerned with two of the three-year degree programmes — B.Com. General and B.Admin. because these are the degree programmes with the largest number of registered students in the Faculty in 2009.

The students must register for eight modules that equal 120 credits (15 credits per module) in the first year of study in both the B.Com. General and B.Admin. degree streams. Four modules are done in the first semester and four in the second semester. Six of the eight modules are compulsory and two are electives (Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences 2009). A summary of the modules in the two degree programmes is provided below:

Table 3.1 B.Com. General Degree modules

Compulsory modules: 6 x 15 credits	Electives: 2 x 15 credits
Accounting for Management 131 (ACM 131) or Financial Accounting 131 (FIA 131)	Business Statistics 132 (Bus Stats 132) or Statistics 111 & 121 (Stats 111/121)
Academic Literacy for Commerce 131 (ALC 131)	Financial Accounting 132 (FIA 132)
Economics 134 (Eco 134)	Industrial Psychology 132 (IPS 132)
Information Systems 131 (IFS 131)	Mathematics 126 (Maths 126)
Management 132 (Man 132)	Mathematical Economics 135 (Maths Eco 135)
Quantitative Skills for Commerce 131 (QSC 131) or Mathematics 126 (Maths 126)	Political Studies 131 (Pol Stud 131)
	Public Administration 131 (PUA 131)
	SA Politics and Government 132 (SA Pol & Gov 132)

Table 3.2 B.Admin. Degree modules

Compulsory modules: 6 x 15 credits	Electives: 2 x 15 credits
Academic Literacy for Commerce 131 (ALC 131)	Accounting for Management 131 and 132 (ACM 131/132)
Information Systems 132 (IFS 132)	Economics 134 or Economics 113 (Eco 134 or Eco 113)
Political Studies 131 (Pol Stud 131)	Industrial Psychology 132 (IPS 132)
Public Administration 131 (PUA 131)	Management 132 (Man 132)
South African Politics and Government 132 (SA Pol & Gov 132)	Public Law 131(Pub Law 131)
Quantitative Skills Foundation 131 (QSF 131) or Quantitative Skills for Commerce 131 (QSC 131)	Business Statistics or Statistics 132 (Bus Stats 132 or Stats 132) and Quantitative Skills for Commerce 132 (QSC 132)

The numerical numbers after each module name indicate first-year level, first semester, i.e. 131, or first-year level, second semester, i.e. 132, while a 3 or 4 at the end indicates that it is a first-year module that could be offered in either semester (departments normally decide which semester, depending on the availability of teaching staff). It should also be noted that when a student fails ALC 131 or QSC 131 or QSF 131, such a student must re-register for the repeat modules in the second semester (they become ALC 132, QSC 132 and QSF 132). Students need to pass repeat modules in order to avoid being

academically excluded at the end of the year (Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences 2009b). The promotion rule for being academically excluded stipulates that a first-year student must pass at least four of the eight modules in the first year of study, including ALC 131 or 132, QSC 131 or 132 and/or QSF 131 or 132) (Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences 2009: 22, 34). There are three implications if a student fails these modules in the first semester. The first is that such a student has to deregister some of the electives in the second semester in order to be able to re-register for the ones failed so that he/she can still accumulate 120 credits per year. The second implication is that such a student will not be able to pass all eight required modules in the first year, and will have to carry first-year modules into the second year of study. The last implication is that such a student will most likely not be able to complete his/her studies in the prescribed (minimum) time of three years.

The Faculty thus attempts to give new first-year students two chances during the course of the academic year to pass ALC and the quantitative modules, and it further tries to ease the burden of a heavy workload in that students are required to pass only four of the eight modules that they must register for in their first year of study (Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences 2009b). The Faculty also provides academic and mentoring support to first-year students and this support is discussed in the next section.

3.4.2 Support offered to first-year students in the Faculty

Apart from support services such as the Orientation Programme at the beginning of the year, the Centre for Student Support Services (CSSS) and the Writing Centre that the University provides to all undergraduate students, the EMS faculty provides three additional support services to its students. The first form of academic support is through the Academic Literacy Course (ALC 131) which is one of the compulsory, 15 credit first-year courses. All new first-year students in the Faculty must register and must pass this course at the end of the first year as explained in the previous section. This is the Faculty's way of making provision to assist new first-year students with the induction into academia and the academic literacy skills that are needed to be successful in the learning process.

The main aim of the course is to develop students' academic literacy and general English language proficiency. The course is shaped through on-going discussions with faculty to ensure that many of the tasks prescribed in the course develop skills needed by students in the Faculty. It equips students with skills and knowledge needed beyond the first year of

university studies and for the world of commerce (Department of Academic Development, Academic Literacy for Commerce (ALC 131) Course Reader 2009: iii). The course content covers the main language skills, namely, listening, speaking, reading, thinking and writing and a “multi-syllabus” approach, as Jordan (1997:63) refers to it, is used. This multi-syllabus approach incorporates product-based, skills-based and process-based content. A multi-syllabus is followed because the global view is that becoming literate is no longer simplistic in the sense of developing reading and writing skills only, but acknowledges that learning and literacy acquisition is a multi-faceted and socially constructed process (Street 2001:2), and the lecturers in the course subscribe to that.

The second form of academic support provided to first-year students is through the tutorial programme. All the first-year courses have at least one tutorial per week where students are divided into smaller groups of 20 and where they can work on work covered in the lectures in smaller groups and tutorial assignments. It also provides opportunities for students to discuss work and ask for clarification on issues that they did not fully understand.

A third and last form of support that the Faculty offers its first-year students is through the EMS Student Support and Research Unit (ESSRU). ESSRU was created in 2005 by the dean and its brief was to provide mentoring and moral support to especially new first-year students in the four-year degree programmes. ESSRU makes use of senior students to mentor new first-year students that are identified as ‘at-risk’ students by the different lecturers. A mentor is assigned three to four students for whom he/she is responsible, and the responsibilities include both additional academic support in modules that the students struggle with, as well as support for their overall well-being and adjustment to the University environment (Director: ESSRU 11 November 2009, personal communication).

Critique could be levelled against these three forms of support; firstly, the academic literacy course is a ‘stand alone’ course and could fall under the separate approach of academic literacy provision (Van Schalkwyk 2008:48-49). The separate approach has its strengths, but a fully integrated approach could be more effective (Van Schalkwyk 2008:242). A fully integrated approach ought to be what Boughey (2007:9) advocates: the building of “[a] ladder of literacy enriched courses through a programme”. Boughey (2007:10) argues for a reconstruction of Academic Development within a discursive formulation that focuses on quality at programme level which is directed at the

transformation of student learning and support of students. She (2007:10) advises that it should be part of an institutional strategy earmarked at study programmes that would be “fit for their purpose”.

Secondly, some of the tutorial programmes are not well managed and some tutors are not equipped with the necessary skills to conduct a tutorial successfully (Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences, EMS Teaching and Learning Report 2010). Thus, the assistance that the programme ought to provide does not happen in some courses. Lastly, the support that ESSRU provides is limited and not all the students who need additional support are assisted due to a lack of human resources and funding (Director: ESSRU 11 November 2009, personal communication).

This kind of support reflects the typical division of ‘academic support’ and ‘student services’, where financial and accommodation problems are handled separately by the administration and academic support is limited to subject-related interventions. The fact that learning is socially constructed calls this division in question because a holistic approach to learning such as what Barton (2007) argues for would be more advantageous. Barton (2007:34-35) advocates his ‘ecology’ approach to literacy and learning because it takes into account that literacy is a social activity; that there are different literacies which people make use of and these are situated in broader social relations; literacy acquisition is based upon a system of symbols and is part of people’s thinking processes; people have awareness, attitudes and values with respect to literacy and these attitudes and values guide their actions; and literacy events have social histories because current practices originated from the past.

Barton’s (2007) ‘ecology’ approach to literacy and learning reinforces the theoretical orientation of this study as discussed in Section 2.3. It also draws attention to the objective of this study: to determine which factors have an impact on failure or successful completion of the first year of study in this faculty; and to derive from the data a socially situated, supportive and holistic learning approach which could assist more students to be successful in the learning process. Therefore, in order to assist with the analysis of the data gathered in this study, a student centred analytical framework is proposed.

3.5 A STUDENTCENTRED ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

A student centred analytical framework is proposed to assist with the analysis of the data in Chapters 5 and 6 for the following two reasons:

1. this study is concerned with documenting the experiences of new first-year students in this faculty in a chronological order and in context specific situations in order to determine the influence of the experiences on the students' behaviour and how that affected their academic performance; and
2. to identify what the students in this faculty regard as important and needed in order to be successful in the learning process.

A student centred analytical framework will therefore assist me to analyse the data from the students' perspectives in the EMS faculty at UWC which is the perspective taken in this study. It will assist in:

- (a) taking the students' contexts into account;
- (b) showing change over time; and
- (c) identifying both challenges to learning as well as enabling factors.

Conducting the analysis in this manner will make the student the centre of the analysis which was not the case in the five studies reviewed in the previous chapter, Section 2.4. However, I am including the themes and sub-themes identified in all five studies because I want to build on previous research, but augmenting it in the form of a student centred analytical framework. This will enable the illustration of the "dynamic interaction and process through time in relation to learning situations" (Haggis 2009: 389) which, in this instance, will be new first-year students' failures and successes in the EMS faculty. The framework will therefore only have four themes: *personal factors*, *academic factors*, *social factors* and *institutional factors* and these four themes will all be from the students' perspective; as opposed to the three categories in Louw's conceptual framework - *Student background factors*, *Student factors* and *Institutional factors* (see Section 2.5.2). The framework is presented in Table 3.3 below.

Table 3.3 Student centred analytical framework

<p>Theme 1: Personal factors Accommodation Financial means Family support Schooling history Self-confidence First generation students HIV/AIDS</p> <p>Theme 2: Academic factors Transition Time management skills Intention of the institution and the experienced reality of students Heavy workload Foundational knowledge / Learning backlogs Commitment (and intentions and goals) Lack of confidence Language difficulties Learning styles Perceived low level of academic integration Self-perceptions of competence Study skills</p>	<p>Theme 3: Social factors Academic/social imbalance Unhealthy social involvements Perceived low level of social integration</p> <p>Theme 4: Institutional factors Academic integration (high/low) Accommodation provision Assessment methods Financial support provision Heavy workload Institutional commitment Large classes Learning support provision Mentoring support provision Resources (sufficient/insufficient) Staffing challenges Sufficient/insufficient administration Sufficient/insufficient course information Teaching methodologies and teaching styles Tutorial support provision</p>
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The framework will be used as a guide to the analysis of the data and the structure in the framework will be the organising principle for the discussions in the two analytical chapters, Chapters 5 and 6. The data analysis process will therefore not be purely inductive but the framework will enable the identification of sub-themes in the data which are similar to those in the framework, as well as sub-themes which are not in the framework. Such sub-themes would be regarded as new sub-themes and would therefore also shed further light on the kinds of challenges to learning that Black students especially experience in the learning process, or it could be enabling factors that could assist more (Black) students to be successful in the learning process.

3.6 CONCLUDING SUMMARY

In this chapter I have reviewed literature pertaining to the *apartheid* era and its impact on education in South Africa (SA); the impact of education transformation on a post-*apartheid* SA; UWC’s history and how it resisted *apartheid* ideology. I also discussed UWC’s role in Academic Development, its admission policy and the students which UWC admits to its undergraduate degree programmes. I then gave a brief description of the EMS faculty’s structure and the degree programmes offered to undergraduate students, and a synopsis of the support services which the EMS faculty offers to its first-year students. This was done to contextualise UWC and the EMS faculty as research site of the study. Lastly, based on the findings from five studies conducted on students’ learning, failures and dropouts as discussed in the previous chapter, and the perspective taken in this study, I

proposed a student centred analytical framework that I use as a guide and organising principle for the analysis and discussion of the data in Chapters 5 and 6.

The review of the literature on the impact of *apartheid* on education in South Africa and on UWC as a higher education institution provided sufficient evidence that Black South Africans were deprived of an equal and just education. And although we are already seventeen years into a democratic governing system, the damage that was done is still prevalent and felt by many Black South Africans. In this sense, UWC as a higher education institution that resisted *apartheid* education was a beacon of hope and continues to be a university that tries to accommodate and educate students coming from these communities.

However, it is important to acknowledge the limitations of both the theoretical orientation and the analytical framework of the study. As explained in Section 2.3, my reason for using Vygotsky and Bandura's social theories as the theoretical orientation of this study as opposed to one of the academic literacy theories, was because these two social theories depict human development and learning as the interplay and interconnectivity of human behaviours and actions in the environment in which they live and function. In addition, Vygotsky's social cultural theory also provides an explanation of the socio-economic status of the student participants in this study. The theoretical orientation therefore, enables a socio-cultural and holistic view of learning – a view of the individual within a social context. It further demonstrates the interrelatedness and interdependence of the factors identified and discussed as the analysis and discussion in Chapters 5 and 6 will show.

Lastly, having both a theoretical orientation and an analytical framework could be viewed as problematic by some readers of this dissertation. However, the analytical framework is not meant to compete with the theoretical orientation; its purpose is to underpin the theoretical orientation in that it acts as a heuristic for the analysis of the data in Chapters 5 and 6. It further assisted in representing the data in a structured and logical manner.

I now move on to Chapter 4 in which I present a detailed discussion of the research process followed in this study.

CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1 INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter, UWC as research site of the study was contextualised and a student centred analytical framework was arrived at. In this chapter, I give a detailed description and explanation of the research process that guided the empirical work conducted for this study. I begin by motivating the research decisions that I made with regard to the research paradigm, the research design and the data collection methods. I then describe and explain the data collection process and the quality of the data. Finally, I conclude this chapter with a summary of what has been discussed and a reflection on my experience of the whole process.

The research methodology chapter is one of the most important chapters of a dissertation because it allows you to describe and explain the research process followed, and to justify the choices made. McKenna (2004:37) states: “Each of the steps I have taken along this process reflects my perception of what is valid and what is important. This chapter on the research methodology serves to make my reasoning behind these choices transparent and to discuss how I have positioned myself within the research”. In the same way, in this chapter I “show the workings”, as Holliday (2001:178) refers to it. I have attempted to do this, firstly, by being honest in Chapter 1 about my role in this process, which varies from researcher (outsider) to co-participant (insider) as the discussions and explanations unfold (Babbie & Mouton 2001:53). Secondly, I have attempted to give reasons and supporting evidence in the form of references for discussions, decisions made, actions taken and procedures followed throughout this dissertation.

It is important to note here, at the start of this chapter that, having reviewed the literature on research methodology and qualitative research specifically, I came to the realisation that there is ‘no blueprint’ on how to design a qualitative study. Creswell (2007:41) states: “[a]t the outset, I need to say that there is no agreed upon structure for how to design a qualitative study. Books on qualitative research vary”. This seems to be the general trend in most of the literature that I have consulted (Babbie & Mouton 2001; Chilisa & Preece 2005; Denzin & Lincoln 2000; Flick 2009; Silverman 2001; Stake 1995, 2006; Yin 2009).

However, there is what Silverman (2001:38) refers to as “a set of shared preferences” when he discusses Hammersley’s (1990) views on the matter of the multiple qualitative research discourse. It is this ‘shared set of references’ with regard to the most important concepts or terminology used in designing a qualitative study that I will draw from and discuss throughout this chapter.

4.2 PURPOSE, OBJECTIVE AND AIM OF THE STUDY

As stated in Section 1.3, the purpose of this study was to investigate factors that have an impact on the successful completion of the first year of study by registered first-year students in the three-year degree programme in the EMS faculty at UWC. The objective was two-fold: firstly, to determine which factors have an impact on the successful completion or failure of the first year of study in this faculty, and secondly, to derive from the data a socially situated, supportive and holistic learning approach that could be used to assist more students to be successful in their first year of study, and in so doing reduce the overall failure and dropout rates of first-year students in this faculty. I therefore intend this study to contribute to the body of knowledge in higher education, specifically with regard to finding ways in which new first-year students within a particular faculty at a specific higher education institution could be assisted in the learning process in order to improve pass rates, and thus minimise failure and dropout rates. While there is general consensus among most researchers of higher education that success in the first year of study is a determiner for success in the subsequent years of study (Leibowitz 1994, 2001; McKenna 2004; Scott 2006, 2009a), I am hopeful that the findings of this study and the recommendations made will provide further insights for developing socially situated learning support approaches that will enhance student retention and success in the first year of study and in subsequent years.

The aim of this study was thus to answer the main research question:

What factors emerge as the primary drivers of success in the first year of the three-year degree programme of study for students registered in the EMS faculty at UWC?

The sub-questions were:

1. Who is the UWC student in the EMS faculty?
2. What are the challenges to learning for a UWC student in the EMS faculty?
3. How do these challenges to learning influence student performance?

4. Why do some students within the same context achieve success and others do not?

I classify my research as an empirical study, seeking to explore, describe and understand a “real-life” problem: new first-year students and how they experience their first year of study at a higher education institution in South Africa (Babbie & Mouton 2001). It is about the challenges they face and how these challenges influence their performance in the learning process. The motivation for the study and the research questions was provided in Chapter 1, and the literature that was reviewed in Chapters 2 and 3 was guided by these questions (Denscombe 1998; Berg 2001). The literature that I reviewed assisted me in constructing a conceptual framework that aims to guide the research process followed. A summary of the conceptual framework is provided below in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1 Summary of conceptual framework

Research Questions	Literature reviewed	Data collected
<p>Main question:</p> <p>What factors emerge as the primary drivers of success in the first year of the three-year degree programme of study for students registered in the EMS faculty at UWC?</p> <p>Sub-questions:</p> <p>1. Who is the student in the EMS faculty at UWC?</p> <p>2. What are the challenges to learning for a UWC student in the EMS faculty?</p> <p>3. How do these challenges to learning influence student performance?</p> <p>4. Why do some students within the same context achieve success and others do not?</p>	<p>Selected learning theories</p> <p>The theoretical orientation</p> <p>Five studies conducted on students learning</p> <p>Education in South Africa and its impact on UWC as academic institution</p> <p>UWC’s role in Academic Development</p> <p>The students that UWC admits to its undergraduate programmes</p> <p>The structure of and support services offered to first-year students in the EMS faculty</p>	<p>Two written reflective pieces at different stages of the data collection process (April and July 2009)</p> <p>Official records from university database to verify biographical & geographical information & matriculation details (May 2009)</p> <p>A questionnaire that included both quantitative and qualitative questions (October 2009)</p> <p>Official results of participants (March 2010)</p> <p>Answers to questions in individual interviews (March 2010)</p>

Designing a conceptual framework for one’s research is not an easy task. Henning (2004:26) states that a conceptual framework “anchors your research in the literature... it facilitates the dialogue between the literature and your study... it delineates your study, and it helps you position your research in the bigger research enterprise”. She adds that it “...includes a literature review which signals the importance of the researcher’s contribution to the production and interpretation of knowledge in a domain” (Henning 2004:26-27). Based on this interpretation of what a conceptual framework is, I constructed

the conceptual framework presented in Table 4.1 above. The research questions guided me in the literature review and directed my thinking in selecting and discussing the literature in the manner that I did in Chapters 2 and 3. It also directed me in proposing a student centred analytical framework and in choosing my data collection methods (Henning 2004; Berg 2001). The main research question contextualised the study in that the research site and context is UWC, a previously HBU that caters mainly for so-called 'disadvantaged' and 'underprepared' students. It further conceptualised the study in that it was a specific faculty with a specific cohort of students that was investigated. As can be seen in Table 4.1 above, I used both quantitative and qualitative research data collection methods (as described in Section 4.5.4 below) in order to find answers to the four sub-questions. Lastly, the conceptual framework also guided me in choosing a research paradigm, which is presented next.

4.3 QUALITATIVE RESEARCH PARADIGM

As stated at the beginning of this chapter, there is 'no blueprint' for a qualitative research study. I will therefore start by examining three of the many definitions of qualitative research, unpacking the different characteristics thereof and describing how these relate to my study, as well as discussing the critique against this research paradigm in which I position my study. Creswell (2007:42) states that "[w]e conduct qualitative research because a problem or issue needs to be explored... because we need a complex, detailed understanding of the issue...we want to empower individuals to share their stories, hear their voices, and allowing them to tell the stories unencumbered by what we expect to find or what we have read in the literature...because we want to understand the contexts or settings in which participants in a study address a problem or issues". These reasons as to why we conduct qualitative research are exactly the reasons why I position my study in a qualitative, interpretive research paradigm. I will unpack the reasons for conducting qualitative research further through a discussion of three of the many definitions of qualitative research.

Babbie and Mouton (2001:53) use the term 'qualitative research paradigm' and define it as "[a] generic research approach in social research according to which research takes its departure point as the insider perspective on social action. Qualitative researchers attempt to study human action from the insiders' perspective". The goal of research for them is to understand and describe a phenomenon. Flick follows Toulmin's (1990) views on what qualitative research attempts, and defines it as being "[o]riented towards analyzing

concrete cases in their temporal and local particularity and starting from people's expressions and activities in their local contexts" (Flick 2009:21). In addition, Creswell (2007:36-37), after noting that a definition for qualitative research "...has become more difficult in recent years", provides this definition:

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

I use these three definitions (Babbie & Mouton 2001; Creswell 2007 and Flick 2009) of qualitative research for two reasons: firstly, because there are similarities between all three of them (the common set of preferences that Silverman (2001) alluded to), and secondly, because it seems to me as if these three definitions build on each other, i.e. the second definition elaborates a little further, whereas the third definition adds to the second and expands further on the process of conducting qualitative research studies, as will be described next.

The first similarity is the reference made to human experiences and their natural and social contexts. Thus, the first characteristic of qualitative research that is empirical in nature is the fact that researchers who position themselves in a qualitative research paradigm attempt to study human beings in their 'real-life' situations, what other researchers refer to as a "natural setting" (Chilisa & Preece 2005; Denzin & Lincoln 2000; Stake 1995). Gillham (2000:11) states that if one wants to understand people in real life, one has to study them in their context and in the way they behave. Denzin and Lincoln (2000:3) explain it in this way: "...qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or to interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them". This is what this study is attempting — to investigate how first-year students (young human beings) experience the learning process (everyday life experiences, activities, actions) at a higher education institution — a specific natural setting.

The second similarity is the reference made to the purpose for investigating a phenomenon. Therefore, the second characteristic of qualitative research captured in the three definitions is the fact that the definitions speak about the purpose — why researchers use a qualitative research paradigm and not, for example, a quantitative research paradigm. The three definitions give the purpose for investigating a phenomenon qualitatively as “to describe and understand”, “to make concrete the tendencies...” and “to inquire”, thus, to interpret the experiences, activities and actions of humans in their natural settings. According to Creswell (2007:39), “[q]ualitative research is a form of inquiry in which researchers make an interpretation of what they see, hear, and understand. The researchers’ interpretation cannot be separated from their own background, history, context, and prior understanding”. This means that the researcher will interpret the phenomenon based on what her background, historical context and experiences are. Denzin and Lincoln (2000:3) speak about qualitative research as consisting “...of a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible”. Qualitative researchers make the world of their participants ‘visible’ through their understanding and interpretation of the data and narrating it as objectively as possible, while Henning (2004:3) explains the difference between the two paradigms: “[t]he distinction between the qualitative paradigm and the better known quantitative paradigm lies in this quest for understanding and for in-depth inquiry”.

Following these researchers, I am interpreting the students’ experiences, their reactions and behaviours in the learning process in order to determine why some of them were less successful than others in the first year of study in the EMS faculty. I have read their stories, listened to their voices and heard what they had to say in order to gain some insight in how they experienced the learning process as new first-year students in the EMS Faculty at UWC. I am therefore looking through a “pervasive lens” (Creswell2007:24).

Lastly, the latter two definitions also elaborate on the process of conducting qualitative research. One can deduce that the process of conducting qualitative research involves the researcher as key instrument; that the researcher should be flexible and reflective; that the researcher respects and values the participants; that the researcher analyses the data inductively; and that reporting is inclusive of the meanings of the participants and not that of the researcher (Creswell 2007; Denzin & Lincoln 2000; Punch 2006; Stake1995). A qualitative research paradigm therefore suggests that the researcher should be the one involved in collecting and gathering the data. Punch (2006:52) states that, in the case of

qualitative data, "...the researcher is seen as the primary instrument for data collection and analysis". But the researcher should also be flexible and sensitive to the participants: "Qualitative research tries to establish an empathetic understanding for the reader, through description, sometimes thick description, conveying to the reader what experience itself would convey" (Stake 1995:39). However, it should be noted that researchers do not analyse the data without some idea of the broad issues they are looking for, and their analysis sometimes is not purely inductive (Creswell 2007). Thus, my analytical process was not purely inductive as mentioned already in Chapter 1 because I used a student centred analytical framework. The sub-themes identified in the framework sensitised and guided me in the analysis of the data, and it assisted me to identify new sub-themes that were not already in the framework.

In the final analysis, I have attempted to interpret and represent the findings as objectively and holistically as possible in Chapters 5 and 6, in that I have tried to focus on the meanings and experiences of the students in the investigation in a sensitive and caring manner, reflecting critically throughout the process on what I do, and how I do it, and being acutely aware of my own bias, of how the way I perceive and experience reality might impact on how I interpret, discuss and understand the data (Creswell 2007:38; Denzin & Lincoln 2000:11).

Having fully explained and motivated why I position my research in a qualitative, interpretive research paradigm, I now turn to a brief discussion of some of the critiques of qualitative research.

4.4 CRITIQUES OF QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

From reviewing the literature and looking at the debates in research methodology and the nature of scientific research, it seems as if there are two main forms of criticism against the use of a qualitative research paradigm. According to Silverman (2001:32), "[i]n many quantitatively oriented social science methodology textbooks, qualitative research is often treated as a relatively minor methodology. As such, it is suggested that it should only be contemplated at early or 'exploratory' stages of a study". The reason for this assumption is that most quantitative researchers view "statistical analysis as the bedrock of research", and suggest that qualitative research is "suitable" to use for the data collection process only since it allows the researcher to "gain firsthand knowledge of the situation" (Silverman, 2001:33). Silverman (2001:33) refers to this assumption as "a problem of

reliability”, since qualitative research “is, by definition, stronger on long descriptive narratives than on statistical tables”. Thus, the first form of critique against qualitative research is the fact that, because qualitative research relies heavily on description, interpretation and understanding, the reliability of the findings could be perceived as being questionable.

The second form of criticism against qualitative research, according to Silverman (2001:34), is the soundness of the explanations given. This is sometimes known as “the problem of anecdotalism”. Silverman (2001:34) states that this complaint of “anecdotalism” questions the validity of qualitative research. Flick (2009:25) adds to this when he states: “Arguments such as using a representative sample are often used for substantiating the claim that only the quantitative data lead to results in the actual sense of the word, whereas qualitative data play a more illustrative part”. Stake (1995) explains the “subjective” nature of qualitative research, where he states that the “intent of qualitative researchers to promote a subjective research paradigm is a given”, and further, “personal understanding frequently is misunderstanding by the researchers and by their readers” (Stake 1995:45). Thus, the criticism against the use of qualitative research is based on the argument that quantitative data is more reliable and valid than qualitative data.

In response to the criticism about reliability, Creswell (2007:209-210) suggests that “[r]eliability can be enhanced if the researcher obtains detailed field notes by employing a good quality tape for recording and by transcribing the tape”. As far as validity is concerned, Creswell (2007:207) says that researchers should make use of accepted strategies to document the “accuracy” of their studies. He suggests that researchers should get to know their participants, their setting and the way they operate; they should make use of multiple and different sources, methods and theories to provide corroborating evidence (triangulation); they should make use of peer review or debriefing where possible; they should clarify their biases from the outset of the study; they should solicit participants’ views of the credibility of the findings and interpretations; they should collect data that will provide rich, thick descriptions that will allow the readers to make decisions regarding transferability; and they should make use of external audits to examine both the process and the product of the account, accessing their accuracy. Ringsted, Hodges and Scherpbier (2011:699) suggest that qualitative research should rather endeavour to be ‘authentic and trustworthy’. Again, these suggestions are part of the ‘shared set of preferences’, since most of the literature emphasise these. Punch (2006:4) is of the

opinion that one should stop with the “either/or thinking” about quantitative and qualitative distinctions; that the one is not better than the other; that both are needed and have their advantages and disadvantages; and that they could be combined. Ringsted *et al.* (2011) express the same sentiments in their article about research in medical education.

To conclude this discussion, most of the researchers suggest that anyone who seeks to use a qualitative research paradigm for a study should employ a combination of the above techniques in order to strengthen their interpretations and findings with regard to the reliability and validity of their research (Babbie & Mouton 2001; Creswell 2007; Flick 2009; Silverman 2001). Henning (2004:147) sums it up aptly: “...I would also like to promote good craftsmanship, honest communication and action as reasons for rating research as good scholarship”. I have attempted to do that in this dissertation and I discuss the instruments that I used in Section 4.5.4. The research design is presented next.

4.5 RESEARCH DESIGN

For the purpose of this study, research design is understood to mean a plan to guide one through the research process, from the beginning to the end (Yin 2009). Consequently, a research design represents the entire research process; it gives direction and guidance in order to arrive at the intended outcomes (Berg 2001). This means that when one embarks on the research journey, the research design should be the first priority. It is a carefully thought through plan that a researcher has to construct with the assistance of the relevant literature, introspection and critical reflection, supervisor’s input, and any other forms of assistance that is needed (Babbie & Mouton 2001). However, as the research design is a plan (or blueprint, as Babbie and Mouton (2001:72) and Yin (2009:26) refer to it), one must take cognisance of the fact that (any) plan could change or that adjustments to the plan could become necessary as the research process unfolds (Cresswell 2007).

Research methodology, on the other hand, has to do with the actual research process, i.e. identifying the unit of analysis, and procedures such as the data collection methods, analysis of the data and the quality of the data (Berg 2001; Patton 2002). Thus, for me, the research design is the ‘full’ picture (the overall plan) that spells out the entire investigation process and gives direction, while research methodology is part of the process — a very important part that deals with the actual research process. Having clarified the difference between what a research design is and what research methodology is, I now move to a discussion of the research design that I use for this study, namely, case study design, and

thereafter a detailed account of the research processes followed and instruments used is provided.

4.5.1 Case study design

From the literature that I have reviewed regarding the different designs that are mostly used in the qualitative research paradigm, I decided that a case study design was most suitable for my investigation because I worked with a specific, identifiable group that shared certain characteristics that made them a coherent grouping (Stake 1995). Babbie and Mouton (2001:281) refer to a case study as “an intensive investigation of a single unit”. Creswell (2007:73) states that “...case study research involves the study of an issue explored through one or more cases within a bounded system (i.e. a setting, a context)”. Yin (2009:18) takes it a step further and speaks about a twofold, technical definition that begins with the scope of a case study: “[a]n empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident”. In the case of this study, the problem of students failing or passing cannot be situated only in the students. Their historical contexts and the institutional context may also influence their success or lack of it. The central theme therefore is that of an in-depth investigation of a case within its natural (real-life) context, and the case could be a single individual, multiple individual units, a group, a treatment team, multiple units or a community (Babbie & Mouton 2001; Gillham 2000; Hammersley & Gomm 2000). In this study, two groups with 20 first-year students per group are the two Cases.

There are four reasons why I decided to use a case study design. Firstly, I used a case study design because it has been successfully used in other higher educational research studies (see, for example, Leibowitz 2001; Paxton 2004; Van Schalkwyk 2008; Smit 2009). Yin (2009:5) states that “...case studies are commonly used as a research method in the social science disciplines”. Case study designs have been used successfully in that they allow for ‘rich, thick descriptions’ of the phenomenon studied (Patton 2002). Holliday (2001:79) supports the use of small studies when he states that “thick description belongs comfortably with the small case study, as a sharp alternative to ‘sample based’ research”. Holliday (2001:80) further states that “thick description generates a richness of perceptions ‘while reflecting and exploring data records’, discovering patterns and constructing and exploring impressions”. Patton (1990:54) is of the same opinion when he states that “[c]ase studies...become particularly useful where one needs to understand some special people, particular problem, or unique situation in great depth, and where one can identify

cases rich in information". Similarly, Brock-Utne *et al.* (2004:xiv) say that "it is in addition clear that [research] projects need not necessarily be carried out on a large scale, including thousands of participants, to be of value. Taking small steps to achieve larger goals are often of immense strategic importance for those who set their sights on the changing of perceptions about theories and practices".

Secondly, I used a case study design because, it "is an exercise in such depth, the study is an opportunity to see what others have not yet seen, to reflect the uniqueness of our own lives, to engage the best of our interpretive powers, and to make, even by its integrity alone, an advocacy for those things we cherish" (Stake1995:136). I work with first- and second-year students, and their progress and well-being in the learning process are my top priority. I believed that this study would help me see "what others have not yet seen", that it would "reflect the uniqueness of my own life" and that which I "cherish", and that it would engage my own "interpretive powers", as Stake (1995) proposes.

Thirdly, case study design requires extensive description and data gathering of the identified case (as described earlier) and this will help me gain an in-depth understanding of the situation and meaning of the first-year students that form the two Cases in this study. Stake (1995:4) suggests that the first criterion in selecting a case is "to maximize what we can learn", that is, to get as much information about as many aspects of the case as possible. From the outset of my study, I had a desire to gain an in-depth understanding of how my students experienced the learning process. I wanted to understand what the challenges are that they face and that they had to deal with in their study careers, and, more importantly, I wanted to understand what the factors are that enable some of them to overcome the challenges, to pass and to be successful in the learning process, despite the fact that they are from so-called 'disadvantaged' and 'underprepared' communities. Thus, following Stake (1995:3), I have an "intrinsic interest" in these two Cases, and I could refer to them as "intrinsic" case study designs.

The fourth and last reason why I use a case study design is because of Babbie and Mouton's (2001) discussion of the four principles on which case studies are based. They (2001:282) state that case study research is based on: the role of conceptualisation; the importance of contextual details and in-depth descriptions; the use of multiple sources of data; and the analytical strategies used. These principles of Babbie and Mouton are what

Yin (2009) refers to as “important components”. Yin (2009:27) divides them into the following:

- “a study’s questions;
- it’s propositions, if any;
- it’s unit(s) of analysis;
- the logic linking of the data to the propositions;
- the criteria for interpreting the findings”.

With regard to conceptualisation, I stated the purpose of the study and provided a rationale for the study in Chapter 1, Section 1.1. I constructed a main research question and sub-questions and motivated how this was done in Section 4.2 of this chapter, with the explanation of my conceptual framework and a summary table (Table 4.1). Lastly, in this chapter I define and explain the entire research process that I followed.

Furthermore, Babbie and Mouton (2001:282) stress the importance of detailing the context of the unit when they state that “to understand and interpret case studies, researchers describe the context in detail. The surrounding ‘ecology’ or ‘environment’, with its notions of multiple, interacting contextualized systems, helps conceptualize the contexts in which the unit of analysis is embedded”. Contextualising your study is therefore an important step because it will guide the reader through the process that you have followed, the type of literature that you concentrated on, the conceptual framework, the data collection methods, and how and why you have analysed and interpret the data in the manner that you did (Babbie & Mouton 2001; Yin 2009). Stake (1995:134) states: “Our observations cannot help but be interpretive, and our descriptive report is laced with and followed by interpretation. We offer opportunity for readers to make their own interpretations of the case, but we offer ours too”. Denzin and Lincoln (2000:23) explain “[t]here is no ‘single interpretive truth’ but multiple interpretive communities, each with its own criteria for evaluating an interpretation”. Following Stake and Denzin and Lincoln, I have attempted to use unambiguous language in my interpretation in order to give a detailed account of the context of the two Cases in Chapters 2 and 3, and in the remaining sections that follow below (4.5.2. to 4.5.5), and referred to this context in Chapters 5 and 6, where I discuss the findings, and in the concluding chapter, Chapter 7, where I make recommendations.

In addition, the use of multiple sources of data is very important in a case study design because it determines the reliability and validity of the research and the interpretation of the researcher (Stake 1995; Yin 2009). Henning (2004:26) and Holliday (2001:46-47) also talk about the “subjectivity” of a researcher’s interpretation, as well as the interpretations of the readers of the report/paper/thesis. Patton (2002:578) explains to a student that it is not a matter of “truth” but rather an attempt to do “the best job he could in describing the patterns that appeared to him to be present in the data and that he present those patterns as his perspective based on his analysis and interpretation of the data he had collected”. Because I understood this important principle of case study design, I have collected six sets of data from and about the students. This I have done, not only to strengthen triangulation, but also the reliability of the findings. Also, with regard to objectivity and trustworthiness, I have already identified and motivated the analytical framework that I used for the analysis in Section 3.5, and I give a detailed description of each set of data in Section 4.5.4, followed by a comprehensive explanation of how I applied this framework to the empirical data collected in Section 4.5.5 and 4.5.6 below.

4.5.2 Challenges to a case study design

Creswell (2007:75-76) discusses three possible challenges to a case study design, namely the identification of a case, how many cases should be studied, and deciding on the boundaries of a case. The first challenge lies in the decision as to which bounded system to use, since a case study design focuses on a “unit in a bounded system” and there might be many possible candidates for selection, as well as difficulty in deciding whether to study the case itself, or the issue of the case (Creswell 2007; Flick 2009). The second challenge, how many cases to include in a multiple case, pertains to the fact that there is no “set number” of cases, thus no clear guidelines on this issue (Creswell 2007:76). Challenge number three lies in the decision of the “boundaries” of the case — how it might be constrained in terms of time, events, and processes (Creswell 2007:76). Flick (2009), Stake (1995) and Yin (2009) add a fourth challenge, that of generalisation, when only one case is studied. Flick (2009:134) states that “[c]oncentration on one case often leads to problems of generalization — less in a statistical than in a theoretical understanding”. However, Creswell (2007:76) suggests a number of four cases for multiple cases, and that the researcher sets boundaries that will adequately surround the case. Yin (2009:15) provides a counterargument for the issue of generalisation when he states that “[t]he short answer is that case studies, like experiments, are generalizable to theoretical propositions and not to populations or universes. In this sense, the case study, like the experiment,

does not represent a 'sample' and in doing a case study, your goal will be to expand and generalize theories (analytic generalization) and not to enumerate frequencies (statistical generalization)". Thus, in qualitative research the issue is not to generalise to other populations, but to focus on specific issues pertaining to a specific population's situation and context, and this is what my study is about (Yin 2009).

Yin (2009:15) notes two additional concerns about case studies, namely that they take too long (this is a challenge that was already identified under the discussion of challenges to qualitative research in the previous section), and "They result in massive, unreadable documents". Yin (1995:15) states that these concerns were valid in the past, but they are not valid anymore because it is not how case studies should be done in the future. My two Cases were set within a specific timeframe, i.e. from April 2009 to March 2010; the data was collected in this period and was manageable.

In addition to the above, Henning (2004:42) cautions that "[c]ase studies are 'not the easy way out' for researchers who have not developed their methodological expertise". She (2004:42) emphasises that "you need to ask the design questions: 'What is this study a case of? Does this topic warrant being referred to as a 'case'? Usually, if the answer to this question is 'yes' and if there is a bounded system with a clear unit of analysis, the study will warrant a 'case' design type" (Henning, 2007:42).

It is clear from the above challenges that deciding on a case study design is a matter that researchers should consider carefully and critically. The first-year students in my study comprise two clear Cases and these will be discussed next.

4.5.3 The unit of analysis: Research participants

The participants in this study were drawn from registered new full-time first-year students in the three-year undergraduate degree programme in the EMS faculty in 2009. There are four degree streams in this degree programme, namely the B.Com. Accounting degree stream, the B.Com. Law degree stream, the B.Com. General degree stream, and the B.Admin. degree stream. Since the total number of students would make a qualitative study impossible, I purposively selected 40 students (two groups of twenty each) in the latter two degree streams, the B.Com. General and B.Admin. degree streams, because these are the degree streams with the largest number of registered students in the Faculty in 2009 (see discussion in Section 3.4.1). The students in Case 1 were 20 students who

had failed one or more of their coursework components; while Case 2 consisted of 20 students who were passing all their coursework components at the start of the research process in April 2009. A detailed explanation of the selection process is provided in Section 4.5.4.1 below.

The biographical and geographical information of the participants are presented in summary format in Tables 4.2 and 4.3 below (Table 4.2 provides a summary of Case 1, and Table 4.3 a summary of the information on Case 2).

Table 4.2 Case 1: Biographical and geographical information

Student	Age	Gender	Race	1st language	Home area	Province
1	19	Male	Coloured	English	Bishop Lavis	WC
2	19	Female	African	IsiZulu	Durban	KZN
3	19	Male	Coloured	Afrikaans	Upington	NC
4	20	Female	African	IsiXhosa	East London	EC
5	18	Female	Coloured	Afrikaans	Paarl	WC
6	19	Female	African	IsiXhosa	King Williamstown	EC
7	19	Male	African	IsiXhosa	Queenstown	EC
8	20	Male	African	IsiXhosa	Colesberg	NC
9	21	Female	African	IsiXhosa	Middledrift	EC
10	19	Female	African	IsiXhosa	Port Elizabeth	EC
11	21	Male	Coloured	English	Athlone	WC
12	19	Female	Indian	English	Manenberg	WC
13	18	Male	African	IsiXhosa/Zulu	East London	EC
14	22	Female	Coloured	English	Kuilsriver	WC
15	19	Female	Coloured	English	Mitchells Plain	WC
16	19	Male	African	IsiXhosa	Mitchells Plain	WC
17	19	Female	Coloured	English	Mitchells Plain	WC
18	19	Female	Coloured	English	Mitchells Plain	WC
19	21	Female	Coloured	English	Goodwood	WC
20	19	Female	African	IsiXhosa	Oudsthoorn	NC

The table shows that the student participants in Case 1 consisted of thirteen females and seven males, with a mean age of 19 (19.4). There were ten African, nine coloured and one Indian student, with nine students reporting IsiXhosa as their first language, eight reporting

English as first language, two students reporting Afrikaans as first language and one reporting IsiZulu as first language. Lastly, ten students were from the Western Province, six from the Eastern Cape, three from the Northern Cape and one came from KwaZulu-Natal.

Table 4.3 Case 2: Biographical and geographical information

Student	Age	Gender	Race	1st language	Home area	Province
1	18	Female	Coloured	Afr/English	Milnerton	WC
2	18	Male	Coloured	English	Cape Flats	WC
3	20	Male	African	IsiXhosa	Nganga East	WC
4	19	Female	Indian	English	Mandalay	WC
5	18	Female	Indian	English	Cape Flats	WC
6	23	Male	African	South Sotho	Repholosibue	FS
7	19	Female	African	English	Edgemean	WC
8	18	Female	Coloured	English	Mitchells Plain	WC
9	19	Male	African	IsiXhosa	Hudson Park	EC
10	19	Female	Indian	English	Cape Flats	WC
11	19	Female	Coloured	English	Brackenfell	WC
12	19	Female	African	IsiXhosa	Cape Flats	WC
13	21	Male	African	Bilingual	Benoni	Gauteng
14	20	Female	Coloured	English	Parow	WC
15	20	Male	African	IsiXhosa	Gugulethu	WC
16	20	Female	Coloured	English	Kensington	WC
17	20	Female	African	IsiXhosa	Westonaria	Gauteng
18	20	Female	African	IsiXhosa	Port Elizabeth	EC
19	24	Female	Coloured	English	Rondebosch	WC
20	21	Male	African	SeTswana	Pretoria	Gauteng

The table indicates that the student participants in Case 2 consisted of thirteen females and seven males, with a mean age of 20 (19.75). There were ten African, seven Coloured and three Indian students, with six students reporting IsiXhosa as first language, one reporting South Sotho, one reporting SeTswana, ten reporting English and two students reporting that they were bilingual. Lastly, fourteen students were from the Western Province, two from the Eastern Cape, three from Gauteng and one student came from the Free State. One student in this group was visually impaired. The research participants are

representative of the student population at UWC (see discussion in Chapter 2, Sections 2.3.1 and 2.3.2), and hence a plus for the selection process, since the students were not purposively selected according to biographical and geographical information, but according to who failed and who passed, as explained above. The next two tables below are summaries of the high schools that the participants attended, the year they completed their schooling and the degree that they were registered for in 2009:

Table 4.4 Case 1: High school attended, year completed and degree registered for in 2009

Student	School attended	Year matriculated	Full Exemption	Degree registered
1	Belhar S/S	2008	Yes	B Com Gen
2	Furtura H/H	2007	Yes	B Com Gen
3	Carlton van Heerden (Model C)	2007	Yes	B Com Gen
4	Sizimisele H/S	2008	Yes	B Admin
5	Klein Nederberg S/S	2008	Yes	B Com Gen
6	Glendale S/S	2008	Yes	B Admin
7	Hector Peterson H/S	2008	Yes	B Com Gen
8	Langa H/S	2008	Yes	B Com Gen
9	Ntabenkonyana H/S	2007	Yes	B Admin
10	Lwazilwethus S/S	2007	Yes	B Admin
11	Groote Schuur H/S (Model C)	2005	Yes	B Com Gen
12	Pelican Park H/H	2007	Yes	B Com Gen
13	Fairmont H/S (Model C)	2008	Yes	B Admin
14	Young Eagles Christian College	2007	Yes	B Com Gen
15	Oval North S/S	2008	Yes	B Com Gen
16	Hottentots Holland (Model C)	2008	Yes	B Com Gen
17	Oval North S/S	2008	Yes	B Com Gen
18	Portland H/S	2008	Yes	B Admin
19	Fairbairn College (Model C)	2006	Yes	B Com Gen
20	Fezekile S/S	2008	Yes	B Com Gen

The table signifies that five student participants attended a former 'model C' school and fifteen students attended former DET and DEC schools in Case 1. One of the fifteen students attended a religious college (but it also resided under the former DEC schooling system). These classifications are based on the Admission Guidelines used by the Student Affairs office (University of the Western Cape 2009e). Twelve students matriculated in

2008, six in 2007, one in 2006 and one in 2005, and all of them passed with full exemption. Lastly, fourteen students were registered for the B.Com.Gen. degree stream and six students for the Admin. degree stream in this Case.

Table 4.5 Case 2: High school attended, year completed and degree registered for in 2009

Student	School attended	Year matriculated	Full exemption	Degree registered
1	Milnerton H/S (Model C)	2008	Yes	B Com Gen
2	Belhar H/S	2008	Yes	B Com Gen
3	Stihembile Matiso H/H	2008	Yes	B Admin
4	Mondale H/S	2008	Yes	B Com Gen
5	Darul Arqam Islamic H/S	2008	Yes	B Com Gen
6	Repholosibue H/S	2003	Yes	B Admin
7	Edgemead H/S (Model C)	2007	Yes	B Com Gen
8	Princeton H/H	2008	Yes	B Com Gen
9	Hudson Park H/S	2008	Yes	B Com Gen
10	Islamic Girls College	2007	Yes	B Com Gen
11	Brackenfell H/S (Model C)	2008	Yes	B Com Gen
12	Athlone School for the Blind	2008	Yes	B Admin
13	Benoni H/S (Model C)	2007	Yes	B Admin
14	Parow H/S (Model C)	2008	Yes	B Admin
15	Cape Town H/S (Model C)	2007	Yes	B Admin
16	Kensington H/H	2007	Yes	B Com Gen
17	Townview H/S (Model C)	2008	Yes	B Admin
18	Ntsonkotha S/S	2007	Yes	B Admin
19	Islamic College	2003	Yes	B Com Gen
20	Sutherland H/S (Model C)	2007	Yes	B Admin

The table shows that eight students attended former 'model C' schools, three students attended a religious school/college, one student attended a school for the blind, and eight students attended former DET and DEC schools in Case 2. Again, these classifications are based on the guidelines used by the Student Admissions Officers. Eleven students matriculated in 2008, seven students in 2007 and two students in 2003, and all of them passed with full exemption. Eleven students were registered for the B.Com.Gen. degree stream and nine students for the B.Admin. degree stream in this group.

The last two tables are summaries of the participants' matriculation/Grade 12 results. Until 2007, a percentage symbol was given as the final result for a senior certificate. The Grade 12 results for learners who completed school under the new, revised curriculum from 2008 make use of a point system per learning area. There are seven learning areas and the total number of points per student was calculated and is presented below.

Table 4.6 Case 1: Matriculation averages/ Grade 12 total points

Year matriculated	Aggregates/total no of points	No of students	% of group
2007	B average	1	5%
2007	C average	3	15%
2005 + 2006	D average	2	10%
2007	E average	2	10%
2008	20 - 29 points	2	10%
2008	30 – 40 points	10	50%

The table shows that one student passed with a B average, which could be regarded as good, while 13 students passed their final year with a C average (3 + 10 with points between 30 and 40), which could be regarded as an average pass. Four students passed their final year with a D average (2 + 2 with points between 20 and 29), which could be regarded as not so good, and two students passed with an E average, which could be regarded as dismal. These results are a good representation of the results of students who are admitted to the different faculties at UWC.

Table 4.7 Case 2: Matriculation averages / Grade 12 total points

Year matriculated	Averages /total no of points	No of students	% of group
2003	B average	1	5%
2003	D average	1	5%
2007	C average	3	15%
2007	D average	4	20%
2008	30 – 35 points	5	25%
2008	36 – 40 points	4	20%
2008	41 – 45 points	2	10%

The table shows that three students passed with a B average (1 + 2 with a total point score between 41 and 45), which could be regarded as good, twelve students passed with a C average (3 + 9 with a total point of between 30 and 40), which could be regarded as an average pass, and five students passed with a D average, which could be regarded as below average. Although more students passed with a B average (three compared to one

in Case 1) and there were no students who passed with an E average in Case 2, the results are not much different than those in Case 1.

However, it should be noted here that not all twenty students in Case 2 participated until the end of the data collection process. Five of them did not come back to me with Written Reflection number 2 in July 2009. I tried to follow up (with e-mails and telephone calls), but they still did not respond and I left it because it was their prerogative to do so, as stated in the consent form that they signed. I therefore continued with the remaining fifteen students who did come back to me (Written Reflection number 2 and the research questionnaire). In addition, when I started to analyse the data sets, I discovered that three of the fifteen had failed one module each (Students no 6, B.Admin., no 3, B.Admin. and no 9, B.Com. Gen.). I had to remove the three students from the group because this Case was for students who had passed all their modules in the first year of study. I therefore only analysed Written Reflection number 2 for the twelve students, as well as their research questionnaires, their final results and their responses to the individual interviews.

4.5.4 Data selection process

Before I could start with the data selection process in 2009, I had to comply with both the requirements for admission to a PhD Degree in the Department of Curriculum Studies, Faculty of Education at Stellenbosch University, and simultaneously with the ethical clearance procedures of the University's Ethics Committee. The research project was formally registered in November 2008 at a meeting of the Research and Study Leave Committee of UWC (Addendum 1); permission was granted in January 2009 by the HOD of the Academic Development Department at UWC to conduct the research in the department (Addendum 2); and permission to register and to start with the data collection process was given by the Stellenbosch University Ethics Committee at the end of January 2009 (Addendum 3).

The empirical investigation was conducted in three phases (I follow Van Schalkwyk (2008) in this regard). The identification and selection of the student participants was completed during phase one, phase two covered further data collection and phase three was used to conclude the data collection process. The data collection process started in Term 2 in the first semester of 2009, and lasted until the end of Term 1 in the first semester of 2010. Table 4.8 below provides a summary of the phases, the time frames and the data sets collected in each phase.

Table 4.8 Summary of data selection process

Time frame	Phase 1: selecting and identifying the participants	Phase 2: gathering further data	Phase 3: concluding the data selection process
Week 2 (April), Term 2, first semester 2009	Data set 1: First written reflective piece to identify student participants and start of data selection process		
Week 6, (May), Term 2, first semester 2009	Data set 2: Official records from university database to verify biographical & geographical information & matriculation details		
Week 2 (July), Term 3, second semester 2009		Data set 3: Second written reflective piece from student participants on what they have done in the first semester	
Week 7 (October), Term 4, second semester 2009		Data set 4: Students completing the questionnaire (both quantitative and qualitative in nature)	
Week 4 (March), Term 1, first semester 2010			Data set 5: Final results of students drawn from university's official database
Week 6 (March), Term 1, first semester 2010			Data set 6: Individual interviews with participants and written response to questions asked in the interviews

As can be seen from the summary table, I used both qualitative and quantitative methods to collect the data. I follow Creswell (2007), Flick (2009), Denzin and Lincoln (2000), Henning (2004), Stake (1995, 2006) and Yin (2009) in this regard, since they all state that a researcher could make use of both qualitative and quantitative data collection methods. However, the study is still predominantly qualitative because most of the data is qualitative (Yin 2009). In addition, I used multiple sources of data (i.e. reflective written pieces, biographical and geographical information, a questionnaire, individual interviews, and the students' final results) to triangulate the data and to strengthen validity (Stake 1995, 2006). Four of the six data sets were from the students, and two were obtained from the University's official database. Table 4.9 below reflects the different data collection methods, what they were, and the timeframe in which the data were collected.

Table 4.9 Methods, types of data and timeframe

Methods	Timeframe: Qualitative data sets	Timeframe: Quantitative data sets
Data type 1: Two sets of the students' written reflections on their own progress in the learning process	Data set 1: Written in April, 2009 Data set 3: Written in July, 2009	
Data type 2: Students' registration information from university database		Data set 2: Verification of biographical & geographical information & matriculation details of students (May 2009)
Data type 3: One questionnaire	Data set 4: The students completed the questionnaire - questions 8 to 13 were qualitative in nature (October 2009)	Data set 4: Students completed the questionnaire – questions 1 to 7 were quantitative in nature (October 2009)
Data type 4: Students' official academic records from the University database		Data set 5: Final results of students after promotions were done (March 2010)
Data type 5: Individual interviews with participants	Data set 6: Students were asked to respond to the questions in writing, in March, 2010	

Data set 2 was used to triangulate the information given in the research questionnaire, questions 1 to 7 (Data set 4). These two sets were collected to answer the first research sub-question, i.e. who is the student in the EMS faculty at UWC? Data set 5 was used to confirm who failed and who passed, thus to assist with reliability and validity with regard to what the students wrote in their reflective pieces, in the questionnaire and in their answers to the questions asked in the individual interviews. Reliability and validity were further strengthened in that specific questions were asked twice, for example the question: *what are the challenges and why?* was asked in Written Reflection no. 1 (April 2009) and in the questionnaire (October 2009), as was the question: *any suggestions to overcome the challenges?* The question: *what did you do to pass?* was asked in Written Reflection no. 2 (July 2009) and in the interviews (March 2010) through the question *what should new first-year students do to be successful in the learning process?* All these sets were collected to answer the other three sub-questions:

2. What are the challenges to learning for a UWC student in the EMS faculty?
3. How do these challenges to learning influence student performance?
4. Why do some students within the same context achieve success and others do not?

Figure 4.1 below is a visual representation of the triangulation process.

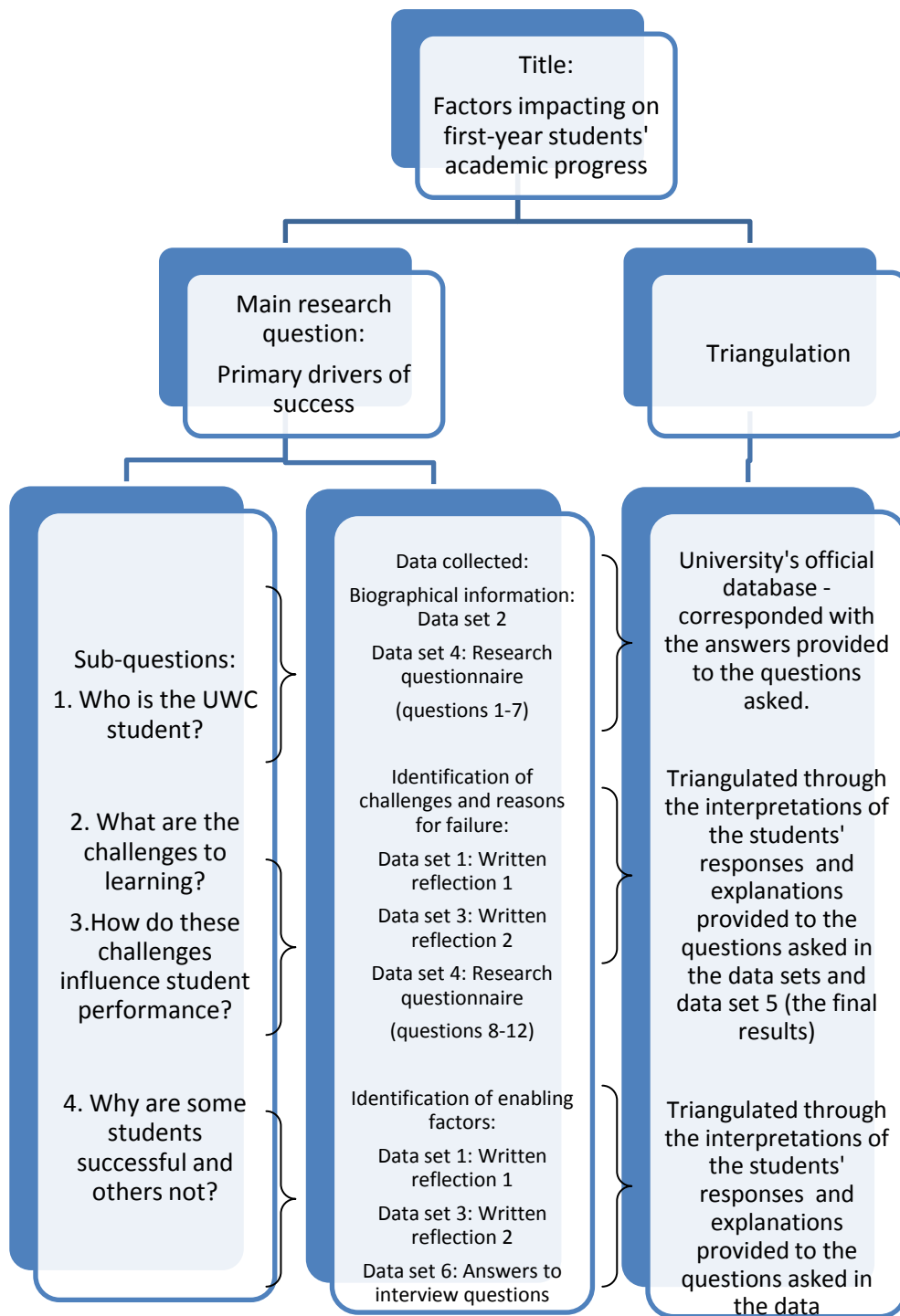


Figure 4.1 Triangulation process

4.5.4.1 Phase 1: Identification and selection of student participants

Phase 1 was the starting phase of the investigation, in which I identified and selected the 40 students as research participants. As mentioned in the previous section, the aim was to use a group of students that would reflect the range of academic success that students at UWC normally achieve. In addition, I was hoping that the students, through their

responses and explanations, would provide “rich, thick descriptions” of the issues/problems under investigation (Denscombe 1998; Patton 1990). I used one of my own ALC 131 lecture groups to identify and select the students. This was an advantage for me, since (most of) the students and I had been together from the Orientation Week before the commencement of Term 1. Staff members in ADD are involved in the planning and facilitating of the Orientation Programme in the Faculty every year. We work with the new first-year students in the programme for three days, and this is where staff and students get to know each other and then we take this process of getting to know each other forward into the lectures in the ALC 131 module that all first year students must register for and pass. Therefore, it would be fair to say that we knew each other a little already, and I believe that they knew by then that I had their best interests at heart and that I cared about them, because I always try to create a safe and caring environment for all my students in the lectures. I announce on a regular basis that my door is open and that they can come and speak to me if they have problems, if they need assistance with something, or if they need to speak to someone, even if it is not an academic problem but a personal one.

Thus, in the first lecture (all the first-year modules have three lectures per week) during week two in Term 2, first semester 2009, I asked all the students who were present in that lecture (176 in total) to reflect on and write about their learning experiences in the first term at UWC (this is Written Reflection no. 1, Data set no. 1). The instruction was that they should reflect on and answer the follow five questions:

1. What were my expectations when I arrived at university?
2. How am I doing so far?
3. What was challenging?
4. What was good/positive so far?
5. Suggestions on what I can do to overcome my challenges, and what the University could do to assist me to overcome my challenges in the learning process.

The first question was asked to ease the students into the self-reflection process. The second question was asked because I wanted to gain some insight at this early stage into what they perceived their progress to be, and because I used their answers to this question to select them as main participants. Question three focused on what their learning challenges were at that stage. I asked this question because I wanted the students to identify their learning challenges as early as possible in order to know what they were and to ascertain what could be done to help the students to overcome the

challenges. Question four was asked because I wanted the students to realise that, despite the challenges, there would also be something good/positive for them in the learning process. I know from personal experience that when one experiences challenges, one tends to concentrate only on that and seldom consider the possibility that there might be something of value as well. Question five (the last question) was asked because I wanted the students to realise that it is possible to overcome learning challenges and to be successful in one's studies. I wanted them not to despair or give up hope.

I collected all their responses and focused only on the answers given to question two (the students had to indicate whether or not they were passing their coursework components) at that stage, since the aim was to purposively identify and select a successful and an unsuccessful (at that stage) group. I read through all the answers to this question and grouped the responses into five categories, namely students who indicated that they:

- Passed all their coursework components
- Passed three and failed one
- Passed two and failed two
- Passed one and failed three
- Failed all four modules' coursework components

Categorising the responses in this way revealed that only 24% of the students reported that they were passing all their coursework components, while the remaining 86% represented the other four categories. I then looked at the explanations provided (under the same question) for why they were passing or not passing all their coursework components. Not all the students explained why they were passing or not, and I selected only the students who did because it was important to select students who could explain their answers. Explaining their answers was an important criterion, because it would help in providing "rich, thick descriptions" that could determine the degree to which context may influence their failure or success (Creswell 2007; Yin 2009). Using this criterion, I identified 30 students in category one (the students who passed all components) and 10 students each in the remaining four categories. I e-mailed these students and invited them to visit me at the office when they were free. As the students came to me, I selected them on a first-come, first-served basis. In the end, twenty-five of the first thirty students came to the office and twenty-seven of the group of forty. I informed the surplus students (five and seven) that I had wanted to ask them to participate in the study and thanked them for responding to my invitation, but that I had met my target.

To the forty students that came first, I showed the letter of approval for the research project and the consent form. I also explained their involvement in the process and the fact that they could withdraw at any stage. I listed the tasks that I would require of them in terms of the different data sets that I intended to collect. They all agreed to participate and signed the consent form in my office (a sample copy of the consent form is included at the end of the dissertation as Addendum 4). After this was done, I obtained their biographical and geographical information from the University's database (Data set 2), and kept this information in a locked cabinet in my office as promised. In order to protect the students' identities, I numbered their records numerically and applied this numerical method to all the data sets (see Tables 4.4 and 4.5 above as example). Doing it this way assisted me in keeping the data together and in discussing the data in Chapters 5 and 6. A sample copy of each of these data sets is included at the end of the dissertation as Addendum 5 (Written Reflection no. 1) and Addendum 6 (students' personal details from the University's official records).

4.5.4.2 Phase 2: Data collection process continues

In this phase, I continued with the data collection process and asked the students to write a second reflective piece in which they reflected on their learning experiences of the first semester of 2009 (Written Reflection no. 2, Data set 3) in the second week of Term 3, July, second semester 2009. I did not ask them to do so during a lecture period again, but e-mailed them and asked them come to see me in my office during lunchtime or when it was convenient for them to do so, which they did. I had no problems with the students in Case 1, who all responded and wrote their second reflective piece. Again, I attribute it to my relationship with the students, which I explained earlier. In addition, I think it also had to do with the fact they were still in the ALC course and with me in lectures, during which I continually made mention of the research project and the fact that there were students in the class who were willing to assist me. I think they felt proud to be part of the project and that motivated them to be cooperative. However, I had difficulties with the students in Case 2. I had to remind them a few times and five students did not come back to me (as mentioned in Section 4.5.3 above). I think that there were two possible reasons why the students in this group were not so eager to respond. One reason was that they were very busy and could not find the time to respond to me (this was mostly the response from the ones that I had to remind), while another reason could be that they were not doing my course any more (they passed at the end of the first semester and exited the course) and we no longer had close contact.

The students arrived individually at my office and I explained to them what I wanted them to do for me. For the group who passed and failed modules, I asked them to reflect on and explain the following (in writing):

1. Which modules did I pass and why?
2. Which modules did I fail and why?
3. Will I do things differently now [in the second semester] and why?

For the group who passed all four of their first-semester modules, I asked them only two questions:

1. Which modules did I pass?
2. What did I do that enabled me to pass all my modules?

I asked them these questions because it was in line with the type of questions (the first three) that we ask students who failed the module (ALC 131) when we meet them again in ALC 132 in the second semester. For the purpose of my study, asking these questions assisted me to find answers to sub-questions 2, 3 and 4. The timing was also right in that it was still early in the second semester, which meant that their experiences would still have been fresh in their memories. A copy of these written reflections is included as Addendums 7a and 7b.

Data set 4 draws on the questionnaire that the students completed in Term 4, second semester 2009. Questions 1 to 7 focus on their biographical and geographical information and were originally included in the questionnaire. Because I had already retrieved their biographical and geographical information from the University's database (Data set 2 in May 2009), I used the students' answers to questions 1 to 7 in the questionnaire to verify the information retrieved from the database. However, I added questions to the questionnaire in order to also obtain information regarding their financial situation, if they received support at home and if they were boarding on campus or off campus (questions 8 to 11). Questions 12 and 13 focused on their challenges and on solutions to their challenges and were also part of the original questionnaire that I had to submit. These two questions were also asked in Written Reflection no. 1 in April. I asked these two questions again in the questionnaire, not only to strengthen reliability and validity, but also to compare their responses given in Written Reflection no. 1 to what was given in the questionnaire (which was answered in October) and to establish whether or not their challenges remained the same, if they increased or decreased, or if there were new challenges that came after they responded in April.

I e-mailed the questionnaire to all the students and asked them to complete it and return it to me. Five students sat in my office and completed the questionnaire there. I left my office while they were doing so in order to give the students some privacy to reflect on and respond to the questions in their own time. The students came individually at a time that suited them best. Both groups completed the same questionnaire, and I again numbered it according to the numerical system that I used in order to ensure that I could identify each student, and to keep each student's data together. At this stage of the investigation, I had four sets of data for each student and I started with the analysis of the qualitative data (this process is explained in Section 4.5.6 below). As mentioned earlier, the students who did not do so well (failed some or all modules) were more eager to respond and complete the questionnaire than the students who had passed everything. In fact, one of the students who failed everything in the first semester (Student 1, Case 1) was one of the five who completed the questionnaire in my office, and he said that he wanted to do this because he wanted to let other students know that if they do not take their studies seriously from the beginning, they are setting themselves up for failure (Student no 1, Personal communication, 7 October, 2009). I found this very unusual — I would have thought that the students who passed everything would be the eager ones, since they felt proud (ought to be) of their achievements, and that the students who failed some or all of their modules would have been shy and not so willing to complete the questionnaire and to return it to me. A copy of the questionnaire is included as Addendum 8.

4.5.4.3 Phase 3: Concluding the data collection process

Phase 3 was the final phase of the data collection process, in which data sets 5 and 6 were collected. Data set 5 is the final results of the students, which I obtained from the University's database during Term 1, 2010. At first I planned to retrieve it at the end of the academic year in 2009, but on reflection decided not to because I wanted to ascertain whether the students would continue their studies and register again in 2010. I therefore waited until the registration period was over in Term 1 (in March) 2010 in order to allow all the students to register. The final results thus reflect which modules they passed or failed, what their promotion status was and if they returned to UWC and registered in 2010. The results are analysed in the same manner in Chapters 5 and 6. Two copies of the results (one of a student in Case 1 and one of a student in Case 2) are included as Addendums 9a and 9b.

Data set 6 is the students' written answers to four questions asked in the individual interviews in Term 1 (during March) of the first semester in 2010. The plan originally was to arrange two focused group interviews with the two groups of students, but due to the fact that the students did not follow the same lecture timetable and had tutorials and practicals on different days, this proved to be impossible. Plan B was to interview the students individually, and that was done in my office. I wanted to interview the students in order to have a final word with them and to thank them for their willingness to participate in the research process. I originally had only the last two questions in mind. However, because I had started with the writing of the literature review chapters and the findings of the five studies as discussed in Sections 3.2 and 3.4, I noted the findings with regard to HIV/AIDS and had also read about first-generation students. Based on that information, I decided to include a question on both of these factors in the interviews because they seemed important; this is why these two questions were only asked at the end of the process. Adjusting and adding to instruments is typical of the iterative process that characterises qualitative research (Stake 1995). I therefore ended up with four questions instead of only two in the interviews. The questions were:

1. Were you the first child in your family to attend university?
2. Were you infected or affected by HIV/AIDS in your family or close friend or someone that you know?
3. What should new first-year students do to enable them to be successful in the learning process?
4. What should new first-year students not do that will prevent them from being successful in the learning process?

The latter two questions were asked in order to obtain additional information on the enabling factors and to ascertain how their answers would correspond with the reasons they provided for passing or failing their modules in Written Reflection no. 2 (July 2009) and therefore, also for triangulation purposes. A copy of this data set is included as Addendum 10. This concludes the explanation of the data collection process. What is presented next is a discussion of the analytical process that I followed.

4.5.5 Analysis of data

I started analysing the data from November 2009 until the end of Term 1 2010, by which time all the sets had been collected. What follows is a description of how the quantitative data sets were analysed, and then a description of how the qualitative data sets were analysed.

4.5.5.1 Quantitative data sets

Analysing and interpreting the quantitative data sets was a relatively straightforward procedure. Data set 2 (the biographical and geographical information) and the first part of Data set 4, questions 1 to 7, were already sorted, grouped and summarised, and presented in Tables 4.4 to 4.9 above. The analysis of Data set 5 (the final results of the students) was done on the basis of how many students in Case 1 passed or failed the required modules, as well as what their promotion status was and whether or not they returned and registered in 2010 (Chapter 5, Section 5.2). The analysis of Case 2 was done on the same basis as that of Case 1 for the latter two steps. However, the first step for this group focused on how well these students had passed their modules (their aggregates). This is done in Chapter 6, Section 6.2.

4.5.5.2 Qualitative data sets

An 'open coding' process was used to sort and organise the qualitative data sets that were collected (Henning 2004; Yin 2009). I used the 'open coding' process because it involved three different stages of working through the data, and that assisted me to work through all the written information and to move back and forth in the process.

The first stage of 'open coding' involved a first general reading of the data per data set, which allowed me to orient myself and to get a general sense of what the students were saying. For clarity, I named this stage, Stage 1: Initiation, General Reading and Noting of Responses. A second reading was done to identify 'units of meaning', which were categorised into two broad categories derived from the research questions, namely, perspectives on the challenges to learning and on strategies to overcome the challenges; and grouped under the four themes of the analytical framework (*personal factors, academic factors, social factors and institutional factors*). In this stage I moved back and forth in the data, trying to identify and group the information until I was reasonably certain that they were correct. It was not easy because of the interrelatedness and interdependency of the issues, and I am therefore open to the possibility that a reader of this dissertation might differ from me in the way I grouped the information. This stage is called Stage 2: Data Reduction and Cross-checking. The third and final stage involved grouping related sub-themes together under the four themes and the two categories (Henning 2004:104-109). I named this stage, Stage 3: Synthesis of Data. Figure 4.2 below illustrates the 'open coding' process followed with each set of qualitative data.

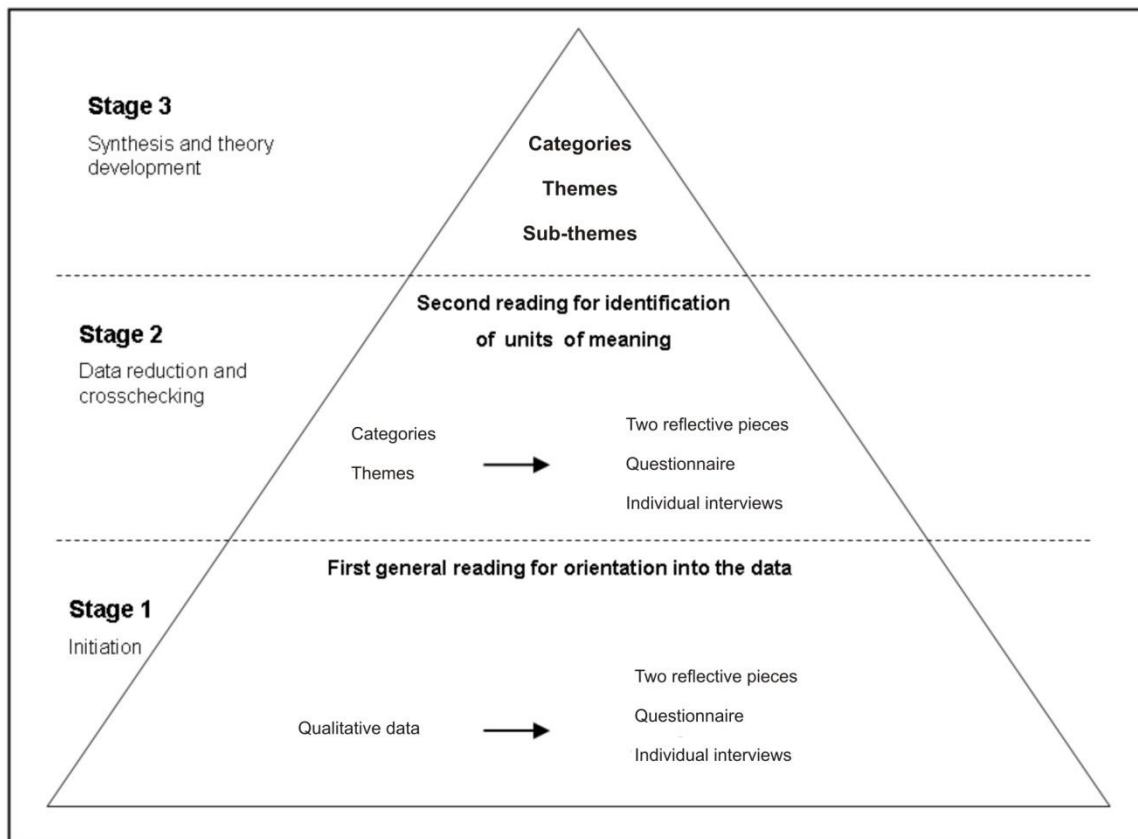


Figure 4.2 Open coding process followed

The three stages in the 'open coding' process were applied to the four qualitative data sets for both Cases. In the end, three sets were arrived at for both Cases. These are included at the end of the dissertation as Addendums 11 to 13 for Case 1 and Addendums 14 to 16 for Case 2. This concludes the analysis of the data sets. The quality of the data is discussed next.

4.5.6 Quality of data

The quality of the data collected, the analysis of the data and the interpretation thereof in a case study design are very important factors that need attention throughout the entire study (Denscombe 1998; Patton 2002, 2008). This is the general view (and also one of the 'set of shared preferences') in the literature that I have consulted. It comes down to two issues — objectivity (which will result in reliability) and validity in a qualitative research paradigm. Objectivity and reliability were discussed in Chapter 1, Section 1.8. However, I want to restate Holliday views on these two issues. Holliday (2001:52) argues that "[q]ualitative researchers accept the fact that research is ideologically driven. There is no value-free or bias-free research design. The researcher should identify his/her biases

upfront and articulate the conceptual framework for the study explicitly". The current view on these issues is that researchers should look for evidence that findings are 'transferable' to different situations and that the concept 'reliability' of data should be replaced with 'trustworthiness' and 'validity' with 'authenticity' (Ringsted, Hodges & Scherpbier 2011:699). Other aspects of quality that are important according to these researchers are the adequacy of sampling, sound data and good analysis, a range of triangulation processes and data collection methods, member checking, multiple coding and the presence of an 'audit trail' (Ringsted *et al.* 2011:699). Therefore, following these researchers and Gillham (2000:28) who states that "[o]bjectivity' in the absolute sense may be an impossibility but that doesn't mean that you immerse yourself in an uncritical subjectivity. You strive for a level of detached honesty which acknowledges your own place in the scheme of things", I state my position on a personal and a conceptual level: a teacher-researcher on a personal level and a PhD student who is familiar with the literature on academic failure and success at first-year level.

Moreover, 'sound data and good analysis' are what Henning (2004:148) refers to as "precision". She (2004:148-149) explains that "precision" refers to how well the entire research process was managed and how the quality of the research was assured (from design to presenting the findings). "Checking" should be done throughout the process in order to identify issues such as biases, neglect and a lack of precision, and to rectify any of these if needed. All procedures and decisions should be questioned critically, theorising should look for and address theoretical questions that arise throughout the research process, and peer evaluation should be done during the process (Henning 2004). Other researchers such as Denzin and Lincoln (2000), Stake (1995, 2006), Patton (1990, 2002) and Yin (2009) discuss the same issues, but they use different terminology, i.e. credibility, trustworthiness, reliability, multiple data collection methods and triangulation.

Because of the fact that I know about my own biases and involvement in the process, and that I want to be regarded as 'trustworthy and authentic', I checked and questioned all my decisions, actions and interpretations as the process unfolded, moving back and forth in analysing the data, in interpreting and understanding the data, and in presenting the information in this dissertation (Henning 2004; Patton 1990, 2002; Ringsted *et al.* 2011). With regard to peer review, after I had analysed the first set of data, I shared the findings with the executive of the Faculty in the form of a PowerPoint presentation, at an international conference in Barcelona, Spain, and with the Teaching and Learning

Committee members at one of their meetings at the end of the second semester of 2009. The questions, comments and feedback given helped me to look anew at the analysis and the way in which I categorised them. Working through the groupings again allowed me to make small adjustments and to pick up on issues that I did not observe previously. Therefore, the analysis will also show that the students in Case 2 provided far richer and thicker descriptions of their experiences in the learning process through their detailed explanations and examples that they included in their written responses.

Lastly, I triangulated the qualitative data sets with the quantitative data in order to strengthen the reliability and validity or as Ringsted *et al.* (2011) suggest, the 'trustworthiness' of the interpretations, the findings and the recommendations made. However, I also did this by asking the same questions twice at different stages in the data collection process (e.g. the questions on what the challenges were and giving solutions to the challenges were asked in April and again in October). This was done in order not only to strengthen reliability, but also to determine whether the challenges increased (accumulated) or decreased (lessened), if new challenges were encountered and how it influenced the students' performance. I also asked the students to make suggestions on what prospective first-year students should do and not do in order to be successful in the learning process in Data set no 6. This was done to ascertain if the answers would correspond to the reasons the students in Case 1 reported as to why they had failed their modules and the reasons the students in Case 2 reported (in Data set 3) as to why they passed their modules. The analysis in Chapters 5 and 6 will reveal that these responses were almost identical.

4.6 CONCLUDING SUMMARY AND PERSONAL REFLECTION

This chapter provided a comprehensive discussion of the research process followed in this study. Working through the data and writing this chapter was very challenging, but at the same time fulfilling. It was challenging because I had to be very critical and careful about every decision made and action taken. I had to provide evidence and validation for making those decisions, and taking those actions. This process was an emotionally draining but exhilarating and meaningful one for me.

I now move on to Chapter 5, where the analysis of the data for Case 1, students who were less successful in their first year of study, is presented.

CHAPTER 5

ANALYSIS OF DATA - CASE 1: LESS SUCCESSFUL STUDENTS

5.1. INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter, a detailed account of the research decisions made and actions taken was presented and a description of the analytical process followed. In this chapter and the next (Chapter 6), the analysis of the data and the findings that were identified on the basis of the theoretical orientation are presented. As explained in the previous chapter (Section 4.5.3), data from two Cases, Case 1 and 2, were collected and analysed. Both Cases consisted of first-year students who were registered for either the B.Admin. or the B.Com. General three-year degree programmes in the EMS faculty in 2009. The students in Case 1 were students who were less successful in the modules that they were registered for, while the students in Case 2 were students who were successful. This chapter analyses the data from Case 1 and Chapter 6 analyses the data from Case 2. As explained in Chapter 4, the data consisted of three quantitative and four qualitative data sets. Two of the three quantitative data sets have already been analysed and presented in tabular format in Chapter 4, Section 4.5.3, and consisted of the students' biographical and geographical information. The analysis of the third quantitative data set — the students' final results (Data set no 5) — is presented in the next section, followed by the analysis of the qualitative data sets.

5.2 QUANTITATIVE DATA SET NO 5: FINAL RESULTS OF CASE 1

As noted in Section 4.5.3 (student participants), the group of students in Case 1 consisted of six students who were registered for the B.Admin. degree and fourteen students who were registered for the B.Com. General (three-year) degree programmes. However, it must be noted here that, of the original twenty students in this Case, five did not continue with their studies in 2010 and only fifteen students came back and registered in 2010, but I analyse and discuss all twenty students' final results for the 2009 academic year because they participated in the data collection process throughout the year. It should also be noted at this point that the students' responses are quoted verbatim throughout the discussions. Since some students' responses will be quoted more than once for different emerging sub-themes, the phrases relevant to the sub-theme under discussion will be underlined. Two tables containing the students' information and a breakdown of the results are presented to facilitate the discussion that follows. This detail is included to further problematise the

construction of students from former DET and DEC schools as 'disadvantaged' and 'underprepared' while students from former model C schools are perceived as well-prepared for higher education (Bunting2004). The lists are not numerical, but according to the number of modules failed, since that is the main focus of the analysis that follows.

Table 5.1 Students' information and breakdown of final results for B. Admin.

Student No	Age	School type attended	Year Matriculated	NSC NNS	No. of modules registered for	No. of modules failed	Promotion	Registered in 2010
18	19	DEC	2008	Points: 30	6	1	Promoted	No
8	20	DET	2008	Points: 29	6	2	Promoted	Yes
6	19	DEC	2008	Points: 28	6	2	Promoted	Yes
9	21	DET	2007	C average	6	5	Acad. excl.	No
10	19	DET	2007	E average	6	6	Acad. excl.	Yes
4	20	DET	2008	Points: 35	6	6	Acad. excl.	No

The results reveal firstly, that all six B.Admin. students attempted only six of the eight modules that they were required to register for and pass in the first year of study. This was because they had to deregister their electives at the beginning of the second semester in order to re-register for ALC 132 and QSF 132 which they had failed (as reported by them in data set 3). As explained in Section 3.4.1, ALC, QSC and QSF are part of the compulsory modules that first-year students must pass in order to be promoted to the next year of study. Should they fail the modules in the first semester, students have another chance to register for them in the second semester to avoid being excluded academically at the end of the academic year (Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences 2009b:22).

Secondly, it can be observed that of the six students, one failed one of the six modules, two failed two of the six, one failed five of the six and two students failed all six modules. A reason why the three students (Students no. 4, 9 and 10) who failed most and all their modules could be that they were 'disadvantaged' and 'underprepared' because they came from former DET schools (see Section 3.3.3). As will be shown later (in Section 5.3), they also experienced other challenges to learning that contributed to their failure in the learning process.

Lastly, the results show that three of the students were promoted and three were academically excluded, and only three continued with their studies in 2010. Two of the three students were academically excluded (Students no. 4 and 9) and that could be the reason why they did not return. The third student (Student no. 18) was one of the three students who were promoted. This student reported in her first written reflection that she “felt stressed at all times” because she was studying and working at the same time. She had to work over weekends in order to “contribute financially” since her father “was the only one that worked”. She wrote:

I even considered leaving the studying and working for a year because working while studying is hectic. The only assignment that I did really well was a political study essay that I got 70% for. I really can't manage anymore.

However, she did not leave her study programme at that stage (two and half months into the first semester). She persevered and continued to the second semester. In her second reflection (which was written during July 2009 and in which she reflected on her experience of the first semester), she explained why she passed PUA and POL, and why she failed ALC and QSF. She wrote:

I think I passed it [PUA and POL] because it did not have too much work to do and it was not as stressful as ALC. It was also a straight forward subject or subjects. It required a person to attend lectures and tutorials and to take note unlike ALC where you have to apply the skills in everything. The tutors and lecturers need to understand that ALC is difficult and should make it easier for the students. The reason why I failed OSF was because I did not prepare myself properly for the test and because I had a hard time understanding a few units.

It should be noted that this student was not the only one who reported that PUA and POL “did not have too much work to do”, that ALC was “difficult” and that QSF was hard to “understand”. Three more students wrote the same response as to why they had passed PUA and Pol Studies; four students wrote that they did not understand ALC and six students wrote that QSF was “difficult”.

The student’s response (Student no. 18) indicates that there might have been at least two reasons why she did not continue with her studies in 2010, namely financial constraints and not understanding the work (she reported these two challenges again in the questionnaire in October). However, because I did not want to speculate, I contacted her telephonically during Term 1, 2010. She informed me that finances were the main reason why she decided not to continue with her studies in 2010. Her plan was to work for a year or two in order to save enough money, and then she hoped to return to her studies (Student no. 18, personal communication, 6 February 2010).

On the other hand, one of the three students who came back had been academically excluded (Student no. 10). This means that this student appealed and applied for re-admission, and that this request was granted after the EMS Student Assessment Committee (which deals with the appeals and re-admission) looked at the reasons for her appeal. This student's reasons and motivation why she failed all six modules that she was registered for in 2009 were that her father, who is her only caretaker and parent, had fallen ill during the first semester of 2009 and that she was worried about him. He could not work for a very long period of time and she struggled financially. The stress and worry about finances and her father's health affected her emotionally and psychologically and she could not concentrate on her academic work. A letter from her father to confirm this information was provided to the committee, and on that basis she was given another chance (Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences: EMS Student Assessment Committee, meeting held on 21 January 2010). Overall, the fact that the students did not pass the required eight modules in the first year of study means that they will not be able to complete their degrees in the prescribed period for completion as explained in Section 4.5.4). Table 5.2 with the results of the B.Com. General students is presented next.

Table 5.2 Students' information and breakdown of final results for B.Com. General

Student No	Age	School type attended	Year Matriculated	NSC NNS	No of modules registered for	No of modules failed	Promotion	Registered in 2010
12	19	DEC	2007	C average	8	1	Promoted	Yes
11	21	Model C	2005	D average	7	1	Promoted	Yes
3	19	Model C	2007	C average	7	1	Promoted	Yes
7	19	DEC	2008	Points: 36	5	1	Promoted	Yes
14	22	DEC	2007	B average	5	1	Promoted	Yes
17	19	DEC	2008	Points: 31	8	2	Promoted	Yes
15	19	DEC	2008	Points:30	8	2	Promoted	Yes
5	18	DEC	2008	Points: 37	8	2	Promoted	Yes
16	19	Model C	2008	Points: 33	5	2	Acad. excl.	No
20	19	DET	2008	Points: 32	4	2	Acad. Excl.	Yes
1	19	DEC	2008	Points: 33	6	2	Promoted	Yes
13	18	Model C	2008	Points: 34	6	3	Failed	Yes
2	19	DET	2007	D average	5	3	Acad. excl.	Yes
19	21	Model C	2006	D average	8	6	Failed	No

The results for the B.Com. Gen. students indicate that five students were registered for the required eight modules, two for seven modules, two for six modules, four for five modules and one student was registered for four modules only. Again, this was because some of them had to deregister their electives at the beginning of the second semester in order to re-register for ALC 132 and QSC 132. The implication of this is (similar to the B.Admin. students above) that all the students who were registered for seven and fewer modules would not be able to complete their degrees in the minimum period of three years because they would still need to do the outstanding first-year modules (in addition to the others that they had failed) in their second year of enrolment. This means that they would not be able to register for all the second-year modules (as explained in Section 4.5.3).

A second observation for the B.Com. Gen. group is that five of them failed one module, six failed two modules, two failed three modules, and one student failed six modules. The two students (Students no. 13 and 19) whose promotion status was 'failed' both attended former model C schools. One would have expected that they would have performed better, since model C schools were regarded as 'better quality' schools than the former DEC and DET schools because of the fact that they had more resources and well qualified teachers and support structures (see Section 3.3.3.1). However, these two students also experienced challenges to learning and that was why they could not perform optimally. For example, Student no. 19 experienced financial challenges, her home environment was not conducive for academic work and she did not receive support from her family. To the question whether they have financial challenges, she responded as follows:

Yes I do. My parents support a family of five. Both of my brothers study and my parents need to pay for all 3 of us. It is very expensive to travel to university and back.

The student lived in Goodwood (a suburb approximately 15 km from the campus) and used a taxi. To the question whether they have family and friends to support them, she wrote:

My family do not really show an interest in my student life and I'm not sure why. My friends on the other hand always tell me how proud they are.

She identified her challenges and the reasons for the challenges as follows:

My challenges are my home environment and the fact that I am more of a practical individual than a theoretical person. Firstly, my home environment is unstable. My parents are happy most of the time, but the rest of the time home is the last place I want to be. My parents argue a lot because of past events. This has a really bad impact on myself and my studies.

Again, she explained what happens at home when there is an argument between her parents and how this affected her academically. If one takes all the challenges in account that she had to deal with, her performance could be justified.

A final observation for the B.Com. Gen. group is that nine of them were promoted, two failed, and three were academically excluded. Twelve continued with their studies in 2010 and two did not return to learning. The two students who did not come back in 2010 included one of the two students who had failed, and one who was academically excluded (Students no.16 and 19). One could deduce that Student no. 16 did not come back because he was academically excluded. It could be that he realised that university study was not for him. In their respective studies, Louw (2005) and Peelo (2002) suggest that this could sometimes happen to students when they perform badly in their studies. I tried to contact him telephonically during Term 1, but was not successful. I did, however, manage to get hold of Student no.19, and she informed me that she did not come back because of her family situation and financial constraints, as highlighted earlier in this section (Student no. 19, personal communication, 6 February 2010).

The twelve students who came back and registered again in 2010 included two students who were academically excluded (Students no. 2 and 20). This means (similar to the one B.Admin. student) that these two students had also appealed and re-applied and were subsequently also re-admitted. Both students explained that they had to deal with serious family issues and that was why they had failed (EMS Student Assessment Committee, meeting held on 21 January 2010).

Overall, there were no obvious trends among this group (B.Admin. and B.Com. Gen) as students from different schooling backgrounds and different age groups failed one, two and more modules. This brief look at the reasons for student failure offers a glimpse of the complex and multilayered nature of factors that affect student success and failure. A complete and systematic analysis of the qualitative data sets is presented next.

5.3 ANALYSIS OF THE QUALITATIVE DATA SETS

As explained in Section 4.5.5.2, I organised the data according to two broad categories derived from the research questions, namely, perspectives on the challenges to learning and on strategies to overcome the challenges (i.e. enabling factors). As explained already, I used the analytical framework as a guide to sort and group the themes and sub-themes that emerged from the data and as an organizing principle for the discussions which follow below. As stated in Section 3.5, this procedure is followed to show how the study links up with previous research and also to exemplify new sub-themes emerging from the data,

bearing in mind that the perspective is that of the students and their view on how they had experienced the learning and academic socialization process in their first year of study.

The three stages in the open coding process were useful in providing a 'structured' format for sorting and grouping the data, but the classification of the qualitative data in the analytical process was not straightforward. I worked back and forth in the process, grouped and re-grouped the data and noted that some of the responses overlapped and could be grouped under more than one theme and sub-theme. Henning (2004:129) states that this process of classifying the data is a very important step in the analytical process, because it forms the conceptual underpinning upon which interpretations and explanations are based and which makes action meaningful to others. Creswell (2007:36-37) explains it as follows: "The final written report or presentation includes the voices of participants, the reflexivity of the researcher, and a complex description and interpretation of the problem". In the case of this study, my research objectives and research questions guided my classification of the data by determining which factors influence failure or successful completion of the first year of study in this faculty from the students' perspective, and deriving from the data a socially situated, supportive and holistic learning approach which could assist more students to be successful in the learning process. Therefore, my interpretation and understanding of the data is influenced by my perceptions and my reading of the literature which inevitably construed my thinking as explained in Chapters 1, 2, 3 and 4.

5.3.1 Category one: Challenges to learning

In this section I discuss the different sub-themes under the four themes: *personal factors*, *academic factors*, *social factors* and *institutional factors*. I attempted throughout the discussions to draw on the theoretical orientation of the study in order to fortify the social embeddedness of the learning process and to demonstrate the interrelatedness and interdependency of the sub-themes, even though they are grouped under one specific main theme. The structure of this section is illustrated below in Figure 5.1.

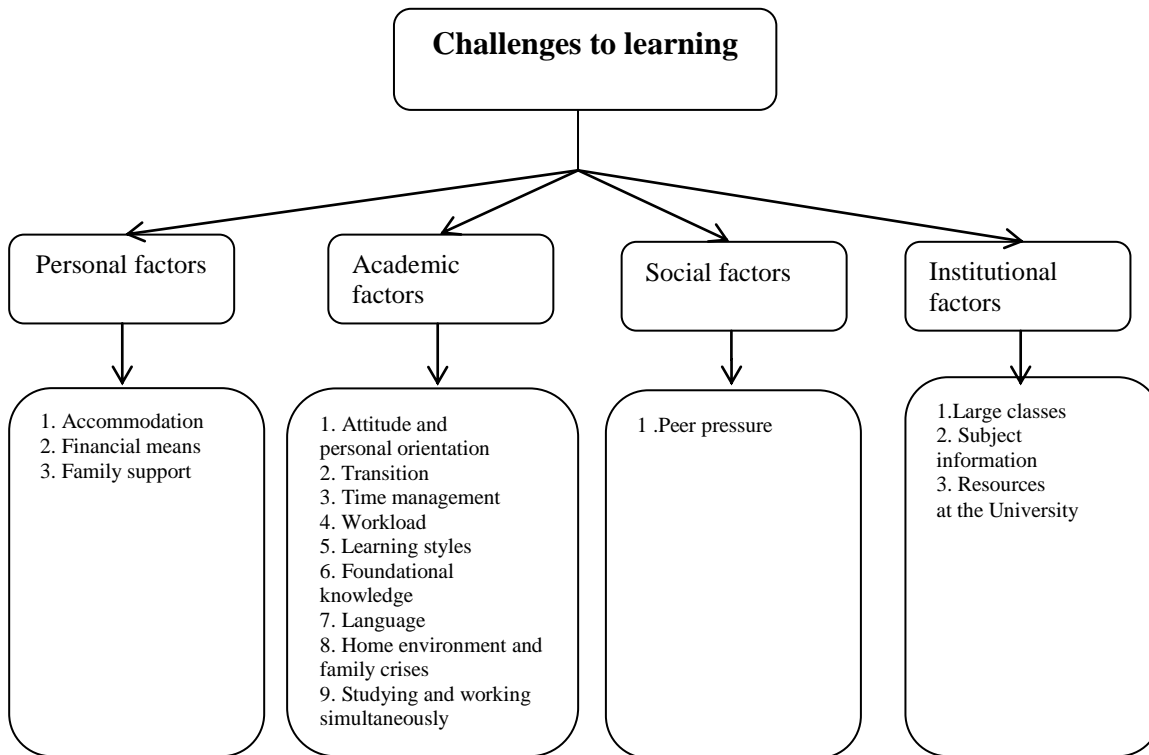


Figure 5.1 Challenges to learning

5.3.1.1 Theme 1: Personal factors

Five sub-themes emerged from the data in this Case and four of them correspond with the findings from the five studies reviewed in Chapter 2. Travelling emerged as a consequence of the sub-theme ‘accommodation’, as will be shown in the discussion that follows. It should be noted that, although the issues of first-generation students and HIV/AIDS were included as questions in the individual interviews, the students did not report these two issues as challenges to learning and it will therefore not be discussed.

Sub-theme One: Accommodation

Initially (in written reflection 1, April first semester), accommodation as a challenge did not emerge as an important sub-theme (mentioned by a few students only) but it became increasingly important, mentioned by more students towards the end of the second semester in the completion of the questionnaire in October. The challenges ranged from not having a suitable place to study to living off campus and travelling long hours as a result of that.

Student no. 6 was one of the ten students who reported that her accommodation was unsatisfactory and therefore a challenge, but she did not provide an explanation for why it

was unsatisfactory. She was from the Western Cape. Student no. 4 reported that accommodation was unsatisfactory for her because she lived with a relative and was uncertain for how long she could stay there. She came from the Eastern Cape and felt she needed on-campus accommodation. Students no. 3, 8, 10 and 20 also felt that they needed on-campus accommodation since they came from the Northern and Eastern Cape, but could not be placed in a university residence because no places were available. They had to find private accommodation, which resulted in other challenges, such as having to worry about a “stable place to stay”. Student no. 3 reported for example:

It is hard to study knowing that you do not have a stable place to stay, especially if you not used to Cape Town.

This student came from the Northern Cape and reported that he was also worried about food to eat, since he was waiting for his loan to come through.

Student no. 10 reported on the noise levels where she stayed. She claimed that she could not study because of boarding with people who lived near a tavern and that made her accommodation unsatisfactory. This student had financial challenges as well and was worried about her father who took ill during 2009. It seems as if the challenges which she had to deal with resulted in her failing all six modules for which she was registered.

The challenges facing the other four students were that they were not boarding or living close enough to the campus and this factor led to the emergence of another sub-theme: time-consuming travelling. Student no. 5, for example, lived with her parents in Paarl and travelling to and from campus took up to three hours per day. She reported her travelling as one of her challenges:

The time it takes me to get to campus via train. I have to wake up early in the morning to be in time and get home late.

Student no. 5 (justifiably) reported it as a challenge because travelling at least three hours per day was taking a huge amount of time out of her day — time that she could have used for her academic work. In addition, public transport is not always reliable and, as she reported later in written reflection no. 2, it sometimes resulted in her not being punctual and missing some early morning lectures.

Student no. 5 failed two of the eight modules that she attempted and Student no. 3 failed one of the seven modules that he attempted. Both these two students passed their school leaving examination with a ‘C’ average. Residing 30km and further from the campus and

having to deal with travelling challenges could have contributed to these students' partial failure in the learning process.

I grouped accommodation under this theme (*personal factors*) because needing a place to live is a personal matter, but when it impacts on a student's progress in the learning process it becomes an academic challenge. This holds true for the travelling challenge which reduced the time that a student could have spent doing academic work and this could have affected a student's progress in the learning process negatively. In addition, accommodation as a sub-theme is not only a personal and an academic challenge, but it becomes an institutional challenge since the institution is not in a position to provide on-campus accommodation to all the students residing outside the Western Cape.

This theme illustrates how personal factors impacted (in this case negatively) on the students and their learning process, and thus demonstrates the effect of the context of learning. Since this factor was reported as a challenge to learning by these students, one could argue that, if the institution cannot fulfill the accommodation needs of all the students which they admit, provision should be made at governmental level. Thus, more financial assistance should be given to institutions of higher learning to enable them to provide accommodation for the students that they admit. In the end, this challenge is typical of the social nature of learning because the students are dependent on people from the community (outside the three layers in the learning context, Section 2.3.3) to not only provide accommodation for them, but transport as well.

Sub-theme Two: Financial assistance

Students needing financial assistance in the learning process is a matter that is well researched and reported on, as well as the consequences thereof which include failure and dropouts (Bunting 2004:24; De Beer 2006:32; Scott 2009a:23; Yorke 2002:33). For the students in this Case, the availability of financial assistance was not perceived as a huge challenge initially (April, first semester) because they had applied for financial aid from NSFAS and were hopeful that they would be assisted. It then became a serious challenge towards the end of the second semester in that more students reported it as a challenge and they also indicated that they were "stressed" about their financial difficulties. They were "stressed" about it because they did not receive financial assistance from NSFAS and they knew that their parents were not in a position to assist them either. Responses were:

I don't have money. I am struggling financially. I sometimes come to school hungry and my parents are struggling they can't do more than they do for me.

I do have a problem [with finances] because at home we are a big family and we all depend on my father wages, which is unable to reach all our needs.

Yes I do [with finances] because I failed last semester so NSFAS could not approve and my parents are not working.

Challenges reported were: not being able to pay study fees, purchase textbooks, or paying for transport to and from campus. Some of the students did not have money to provide for their living expenses and to buy food as the first response illustrates. The four students (Students no. 3, 6, 9 and 18) who reported not having money at all did not elaborate on these challenges. Despite these financial challenges, Student no. 3 managed to pass six of the seven modules that he was registered for, Student no. 18, five of the six modules that she was registered for, and Student no. 6 passed four of the six modules that she was registered for. It seems as if these three students managed to either deal with the financial challenges or overcome them in some way. Student no. 9 was less successful in that she passed only one of the six modules that she was registered for.

Students no. 15 and 17 (the two sisters) were among the six students who had problems with paying their fees because both of them came from the same family and had a brother who was also studying. They worked weekends to assist their parents financially and to have money to buy textbooks and pay for their travelling expenses. They also reported family challenges (see Section 5.3.1.2 below). Despite all of this, they both managed to pass five of the eight modules that they were registered for. Student no. 1 also reported having difficulties paying his fees, but he later received a loan from NSFAS and his fees were paid.

One of the two students who had a problem with living expenses (Student no. 14) also had a problem with travelling expenses. This was despite the fact that she obtained a NSFAS loan. The loan amount did not make provision for living expenses and travelling costs. She reported that she "always worries about" her situation. Student no. 5 was in a similar position. She also received a loan from NSFAS, but it did not make provision for textbooks. These two responses correspond to one of the findings from the REAP & RAD study in 2008, where it was found that the loans made available to students by NSFAS did not cover everything a student needed (see also Letseka *et al.* 2010:62). Despite these challenges, Student no. 14 managed to pass four of the five modules that she was

registered for, and Student no.5 passed six of the eight modules that she was registered for.

Student no. 8 was the student who reported not having money to buy food. In addition, he also did not have money to pay his fees or to buy textbooks. He reported that he was “stressed about his situation and wanted to find a job” in order to overcome his financial challenges. Despite his financial challenges, and after failing two modules in the first semester, he managed to pass all four modules that he was registered for in the second semester. The last two students (Students no. 4 and 19) had a problem funding their transport to and from campus. Student no. 4 reported that the person who was assisting her financially “lost her job” and could not do so anymore. Student no. 19 reported that her “father was the only breadwinner in the house” and he could not cover her travelling costs. This student also reported that she did not receive support from her family and that her home environment was not conducive to studying (see below under sub-theme three). In the end, Student no. 4 did not pass one of the six modules for which she had registered and she was academically excluded. Student no. 19 passed only two of the eight modules that she had registered for and failed her first year of study. As was reported in Section 5.2, she did not continue with her studies in 2010. Stressing about finances all the time and not having the means to buy textbooks, travel to and from campus or buy food to eat can be expected to have a negative influence on the students’ academic performance. Similar findings were reported in studies conducted by Bunting (2004), Louw (2005), the Department of Education (2004) and the REAP and RAD study (2008).

I grouped this sub-theme under *personal factors*, but from the students’ explanations, one can observe how this issue is also a social one. The students are dependent on their families in the first instance to assist them financially. If their families cannot assist them, then they depend on the educational institution to assist them in the form of bursaries and loans. The institution, however, cannot assist the students on its own; it needs the financial backing of the education department. Not only do the three layers represent the interdependency of learning, but the students’ families and the fact that they are not able to provide for their children’s financial needs, speak to the broader societal issues of unequal socio-economic and power relations, being the environmental factors which Vygotsky (1979, 1994) and Bandura (1986, 2001) describe and the discussion in Section 3.3.3.1. Thus, the family backgrounds and historical experiences (the issues that Louw identified in his study) reflect the influence that *apartheid* had on black South Africans and

the position in which many families still today, seventeen years into democracy, find themselves (Letseka *et al.* 2010:64).

Sub-theme three: Family support

Many researchers suggest that a supportive environment is an enabling one (Killen 2000, 2005; Kuh *et al.* 2005; Strydom & Mentz 2010; Walker 2006). According to them, support includes both family and friends' support, and support from the institution. The students' responses to the question whether or not they received support from their family and friends indicate that most of them received this form of support. Only three students reported in the questionnaire (October, second semester) that they did not receive support from their family, but mostly from their friends (Students no. 6 and 13) and from a friend and lecturers (Student no. 19). They did not necessarily explain why their families did not support them; their responses focused on the support which they received from their friends. Student no. 6 for example, wrote:

Yes, especially my friends that are doing second and third year. They are the ones who give me support all the time and often encourage me not to give up.

She also responded to the question, *what is positive about your studies* (also in the questionnaire):

To be honest, there is nothing positive or good because of the modules that I failed. They just make me feel that I stupid and dumb.

This response clarifies her response above regarding why her friends “often encourage her not to give up”. This was the same student who reported in written reflection no. 2 that she “hated” QSF 131, and after attempting QSF twice, she still could not pass it at the end of the year. She also experienced financial challenges (see sub-theme two above). She attended a former DEC school, matriculated in 2008 and her total points score was 28, which is below average. Despite her hardships, she managed to pass four of the six modules (the minimum required) that she attempted, was promoted at the end of the year and returned in 2010.

The other student, Student no. 13, wrote:

Yes, most of my friends studying so we motivate each other.

It seems as if this student was fortunate because his friends were also studying and as a group of friends they could motivate each other. Implied in his response is also the possibility that they assisted each other academically as well. Despite this support, and despite coming from a former model C school, he was not promoted at the end of year

because he only passed three of the six modules that he was registered for. However, he returned in 2010.

Student no. 19 wrote:

My family do not really show an interest in my student life and I'm not sure why. My friends on the other hand always tell me how proud they are.

I also receive encouragement & help from my lecturers.

This is the same student who reported in written reflection no. 2 that her home environment was not conducive for academic work and that her parents were fighting all the time. In addition, she was also one of the students who experienced financial challenges and she was a first-generation student, which may explain her family's lack of interest in or knowledge of what she was doing. The fact that she had to face all these challenges could explain her performance and her promotion status (she passed only two of the eight modules that she had attempted and her promotion status was a fail), and, as she indicated to me in my follow-up conversation with her in February 2010, her financial challenges and hardship at home were the deciding factors for her not returning in 2010 (see section 5.2 above).

Student no. 14 reported that she was in need of emotional support and stability. She wrote:

My challenges are emotional support and stability. Sometimes I feel like I go through these things alone.

Her response indicates that she did not experience an emotional connection or sense of stability in her academic surroundings but rather a sense of alienation (Mann 2001). In her article, in which she discusses the six different types of alienation that students could experience, Mann (2001:11) explains that most students entering the new world of academia are in an equivalent position to those crossing the borders of a new country — they are outsiders coming into a “foreign country” and having to conform to the rules and demands of the new country. The student felt this way perhaps because she could not adjust to and handle the demands made by academia. Her experience could thus be an example of what Leibowitz (2001) is saying about students finding the demands made by the academic environment “overwhelming”, and what Bourdieu (1993) refers to as students being outsiders who need to be “allowed in” by the “gatekeepers” (the academic staff). The fact that this student felt “alone” highlights what academic life is constructed to be for her: an emotionally unstable and lonely experience. What this student needed was a

safe, supportive and enabling learning environment as Leibowitz (2009:96) explains: “[i]n order for students from various socio-cultural backgrounds to participate freely in higher education...it is the responsibility of the institution to ensure that material, structural and affective conditions exist for individuals to exercise agency... that all students can engage and grow academically”.

Although I grouped this sub-theme under *personal factors*, the consequences demonstrate how it could also have been grouped under *academic, social* and *institutional factors*. It accentuates the fact that students need support from the other role players in the learning process to be successful. In this instance, the other role players are the family, friends, fellow students, lecturers and psychiatrists. In addition, the responses of the students also demonstrate the positive influence of these role players on the students’ motivation and perseverance levels. This is true for all the students because they did not drop out during the course of the year. Thus, even though the three students did not receive moral support and encouragement from their families, they received moral support, encouragement and academic support from their peers and lecturers and that assisted them to persevere. The student who was in need of “emotional support” gave herself advice — “talk to someone who can relate and offer encouragement”. It seems as if she did just that because she managed to pass the minimum of four modules that were required for promotion at the end of the year.

5.3.1.2 Theme 2: Academic factors

Nine sub-themes were identified from the students’ responses under this theme. Three of the nine emerged as new sub-themes from the data because they were not identified in the studies which I reviewed in Chapter 2.

Sub-theme one: Attitude and personal orientation

I labelled this sub-theme ‘attitude and personal orientation’ because the students’ responses reflected their attitude and orientation of how they experienced their first semester at university. It is the second new sub-theme which emerged from the data in this Case. They reflected on the reasons why they had passed some of the modules and why they had failed some in written reflection no. 2 in July 2009 (beginning of the second semester).

There were discernible differences between the students' attitudes towards the modules that they had passed and the ones they had failed at the end of the first semester. Firstly, some students reported that they were "passionate" about the modules that they had passed, but they had a "bad attitude" towards the ones that they had failed. Secondly, they reported that they "put a lot of effort in" and "worked hard" for the modules that they had passed, but they were "lazy", did not work hard enough" and they abused their freedom in the modules that they had failed. Thirdly, they did not report that they were under pressure and were not focused under the modules that they had passed, but they reported these two reasons for failing the ones that they did.

Examples of responses why they had passed some of their modules were:

I think I put so much effort in it [Political Studies] and I was so passionate about it.

I was a hard worker.

Its because the politics tutor was more helpful and the politics is my favourite subjects. So when I study it I don't get bored.

I passed it [Man 131] because I like the subject.

Because both of these modules [PUA 131 and Pol Studies 131] I like them very much and they were not that hard, they were understandable they did not have much work and we were given much time to study.

Examples of responses why they had failed some of their modules were:

QSF was very difficult for me and I had a very bad attitude towards it and I ended up hating it sometimes.

Firstly, I would like to start off by saying that I did not work hard enough, or even at all, in every module that I was registered for in the first semester.

The reason why I failed was because I was lazy and didn't take note in some of my classes.

I played dominoes in the caf and read over the slides at night when I got home.

I failed because the subjects [IFS 131, ALC 131 and QSC 131] did not interest me. There was too much negativity. I also was overwhelmed by the freedom at varsity because everything was new to me and I could do what I wanted and before I knew it the exams was coming up and I was caught up in having too much fun.

It seems self-evident that students will develop a positive orientation towards subjects that they "like", are interested in and are "passionate" about. The opposite is also true — they will develop a negative orientation towards subjects that they dislike and which they experienced as challenging. Orientations such as these could become worse and could

also be linked to other challenges. For example, for three students in this Case (Students no. 4, 6 and 9), this negative orientation became worse as the year progressed. In the questionnaire conducted in October, they reported that they could not see anything positive about their studies because they continued to fail their course work in the different modules. They wrote in response to the question, *what is good/positive about your studies*:

So far nothing. [Student no. 9]

I don't see anything good about my studies because many times I fail and this led to me panicking about everything and I'm always too stressed and sometimes decide not to come to school. [Student no. 4]

To be honest there is nothing positive or good because of the Modules that I fail, they just make me feel that I stupid and dumb. [Student no. 6]

Student no. 9 did not explain why she made this statement. However, one could infer that a key contributing factor was her financial situation (she reported that she had financial challenges with everything — paying her fees, buying textbooks, accommodation, travelling, living expenses and food). In addition, she also reported that she had a language challenge and difficulty with comprehension. Her final results showed that she passed only one of the six modules that she attempted and, because of that, she was academically excluded. She did not apply for re-admission in 2010.

Student no. 4 reported a similar response because she failed all four modules in the first semester and continued to fail in the second semester. She also reported financial challenges. She explained:

I think that because I spent most of my time trying to find finances, I got too involved in it that I forgot why I came to university. Sometimes I feel like I can't do anything because of money. I got advice from so many people but I'm too stressed to do anything.

This student did not pass one of the six modules that she attempted, and was academically excluded and did not return in 2010. It seems as if she was not able to concentrate on her studies and do what was required of her because of her financial challenges.

Their responses indicate that their self-confidence and personal agency capabilities were diminished because they continued to fail and their 'will to learn' was compromised (see Section 2.3.2). They experienced the 'fear' of failure which in the end became a barrier to their learning (Walker 2006:98). They dealt with multiple challenges and their results are an indication of the severity of their situations and the impact challenges can have on students' learning. One could conclude that these two students did not receive the needed

assistance and support or, if they did, that it was not sufficient or too late and because of that, they were unsuccessful in the learning process. What happened to these students demonstrates the need for the early detection and solving of learning challenges facing students, both on a personal and academic level.

Student no. 6 (the last of the three) was the exception. Although she failed some of her modules and felt “stupid and dumb” because of it, she did not lose confidence in herself and her capabilities. She wrote under question 8 in the questionnaire (*why did you decide to study towards a degree in the EMS faculty?*):

Because, I have a passion working with people that is why I choose B-Admin, I wanted to do human resources Management and I love politics.

An inference could be made that her “passion” and “love” for what she was studying and what she wanted to do motivated her to persevere, or as Leibowitz (2009:95) states “...the existence of agency, or the will to succeed against the odds” resulted in her passing the required four modules for promotion status at the end of the year.

Overall, however, the students’ responses illustrate the negative impact that failure could have on students’ agency (Bandura 1986, 2001) and their ‘will to learn’ (Barnett 2007). Because the failing continued, it weakened their ‘will to learn’ and they became demoralised and the end result was “terminal failure” as Scott (2009a:21) refers to it, for at least three of them, The students’ results and promotion statuses at the end of the year provide proof for the inference that for some of them (Students no. 4 and 9 for example) multiple challenges resulted in a compromised ‘will’; while for others such as Student no. 6 (and Student no. 1), it was the opposite — challenges strengthened ‘the will to learn’ which led to perseverance and improve performance in their second semester modules (Barnett 2007).

Sub-theme two: Transition

It is acknowledged that the transition from high school to university is a challenge for the majority of new first-year students (Green, Cashmore, Scott & Narayanan 2009; Scott 2009a). It was the same for many of the students in this Case. It emerged as a challenge for fourteen students from the start in written reflection no. 1 (April, first semester) and the students reported it as a reason why they had failed some of their modules at the end of

the first semester in written reflection no. 2 (July, beginning of the second semester).

Responses were:

Adjusting to university life was hard.

It was difficult to adapt myself to the new challenges at university.

Fitting in and working hard is very hard to adapt to.

I'm used to education being strict and structured, but in varsity things are not structured, you may attend lectures anytime, you may choose not to write a test.

I see how different university is from school. It takes a while to adapt and to get use to the way the University works.

It is a very stressful experience, lots of things to learn.

The responses indicate that the students experienced their transition from high school to the University environment as challenging and as a consequence thereof, they experienced some form of alienation — they are outsiders coming into a “foreign country” and having to conform to the rules and demands of the new country (Mann 2001:11). The “foreign country” is the academic discourse that Leibowitz (2001:17) refers to as “crossing boundaries into unfamiliar contexts”, and Bourdieu (1993) and McKenna’s (2004) allusion to attempt “to crack” the “academic code”. Their social integration into the University environment was challenged and that became a barrier to their academic integration (Green *et al.* 2009:55).

In written reflection no 2, the students also reported on what they did *not* do to assist them with the transition in order to adhere to the demands made by academe during the first semester. Three students reported that they “did not prepare adequately” for lectures, five “did not attend lectures” regularly and three “did not submit” some of the assignments which were required in the different modules. These responses speak of one of the five capabilities which Bandura (1986, 2001) advocates that human beings have — the self-reflective capability. The students were reflecting on their behaviour towards their learning in the first semester and the consequence thereof, which was failure. The focus here is thus on the students’ themselves — the fourth layer in the learning context. The reasons which the students provided as to why they failed some of their modules at the end of the first semester point to the fact that they did not take their studies seriously and therefore did not work hard. It also demonstrates how these factors relate to and are dependent on each other and the cause and effect sequencing: not preparing for lectures or missing

lectures will result in the content not being understood, which means that assignments cannot be done properly or perhaps are not even attempted. The result would be failure in the course work component and therefore, no access to the examination (Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences 2009b).

Student no. 16 explained that he was used to a schooling system in which education was “strict and structured”, but that at university “things are not structured, you may attend lecturers anytime, you may choose not to write a test”. He thus found the transition from school to university challenging, especially the fact that he was free to do whatever he wanted without anyone standing on top of him. Not using one’s freedom wisely could result in one doing things that are not conducive to or productive for studying and could have “tremendous implications”, as Yorke and Longden (2004:117) suggest. But this student also had other challenges to learning. He had difficulty understanding some of the modules and he had serious financial challenges as well. All these challenges could have accumulated to such an extent that he could not deal with or overcome them all even if he had ‘the will to learn’ (Barnett 2007). He therefore, succumbed to his challenges and he had passed only three of the five modules that he attempted.

I grouped this sub-theme under *academic factors* because, even though it could be regarded as a *personal factor* challenge, the fact that the students themselves reported it as a reason why they failed some of their modules reveals the interdependency of this theme as both a *personal* and *academic* challenge. However, it is not only a student challenge, but it is also an institutional challenge because, when the students fail some or all their modules, it means that the institution will lose subsidy because such students will not complete their studies in the prescribed period of three years. Therefore, first-year students’ transition from school to university is a serious challenge to learning and was also identified by Louw (2005) and Tinto (1975).

Sub-themes three: Planning and time management

When students arrive at university, the assumption is that they will know that planning and time management is important. They are therefore expected to take control of their learning through independent study, planning and effective time management techniques (Cottrell 2008:12-13). Unfortunately, new first-year students find this adjustment challenging and it was the same for many of the students in this Case. Time management

as a challenge was reported in all three data sets (written reflection no. 1, no 2 and in the questionnaire). Two students also reported their inability to management their time effectively as a reason why they had failed some of their modules at the end of the first semester. Responses were:

My challenge is not being able to manage time effectively.

And with my time management ability to be quite poor I struggle to balance all the activities in my life.

Not being able to manage my time effectively is another issue.

Planning and time management was also identified as a challenge to learning by the students in the studies conducted by Louw (2005) and the REAP and RAD Team (2008). This implies that, while students are expected to apply effective planning and time management techniques, in reality the opposite is happening. It seems as if the students (especially new first-year students) are not able or they do not know how to plan and management their time effectively. A possible reason could be the fact that they perceived their schooling as “strict and structured” and university as “unstructured” as Student no. 16 noted (quoted in the previous section).

Thus, the ‘freedom’ that they experience and enjoy at university together with peer-pressure could result in no planning and no time management (as Student no. 1 also explained in written reflection no. 2). A lack of proper planning and time management could result in procrastination, late submission of course work or non-submission and not being eligible for admission to the examinations as also pointed out in the previous sub-theme. Failing will also de-motivate and discourage students, they will start to doubt themselves and to lose faith in their own capabilities (as was shown above under *personal factors*) and the end result could be complete failure. Thus, the consequences of this sub-theme are similar to the transition challenge discussed above. Ineffective planning and time management techniques could also result in the students experiencing the workload as ‘heavy’ and could therefore be linked to a perceived ‘heavy’ workload, which is discussed next.

Sub-theme four: Workload

First-year students are often confronted with far higher volumes of work than they experienced at school (Price & Maier 2007:23). However, a lack of planning and time management leading to procrastination and late or non-submission of coursework could

also be a reason why students perceived the workload as 'heavy'. Students discover in their first year that they have to take far more responsibility for their studies by scheduling a workload that may seem impossible. As Student no. 20 notes:

Now that I am putting my whole effort but still I don't make it. Too much is expected from us, e.g. the work to have in order to pass.

This student reported this response in the questionnaire while another student mentioned that they already had covered 18 chapters in the Management module during term 1. Student no. 5 reported in written reflection no. 1 that she expected university to be different from school and that hard work was needed. She wrote:

At first I didn't know what to expect, I just knew varsity is at a higher level than high school and that I had to work harder and would be left alone meaning teachers/lecturers won't stand behind me to hand in a task/assignment.

It seems as if these two students realised from the start of their university studies that university would be demanding and challenging and that hard work was required. It is as if they adopted a pragmatic approach to deal with the demands of the workload because they realised that they had to take responsibility for their own learning (Van Schalkwyk *et al.* 2009:4). But Student no. 20's remark about "too much is expected from us" could also be valid. The demands made by academe are challenging, and it could be 'overwhelming' for new first-year students. Johnson, Johnson and Smith (1995:9) state "the more pressure placed on students to achieve and the more difficult the material to be learned, the more important it is to provide social support within the learning situation". They argue that challenges and social support must be balanced if students are to cope successfully with the stress inherent in learning situations and that is why the student's remark could be considered as valid.

Ten other students also reported the workload as a challenge. Their responses included:

One of my biggest challenges is the workload that one gets at university.

My challenges are coping with all the work at once.

The stress and heavy workload at campus.

Another challenge is the workload. Each subject gives you assignments to do and test to write and many of us cant cope.

Their responses imply that they were struggling to handle the workload because the workload was perhaps too much or because they did not know how to apply effective time

management techniques. This is based on the fact that it was the same students who reported a lack of time management techniques and two of them reported given into peer pressure as well. As explained above, if students do not plan and manage their time effectively, they could perceive the workload as 'heavy' and will find it challenging. The consequences for not handling the workload are similar to those of ineffective planning and time management. The workload challenge was also identified in the studies conducted by Louw (2005) and the REAP and RAD Team (2008).

Sub-theme five: Learning styles

The sub-theme 'learning styles' is used to describe social habits of learning; I do not subscribe to a view of learning styles as inherent and unchangeable. However, research conducted on students' learning styles and study habits indicated that it could influence their learning either positively or negatively (Jordan 1997; Oxford 2001). For example, if a student is a slow learner, then she will need more time to study and prepare for tests and examinations. Four students reported this as a challenge. They explained:

I am a slow learner. I find it easier to listen and do a test or task on the work learnt. That is how I remember work (Student no. 19)

It takes me longer to understand and grab hold content, so when the time comes for exams I don't fully understand the work and its content. (Student no. 16)

I struggle to study, because I don't know how to answer questions and how to elaborate on a answer. (Student no. 13)

I am also a slow learner in meaning that I take a lot of time studying but cover a little work (Student no.11) and tm and workload

The implication for these students was, given the fact that they were also part of the group of twelve students who reported a perceived 'heavy' workload, that they would not have been able to prepare themselves well, for especially tests and examinations. Oxford (2001: 359-362) in her discussion about the three main categories of learning styles (sensory preferences, personality types and biological differences), points out that learning styles are not black or white, or present or absent, but generally operate on a continuum or on multiple, intersecting continua and suggests that students need to know how and when to adjust their learning style to suit the learning task at hand. An inference could be made that one of the four students (Student no. 11) learnt to adjust or changed his learning styles and study habits because he managed to pass six of the seven modules that he was registered for. The other three students (Students no. 13, 16 and 19) were perhaps not able to adjust their learning styles and study habits, and that, together with the other

challenges that they experienced, resulted in them not passing most of the modules for which they were registered.

Sub-theme six: Foundational knowledge

Foundational knowledge is needed in the learning process because it provides the basis for knowledge construction. Learning is best facilitated when students can build on their prior knowledge (Phillips & Soltis, 1985; Nieman & Monyai, 2006; Olson & Hergenbahn, 2009). If students do not have the requisite foundational knowledge in a subject, it could mean that they might struggle to understand the content in that specific module and may experience the subject as difficult and challenging. As was the case with the accommodation and financial challenges discussed above, this sub-theme progressed from being not a 'serious' challenge in written reflection no. 1 to becoming a serious challenge in written reflection no. 2, in which more than half of the students report it as a reason why some of them failed their modules at the end of the first semester. It was also again reported as a challenge to learning in the questionnaire in October. Examples of the students' responses were:

My challenges are not being taught certain things at school and learning it for the first-time at university.

Maths – didn't do it at high school so had to do it at varsity so that caused problems.

I did not do Accounting in high school that made it difficult for me to cope with this subject at university.

This perceived lack of foundational knowledge resonates with the earlier discussion about the former DEC and DET schools (see Section 3.3.3). Berger (2000) and Boughey (2009) argue (drawing on Bourdieu's theory of social reproduction) that many black students have been exposed to poor and under-resourced schooling systems and are often 'disadvantaged' and 'underprepared'. They therefore will find it difficult to understand the subject content; the content could have been cognitively too challenging for them and the lecturers could have expected too much of the students. Three students in the B.Admin. group reported that they attended all the ALC 131 classes and went for consultation, and a fourth one reported that he submitted all his assignments for this module, but all four of them still failed ALC 131. What these students experienced and reported confirm the findings of research conducted by Louw (2005) and REAP and RAD (2008) that show how the schooling system from which they come contributed negatively to their academic progress.

Sub-theme seven: Language

The discussion on language in learning (Section 3.3.3.2) highlights the implications of learning in a second and or additional language. Gough (1996) strongly argued the point that second- or additional-language speaking students of English are 'disadvantaged' in his discussion about multilingualism at UWC. In this Case, seven students reported language as a challenge to learning. Three of them reported that they had "comprehension challenges" which could be regarded as a problem with the register and complexity of academic texts. The remaining four students explicitly reported language as a challenge and two of the four students gave this challenge as a reason why they failed their modules at the end of the first semester in written reflection no 2. These two students reported it again as a challenge in the questionnaire in October. Examples of the responses were:

The medium of instruction is too difficult. I cannot understand the presentation. Its not easy to attempt some questions.

I have difficulty communicating with peers and lecturers. Difficulties in writing proper register and language when writing things like essays.

Academically I have a problem with English because of my background.

The challenges are we are finding difficulty to understand lecturers sometimes because we used to be taught by teachers who understand our language then they translate for us to understand fluently.

These students came from former DET (Student no. 5) and DEC (Students no. 9, 10, and 20) schools. The students were second- and additional language speakers of English and had received their primary and secondary schooling in their first language (Afrikaans for Student no. 5 and IsiXhosa for Students no. 9, 10 and 20). Therefore, it seems that they did not have the academic language proficiency in English that Cummins (2000) argues for, or more specifically, they did not understand "the way in which language is used to structure experiences within the University" (Boughey 2002:299). Secondly, given the fact that learning a discipline implies learning to use language in "disciplinarily approved ways" that involve "a specialized discourse" (Hyland2006:39), and that these students do not have the academic language proficiency as a starting point for more specialised discourses, they will not be able to understand or know how to use the language appropriately. That is why Leibowitz (2001:17) argues that "students are expected to use new words in new patterns to express these values, ideas and functions". Given the fact that they are additional language speakers of English, they found the task 'overwhelming' and that was why two of the four students reported it as the reason why they failed some of the modules at the end of the first semester.

The last response listed indicates that this student (like others in schools where isiXhosa is a community language) was used to code switching as he was fortunate to have had teachers who understood his own first language and who could explain the content in his own language for better comprehension (see Setati *et al.* 2002). This draws attention to the fact that, at university level, the lecturers are mostly either Afrikaans or English speaking, with very few academics who speak IsiXhosa or other indigenous languages. Thus, while some of the Afrikaans-speaking students could still be helped in Afrikaans when they go for consultation to lecturers who can speak and understand Afrikaans (in my own case, my Afrikaans-speaking students will ask, *may I speak Afrikaans, please, miss?*), most of the IsiXhosa-speaking students and students speaking other languages cannot do this. They are thus at a further disadvantage, as pointed out by Gough (1996:17) who argues that “[i]f you are not proficient in the dominant language, you are handicapped and there is no getting away from it”.

The language challenge that these students experience illustrates what the impact of the language of teaching and learning (LoTL) of an institution could have on the students in the learning process and it draws attention to the four layers in the learning context and the broader socio-cultural environment. UWC’s LoTL policy was changed from Afrikaans to English in order to accommodate especially African students (see discussion in Section 3.3.1), but this policy created a learning challenge for many students in the end. If one looks at the broader socio-cultural environment, South Africa has a multilingual language policy and, while the ideal of multilingualism is being promoted by the government and the provincial education departments, the reality is that English and, to a lesser extent, Afrikaans, are the two dominant languages that are used at institutions of higher education in SA (Boughey 2002). It is this policy of using English as the LoTL that is a barrier to learning for many students (Celce-Murcia 2001; Macaro 2003; Troskie-De Bruin 1999).

Sub-theme eight: Home environment and family crises

A home environment that was not conducive to academic work due to family-related issues emerged from the data as a new sub-theme because it impacted the students’ learning negatively. Also, the way in which three students responded to other questions showed how their home environment and family responsibilities often forced students to take part-time jobs, and these factors combined to impact negatively on their academic work. Yorke (2002) argues that family responsibilities and a lack of finances could lead to students dropping out of their studies. This was the reason why Student no. 18 (see

discussion in Section 5.2 above) did not return to learning in 2010. This sub-theme and the next one (working and studying simultaneously) are discussed together because they are related and the same students had to deal with these challenges.

Three students reported that their home environments were not conducive to academic work or to study. They wrote:

I had problems with my father. There were so many family issues. My parents arguing almost every day and not being able to study because I could not focus on my studies. This leads to so much stress and it emotionally drained me.

My parents were constantly talking about divorce. All that impacted on me and because of that I failed Management 131.

My challenge is my home environment. They [my parents] argue a lot because of past events and this has a really bad impact on myself and my studies. If they argue, I need to go and I do not have any family or friends living nearby where I can study, and I have to leave my work for the next day.

Two of the three students (the two sisters) also reported having to deal with family crises.

They wrote:

Another problem that I had was that my grandfather died during the second semester and it was just before I had to write term tests. I could not focus on my studies and failed my IPS term test. While I was still dealing with the death of my grandfather, my grandmother was diagnosed with cancer which had spread throughout her body and she had two months to live. It was a tough year academically and personally for me that played a role in determining the way I performed.

I had a case where my grandfather died a day before a test that left me emotionally drained. I ended up failing the test as I found it impossible for me to concentrate. Not long after my grandfather death, my grandmother was diagnosed with cancer that had spread through her body. There was nothing the doctors could do for her.

Sub-theme nine: Working and studying simultaneously

The same two students also reported on having to study and work over weekends. They wrote:

Studying during the week and working weekends make me too tired to complete my work. Working affected my study so bad that I sometimes studied a day after the test, and it made the workload at university much more than it should have been. I could have left work and focus more on my studies but it helped provide transport fees, especially that my brother, sister and I were all studying. It helped my parents with paying my university fees.

One thing that also affected me was the fact that I worked on the weekends and cannot use that time to study. I worked from 9am to 9pm which was tiring.

Experiencing severe family crises together with a precarious home environment and part-time work will impact a student's learning negatively (Letseka & Maile 2008:6). Student no. 15 said that she remained "positive and focused", despite sometimes not feeling able to, and she knew what her objectives were. Student no. 17 said that it was good to have her

sister with her because they could support each other and work together. This is how they dealt with their multiple challenges. In the end, they both managed to pass five of the eight modules that they were registered for, and they were promoted. In this case, a picture emerges of students having to fight a multitude of problems and still succeeding in passing most of their modules. In addition, these two students had attended a former DEC school and their total Grade 12 points were 30 and 31 which is just below average. What happened to these two students demonstrates that overwhelming circumstances can be conquered. The fact that they remained positive and focused, and that they had each other for support, motivation and encouragement, as well as the support of their parents, enabled them to persist and they consequently were reasonably successful in their first year of study.

However, Student no. 19 (the other student who also reported that her home environment was not conducive to academic study) was not so fortunate. She managed to pass only two of the eight modules which she attempted, and her promotion status was “failed”.

She attended a former ‘model C’ school and passed her matric with a ‘D’ average. In her case, one might have expected that she would have performed better because she came from a so-called ‘better’ schooling background. However, she also experienced a multitude of challenges as was reported earlier. Looking at the fact that Student no. 19 came from a supposedly ‘better’ schooling background and the two sisters did not, one could argue that the challenges to learning accumulated to such a point for Student no. 19 that she could not overcome them.

Family support in this instance emerged as an enabling factor. The two sisters reported that their family supported them, while Student no. 19 reported that she did not receive support from her family. It thus seems as if family support could be more important to students than family harmony or financial support. Family support is a theme that was also reported on as an enabling factor for the students in Case 2 (Chapter 6) and it thus makes this sub-theme a very important enabler. It directs attention to the affective and social needs of students in the learning process (Killen2000: xvi). Parents and family members should be made aware of this and of how their involvement in their children’s education could make the difference between passing and failing.

5.3.1.3 Theme 3: Social factors

Peer pressure was the only sub-theme that emerged from the students' responses under this theme and is regarded as a new sub-theme because it was not explicitly identified as a finding in the studies which I reviewed in Chapter 2.

Sub-theme one: Peer pressure

Tinto (2000:85), in his discussion of building supportive peer groups, states that meeting people and making friends during the first year of college is an important aspect of student life that could assist with the social integration of students and the transition from school to university. Because new first-year students find themselves in an unknown environment, their need to make friends in order to feel safe and secure is strong (Killen 2000: xvi). However, making the 'wrong' friends could lead to 'negative' peer pressure, as four students in this Case reported. Also, in the last data set (the individual interviews) most of the students suggested that new first-year students should not give into peer pressure and that they should choose their friends "wisely". The emphasis which the students placed on peer pressure in the last data set therefore warrants it as a challenge to learning in this study. Responses were:

Often there are friends that influence you not to go to classes, do not fall for the pressure is what I tell myself ever since I failed my first semester.

You are easily distracted by others.

If one is "easily distracted by others", one would end up giving in to peer pressure and not do what is required. The end result could be complete failure (as was the case for Students 1 and 16), or partial failure, (the other two students managed to pass at least two of the four modules) at the end of the first semester.

It was Student no. 1 who admitted that he lacked "a greater self-will". This is the same student who explained in detail in written reflection no. 2 why he had failed all of his modules in the first semester (see discussion in Section 5.3.2.1 below). Unlike some of the other students in this group, Student no 1 did not experience serious financial challenges or challenges such as lacking background knowledge or having a language challenge. His challenges were personal and about himself as he reported: "a lack of self-will", "friends that influence you" and "juggling between life, your family, your friends and education". He also admitted in written reflection no. 2 that it was because of "a lack of self-will" that he had failed all his first-semester modules. Student no. 1 is a good example of a student who did not take responsibility for his own learning during the first semester.

These responses demonstrate that the students, in trying to integrate socially to the University's environment, made 'wrong' choices which impacted negatively on their academic progress. The students suggested themselves that they need the 'right' kind of peer pressure — fellow students who motivate each other to attend all lectures, who work and study together, and who encourage each other when in need of moral support.

5.3.1.4. Theme 4: Institutional factors

The fact that some of the students identified institutional factors as challenges to their learning draws attention to the relationship that exists between students and the institutions that admit them. Yorke and Longden (2004:136-137) are of the opinion that institutions should provide a safe and supportive learning environment for students and actively engage students in the learning process (see also Killen 2000, 2005, Kuh *et al.* 2005; Leibowitz 2009; Strydom & Mentz 2010). However, when students identified institutional factors as a challenge to learning, the implication is that they do not perceive the institution as supportive and safe. In this instance, three students reported large classes, inadequate subject information and available resources at the University as a challenge to their learning. Although only a few students reported these sub-themes as challenges, it warrants a discussion, because the same student reported two of the three challenges, and an additional two students reported the third challenge. Also, two of the three (large classes and resources) are challenges for the University's management (and other universities too), which is a result of UWC history of being a HBU, its culture of being a 'people's university' and its admission policy which admits students coming mainly from the working class and poorer communities (CHE 2010:8; Letseka *et al.* 2010: 54).

Sub- theme one: Large classes

One student reported that he found the large classes challenging. He wrote:

One of the challenges I face here at university is the issue of many students in one class because that does not give you a chance to have a one-on-one conversation with your lecturer.

His response indicates that he was probably used to much smaller class sizes at school. Because the number of students in the classes did not allow for one-to-one consultations, he might have felt overwhelmed by the large group of students. In the end, this situation could have prevented him from expressing himself freely or from asking questions and obtaining clarification when he did not understand. Despite this challenge and the other

challenges that he had, he managed to pass four of the five modules that he attempted and was promoted.

Sub-theme two: Subject information

The same student also reported on having received inadequate subject information. He wrote:

The issue of modules, some of the modules I was not aware that I'm going to do them in my degree.

The student's response could imply that he either did not attend sessions at career exhibitions or the orientation programme where academic advisors explain what the different modules entail, or, that he did attend these sessions but still did not understand what some of the modules were about, which is typical of first-year students in general (Gregory 2009).

Sub-theme three: Resources at the University

Two students perceived a lack of resources at the University. They wrote:

Also, some of the modules need more tutors.

Because in the University there are few computers and we are off campus students.

The University does not provide us with shuttles so that we could stay later at night [to do our work].

These observations from the students are correct (based on my experience of being a lecturer in this faculty for nine years). In some of the modules, especially Accounting and the quantitative skills modules (QSC and QSF), lecturers always report in committee meetings on the challenges they face with regard to finding good tutors to assist them with the tutorials. In addition, the Faculty and the University at large have a shortage of human, financial and other resources such as computer laboratories and computer facilities for students and staff.

The challenges which the students experienced because of the University's inability to provide sufficient resources direct attention to the University's background and socio-economic status as being one of the historically black universities. The situation which the University finds itself in is a direct result of the consequences of *apartheid* and the University's culture and ideology of accepting students mainly from working class and poorer communities (see discussion in Section 3.2.1 and 3.3.1). This is typical of what

many HBUs are still experiencing today (Strydom & Mentz 2009; Webb 2002). Therefore, the large classes, the lack of sufficient human, financial and other resources are consequences of the history and context of UWC (CHE 2010; Letseka *et al.* 2010).

5.3.1.5 Summary of challenges to learning

The sub-themes mentioned in this section are intertwined: personal factors influence or are influenced by academic factors which in turn are affected by social and institutional factors (Strydom & Mentz 2010:6). Moreover, these sub-themes may not exist right from the beginning; for example, when a family member dies or becomes seriously ill. However, they may exist right from the start but accumulate in terms of the impact on successful learning; for example, travelling long distances exponentially decreases the time available for study or not having a home environment conducive to learning. Or a lack of foundational knowledge that results in difficulties with regard to comprehension which accumulate over the course of the academic year, with financial challenges as an overarching theme that results in partial failure for some and complete failure for others in this Case. These issues affecting student learning are what Leibowitz (2009:87) refers to as “distribution of resources as a dimension of social justice in relation to higher education” and illustrates the ‘underprepared’ and ‘disadvantaged’ discourses as discussed in Section 3.3.3.1.

The location of UWC in a working class community and its history as an HBU⁵ with a particular orientation, “widening access and educational redress” (Holtman, Marshall & Linder 2004:185) that results from its *apartheid* history are contextual factors that define and influence the lives of students. Vygotsky’s (1979) argument that the environmental factors impact and construct a human being’s development and learning was demonstrated through the analysis of all the sub-themes discussed. Also, the students’ responses showed how factors beyond their control impact their lives as individuals and as students, and it also revealed how many role players could be involved in the learning process and how the sub-themes were interrelated and interdependent. The analysis of the students’ data in this Case validated the theoretical orientation in this dissertation: learning is socially entrenched.

⁵ It is acknowledged that there are other historical black universities in South Africa which may have similar conditions and institutional difficulties but the focus of this study is on the EMS faculty at UWC.

5.3.2 Category two: Overcoming the challenges to learning (enabling factors)

Since the data elicitation devices (written reflection no 1, April, first semester 2009; written reflection no 2, July, second semester 2009 and the questionnaire, October, second semester 2009) required that students propose ways in which to overcome their challenges, the sub-themes mirror those identified in the previous section — not necessarily in a symmetrical way. For example, seven students mentioned accommodation problems but only one suggested a way to solve the problem. In addition, the students also made suggestions under *institutional factors* as to what the institution could do to assist them to overcome the challenges to learning, and they made suggestions for what prospective students should do and should not do (which were similar to the ones that they suggested for themselves and are therefore discussed together) in order to strengthen their chances of success in the individual interviews conducted in March, 2010. All the sub-themes which the students reported that they had done, and the suggestions made to the University and prospective students, are thus regarded as enabling factors in this study. This section can be summarized as follows in Figure 5.2:

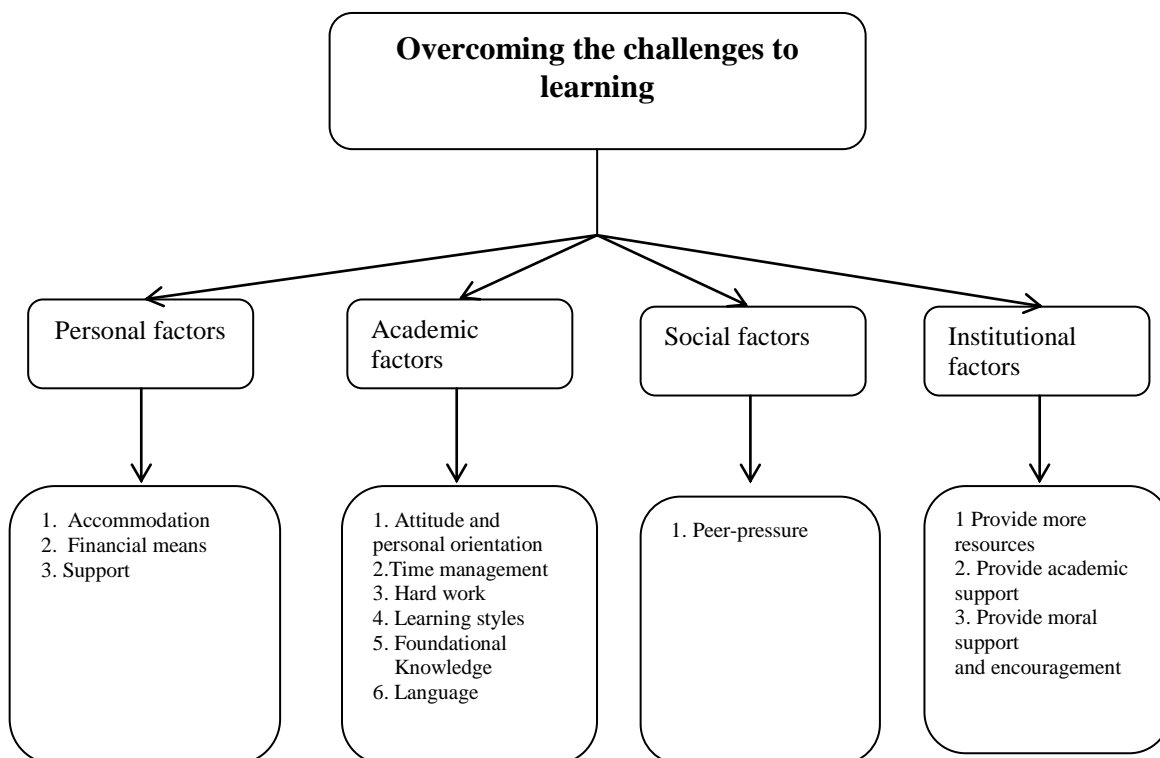


Figure 5.2 Overcoming the challenges to learning

5.3.2.1 Theme 1: Personal factors

The sub-themes *first generation students* and *the impact of HIV/AIDS* were not reported as challenges to learning by the students (as already mentioned); therefore the suggestions made under this theme were attempts to overcome the accommodation challenge, the financial challenge and the need to talk to someone, thus seeking moral, emotional and professional support.

Sub-theme one: Accommodation

Although seven students in this Case reported that they had accommodation challenges in the previous section, only one student, Student no. 5 who lived in Paarl and who had an accommodation challenge which resulted in travelling long hours, made a suggestion on how to overcome this. She wrote:

I think I must get a place to live closer to campus but don't have the money to cover the living expenses.

Her suggestion was an attempt to solve her travelling challenge and it could have been a solution, but then she would have had to pay accommodation fees and would need money to cover her living expenses, which she said she could not afford to do. What she needed was on-campus accommodation and additional financial assistance from NSFAS since they paid her fees (see discussion in the previous section under financial means). The fact that she received financial assistance from NSFAS implies that her parents were not in a position to assist her financially and that was why she indicated that she could not afford to move out of her home in Paarl which is in the greater Cape Town area. Also, even if she could have been financially assisted by NSFAS for accommodation, the University would not have been able to offer her on-campus accommodation as it cannot assist all the students residing outside of the Western Cape as was also reported in the previous section. Her suggestion was thus not a viable option and her travelling challenge was not solved. One could assume that the other six students could also not solve their accommodation problem because it was reported as a challenge until October, which was almost at the end of the academic year.

Sub-theme two: Financial means

Of the twelve students who reported having financial challenges, three of them (Students no. 1, 8 and 18) suggested that they should try and find a job in order to overcome their challenges. Their responses were:

Where my finances are concerned the only option is for me to get a job to be able to get, at least, registration fee monies together.

Looking for a job and getting food. So that I cannot worry with it.

I will overcome the finance challenge by working during the holidays.

It was their way of overcoming their financial challenges, but at the cost of time available for their studies. Even if they managed to find a casual job over weekends, it would have an impact on their studies, as the two sisters reported in the previous section. The suggestion was thus an attempt to find a way out of their financial difficulties, but it would jeopardise their chance of success in the learning process. Fortunately, Student no. 1 obtained a loan from NSFAS and his fees were paid. Student no. 8 did not indicate that he obtained financial aid during the course of the year. However, it seemed as if he found a way to deal with this challenge because he managed to pass six of the eight modules for which he was registered. Student no. 18 found a job and worked and studied simultaneously, but this had a negative impact on her progress, as she reported in the questionnaire in October.

The remaining nine students reported it as a challenge until October, and one could therefore conclude that they did not find a way to overcome their financial challenges and that it contributed to their failure in the learning process as discussed earlier. Three students (Students no. 4, 9 and 10) were severely affected by financial and other challenges because two of them failed all six modules which they attempted, while one (Student no. 9) only managed to pass one of the six modules. Their situations show that a lack of finances while studying (together with other challenges) could have a serious impact on students' personal orientation and behaviour in the learning process and could lead to "terminal failure" (Scott 2009a:21).

Sub-theme three: Support

Two students (Student no. 4 and 14) reported that they needed emotional and professional support respectively. They wrote:

Maybe if I could talk to someone who can relate & offer encouragement.

I think I need counseling, maybe that could help me because I think the stress got to me. Sometimes I smile and pretend to be fine even though I'm not.

Student no. 4 was the one who not only had financial challenges, but she was worried and stressed about the fact that she continued to fail all her modules as reported under Theme 2 (*academic factors*) above. Her suggestion was an attempt to deal with the stress because she realised that it was affecting her negatively. Whether she was able to speak to someone and received assistance is unknown, but what is evident from her results is

the fact that her stressing over her challenges had a negative impact and resulted in complete failure for her.

Student no 14 was the one who reported that she was “too stressed to do anything” and that was why she made this suggestion (to go for counselling). She also experienced financial challenges and was in need of emotional and professional support. It seems as if she received some form of support because she managed to pass four of the five modules which she attempted.

Two further suggestions on obtaining support were made to prospective students. These were:

Have someone that you can speak to when things are getting tough and you need help (in your personal life and to help with your emotions).

Don't be afraid to ask for help and then help yourself.

The students' responses demonstrate that they realised the importance of (all forms) of support. They have learnt from their own experiences that it is not good to keep to yourself or to be afraid to ask for help when in need because it would impact negatively on your academic progress, and they wanted new students to know this and to act when necessary. To this end, Mahatey *et al.*(1994:105) state that “students need an environment which provides support and promotes personal well-being”. They cited Jacobi (1991) and House (1981) among researchers who have shown the relation between the psycho-social well-being of students and their academic performance in their proposal to introduce a Mentoring Programme at UWC as part of UWC's aim to provide academic support for the large number of students that were funded by the Kagiso Trust in August 1992. The fact that all students need support (moral, emotional and academic) is being emphasized by many researchers already (Beyer *et al.* 2007; Nieman & Pienaar 2006; Rogers 1983, 1970) and is highlighted again through the students' suggestions in this Case. This sub-theme therefore provides further proof for the theoretical orientation of this study: learning is socially embedded.

5.3.2.2 Theme 2: Academic factors

The suggestions made under this theme focused on what the students did to overcome their academic integration challenges in the second semester. The students reported that they changed their attitude and personal orientation by starting to be focused, determined

and hardworking; they applied effective time management and study techniques in order to handle the pressure of the heavy workload; they did their pre-reading and prepared better for all their lectures and tutorials; they attended classes regularly; they concentrated more in class, they ensured that they understood the work because they went for consultation and asked questions; and they did what was required of them.

Sub-theme one: Attitude and personal orientation

Eight students reported that they changed their attitude and personal orientation towards their studies. These suggestions could have been attempts to overcome their negative feelings about their studies and to assist them with the transition period. Responses were:

One way that I overcame some challenges was to remain positive and remain focused even though sometime I was unable to. Always know what your objectives are.

I will not take anything for granted anymore.

I will improve.

The suggestions made implied that there was a change in attitude towards their studies. It seems as if there was an awareness of their own responsibility towards their studies, which is what students should have (Cottrell 2008; Leibowitz 2009). It is possible that their experiences of failure in the first semester acted as a 'wake-up call' and resulted in learning habits that would inspire them to do better in the second semester. This was indeed the case for Student no. 1, who wrote:

I know that I failed all my subjects [in the first semester]due to my own negligence. ALC was hard work and was not easy. I progress well in school with academic writing, but yet on university I did not. Mathematics and all the other subjects were easy. I thought that I could go through my subjects like a breeze, but I was mistaken. Reality bit me hard. I made major improvements on my social life and I took major advantage of my new found freedom, which was to my disadvantage in the end. There are many factors relating to my failure of the 1st semester, but for now I hope to improve.

It is worth analysing this response because it reflects critical thought and insight gained by the student. It also portrays honesty and an attempt at understanding the learning goals referred to by Monteith (1996). A critical and self-searching awareness emerged after this student experienced failure in the learning process. The student started his response with an acknowledgement that it was his own fault that he failed all his modules in the first semester. He then motivated why he made that statement. "Reality bit me hard", signals that the student acknowledged the fact that he took the work at university for granted and, as a result, paid dearly for his bad attitude and approach to university study. His closing sentence signals that he realised that it was not only one thing that he did 'wrong', but a combination of factors that contributed to his failure. However, and this is the positive and

encouraging part, he did not give up hope. His closing words were, "...but for now I hope to improve". Thus, failure helped to mould this student into a more appreciative and motivated student in the second semester; a student whose "will to learn" was strengthened because of failure, and who now had intrinsic motivation that enabled him to be successful in the second semester (Barnett 2007; Biggs 1999; Martin & Fellenz 2010). His final results (he passed all second-semester modules) confirmed this frame of mind.

Other suggestions made on how incoming first-year students' attitude and personal orientation should be included:

To keep focus and believing in yourself.

Concentration, determination and drive. Knowing what you want and doing every possible thing to achieve that. That is all that one needs.

Advice that I can give to first year students is to remain optimistic and focused.

These suggestions indicate that the students realised that success in the learning process requires a strong 'will to learn' (Barnett 2007) and personal agency (Bandura 1986, 2001). A strong will and personal agency will result in a student being focused, determined to pass and going the extra mile to achieve his or her objectives. It could also assist students with the transition period from high school to university and to adhere to the demands made by academia. A strong will and personal agency could be regarded as the starting point to successful learning but, as was clear from the sub-themes in Section 5.3.1, there are many other factors that impact on student learning.

Sub-theme two: Time management

The students realised that proper planning and the application of effective time management will result in having "enough time"(as one of them reported) to study and prepare for assignments, tests and examinations. Therefore, they reported that they started to plan and manage their time better in the second semester. Planning and managing their time effectively would also assist them with the transition phase and with their 'perceived' 'heavy' workload challenges. They also suggested that incoming students should plan and manage their time effectively in order to be successful in the learning process.

Responses were:

Planning is important, plan everything, your day, what is due when, plan mentally and also write it down.

Time management is also crucial factor because you have to manage all of the above factors. University is not like school where mommy or daddy can take care of you account or books for that matter.

These responses illustrate that the students have adapted to the autonomy and responsibility of university learning; they have learnt that, without effective planning and time management, the workload could become too much, they would not be able to do everything that is required, and when that happens, failure is the end result. They wanted new students to understand this very important factor in order to organise their lives and to enable them to do what is required of them. It is as if the students are now aware of and understand that effective planning and time management techniques are vital at university level in order to adjust and adhere to the demands of academic life. It is safe to suggest that the students “[b]ecame aware of the process of learning” (Mahatey *et al.* 1994:104) and, because of their adaptation and changes in their attitude and personal orientation, there was an improvement in their results at the end of the second semester.

Sub-theme three: Hard work

As was suggested in the previous section, hard work relates to planning and time management and the workload. The students reported that a reason for passing some of their modules at the end of the first semester was “hard work”. They thus suggested that new first-year students should be prepared to work hard in order to overcome challenges relating to transition and a ‘heavy’ workload. Responses included:

Work hard because it always results in positive results.

Hard work and determination are those that keep you strong as well as discipline.

Motivate yourself and tell yourself that you will work hard and do your best. Know what you are getting yourself into from day one, don’t underestimate the work because you fool yourself into thinking that you can get away with it or that it looks easy initially, make it easier for yourself by taking it seriously.

“Work hard” means that new students should know that they cannot take university study for granted. It signals the growth and maturity that these students developed because of their experiences in the first semester. It also points to the fact that success at university requires hard work, and hard work implies having a strong ‘will to learn’, being focused, being committed, dedicated and determined. Working hard entails the values that these students learnt and came to appreciate the hard way — from their own mistakes of not being committed and dedicated in the first semester. The students made this suggestion to prospective students because they wanted to draw their attention to what type of action is required to adjust to the University environment in order to enhance their chances of

success. Intention and action are two different elements, and the students had learnt the hard way that success in the learning process does not come through intention alone, but with the required action needed in the process to success. They wanted new students to know this and to act accordingly.

Sub-theme four: Learning styles

Relating to planning, time management and the workload, are the students' learning styles and study habits (Price & Maier 2007). The students who passed the QSC module at the end of the first semester gave the first response below. Some of the other students reported that they started to revise their work on a daily basis and they attempted to do pre-reading. In their suggestions to prospective students, they try to alert them to take cognisance of their learning styles and study habits. Responses were:

Practice various questions for QSC 131.

Study hard, party less, and pray, that is the remedy to success especially when you in an institution of higher learning that has a lot to offer for you.

Revise your work on a daily basis.

I know it's impossible to read everyday but try to study almost twice a week and during weekends and prepare yourself before lectures by reading so that you can get an idea when the lecturer is explaining the notes.

Students' learning styles and study habits are important enabling factors, but if their learning styles and study habits are not effective or suitable for university study, it could become a challenge, as some of the students reported in the previous section.

As Mahatey *et al.* (1994) observe, successful students often tailor their learning approaches to the different tasks they face. An inference could be made that the students were beginning to realise this important learning strategy as a result of the difficulties they had experienced in the first semester and that was why they adapted their own learning styles and study habits, and made these suggestions to new first-year students.

Sub-theme five: Foundational knowledge

Having sufficient foundational knowledge is important for comprehension of the content in the different subjects and for strengthening students' chances at successful learning (Hutchinson & Waters 1987; Pascarella & Terenzini 2005). The students who passed QSC 131 and IFS 131 at the end of the first semester reported that they were "mathematically inclined from a young age" and had "past knowledge of QSC and IFS". Their responses

indicate that having foundational knowledge in a subject is advantageous and aids students' successful mastering of the content.

The students made four other suggestions on what they have done to overcome their lack of foundational knowledge in the subjects which they failed at the end of the first semester. The first suggestion was that they started to prepare themselves adequately. One student explained it as follows:

Preparation for class is very important because at tertiary level of education one is suppose to have a more keen and matured approach about one's success and must therefore be able to go the extra mile of doing self-study when required to do so.

The second suggestion was that they "attended all their classes" and "concentrated in class". The students reported that they started to attend all their lectures and tutorials and they concentrated in class and that was why they had passed some of their modules. They also suggested that incoming first-year students should adhere to these enabling factors. It seems as if the students realised that attendance and concentration are important for one's understanding and for clarification of the content in their different subjects. If you attend classes, you do not miss out on valuable information, examples and further explanations given by the lecturers and the opportunity to ask for clarification and participate in class and tutorial discussions. All these activities strengthen one's understanding of the content and could enable one to pass the assignments and to do self-study. The students' suggestions on class attendance therefore strengthen the finding of Thatcher, Fridjhon and Cockcroft (2007:658) that students who attended classes regularly showed significant academic performance advantages over students whose attendance is poor.

The third suggestion was that they "went for consultation" and "asked questions" to improve their comprehension of the subject matter. They advised new first-year students to do the same. What is implied in this suggestion is that, because they went for consultation and asked questions, this action improved their comprehension of the content and they could do the assignments (successfully) and submit them on time, which contributed to their success in the modules passed. Asking questions and going for consultation are important and pro-active, especially when a student does not have sufficient foundational knowledge about a subject. In consultation sessions students have the opportunity to speak to the lecturers on a one-to-one basis and they do not have to feel shy or afraid of what other students will think of them. Consultation also helps to create a

personal relationship and trust between students and lecturers (based on my own personal experienced of being a lecturer for ten years) and can mitigate feelings of alienation and loneliness that are often exacerbated by large classes.

Suggestion no. four was to obtain assistance from peers. Student no. 13 made this suggestion. He wrote:

Getting help from friends who did it at high school and are good at it.

"Getting help from friends" was his attempt to overcome this challenge of lacking foundational knowledge in Mathematics. His results indicate that he did not obtain the help (or even if he did, it did not help him) because he attempted QSC 131 (where knowledge of Mathematics is needed) twice and still did not pass. This suggestion draws attention to the fact that the students also need academic support (in addition to moral and emotional support). Kuh *et al.* (2005) and Strydom and Mentz (2010) promote active and collaborative learning as a means to strengthen students chances at successful learning.

Sub-theme six: Language

One of the four students (Student 9) who reported on having a language challenge, suggested that she could "read a lot of books and familiarise my self with the English language" in order to overcome this challenge. She also suggested that books must be translated into other languages (this response is part of providing academic support to students below in Section 5.3.2.4). Unfortunately, this student was not successful in the learning process. She managed to pass only one of the six modules that she was registered for. It seems as if she could not overcome this challenge in terms of language, despite her suggestion of reading more books (it was perhaps too late in the year to make a difference, or it was a suggestion that she still needed to act on) alongside the other challenges with which she also had to deal during the course of the year. The language challenge is a reality for some students in the Faculty, and the way in which the Faculty could attempt to assist the students to overcome this challenges is what Boughey (2002:306) suggests should happen "[m]aking the rules and conventions of academic ways of thinking, valuing acting, speaking, reading and writing overt to students *using the mainstream curriculum*".

5.3.2.3 Theme 3: Social factors

As was the case in category one above, peer pressure emerged as the only sub-theme under this theme for the students. Student no. 1 reported it as a challenge and suggested that, in order to overcome this challenge, he needed to balance his life and not give in to peer pressure. He explained:

Where peer pressures are concerned there are many ways to deal, but we just do not want to see or use those ways. We can say no, it is our right...We can be an individual and not give in or simply just be stubborn and go to class.

It is evident that he realised that adjustments needed to be made after he failed all his modules in the first semester (as reported already). His second semester results indicate that he did manage to find that balance in his life and that he became “stubborn” and went to class. He was one of the fortunate ones because his challenges were relatively easy to overcome and not as serious or severe as some of the challenges facing other students. I am suggesting ‘relatively easy’ in the context of the fact that it was mainly up to him to make the adjustments and to start acting on them since his financial challenge was sorted out (NSFAS paid his class fees). He was not dependent on other people for assistance with his other challenges (for example, he did not lack background knowledge or had to deal with a language challenge, etc).

Other suggestions were also made on how incoming students should not succumb to peer pressure. These were:

Stay away from the cafeteria.

Do not get involved in big crowds.

Do not let other people influence you.

Do not bunk classes to play dominoes.

All these suggestions signify that the students were now aware that these situations are ‘dangerous’ in the sense that you would give in more ‘easily’ to pressure from a group than you would do from only one or two students at a time. The students’ warnings relate to the freedom that they began to experience when they started with university study. It is this freedom and independence that could have tremendous implications for many first-year students in their initial stage of university life as Yorke & Longden (2004:117) note. They therefore became very conscious of the fact that it is best to avoid these situations in order to remain in control of learning and to focus on what is required. Subsequently, the heavy focus on peer pressure suggests that the students felt that it is an important factor that

could lead to failure in any student's life. It seems as if there was an urgency that new incoming students should understand how 'negative' peer pressure could impact negatively on the learning process, and they wanted them to be aware of this important learning principle.

I must note that I was surprised at the seriousness with which the students responded to the questions and how closely related their answers were to one another (especially in the individual interviews). I could also sense honesty and a real desire to help other students. Student no. 1 for example said to me that I could ask him "any time" to speak to new first year students because he "can speak from personal experience" on how not to succeed at university. He was the student who wrote how appreciative he was to be given a second chance during his second semester to rectify the mistakes he had made during the first semester, which he did (see discussion in Section 5.3.2.1 above). Student no. 14 also expressed her appreciation in the interview (March 2010) - she wrote:

I am sooo glad that Im back this year! That I get a chance to continue and Im doing much much better, much more comfortable, I know what to do, I plan ahead, always think ahead. Im doing so much better, my C's and D's from last year are turning into B's and A's! Its an incredible opportunity to be at university, remember that not everyone gets this opportunity and maybe because I had such a tough time last year I thought about how I can improve. Ive changed little things, but mostly adjusted my attitude.

This is the 'seriousness' and the honesty that I am referring to. This student is saying that she changed her "attitude" (compared to the previous year) and that she realised that it was an "opportunity" to study which she should appreciate. Her response is an indication that she had grown and developed personally, cognitively and emotionally as discussed by Bransford *et al.* (1999), Illeris (2002) and Schunk (2008). It seems as if the students who returned in 2010 have indeed adapted to and integrated into the academic community as Tinto (1975) suggests should happen for successful learning to occur.

5.3.2.4 Theme 4: Institutional factors

As was mentioned at the beginning of this category, the students also made suggestions in written reflection no. 1 as to how the University could assist them to overcome their challenges to learning. These suggestions could be grouped under three main sub-themes: the provision of resources; the provision of academic support; and the provision of moral support and encouragement. The fact that the students made suggestions on how the institution could assist them to overcome their challenges to learning is significant because it implies that they realized that they could not be successful in the learning process on their own. It directs attention to the relationship which exists between the

students and the institution in the learning context. Strydom and Mentz (2010:6), in their discussion of student engagement based on Kuh *et al*'s. (2005) seminal work, state that the learning process consists of “student behaviours and institutional conditions”. They (2010:3) explain that “institutional conditions” refer to “the extent to which they [the institutions] employ effective educational practices to induce students to do the right things”. The preceding analysis focused on what the students did (thus “student behaviours”) to overcome their challenges; this section will discuss the “institutional conditions” which the students suggested should be in place to assist them to overcome their challenges to learning.

Sub-theme one: Resources

The students suggested that the Faculty (and thus the University) should provide more resources in terms of comprehensive financial aid, more on-campus accommodation and more human and infrastructure resources. The suggestions were:

- Provide more comprehensive financial assistance
- Provide more on-campus accommodation
- Appoint more lecturers
- Provide lecturers with better teaching methodology and teaching strategies
- Provide more resources in terms of computer laboratories and computers

The suggestions of providing more resources included comprehensive financial aid and on-campus accommodation were made by Students no. 6, 9 and 10. These three students were part of the group that reported having financial challenges and other learning challenges (as discussed in section 5.3.2.1 above). The second last suggestion would be the one most feasible in the short term because it could be achieved through workshops, seminars and lecturers themselves, while the others are factors that the University management is aware of and is attempting to address. If, for example, the Faculty could appoint more lecturers, it would also provide more academic and learning support to students because class sizes could be reduced, thus lecturers would have more time to get to know their students on a personal level and to understand them better. Similarly, if more computer laboratories and computer facilities were in place, more students would have access to these and be able to complete their work on time, especially where students do not have computers at home.

Sub-theme two: Academic support

The provision of academic support to students has been considered as vital by all researchers involved in higher education and successful student learning (Leibowitz 2001,

2009; Mckenna 2004; Louw 2005; Kuh *et al.* 2005; Strydom & Mentz 2010; Van Schalkwyk 2008). For the students in this Case, academic support from the institution encompasses that the Faculty should:

- Reduce the workload
- Make the difficult modules year courses (ALC, Man & IFS)
- Encourage consultation visits
- Provide extra learning support
- Provide more academic support

One could infer that the suggestions made by the students were related to actions that would assist them with their academic integration. Because the students perceived the workload as 'heavy', they would want to request the Faculty to reduce the workload and to make the modules which they experienced as challenging year courses in order to allow for more time to be devoted to these subjects. Their suggestion to ask lecturers to encourage consultation visits is also an attempt to provide further academic support to them. What could be implied in this request is that the students did not feel free or confident enough to make use of consultation because some lecturers might have been perceived by some students as 'unapproachable'. It seems as if the students were of the opinion that if the Faculty requested lecturers to encourage consultation visits, they would feel more comfortable making use of this form of academic support. The first two suggestions may not be feasible in the short term, but going for consultation could assist to lessen the perceived 'heavy' workload and challenging modules notions because if there is improved comprehension and a sense of 'control' over one's learning experience, the workload could become 'manageable'.

Three students (Students no. 9, 10 and 20) also made suggestions about providing more academic support for especially the language challenge. These were:

- Book must be translated in other languages, too.
- The Faculty and lecturers must try to help us and use the easy concept so that we can understand it.
- Extra classes for English should be offered to students.
- Provide tutorial support for all modules.

They were the students who reported language challenges in addition to the financial challenges that they experienced. However, because the three students did not receive this support from the Faculty (books are not translated into other languages and there are no extra classes for learning English), their language challenges (and other challenges) impacted on and affected them negatively. It seems as if the language challenge was more severe than the financial challenges, because some of the other students who also

had financial challenges were reasonably successful in their studies (Students 1, 5, 8, 15, 17 and 18 for example).

Students 3, 7 and 16 explained their suggestions for learning support. They wrote:

Some of the classes need to be more learner friendly.

In the beginning, there are PF's that tell what to expect in varsity and show the school. They don't do their jobs properly. Varsity needs to make first years welcomed in the manner that they understand all variables in the University, yes, varsity is not here to spoon feed, but you can't tell someone who has never swam to swim, you give them a life jacket, so that when they are comfortable they will swim on their own.

The University/faculty must give a full awareness of what a student must expect before he/she can choose a particular course/degree.

These suggestions by the students were attempts to overcome their challenges with regard to the transition phase and understanding what was expected of them (one student reported having received inadequate information as his challenge in the previous section and that was why he made the latter suggestion). It would therefore be important for the Faculty to consider these suggestions and to also make provision for the students who they allow to register late because those are the students who often do not attend the orientation programme and who do not receive any form of assistance at the beginning of the academic year.

Sub-theme three: Support and encouragement

The importance for the need for support is again highlighted in the two suggestions made by Students no. 16 and 18. They explained:

My lecturers interact with me on a more personal level, if they could understand my weak and strong points.

My suggestion is to take a look at how students are doing and find out what they are really struggling with.

The need for compassion and empathy on the part of the lecturers is implied in these two responses. Knowing who they are and understanding what their challenges to learning are would enable lecturers to have empathy and more patience with the students. It would also provide lecturers with the opportunity to follow up on work that was not understood by providing more scaffolding tasks to enhance comprehension. It would further assist the students with both their social and academic integration into the academic environment and would build better relationships between students and lecturers. Knowing the students on a more personal level would also create trust and a safe and supportive learning

environment for students as Kuh *et al.* (2005) and Strydom and Mentz (2010) suggest in their discussion of active and collaborative learning. However, the size of classes and diversity of challenges could compromise these suggestions.

5.3.2.3 Summary of overcoming the challenges to learning

The factors which the students identified as challenges to learning and how they tried to overcome their challenges (in other words, what they believed might serve as enabling factors) are all interrelated and interdependent. Because most of the students had financial challenges, they suggested that the Faculty should provide comprehensive financial assistance. But in order for the Faculty (and thus the University) to act on this suggestion, it needs the assistance of the education department. Another example of the interrelatedness of these factors is the foundational knowledge and comprehension challenges which many of the students (in addition to the financial challenges) had to deal with. They reported that they started to attend all their classes, they asked questions and they went for consultation, and they made the same suggestions to new first-year students. These actions thus enabled the students to comprehend the content better, which in turn resulted in the completion and submission of assignments on the due dates and that led to an improvement in their second semester results. These factors thus illustrate the closely linked relationship between “student behaviours” and “institutional conditions” (Strydom & Mentz 2010:6).

A last example that could be made to illustrate the interdependency of the sub-themes identified and reported on is the students’ need for (all) forms of support from their family members and friends, their peers, the staff at university and the education department. Not only did the analysis of these factors demonstrate the interrelatedness of the learning process among especially the latter three layers in the learning context, but it also brought the influence and impact of social cohesion into perspective. The analysis of what the students experienced; how they dealt with and attempted to overcome their challenges; and the suggestions they made to prospective first year students and the University draws attention to “[t]he importance of a holistic view of student learning and making the student as an individual the point of concern” (Bitzer 2009:312).

5.4 SYNTHESIS OF FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION

The analysis of the data in this chapter was done in order to find answers to sub-questions two and three, namely:

What are the challenges to learning for a UWC student in the EMS faculty?
How do these challenges to learning influence student performance?

The analysis showed that the students identified sixteen sub-themes as challenges to learning, thirteen on how they could overcome their challenges and eleven sub-themes as suggestions to new students (which were similar to what they have done to overcome their challenges). Table 5.3 illustrates these factors below:

Table 5.3 Synthesis of findings: Sub-themes identified

Challenges to learning	Overcoming the challenges	Suggestions to new students
<p>Theme 1: Personal factors 1. Accommodation which resulted in a travelling challenge 2. Family support 3. Financial means</p> <p>Theme 2: Academic factors 4. Attitude and personal orientation 5. Transition 6. Planning and time management 7. Workload 8. Learning styles 9. Foundational knowledge 10. Language 11. Home environment and family crises 12. Working and studying simultaneously</p> <p>Theme 3: Social factors 13. Peer pressure</p> <p>Theme 4: Institutional factors 14. Large classes 15. Inadequate information 16. Resources</p>	<p>Theme 1: Personal factors 1. Finding work to overcome the financial challenge 2. Moving closer to overcome the travelling challenge 3. Seeking emotional and professional support to overcome negative feelings and loneliness</p> <p>Theme 2: Academic factors 4. Changed their attitude and personal orientation (be focused, committed, dedicated and work hard) to overcome their negative attitude and the transition period 5. Applied effective planning, time management techniques to handle the workload 6. Adjusted their learning styles and study habits 7. Asked questions and went for consultation to improve comprehension and assist with the lack of foundational knowledge 8. Attended all classes, prepared themselves and concentrated on also improving comprehension 9. Submitted all assignments on time</p> <p>Theme 3: Social factors 10. Resisted negative peer pressure</p> <p>Theme 4: Institutional factors Suggested that the Faculty should provide: 11. Resources 12. Academic support 13. Moral support and encouragement</p>	<p>Theme 1: Personal factors 1. Have support (family, peers and staff)</p> <p>Theme 2: Academic factors 2. Have a positive attitude and personal orientation (be focused, committed, dedicated) 3. Be prepared to work hard and to adjust to the environment 4. Apply effective planning and time management techniques 5. Be aware of your learning styles and study habits 6. Ask questions and go for consultation 7. Attend all classes 8. Concentrate in class 9. Do preparation 10. Need foundational knowledge</p> <p>Theme 3: Social factors 11. Avoid negative peer pressure</p>

Many of the sub-themes identified in the findings were similar to the findings identified mostly by Tinto (1975), Louw's (2005) and the REAP and RAD Team (2008), while five sub-themes emerged as new factors which impacted on learning for students in this Case. These are listed alphabetically below to avoid the impression that some are more important than others:

1. Attitude and personal orientation
2. Home environment and family crises
3. Peer pressure
4. Travelling
5. Working and studying simultaneously

The table and list above could create the impression that these sub-themes constitute separate issues that can be tackled separately, but throughout the analysis the discussions attempted to demonstrate the interrelatedness and interdependency of the sub-themes; how the challenges influenced the students' performance; how they dealt with the challenges; and their reflections on what they should have done differently. The students' experiences reflect that "[l]earning is always multi-dimensional" (Walker 2006:118).

Another disadvantage of listing the themes and sub-themes is that it creates the impression that problems are static. As was shown in this chapter (see Section 5.3.1), challenges may appear and accumulate in the course of the year requiring different solutions at different times. Because the challenges increased over the course of the academic year, the severity thereof compromised the students' 'will to learn' and some of them surrendered as a consequence and did not return to learning the following year. It was evident that the multitude of challenges influenced and impacted the students on a personal level, an academic level, a social level and an institutional level. The analysis demonstrated that the "[v]icious cycle of financial disadvantaged and academic underperformance which originated under *apartheid* still prevails [at UWC]" (Letseka *et al.* 2010:64).

In addition, failing students become a further burden on the education department if they received financial assistance in the form of NSFAS loans. The fact that they will not complete their studies in the required time means that it will take longer for them to graduate and to find employment. This delay also prolongs the repayment period and the education department loses out on finances which they could have used to assist other students. In the end, it also becomes a broader social and economic issue (Louw 2005:1), because when students fail, it also has an impact on the students' family, their expectations of the students, their financial situations and the students' future.

But the students' experiences also depict the power relations that exist between the students and the institution. The students are subjected to the demands made by

academe (and thus the academic staff) and are required to conform and adjust to what is required of them (Leibowitz 2001, 2009; Mckenna 2004). Most of the students in this Case could not adhere to the demands and failure was the end result. What happened to them corroborate the findings from other research studies conducted that many (first-year) students fail, give up and drop out of university studies completely (Berger 2000; Bunting 2004; Scott 2006, 2009a; Webb 2000).

Furthermore, UWC as an HBU gives students from various backgrounds the opportunity to study at a higher education institution (CHE 2010:8). It is located in a working class community from which it draws first generation students and on which it depends to provide accommodation and transport to students who cannot be housed in university residences. Such students probably struggle financially (because students with loans can stay in university residences) and may find the circumstances less than ideal, for example, living in the vicinity of a noisy tavern, which will make study in the evenings very difficult. Others study from their homes and have to deal with family problems which could demoralise and demotivate them. Working part-time to alleviate financial pressure will result in less time for a study programme that is already overwhelming. Making friends and trying to integrate socially could result in negative peer pressure. The anonymity and alienation of big classes mean that students can 'disappear' unless they make an effort to speak to lecturers or obtain counselling or some form of help. The analysis revealed how "tightly interwoven" the contextual, personal and academic factors were (Strydom & Mentz 2010:6).

In conclusion, the students' responses demonstrate how factors beyond their control influence their lives as individuals and as students, and they also reveal how many role players could be involved in the learning process. Therefore, the analysis and the findings in this chapter provide evidence for the theoretical orientation in this dissertation: learning is socially situated and constructed. From these findings, one could propose that a socially situated, supportive and holistic learning approach should include progressive steps and strategies (from all the role players) in which the learning challenges and thus the reasons for failure could be addressed and minimised in order to enable more students to overcome them. Such an approach should also include the enabling factors which the students identified as reasons why they had passed some of their modules in order to increase the pass rate among first year students in the EMS faculty, as will be discussed in Chapter 7.

I now move to Chapter 6, where the analysis of the data from Case 2 (the students who were successful in their first year of study) is presented. A comparison between the two Cases will also be made throughout the discussions.

CHAPTER 6

ANALYSIS OF DATA - CASE 2: SUCCESSFUL STUDENTS

6.1 INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter, data were analysed from Case 1, the students who were less successful at the end of their first year of study in 2009. In this chapter, I analyse data from Case 2; students who were successful at the end of 2009. While the analysis of the data in Case 1 already revealed that ‘underprepared’ and ‘disadvantaged’ students are not necessarily academically weak, the data in this chapter will show that some of the students in this Case were academically very strong because they managed to pass exceptionally well despite any possible disadvantages. As in the previous chapter, I first present and discuss the analysis of the third quantitative data set — the students’ final results (Data set 5) and then the analysis of the qualitative data. I use the same format for the analysis and discussions as presented in the previous chapter and a comparison between the two Cases is also made throughout the discussions. Following Case 1, a numerical system is again used to refer to the students in order to protect their identity and to adhere to the confidentiality clause in the consent form.

6.2 QUANTITATIVE DATA SET NO. 5: FINAL RESULTS OF CASE 2

As explained in Section 4.5.3 in which the research participants were discussed, I started with twenty students in this group, but ended up with twelve in Term 1, 2010. At the start of the data collection period (April, 2009), the twenty students included nine who were registered for the B.Admin. degree and eleven who were registered for the B.Com. Gen. degree (both three-year programmes). Thus, the biographical and geographical information of all twenty students was analysed and presented in Section 4.5.3, and I had all twenty students’ written reflection no. 1, which is part of the analysis in Section 6.3 below. Because five of the twenty students did not come back to me with written reflection no. 2 during Term 3, 2009 (as explained in Section 4.5.3), I continued with the remaining fifteen students. However, in written reflection no. 2, two of the fifteen students (Students no. 3 and 6, both B.Admin. students) reported that they had each failed one module in the first semester and they were removed from the group, since the purpose with this group was to investigate those students who had passed all their modules. In addition, when I analysed the students’ final results at the beginning of March 2010, I discovered that Student no. 9 (a B.Com. Gen. student) had also failed one second semester module and I

had to remove him from the group as well. Therefore, the analysis of the final results for this Case includes only the twelve students (four B.Admin. and eight B.Com. Gen. students) who passed all the modules that they were registered for in 2009. Two tables containing the twelve students' information, including a breakdown of their final results, are presented first followed by a discussion of the findings. It should be noted that the students are listed according to their results, ranking from highest to lowest per degree programme since that is the focus of the analysis.

Table 6.1 Students' information and breakdown of final results: B Admin

Student no.	Age	School attended	Year matriculated	NCS NSC	No. of modules registered for	First-year results: Average passed with	Registered in 2010
18	20	DET	2007	C average	8	A (76%)	Yes
12	19	DEC	2008	Points: 42	7	C (65%)	Yes
20	21	Model C	2007	C average	9	C (63%)	Yes
14	20	Model C	2008	Points: 32	8	D (59%)	Yes

Table 6.2 Students' information and breakdown of final results: B Com Gen

Student no.	Age	School attended	Year matriculated	NCS NSC	No. of modules registered for	First-year results: Average passed with	Registered in 2010
19	24	DEC	2003	B average	8	A (78%)	Yes
16	20	DEC	2007	C average	8	A (76%)	Yes
2	18	DEC	2008	Points: 36	8	B (72%)	Yes
8	18	DEC	2008	Points: 39	8	C (69%)	Yes
10	19	DEC	2007	C average	8	C (68%)	Yes
7	18	DEC	2008	Points: 36	8	C (65%)	Yes
1	18	Model C	2008	Points: 41	8	C (63%)	Yes
11	19	Model C	2008	Points: 37	8	D (58%)	Yes

As can be seen from the tables, one B.Admin. student was registered for nine modules, two were registered for eight modules and one was registered for seven modules, while the eight B.Com. Gen. students were registered for the required eight modules. As explained in Section 4.5.3, first-year students should register for four first-semester modules and four second-semester modules. This equals 120 credit points for the year (each module counts 15 credit points) (Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences 2009). After registration, however, they are allowed to change or delete some of the electives, or in some cases add a module that they are interested in. Thus, while eight modules in the first year are the norm, nine is the exception.

Student no. 12 was registered for seven modules and Student no. 20 for nine modules. A reason why Student no. 12 was registered for seven modules and not eight was because she was a student with a disability and these students are allowed to register for fewer modules. Student no. 20 was most probably interested in learning more about a specific subject and that was why he added the module and had nine modules instead of eight. He

attended a former model C school and obtained a C average for matric in 2007, which seems to have prepared him well for higher education since he maintained this average in his first year. In written reflection 1 he wrote:

I think UWC must allow student to take as many modules they want because other students like myself have a hunger for knowledge and restricting us to 4 modules a semester is unfair. There are certain modules that I would love to do but because it will be above the required 120 [credit] mark I am not able to do so.

His response indicates the confidence that he had in himself and his abilities. The “hunger for knowledge” also indicates that he wanted to gain as much knowledge as possible and that could be another reason why he added an additional module to his registration.

One can observe that these students not only managed to pass all their modules at the end of their first year, but some of them managed to pass them exceptionally well. There were three students who passed with an ‘A’ average (75%+); one student passed with a ‘B’ average (70%-74%); six with a ‘C’ average (60%-69%) and two with a ‘D’ average (50-59%) (University of the Western Cape 2009c).

Some of the students who obtained an ‘A’ average were a bit older than the norm (which is typically eighteen or nineteen). Students no. 16 and 19 informed me that they had worked after school before coming to study while Student no. 18 was at home for a year before she came to study (Students no. 16, 18 and 19, personal communication, 24 August 2009). Since these three students were older, one could argue that they knew what they wanted to do and why they were at university, that they were determined to succeed and possibly worked harder.

The way in which more mature students contribute to the learning experience for other students too is illustrated by Student no. 19. Initially she reported on her challenge of working in groups for an assignment:

My challenge was group work, being much older and very serious about my studies, my peers were always 5 years younger. I found it hard to relate to anybody in the first year in the first term.

Unfortunately, group work is an integral part of the Management module, in particular. She overcame this challenge by doing the following:

Group work is not only about working as a team. A good strong and focused leader will guide and help the group. Choose group members wisely, look for commonalities with regards to group members’ standards. Assignments count for a lot, therefore every assignment deserves 110%.

She became the leader in her groups and guided the younger students in working hard and being committed to the assignment. In the end, despite the fact that she had experienced multiple challenges to learning and that she came from a 'underprepared' and 'disadvantaged' schooling background, she outperformed all the other students as is evident from her final result in the table above.

Age, however, is not the only determiner of success because Student no. 2, who obtained an average of 72%, was 18. This indicates that younger students can also work hard, know why they are at university and pass their first year of study well. I would rather argue that the older students had the advantage of 'maturity' as McInnis, James & McNaught (1995) suggest. This is evident when one looks at their responses in written reflection 2 (after receiving their first-semester results). A shortened version of their detailed responses from the three students who were older is provided below.

Student no. 16 wrote:

Finally everything made sense. The family functions I never attended because I had to study, We [her boyfriend and herself] both have goals, we both know to get where we want to be we need to work for it. I try to make a success of my studies so I'll be able to establish myself.

Student no. 18 wrote:

I was determined to make my mark in the world. I know that working hard in my studies, might provide me with a good job after graduating, I am here for the purpose of getting a degree and the only way to do that is if I stay strong and study hard, which is exactly how I got to pass in the past semester. The will to succeed has been the driving force behind any effort I make towards my academic work.

Student no. 19 wrote:

It was important for me to set goals and keep track of them. This gave me an indication of where I was in terms of achievement and allowed me to analyse and conclude where I needed to focus to push my year mark. Setting a goal, kept my focus strong and helped me to motivate myself.

These three students' explanations on how and why they passed their subjects so well stood out from the rest. They worked hard because they wanted to succeed. They were determined, focused, goal-driven and motivated. Student no. 18 said she had "the will to succeed" and that was her "driving force" in her academic work; 'the will to learn' that Barnett (2007) is arguing for with regard to successful learning for students. It resulted in the effective use of their self-regulatory and self-reflective capabilities. Their results are a confirmation of their hard work and dedication.

It is also important to note that, despite the fact that the four students (Students no. 16, 18, 19 and 2) came from a 'disadvantaged' and 'underprepared' schooling background, they outperformed the students who came from former model C schools. Again, this signals that, if the will to do something is strong enough and one is prepared to work hard, to make sacrifices, to ask for help when in need and to go the extra mile, one can succeed, because as Barnett (2007: 15) states, "[a]t any level of education, a pupil, a student cannot make serious progress unless she has a will to do so". Having the 'will to learn' is thus the starting point for a student and having as many enabling factors as possible in place (as the discussion below in Section 6.3 shows) could ensure successful learning for any student.

Lastly, all twelve students were promoted to the next year of study and all twelve students came back and registered in 2010. This is in sharp contrast to the performance of the twenty students in Case 1, where twelve were promoted, two failed, six were academically excluded and five students did not return to continue with their studies in 2010. Overall, the performance and results of the students in this Case proved that successful learning is possible for students from different backgrounds if most, or all, the enabling factors are in place. What contributed to their success and how they achieved it is discussed in the analysis of the qualitative data which is presented next.

6.3 ANALYSIS OF THE QUALITATIVE DATA SETS

As in Case 1 in the previous chapter, four qualitative data sets were collected from the same questions asked, and the same structure and format for the analysis of the data which is presented next, are used. As mentioned already, a comparison of the analysis in the two Cases has been made within each section.

6.3.1 Category one: Challenges to learning

Following Chapter 5, I first discuss sub-themes under *personal factors*, then *academic factors* and lastly *institutional factors*. There were no *social factors* sub-themes reported in this Case. The challenges are summarised in Figure 6.1 below.

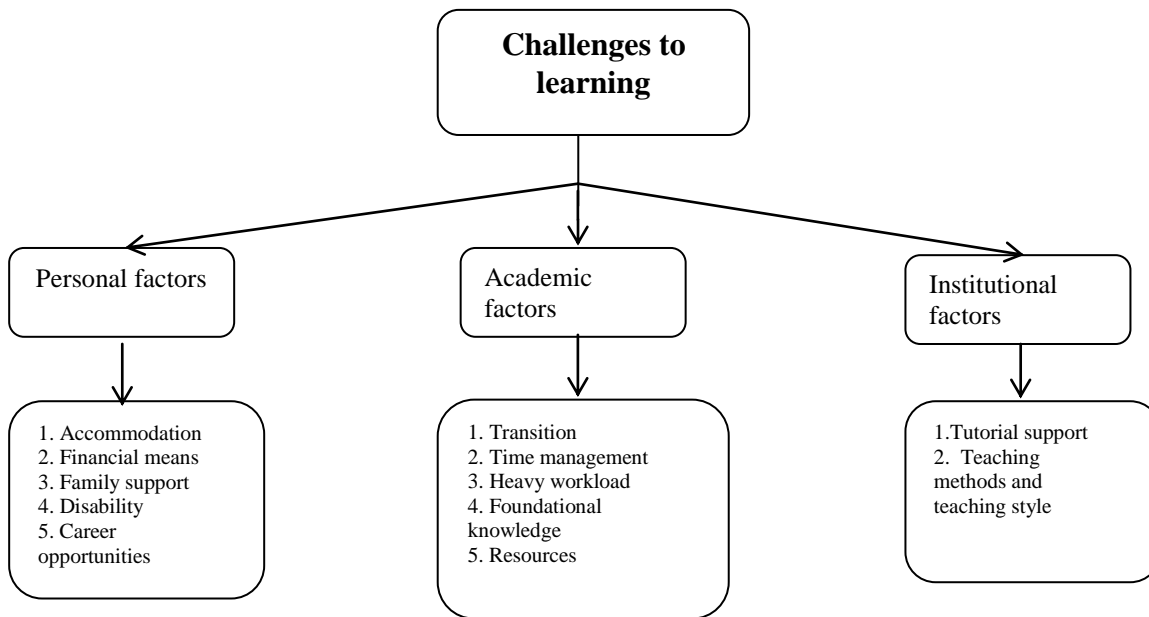


Figure 6.1 Challenges to learning

6.3.1.1 Theme 1: Personal factors

Five sub-themes emerged from the students' responses under this theme and three of them are similar to those identified in Case 1. Two new sub-themes, disability and career opportunities, emerged from the data in this Case.

Sub-theme one: Accommodation

All the students in this Case reported that they did not have accommodation problems, but two students (Students no. 14 and 20) reported that they had a problem with travelling, in that public transport was unreliable and resulted in them sometimes arriving late for early morning classes. Two other students (Students no. 7 and 18) reported having to travel long hours to and from campus. Responses included:

The travelling from my flat in Observatory to UWC is a problem sometime as the train has problems and sometime Im late for class because of the incompetence of Metrorail. I would have love to get residence in the University.

Another problem I was facing was transportation problems it took me a hour and a half just to get to school.

The students in this Case were fortunate not to have had serious accommodation challenges if one compares them to some of the students in Case 1 whose accommodation was unsatisfactory and as a consequence of that, had to deal with other challenges as well (see Section 5.3.3.2). However, the four students' responses with regard to the travelling challenge are similar to the students in Case 1. Travelling was

therefore identified as a challenge to learning in this Case but not to the extent that it was in Case 1.

Sub-theme two: Financial means

This challenge, unlike Case 1 where the financial challenges of the students became more severe as the year progressed, seems to have lessened for the students in this Case because seven students reported it as a challenge in written reflection no. 1 (April, 2009) but only four students reported it again in the questionnaire (October 2009). Two other students (Students no. 1 and 16) reported something different. Student no. 1 reported that her parents were “just able to pay” for everything but she indicated that she does have financial difficulties because “applications for bursaries are so complicated, and student loans”. It seems as if the “complicated” procedures of applying for financial assistance put her off. Student no. 16 on the other hand, reported that she had sufficient funds for her first and second year, but not for her final year. She was thus worried about her future financial situation.

Two of the four students (Student no. 14 and 20) who reported it as a challenge did not indicate the extent of their difficulty. They explained, however, why they were experiencing financial difficulties. They wrote:

Yes, due to financial difficulties this year I was unable to be financially supported my parents were facing a financial crises because of recession.

Yes, my father is currently unemployed and my mother is the only source of income in our household.

Student no. 8, one of the other two students, reported that she had difficulty paying her fees and buying textbooks, while Student no. 19 explained that she was responsible for her own finances and at times did not have money for travelling to and from the campus. The inspiring fact is that, even though these students experienced financial challenges in their first year of study, all of them managed to pass all their modules, and Student no. 19 passed exceptionally well (see Section 6.2 above).

In comparison, fourteen students in Case 1 experienced financial difficulties and for six of them it was severe (they could not pay their fees, buy textbooks, travel to and from campus, did not have money for food or their living expenses). One could therefore have empathy with the number of students in Case 1 who had to deal with financial challenges. As was shown through the analysis, most of them experienced financial challenges

throughout the year and it had a negative impact on their academic work and therefore lowered their chances of success in the learning process. However, because not so many students in Case 2 experienced financial challenges with only two of them having very serious challenges, together with the fact that for some the challenge was surmounted, their chances of success seem to have been enhanced. This therefore, provides support for the inference made in the previous chapter (Section 5.3.1.2, sub-theme nine) that the severity of the financial challenges would determine the impact on students' learning and that other factors, such as the need for support, could have a greater effect on students.

Sub-theme three: Family support

All the students in this Case reported that they received support from their families and their friends, and family support was thus identified as an enabler, rather than a challenge. These responses are similar to those in Case 1, where most of the students also reported that they received support. The difference, however, is that the students in Case 1 did not mention what type of support they received whereas the students in this Case reported that they received moral support and encouragement from their families and friends. To the question, *do you have family and friends that support you*, they responded:

I do, everyone is encouraging and supportive.

Yes, I do. My parents support me and always tell me that they know I do my best and that is what they just want. They do not need an A on my report to make them proud of me.

My family is all very supportive and encouraging. Although their expectations for me is high – it pushes me to work hard.

In fact, the students in this Case (Case 2) had already reported in written reflection 2 how the support that they received from their family and friends motivated and encouraged them and contributed to a desire to work hard in order to pass all their first semester modules. Also, Student no. 12 (who is partially sighted) reported that it was only her grandmother who supported her, and not her parents. She wrote:

My step-father alienates me because I am not his child and my mother does not support me because she is afraid of my step-father.

Despite not receiving support from her parents, and despite her disability, she managed to pass all her modules with a 65% average and it would appear that the support that she received from her grandmother carried her through.

In conclusion, all the other students in both Cases received support from their families and friends, and some from lecturers. The students in this Case explained in detail how the support received motivated and encouraged them to work hard and to achieve success.

Their responses demonstrate that, for students in this faculty, support from family and friends is very important, confirming that a supportive learning environment is an enabling factor as proposed by Killen (2000, 2005), Kuh *et al.*(2005) and Strydom and Mentz (2010).

Sub-theme four: Disability

Unlike Case 1, where no student reported having to learn with a disability, one student (Student no. 12) in this Case reported having a disability as a challenge in written reflection no. 1 in April. Although it is only one student, I am discussing her situation because there are other students at UWC with disabilities and her story thus provides a perspective from someone of this group. In addition, it is worth discussing her disability because she proved that students in this category can also be successful. She wrote:

My challenge is my disability. I am partially sighted, I can only see 30% and the fact that I have this challenge sometimes impacts my life negatively.

Her disability was both a personal and an academic challenge. It was a personal challenge because she was worried about how UWC would accommodate her as a student, but then she discovered that UWC does accommodate students with a disability. In addition, because she only had 30% vision, she could not see or read from a 'normal distance' (in class for example), and that created academic challenges for her. I discuss what she did to overcome especially her reading challenge in Section 6.3.2 below. What is important to note here is the fact that she did not become de-motivated or dropped out. Her 'will to learn' was strong and she persevered. Her final results are testimony to her perseverance.

Sub-theme five: Career opportunities

This Case had one student (Student no. 16) who was concerned about the future. It was already mentioned under sub-theme two above that she reported that she was 'anxious' about her financial situation in the third year. Under this sub-theme, she reported that she was troubled about finding a job when she completed her degree. She wrote:

There is not a day I do not sit and worry about getting a job after I study. I worry about this. The way everything is going I do not even know if I will get a job and there is no comfort or guarantee that I will. It bothers me 99% of the time. It is as if I am working hard but I don't even know if I will reap benefits. There my negativity comes out but sometimes I just think I am realistic.

I discovered that there was another reason why she so distressed. In a personal note to me she spoke of having low self-esteem and how this made her feel uncertain about her abilities and what she could achieve. In my response I informed her that I would never have thought that she had low self-esteem because, when I looked at the way she

conducted herself, I saw a confident student who knew what she wanted in life and who was prepared to work hard to achieve her goals. As part of her challenges, she wrote:

As you said in the email when you talk and see me I am not the person I am describing. I don't think any of us are. I hide behind a lot because [it is] easier this way. It should make you realise that the point of this research is to find out why some people succeed in University and why some don't. But there is something different one can deduce. Even the stronger ones like myself, we think we cannot do something, we cry when the pressure is high, we question ourselves, we feel like dropping out [of] campus. And this is scary because if we are the stronger ones and this is hard to cope with are we going to be good leaders of tomorrow?

This student was a very quiet student. However, when she was in a safe and secure environment, she would 'open up' and speak her mind. She became one of the top performing students in my own course (Academic Literacy for Commerce, ALC 131). Her response reflects critical engagement with real-life issues. It also reflects a thoughtful and enquiring mind. Normally, new first-year students are concerned about adjustment, the workload and passing their modules. She, instead, was worried about the future (thus, long term, third year and beyond) and one could suggest that she was reflecting on her self-regulatory capabilities and her self-efficacy. Bandura (1986:391) defines perceived self-efficacy "[a]s people's judgments of their capabilities to organize and execute courses of action required to attain designated types of performance". In this case, the student described how hard work and her faith helped her overcome her fear and uncertainties. She wrote:

All I do is work as hard as I possibly can and trust in the grace of the Almighty.

Clearly, she was one of the successful ones, because, through her continued hard work, determination and commitment, she obtained a 76% average across all eight modules for which she was registered. I wrote back to her again and informed her that she should stop worrying and continue to work hard and be focused.

6.3.1.2 Theme 2: Academic factors

The students in Case 1 reported nine sub-themes under this theme, but the students in this Case only reported five. This suggests that the students in Case 1 experienced more academic factor challenges than the students in this Case.

Sub-theme one: Transition

Fifty percent of the students in this Case reported feeling negative about being at UWC in written reflection no. 1 in April, first semester. Responses included:

I hated orientation. I didn't want to come and was miserable.

At first, coming to the University gave me a feeling of nervousness. [It] was a culture shock and experience racism and segregation between coloureds and black students.

Settling in has not been easy all the time for me as I was alone.

If you not a very disciplined student it is especially hard and the difference between school and university is quite vast and overwhelming. I do find university difficult and Im barely coping.

It is evident that these students were unhappy and were struggling to adjust to university life. Not being sociable and not making friends easily could add to feelings of loneliness and alienation, and finding university 'difficult' and 'not coping' could make the transition period even more challenging. Experiencing a sense of racism and segregation would also aid a feeling of alienation (Mann 2001) and would make both the social and academic integration challenging because these students are not making friends as Tinto (2000:85) suggests should happen to facilitate social integration. These experiences of the students could be an indication that their affective and social needs in the learning process were not being met, which in turn could lead to failure, as Nieman and Pienaar (2006) suggest could happen to students in the learning process.

However, most of these students, with the exception of two, managed to overcome these initial negative feelings and experiences because they did not report it as a challenge again in the later data sets. The two students (Students no. 3 and 6) who could not overcome their challenges were part of the three students whom I had to remove from the group as explained in Section 6.1. For the remaining students, an inference could be made that they started to adjust to the University environment and overcame this challenge as the semester progressed. Their results are proof of this assumption.

For some of the students in Case 1, however, the negativity and alienation continued throughout the academic year because they reported it in the questionnaire in October again (the fact that some of them continued to fail in the second semester and they could not see anything positive about their studies). This demonstrates that, while the challenges increased and became more severe for some students in Case 1, for the students in this Case, the challenges became fewer and less severe and that could have been another contributing factor for passing all their modules. What happened to these students support the assertion of Beyer *et al.* (2007:72) that students need to adjust to the University environment both socially and academically in order to enhance their chances of successful learning.

Sub-themes two: Time management

Similar to the students in Case 1, five students identified time management as a challenge in both written reflection no. 1 (April, first semester) and in the questionnaire (October second semester). Responses included:

The biggest challenge for me is time management. Trying to juggle all my lectures, assignments and test dates that I have as well as maintaining a healthy social life sometimes proves to be a challenge for me.

Well, at times time management is a problem. Having so much things to do and so little time becomes quite challenging.

Time management. How to juggle your school life, social life and spiritual life.

The perceived 'heavy' workload that some of them reported could be the reason for the difficulty in managing their time. Applying effective time management techniques seems to be a challenge for people in general and especially for students (Price & Maier 2007:54).

Two students (Students no. 1 and 11) linked procrastination to time management. They wrote:

Thirdly is leaving homework, assignments and studying for tests till the last minute.

I have to admit that I am a procrastinator and sometimes put things off to the last minute which is definitely another challenge for me.

Student no. 1 identified time management as her second challenge, and then reported procrastination as challenge number three, while Student no. 11 reported time management as her first challenge and procrastination as the second. Procrastination, as is the case with poor time management, normally puts students under pressure, as reported by Student no. 1. She wrote:

I have this tendency where I tell myself that I work better under pressure; it worked up until now, but I don't think it will in future.

Five students reported under Question 13 (*any suggestions on how to overcome the challenges*) that they prioritised their work and started to work on assignments earlier in order to manage their time better and more effectively. While students in both Cases identified time management as a challenge, there is a difference in the sense that in Case 1, the way in which they approached their learning had been a contributing factor to their time management challenge, while for some of the students in this Case (Case 2), it was procrastination.

Sub-theme three: Workload

A perceived 'heavy' workload is a challenge that most students have to deal with at university. The students in Case 1 also reported this challenge, as did students in previous research conducted on failure rates and dropout rates (Louw 2005; Troskie-De Bruin 1999; Yorke & Longden 2004). Not managing one's time effectively and giving in to procrastination will result in students experiencing the workload as a challenge. The students reported:

Another challenge is, it may be possible to write two tests the same day, tutorial test and also submit an assignment the same day.

The production of constant assignments and tests, because it is draining on the mind and body especially if you are involved in other activities.

The last challenge was the load of work due to the new 8 module system – no time to reflect, just studying and writing.

Inadequate use of time could exacerbate the workload and could lead to other challenges, such as stress and pressure, not being able to complete and submit assignments on time, or not having enough time to prepare adequately for tests and examinations (Price & Maier 2007).

Student no. 19 (the third response above) identified another important consequence of a 'heavy' workload — not being able to "reflect" on what was learnt. If students do not have time to reflect on what they are learning about and feel under pressure to merely complete assignments, they could adopt a surface approach to learning. A heavy workload perceived or real could result in a situation where students could adopt a surface approach to their studies without really internalising and appreciating what they are learning because of a lack of time (Botha 1996). A deep approach to learning, on the other hand, would require self-reflection in order to digest and internalise new knowledge, and this requires time. A deep approach to learning would therefore add meaning and value to the students' existence, their perceptions and experiences, as Biggs (1999) and Marton and Saljo (1984) explain in their discussions of the two approaches to learning which students could adopt. Student no. 19 is indicating through her response that, because of the workload, a deep approach to learning is not an option. Given the fact that she was the top performer of all the students in this study (one can therefore not say that she was lazy and that was why she found the workload challenging), her response could be legitimate and the Faculty may wish to consider curriculum renewal activities in future.

Sub-theme four: Challenging modules

Unlike the students in Case 1, not one of the students reported explicitly that they believed that they lacked foundational knowledge or that they had learning backlogs, except for Student no. 19 who noted that she had matriculated five years before “and the syllabus was completely different for Business and Financial Mathematics”. Five other students reported finding some modules challenging in written reflection no. 1 (April, first semester) and only one student reported it again as a challenge in the questionnaire (October, second semester). Responses were:

I am however struggling with Public Administration as I cannot understand the definition of this concept.

ALC, I am not doing well at all in ALC, I even asked ... my tutor why is it that I always fail? But then I realised that the problem was in me, I somehow find it difficult to apply the knowledge which I gained.

As with the students in Case 1, all the students who reported this challenge also attended former DEC and DET schools. The level of difficulty in some modules was also identified as a challenge to learning by students in previous research studies (Louw 2005; REAP and RAD Study 2008). Fortunately the students in this Case (Case 2) asked questions when they did not understand, went for consultation and worked harder (these are some of the reasons they provided in written reflection no. 2 as to why they had passed all their modules in the first semester (see Section 6.3.2.2 below). For two of them (Students no. 5 and 19), their relative maturity could also have been a contributing factor as to why they eventually overcame the challenge and had passed all their modules.

Sub-theme five: Resources

This sub-theme was reported by four students who indicated a lack of resources at home to do their academic work, and emerged as a new sub-theme. The students in Case 1 did not report this sub-theme as a challenge. Responses included:

I don't have the programmes necessary at home to do my tasks.

I do not have the resources.

Not having the resources to do academic work at home could be a challenge for students and it could result in the students not submitting assignments on time or not submitting them at all. The lack of access to computers and computer programmes can be linked to sub-theme six above because it draws attention to the fact that these students come from working class homes and poorer communities surrounding UWC which is one of the

aftermaths of *apartheid* (CHE 2010). A possible solution for this challenge was to try and do the work on campus, but resources on campus are not seen as sufficient, either. For example, a student in this group reported in written reflection no. 1, that the computer laboratories at UWC are always full and he had “to wait in line for up to an hour” before he could use a computer. It is a challenge to learning that many students at UWC have to face in the learning process (based on my working with first year students for nine years in this faculty and their explanations for why they could not submit some of the assignments for ALC on time). In this way, UWC is also struggling to improve its resources after years of not being funded as well as the previous ‘white’ universities, together with their admission policy of admitting many students from working class and poorer communities (CHE 2010; Letseka *et al.* 2010)

6.3.1.3 Theme 4: Institutional factors

Two sub-themes emerged as challenges to learning under this theme, namely the provision of tutorial support and the teaching methods and style of a lecturer. Some students in Case 1 reported three challenges under this theme, but theirs were about large classes, inadequate information received and resources at the University. No comparison has thus been made in this section except for the fact that the students in both Cases reported *institutional factors* as challenges to their learning.

Sub-theme one: Tutorial support

Three students commented on their experiences with tutorials, ranging from a tutor explaining work a day before the due date to tutors who were too strict with their marking. This sub-theme was not identified in the studies that were reviewed in Section 2.4 and is therefore regarded as a new sub-theme. Responses included:

What I also find unfair is a tutor who explains what is required in an assignment the day before the due date.

Tutors don't either understand my way of writing or just mark quite strict.

My tutor ... is stingy with marks.

It seems as if this challenge was very serious for Student no. 1 as she explained:

I get despondent at times when my marks come, and they're quite low.

The fact that she experienced the “strict” marking of the tutors negatively could have impacted on her self-esteem and self-confidence levels. However, she did not give up and she worked hard and managed to pass all her modules at the end of the year, as did the

other two students. The tutors represent the institution and their position as assessors of students' course work illustrate the power and influence that they have on student performance and thus the power relationship that exists between these two role players (Walker 2006).

Sub-theme two: Teaching methods and teaching style

In Case 1, one student reported on finding large classes challenging. In this Case however, four students reported that they did not understand a particular lecturer and they explained that his accent (he was a foreigner) and tone (speaking very softly) were problematic. Thus, where it was about the size of classes in Case 1, for the four students in this Case, it was a lecturer's teaching methods and teaching style that was a challenge.

They explained:

I have problems with the ... lecturer⁶. He knows the work, but is not able to carry it over well. This is why many children do bad in this subject.

The only challenge I have on university is understanding my ... lecturer. By this happening it makes me find ... boring and I tend not to attend the lectures and rather study on my own without the lecturer clarifying certain sections.

However, with ... I am finding it extremely difficult to cope with. I sometimes find it pointless to go the ... lectures because I get nothing out of it. And when I have to prepare for exams, I have to do self study, almost the same as teaching myself.

Although their experiences relate to only one lecturer, their views are important because if students cannot understand a lecturer in class and it leads to non-attendance, they might end up failing the course. The first response tried to 'excuse' the lecturer's inability to lecture in an understandable manner. However, it also placed the lecturer as the challenge to learning for students with the remark "This is why many children do bad". In addition, the other responses indicate that because these students could not understand what the lecturer was saying, they did not attend the lectures, and this is alarming because it could impact on their performance in the subject as the Thatcher, Fridhjon and Cockcroft (2007:658) study revealed. The responses signal that the lecturer's teaching methods and teaching style were not conducive for learning and did not create a supportive classroom and learning environment (Killen 2000, 2005; Johnson *et al.* 1995). Instead, he seems to have alienated the students and may have contributed to the impression that students' learning of this subject was "pointless". Such impressions should be of great concern for the Faculty at large because it might occur in other classes as well.

⁶ I did not include the module abbreviation name (...) in order to protect the identity of the lecturer involved in the subject. It is the same for all three responses.

6.3.1.4 Summary of challenges to learning

Although some of the sub-themes reported under *academic factors* differed in the two Cases, both groups of students reported sub-themes under three themes, namely *personal*, *academic* and *institutional*, while some students in Case 1 also reported one sub-theme under *social factors* as challenges to learning. Also, in Case 1, the students reported more *academic factors* (nine sub-themes were reported) as challenges to learning while the students in Case 2 only reported five. This means that the students in Case 1 not only experienced more challenges to learning than the students in Case 2, but also that the *academic factors* challenges, together with the financial challenges, could have been the decisive factors that contributed to their lack of success.

The fact that the students who reported that they struggled with foundational knowledge (in Case 1) and with the level of difficulty in some of the modules (in Case 2), attended former DEC and DET schools is also important because in Case 2 they managed to overcome their challenges (as will be discussed next) despite the perception that students from such schools are 'underprepared' and 'disadvantaged' (see Section 3.3.3.1).

Although the issue of first generation students and HIV/AIDS were included as part of the interview questions, the students in both groups did not report it as a challenge. This was despite the fact that nine out of the twelve reported that they were the first child in their families to study at a university. Again, this resonates with Smit's (2009) finding in relation to Namibian first-generation students that first-generation students are often also successful at university, even if the support they receive from their families is not necessarily what could be regarded as academic support. Also, the few students who reported that they were affected by HIV/AIDS did not explain how it affected them. It is safe to suggest that this question did not serve its purpose and investigating the effect of HIV/AIDS on academic performance requires another kind of instrument to yield better results.

To conclude, the factors which the students reported as challenges to learning represent the complexity of learning and the interrelatedness of the factors which the students had experienced (Beyer *et al.* 2007:355–361; Silver & Silver 1997:14). What is encouraging is the fact that, in both Cases, the students attempted to overcome their learning challenges and did not drop out in their first year of study. The twelve students in Case 2, despite also having to deal with and overcome challenges, proved through their performance and

results that ‘disadvantaged’ and ‘underprepared’ students are not necessary academically weak. How they managed to do this will unfold in the rest of the analysis below.

6.3.2. Category two: Overcoming the challenges to learning

Following the same path as the students in Case 1, the students in this Case also made suggestions as to what they could do and what the Faculty could do to assist them to overcome their challenges to learning. They made three suggestions under the theme *personal factors*, six under *academic factors*, one under *social factors* and three under *institutional factors*. These suggestions were made in the different data elicit devices. They also made suggestions to prospective students on what they should do and should not do to improve their chances of success, which were similar to what they themselves had done. Therefore, what the students in this Case have done to overcome their challenges and the suggestions they have made are similar to the previous chapter, regarded as enabling factors for successful learning for first-year students in the EMS faculty at UWC. The structure of this section is illustrated in Figure 6.2 below.

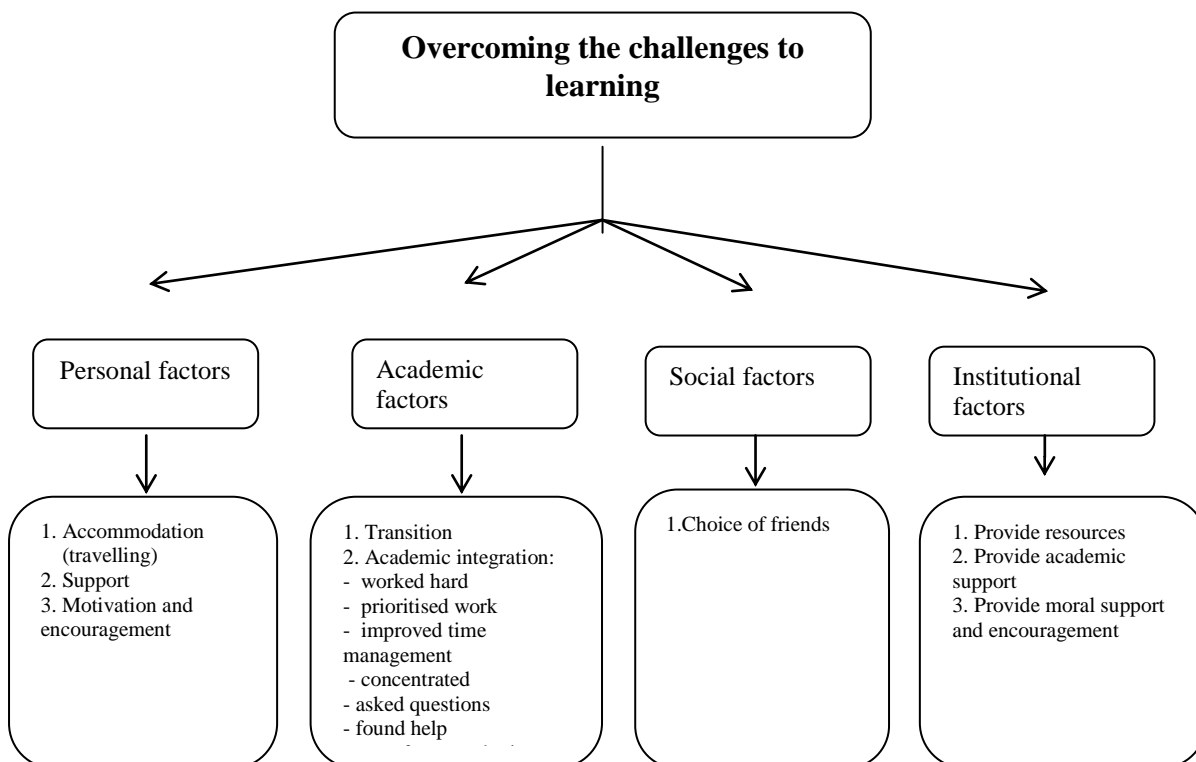


Figure 6.2 Overcoming the challenges to learning

6.3.2.1 Theme 1: Personal factors

As have been reflected in the diagram, three sub-themes were identified from the students' responses on how they attempted to overcome their challenges to learning under this theme.

Sub-theme one: Accommodation

One of the two students who reported travelling long hours suggested that he should try and find accommodation closer to the campus as a solution to the travelling challenge. This suggestion was similar to the one in Case 1 where the student also suggested that she should find accommodation closer to campus. However, for both of them, this solution had financial implications and was therefore not a viable option. Student no. 18 in this Case suggested that prospective first year students should try and find on-campus accommodation as far as possible. Having on-campus accommodation would therefore eliminate the travelling challenge.

Sub-theme two: Support

Support was not identified as a challenge, but as an enabling factor in the previous section. It seems as if the students in this Case understood the importance of having a support system in place. Student no. 11, for example, explained why it was important:

I also think that having a good support system is essential in dealing with the pressure of varsity. It is important to realize that it is ok to sometimes ask for help when you struggling with something; no one expects you to be 100% sure of everything that you do.

Through her explanation, she was reflecting critically on this enabling factor. Her reflection resonates with Student no. 16 earlier, who acknowledged the vulnerability of human beings and the fact that we are social beings (Maslow, 1970; Rogers 1983, 1970). The students in Case 1 also reported the need to have a support system in order to overcome their challenges, and both groups of students urged new students to have a support system in place. Subsequently, having a good support system in place emerged as a very important enabling factor for both groups of students and is in line with one of the five benchmarks of effective educational practices as identified by Kuh *et al.* (2005) and built upon by Strydom and Mentz (2010:9-10).

Sub-theme three: Motivation and encouragement

This sub-theme emerged from Student no. 19 suggestion that students should motivate and encourage each other. It could be that she made this suggestion based on the fact

that she took control of the group work challenge that she had and she became the leader who pulled everything together in the group (see Section 6.2 above). This suggestion illustrates the students' need for support from their peers in the learning process (Beyer *et al.* 2007). It is, however, not only an acknowledgement of their need for a support system, but the application of their collective agency capabilities to support each other. She explained:

Surround yourself with positive peers or better yet; help encourage and motivate others to join you in reaching a goal. Knowing you can help & support each other, makes learning less stressful and fun.

Student no. 19 was the top performer among all the students and one could suggest that she was a self-regulating student who employed specific learning strategies to achieve her academic goals (Zimmerman & Martinez-Pons 1992:185-203). Her suggestion corresponds with the two sisters in Case 1 where they reported that they motivated and supported each other in the learning process. As a consequence, this sub-theme relates not only to having a support system in place as discussed in the previous sub-theme, but equally important, to the sub-theme, *choice of friends* (discussed under Theme 3, *social factors* below).

6.3.2.2 Theme 2: Academic factors

The suggestions made by the students on how they had overcome their challenges to learning under this theme focused on their academic integration. Some of them were similar to the suggestions made by the students in Case 1.

Sub-theme one: Transition

Since fifty percent of the students in written reflection no. 1 (April, 2009) reported that they struggled to adjust to the University environment, they made suggestions to themselves in order to assist them to overcome the adjustment challenge. They wrote:

Always remind yourself why you are here perhaps it may help you to succeed.

My suggestions are to be responsible.

The only way I can make a real success out of this study period is to stay focused at all times possible.

Suggestions like these can be seen as two sides of a coin: Reminding yourself about why you are at university (presumably what your aims, goals and objectives are) is a form of taking responsibility for your own learning as Leibowitz (2009:96) suggests students should do. Staying focused, which acts as motivation for hard work and perseverance is the action needed to achieve the goals and objectives. The students in Case 1 also made

the suggestion to stay focused. However, their suggestion related to not giving in to negative peer pressure, which was why “make the right decisions” was included in their responses. They reported peer pressure as a challenge and a reason why some of them failed some of their modules at the end of the first semester. What is significant is that both groups of students gave new first year students advice on how to avoid negative peer pressure. It would thus appear as if all the students realised that their fellow students could influence their lives and their learning either positively or negatively. Making friends and wanting to belong is a human need (Maslow 1954) and a characteristic of the social situatedness of learning. Students need to develop strategies to deal with friends and peers in such a way that they will not give into peer pressure that diverts their attention from their studies in negative ways, while maintaining contact in order to depend on the support of their friends, as pointed out by the student who noted:

My social life was extremely important me, so I had to manage my time correctly and prioritise what was most important and required my time.

This sub-theme is thus related to both the support sub-theme above and the ‘*choice of friends*’ sub-theme below under Theme 3, *social factors*. All the students wanted in-coming first year students to understand the importance of choosing one’s friends ‘wisely’ because choosing friends ‘unwisely’ could impact one’s adjustment to the University environment and progress in the learning process negatively (Yorke & Longden 2004:117).

Sub-theme two: Overcoming the academic integration challenges

There are two main trends in this sub-theme: on the one hand students described how they organised themselves to manage their time and the workload, and on the other they described their interaction with tutors, lecturers and peers to maximise their understanding.

Organising themselves included suggestions on how to overcome the perceived ‘heavy’ workload challenge. These were that they should “work harder” by putting in more time and effort; that they should “prioritise their work” and start with assignments early; and that they should “improve their time management techniques” by drawing up a time table and following it through. Explanations given were:

With all the assignments, tutorials and test that had to be done effective time management was going to be of utmost importance. I would then record all test dates and due dates as soon as they were made available to me and then try and allocate time that I estimated to be, efficient for each task at hand. I also tried my best to study before the time for a test and not leave things for the last minute as I found that it only creates more anxiety and stress that does not help you with what you have to do.

My social life was extremely important to me, so I had to manage my time correctly and prioritise what was most important and required my time. I worked from a system whereby I created an electronic diary via an excel spreadsheet I would update this sheet weekly or even daily. The sheet portrayed information about assignments, tests, tutorial test etc. As well as due dates, my progress as well as the next date I need to progress on it. I used "auto filler" to filter check what I needed to focus for the specific week. This allowed me to plan my week and avoided time wasted on projects and tests only one or two weeks away. Once the task was completed I changed its status on my sheet and only filtered "incomplete" to keep track of my progress etc. I found that putting in this little bit of effort when updating the diary, freed up a lot of time and allowed me to have my social life and still work hard and consistently. I learnt time management from my ALC module, I just created a system that worked for me.

Try to be a perfectionist even if you're not one. I always tried to be very thorough and didn't mind doing something 100 times if it meant that the end result would be an excellent test result or a strong assignment mark. Something you produce as an individual reflects on you as a person. It is a representation of your potential and effort –therefore it is important to do yourself proud. It is not only a reflection to your lecturer and tutor but more importantly to yourself.

These detailed explanations reveal the students' attitudes, dedication and commitment to how they approached the academic work and everything related to their learning. In adopting these learning strategies, the students in this Case proactively found ways to overcome their workload challenge and demonstrated that they understood the learning goals and adjusted successfully to the demands made by academe. What happened to them is what Pascarella and Terenzini (2005:608) advocate: "the greater a student's engagement in academic work or in the academic experience of college, the greater his or her level of knowledge acquisition and general cognitive growth".

The students in Case 1 also made the suggestion that they should apply effective planning and time management techniques. In fact, it was the sub-theme for which they made the most suggestions, which shows that they viewed the workload as being a very important learning challenge. However, for them it was about minimising the effect of failure. In the end, one could construe that the suggestions made to overcome the workload challenge signal that they were also becoming self-regulating students who had begun to understand the learning goals, their own learning needs and what was needed to assist them in the learning process (Bandura 2001:13; Zimmerman & Martinez-Pons 1992:185-203).

Student no. 18, one of the 'A' average students in this Case, is a typical example of a self-regulating student. She wrote about her experience of on-campus accommodation (she came from Port Elizabeth in the Eastern Cape and was fortunate to have had accommodation in one of the residences on-campus) and how she benefited from that.

She explained that living on campus made it easier for her to attend class and concentrate on her studies. She wrote:

Being on campus means that I do not have to travel, deal with family dramas and all the everyday issues surrounding our townships and communities. It therefore helped me to concentrate on what is most important at this time in my life (my studies). I wake up every day thinking of nothing else but going to class, even though sometimes I am tempted not to go. But the fact that I live on campus residence kept me grounded and reminds me of those who have to travel and deal with a lot just to get to campus, and that makes me realise how lucky I really am to be at university.

She could work late at night and did not have to worry about travelling late at night. In addition, the residences offered support programmes that she benefited from. She explained:

There are also specialised programmes for first year residence students, designed to assist students with regard to their academic work and to adapt to the new environment and ways to overcome the challenges which arise. These residence benefits have contributed a lot to the positive choices I make for my future. The study material made available in campus residence helped me to keep focus and utilised my free time effectively in order to prevent the unknown.

Having on-campus accommodation thus proved to be beneficial to students coming from other provinces in that it eliminated challenges such as private accommodation, travelling and conducive learning environments. These were the challenges that six students in Case 1 had to face and deal with, which shows the effect of non-academic but related factors on student success.

This student also explained that having on-campus accommodation helped her avoid other challenges, such as “family dramas” and issues in the community. It enabled her to focus and concentrate on her studies. She made use of the support programmes that were offered in the residences, and she benefited from these programmes because they contributed to her passing all her modules. However, she did mention that the social life in the residence could be a distracting factor. She reported:

But there are also negative influences on residence life, therefore one has to be strong and firm, with the hope of achieving what others have failed to do and not to fall in the same trap that the ones before you have gone into and have not been able to pick themselves out of.

It is clear from her response that she was self-regulating and did not give in to the distractions, but instead realised that it was a privilege to be at university (as she reported in written reflection no. 1), particularly when she thought of the many learners and other young people who did not make it to university. Her ‘will to learn’ was strong and she did

what was necessary to achieve her goal of succeeding in her studies. She suggested that new students should find on-campus accommodation because that is advantageous.

A second trend in responses to challenges in this Case (Case 2) showed how students made an effort to find solutions to their problems. One suggestion was that they should “pay special attention in lectures”. This suggestion was an attempt to overcome the “concentration challenge” in lectures. The students also reported the issues of not “being afraid to ask questions, to find help when needed” and “to go for consultation”. These were important actions that assisted them in understanding the content of the different modules and in clarifying difficult concepts and terminologies. Some responses were:

And also do not be afraid to ask for help, nobody expects you to always be good at everything. I often stayed after class and asked the lecturer questions about things I did not understand and they would stay behind and explain it to me until I did, if they could, or I made use of consultation times.

I asked questions when I did not understand and I went for consultation. It helped to clarify the work and I was able to understand it better.

I asked questions when something was not clear and I went for consultation and I received clarification on work covered. Consultation helped with preparation for tests and exams.

Their responses indicate that they not only identified the problem, but also found a solution to the problem. They were not afraid to ask for help, they stayed behind after lectures and went for consultation. They were actively doing something to foster their integration into the academic structures and become familiar with staff members, which aided their academic integration as Strydom and Mentz (2010:10-11) and Pascarella and Terenzini (2005:600) suggest would happen when there is interaction between students and lecturers outside of lectures and when students feel that lecturers care about them. They benefited from the actions they took because asking for clarification and going for consultation assisted them to understand the work better, and enabled them to prepare well for tests and examinations. The first response was from Student no. 11, who wrote in her advice to new first-year students that “There is no such thing as a STUPID Question!” She clearly understood that, in order to help herself, she needed to speak up and act. Again, it shows how they used their self-efficacy perceptions and self-regulated strategies in order to take control and responsibility for their own learning (Monteith 1996:208). The same forms of advice (attend all your classes, ask questions and go for consultation) were suggestions made to future first year students.

Three fundamental differences emerged between the two Cases from the responses given and explanations provided in the data collected.

Difference no. 1: Detailed explanations

The first difference is the fact that the students in this Case discussed and explained their answers in much more detail. Most of the students in Case 1 (with the exception of four) did not do that. For example, the following two students both reflected on the modules they had passed and the possible reasons for their success:

A response from a student in Case 1:

I passed QSC 131 and Man 131. The reason why I passed those subjects was because I understood the work better and knew how to study for it. What I did to pass them was to make sure that I handed in my assignments and that my tutorials for Man 131 were done on time. Also for QSC 131 I paid close attention in class and practiced my exercises over and over.

A response from a student in Case 2:

The modules which I had in my first semester were Academic Literacy for Commerce 131, Management 131, Information Systems 131 and Quantitative Skills for Commerce 131. The reason I think I passed all my modules was because I knew from the very beginning that it was not going to be easy. With all the assignments, tutorials and test that had to be done effective time management was going to be of utmost importance. I would then record all test dates and due dates as soon as they were made available to me and then try and allocate time that I estimated to be, efficient for each task at hand. I also tried my best to study before the time for a test and not leave things for the last minute as I found that it only creates more anxiety and stress that does not help you with what you have to do.

The first student provided obvious reasons for why he had passed, while the student in the second response explained the process of what she had done to ensure that she would pass all her modules. In fact, she continued, in a second and third paragraph, to describe other factors in detail that also assisted her to pass all her first-semester modules.

This example illustrates the differences in responses between the students in the two Cases. Not only did the students in this Case understand the learning goals and what was required of them, but they were also more confident in their language use. They were willing to explain, argue and conceptualise their thoughts in an academic register, which is an indication that they were comfortable elaborating in English. They could therefore express themselves with ease and provided “rich data” for the analysis as Holliday (2001) explains could happen when case studies are used as research designs.

Difference no 2: A stronger 'will to learn'

The second difference is that the students' 'will to learn' in this Case was stronger than that of the students in Case 1 and, because of that; they were self-regulated students with intrinsic motivation. Responses such as these provide evidence for this inference:

The will to succeed has been the driving force behind any effort I make towards my academic work.

I was passionate about my studies and therefore, I had the will and the drive to succeed.

Firstly, I was focused and I worked hard.

I remained a hard working and competent student throughout the semester.

"The will to succeed" shows the students' commitment to themselves and to the learning process as Barnett (2007) explains. It further resulted in intrinsic motivation that had, as a consequence, determination and hard work (Cohen *et al.* 2002:172; Oxford 2001: 365). These authors argue that intrinsic motivation is based on the fact that students are interested in what they are learning, and the driving force is not external rewards, but internal happiness and satisfaction. Biggs (1999:60) suggests that "[i]ntrinsic motivation drives deep approaches to learning and the best academic work". The three students in this Case who obtained above 75% averages are proof of "best academic work".

Also, one could suggest that their intrinsic motivation was strengthened by the extrinsic motivation provided by their support base. Responses were:

My family and friends have been very supporting throughout this whole process, which encourages me even more, and every day I wake up and realise the little things in my life and how important they are towards shaping the mentality of an individual.

My life, my family, my home and my community are my inspiration to go forward, to strive for perfection and reach for the stars even if I might never come to know how it feels like to be there. These are all the reasons that keep me going and determined to succeed with everything in me, which further reflects in my academic work. This is the reason why I passed. I was proud to have passed all my subjects and hoped to do even better in the following year.

Lastly, they also had other forms of extrinsic motivation. Examples were:

Sometimes your best is not enough – and you need to put in 110%. Thereafter you can say put in all your effort. I worked for 5 years – my last motivation was that I felt like I wanted to empower myself. After being told I was not really qualified for a position after getting the promotion and that they could not pay me what they paid someone qualified, really pushed me to study and it's the strongest motivation.

The dean's list played a massive role in my hard-work. There are times my friend and myself would just stare at it in hope that we'll be staring at our own names on it the following year. It served as a strong form of motivation.

I was not a very hard worker at school, but I worked hard at university because of two reasons. I received a bursary to study and I could therefore not afford to fail. I need to sustain my bursary in order to obtain my degree. The other reason was because I wanted to be part of the Golden Key Association (you can only become a member on invitation and that is based on good academic performance).

I have dreams to fulfil. I want to obtain my degree in order to work for a good place and to earn good money because I want to give back to my parents. I am the first child to study at university from my family.

The students' explanations of how committed they were to succeed in the learning process reflect how well they managed to handle the demands made on them by academe, and thus their academic integration.

This is what Student no. 12 wrote in written reflection no. 2 (July 2009):

When I opened my results and I saw that I passed all my modules [first semester] I felt overwhelmed and full of joy. I had overcome all challenges. I was a winner. I couldn't stop smiling. All my tears, sleepless nights, hard work and dedication had paid off. The confidence I gained from that day onwards I shall never leave behind. I started to look at life a lot differently.

This student's response exemplifies Biggs's (1999) and Marton and Saljo's (1984) explanation of deep approaches to learning that results in experiences of internal happiness and satisfaction, when she uses words such as "overwhelmed and full of joy", "winner", "couldn't stop smiling" and "confidence gained". This student had many learning challenges that she had to overcome in the first semester. She was partially sighted and attended the School for the Blind in Worcester (as explained in Section 6.3.1). One of her main challenges was the amount of reading that was required, because she was partially sighted and reading was difficult, slow and painful for her. Because of this, she could not prepare adequately while studying for tests. For example, she wrote:

I failed my first QSF 131 and ALC 131 test. I cried for two nights in a row. For the first time in my life I failed a test, it was frustrating. I thought that I will not make it, I did not talk to anyone about it, I suffered in silence.

What did she do to overcome her distress in failing these coursework components? She wrote:

I then realized that I was no longer at school. I am at university therefore I needed to start talking to people. Talking would not solve my problems but it was going to help lighten my problems. When I got to my room one day I wrote a list of reasons why I was at university and why I needed to succeed and that would help me reflect every time I felt I could not make it or when I wanted to give up. With all that done, the real work had to start. I studied six hours a day and that was on a normal day. When examination started I studied more than ten hours a day, I consulted tutors, lecturers and my mentor. I attended group study session which helped me tremendously.

Her responses about when she started with her university studies, the challenges that she faced and had to overcome, and what she did to overcome them, indicated that she had learnt about the nature and requirements of different learning tasks, and about the variety of study skills and learning strategies that Monteith (1996: 208) is suggesting students should develop. Making a list of things she was going to do assisted her to “inculcate an openness to different approaches to learning and an awareness of the process of learning” (Mahatey *et al.* 1994:104) and tailored her learning approach to her advantage. Overcoming her learning challenges and passing all her modules at the end of the first semester (including the two that she failed during Term 1) boosted her self-esteem and confidence levels. Experiencing joy, fulfillment and success in the learning process changed this student’s perception of her own capabilities and of learning in a positive way. It strengthened her ‘will to learn’ further and her intrinsic motivation and it gave her the confidence that enabled her to pass all her first-year modules at the end of the year with a 65% average.

Difference no 3: A positive attitude and problem-solving language

Difference number three relates to the fact that the students’ responses and explanations in this Case (Case 2) were characterised by positive attitudes and problem-solving and empowering language use. In sharp contrast to this is the fact that many of the students’ language use in Case 1 was characterised by negative and disempowering language. It is as if the challenges to learning weakened the students’ ‘will to learn’ in Case 1 and that was why some of them ‘surrendered’ to the challenges. Below are some examples of the differences in language usage between the two Cases.

Table 6.3 Differences in language usage between the two Cases

Case 1: Negative / disempowering language	Case 2: Problem-solving /empowering language
I am alone and not coping. Sometimes I feel like I go through these things alone.	I thought that I will not make it, I did not talk to anyone about it, I suffered in silence. I then realized that I was no longer at school. I am at university therefore I needed to start talking to people.
I do not have the resources to complete assignments on time.	I prioritised my work and started to work on assignments earlier. Drawing up a schedule and writing down exactly what needs to be done and when it needs to be done by. By doing this and following this set out schedule it will ease the pressure of trying to keep up with all my deadlines and ensure that my work is done on time and still have enough time to study and be well prepared for my tests and exams.
I do not see anything good about my studies because I am failing and panicking about it.	I failed my first QSF 131 and ALC 131 test. I cried for two nights in a row. For the first time in my life I failed a test, it was frustrating. I remained a hard working and competent student. I studied six hours a day and that was on a normal day.
To be honest, there is nothing positive or good because of the modules that I failed, they just make me feel that I stupid and dumb.	Try studying by associating theory to something you are familiar with. This really helped me to enjoy studying as I could understand things better and simpler

The students in Case 1 seemed to have been so overwhelmed that they could not move from negative and disempowering utterances to problem-solving strategies. On the contrary, the students in Case 2 expressed themselves in a positive and empowering manner, they provided detailed learning strategies, they went into action when the challenges arose and they came out victorious in the end. The students in Case 2 have demonstrated that they used their self-regulatory and self-reflective capabilities to be integrated into the academic system by accessing and relying on academic processes and staff and support from the other role players (Beyer *et al.* 2007: 340–341).

6.3.2.3 Theme 3: Social factors

Although the students did not report peer pressure as a challenge to their learning in this Case, they did report on the type of friends that they made and how that was a contributing factor to their success. I labelled it 'choice of friends' because of the way they explained it in their responses.

Sub-theme one: Choice of friends

Eight students made it clear that the choice of friends was an important factor in their success achieved. Responses included:

I surrounded myself with people who wanted to work.

I chose friends who had the same focus and determination – I found that when we worked together, things always seemed more positive and we enjoyed our studies and tried to make even the worst subjects fun by talking about it.

Thirdly, I had a study group. We also motivated and supported each other. It is important to make the right friends. Friends that also want to work hard.

According to these students, having the 'right' friends would ensure that they not only receive support and encouragement, but also academic support from their peers and would thus avoid 'negative' peer pressure. Strydom and Mentz (2010) (following Kuh *et al.* 2005) promote this issue in their discussion of active and collaborative learning in which support groups in the form of peers and people from the community enhance students' own active learning and give them opportunities to practise what they are learning. Choosing the 'right' group of friends was important because, as the students in Case 1 reported, mixing with the 'wrong' friends could be detrimental to successful learning. The students' explanations in this Case imply that 'good' peer pressure derived from the 'right' friends. This was exactly the conclusion that some of the students in Case 1 came to after they had failed most or all their subjects at the end of the first semester. Both groups of students therefore suggested that prospective students should choose the 'right' friends.

Although I grouped this sub-theme under *social factors*, it also relates to, and forms part of the other three themes - *personal*, *academic* and *institutional factors*. Choosing friends when one is in a new environment is a personal matter; supporting and encouraging one another is both a personal and social matter that could assist with the social integration of students and the transition from school to university (Tinto 1975, 2000). When students work together in study groups and assist one another, it becomes an academic matter. Because the students in this Case have done this, it contributed to their success in the learning process, which then becomes an institutional matter. The likelihood that they will follow the same pattern for their second and third year is strong (the foundation for successful learning is laid — Scott 2009a) and therefore the University will benefit because it will receive the subsidy for completion in the prescribed time from the education department. This sub-theme aptly exhibits the interrelatedness and interdependency of the socially situated learning context.

6.3.2.4. Theme 4: Institutional factors

The students' suggestions under this theme followed the same pattern as those made by students in Case 1 in that they also made suggestions which could be grouped under three sub-themes: the provision of resources, the provision of academic support, and the provision of moral support, encouragement and professional support.

Sub-theme one: Resources

The students suggested that the Faculty should provide more resources in terms of comprehensive financial aid, and more human and infrastructure resources. The suggestions were:

- Provide more comprehensive financial assistance
- Appoint good lecturers
- Improve lecturers' teaching methods and styles
- Provide more resources
- Extend resource centres' operating hours

The students in Case 1 also made five suggestions under this sub-theme and four of the five are exactly the same. Suggestion number five in Case 1 was for the provision of on-campus accommodation because the students identified accommodation as a challenge, while the students in this Case did not experience accommodation as a challenge but four of them reported a lack of resources at home and that was why they requested that the resource centre's operating hours should be extended because that would allow them to complete their work on-campus with the necessary resources.

Sub-theme two: Academic support

The suggestions for the provision of academic support were:

- Reduce the workload
- Make ALC 131 a year course
- Provide academic support
- Provide more learning support
- Provide sufficient time for test preparation
- Spread due dates evenly
- Instruct tutors to explain work timeously
- Lecturers to be lenient with regard to plagiarism

As can be observed from the list, the students in this Case made eight suggestions under this sub-theme compared to the five made by students in Case 1. Four of the five suggestions in Case 1 were similar to the ones in this Case, with one suggestion made by the students in Case 1 for the encouragement of consultation visits. The students in this Case (Case 2) expressed their need for a balanced workload because the suggestions for

sufficient time provision, the scheduling of due dates and timeous explanations by tutors relate to the workload, while the suggestion about plagiarism could be an attempt by the students to let the lecturers understand that they were novice researchers who were in need of guidance and support as far as research assignments were concerned.

Sub-theme three: Support

Lastly, the students asked for the provision of moral support, encouragement and professional support. These suggestions were similar to the suggestions made by the students in Case 1. However, where the students in Case 1 reported experiencing the learning process as being a lonely one and therefore their need for support from the institution, the students in this Case did not reported a lack of support. The fact that they made these suggestions could therefore mean that they perceived support from all the role players as a very important enabling factor.

Thus, the differences in the suggestions for the institution under the first two sub-themes above indicate the differences in the learning challenges which the two groups experienced and needed assistance with. It appears as if the students in Case 1 felt a need for more personal support due to the lack of academic integration that they experienced, whereas the students in this Case seemed to feel that structural changes would be sufficient. The fact that both groups of students identified the need for support from the institution in the third sub-theme strengthens the assumption that the students in this study perceived support (from all the role players) as imperative to their success in the learning process. This finding resonates with researchers who argue for the need of a supportive and safe learning environment (Beyer *et al.* 2007; Pascarella and Terenzini 2005; Yorke and Longden 2004).

6.3.2.5 Summary of overcoming the challenges to learning

The way in which the students in Case 2 explained what they did to overcome their challenges and the fact that they could overcome them successfully (unlike the students in Case 1) provides evidence for the inference that they took responsibility for their own learning as Leibowitz (2009:96) (among others) suggests students should do. Their actions demonstrated the way in which they dealt with two of the three modes of agency, namely personal and proxy, as identified by Bandura (2001:13) and their self-regulated learning strategies (Zimmerman & Martinez-Pons (1992:185-203). The fact that the students managed to overcome their time management, procrastination and workload

challenges demonstrates the level of their cognitive, motivational, affective and choice abilities under personal agency. Proxy agency refers in this instance to the institutional practices (of having to do and submit assignments, studying and preparing to write tests and examinations) which affect a student's life directly because these practices are part of the assessment methods used in learning. Therefore, the students in this Case demonstrated that they could adjust and adhere to the institutional demands successfully.

The students in both Cases also realised that they could not be successful in the learning process on their own and this directs the attention to their collective agency (Bandura 2001:14). Their suggestions for what the University, lecturers and tutors could do to assist them in overcoming their learning challenges, together with the fact that they were in need of support from their families, friends, peers and the institution link up with the degree to which they (a) managed their integration into academic life and (b) managed their time for studies and social contact. But it also demonstrates "[t]hat every aspect of the students' experience of university life influences their chances of achieving success" (Van Schalkwyk *et al.* 2009:7).

Lastly, the suggestions made by the students for the Faculty exhibit the interrelatedness and interdependency of the multitude of factors and variables among especially the latter three layers in the learning context: the higher education band, the higher education institution and the students (see Section 2.3.3). For example, UWC as a higher education institution would only be able to provide more comprehensive financial provision to students if the higher education department provides more financial assistance to UWC. Likewise, in order to appoint more qualified lecturers, UWC needs to receive more funding from the education department, or UWC would have to increase their tuition fees. However, increasing the tuition fees would result in increasing the students' already identified financial challenges even further and would also have a knock-on effect on other environmental factors, such as having enough funds left to purchase textbooks, pay rent and transport costs, not to mention food and living expenses. As a result, the interrelatedness of the learning context suggests that UWC as a higher education institution should strive to provide a safe and supportive learning environment for students; they should actively engage students in the learning process; and should attempt to assist the students to overcome their challenges to learning (Johnson *et al.* 1995:9; Killen 2000:xvi; Yorke & Longden 2004:136-137).

6.4 SYNTHESIS OF FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION

The analysis of the data sets in both Cases was conducted in order to find answers to the main research question and the sub-questions of this study. In the previous chapter (Chapter 5, Case 1), answers were obtained from the analysis of the data for sub-questions two and three, namely:

What are the challenges to learning for a UWC student in the EMS faculty?

How do these challenges to learning influence student performance?

In this chapter, answers were also obtained from the analysis of the data for sub-questions two and three. Finding answers to these two questions were included in this chapter because the aim was to establish whether or not the students in this Case also experienced similar challenges to learning as were identified by students in Case 1. The objective for doing this was to determine how the students in this Case dealt with the challenges, how the challenges influenced the students' behaviour and performance, and what the students in this Case have done to overcome them because they managed to pass all their modules at the end of the 2009 academic year.

It was noted that two new sub-themes emerged from the data analysed under challenges to learning for the students in this Case (Case 2). These were resources (not having the resources to do academic work at home) and tutorial support (challenges with regard to the tutors). In Case 1, five new sub-themes emerged from the data under the same category. Thus, a total number of seven new sub-themes emerged from the data used in this study as challenges to learning for new first-year students in the EMS faculty at UWC. The challenges to learning and what the students have done to overcome them are presented and interpreted below.

6.4.1: Challenges to learning and interpretation

The challenges to learning as identified by the students in both Cases are listed in the table below. It should be noted that, although more challenges to learning were discussed in the analysis of the data in both Cases (for example, in Case 1, sixteen challenges were identified and discussed), only the challenges which three and more students reported are included in the table. Challenges identified by only one or two students are regarded as exceptions. Identifying the challenges to learning will provide answers to sub-question number two, while interpreting the findings derived from the challenges will provide answers to sub-question no. three (see Section 6.4 above).

Table 6.4 Challenges to learning: Case 1 and 2

Challenges to learning: Case 1	Challenges to learning: Case 2
Theme 1: Personal Challenges 1. Accommodation 2. Financial means 3. Family support	Theme 1: Personal Challenges 1. Financial means
Theme 2: Academic Challenges 4. Attitude and personal orientation 5. Transition 6. Time management 7. Workload 8. Learning styles 9. Foundational knowledge 10. Language 11. Home environment and family crises 12. Studying and working simultaneously	Theme 2: Academic Challenges 2. Transition 3. Time management 4. Workload 5. Challenging modules 6. Resources
Theme 3: Social Challenges 13. Peer-pressure	Theme 3: Social Challenges None.
Theme 4: Institutional Challenges None	Theme 4: Institutional Challenges 7. Tutorial support 8. Lecturer's teaching methods and teaching style

Two findings can be highlighted from the analysis, namely:

1. the fact that some of the challenges which the students in the two groups experienced were similar while others were different; and
2. the fact that the students in Case 1 experienced more challenges (thirteen in total) to learning than the students in Case 2 (eight).

At least three inferences could be made from these findings. The first is that the (obvious) reason why the students in Case 1 were less successful and some of them had experienced complete failure in their first year of study would appear to be because they had more challenges with which they had to deal and overcome than the students in Case 2.

The second inference is that some of the challenges experienced by the students in Case 1 were greater than the challenges with which the students in Case 2 had to deal. One could suggest that, because the challenges were greater for the students in Case 1, they were 'overwhelmed' by it. For example, where the students who continued to fail reported that they see nothing 'positive' anymore and could not think of other strategies that could assist them; or, because of their 'disadvantaged' backgrounds and circumstances, they did not know about alternative learning strategies that could assist them. On the contrary, the students in Case 2 demonstrated through their responses that they were proactive when

they encountered difficulties and failure; they used their cognitive abilities and self-regulating strategies effectively and applied a combination of different learning strategies to successfully overcome and eliminate their challenges. They exhibited characteristics of successfully acquiring the skills of “*how to learn*” (Van Schalkwyk *et al.* 2009:5) and that was why they were 100% successful in their first year of study.

The third inference is the fact that for the students in Case 1, the challenges interacted and influenced the students’ performance negatively because the challenges accumulated over the course of the academic year and they become severe. One could suggest that, although the students attempted to deal with and overcome the challenges, they could not, and in that sense, ‘surrendered’ to the challenges. Whereas the students in Case 2 managed to deal and overcome their challenges successfully (what Students no. 12 and 19 did for example) in the first semester, and because of that, their challenges became fewer as the year progressed. Therefore, for the students in Case 2, the challenges did not interact and influence the students’ performance negatively. Rather, the challenges strengthen the students’ ‘will to learn’ and resulted in them working even harder (Barnett 2007; Beyer *et al.* 2007:102). Thus, the challenges to learning influenced these students’ behaviour positively.

6.4.2 What did the students do to overcome their challenges?

Building on the challenges to learning that were identified in the previous section, the next table reflects what the students did to overcome their challenges. The findings from this table will assist in providing answers to the last sub-question of this study which is:

Why do some students within the same context achieve success and others do not?

Table 6.5 Overcoming the challenges: Case 1 and 2

Overcoming the challenges: Case 1	Overcoming the challenges: Case 2
Theme 1: Personal Challenges 1. Accommodation: remained a challenge 2. Financial means: remained a challenge 3. Support: remained a challenge	Theme 1: Personal Challenges 1. Financial means: worked part-time but was problematic
Theme 2: Academic Challenges 4. Attitude and personal orientation Changed their negative attitude to a positive one and became focused and that assisted with their transition challenge 5. Workload Started to apply effective time management techniques, to work hard and changed their learning styles 6. Foundational knowledge Started to pay attention in class, asked questions, went for consultation and obtained help from peers 7. Language: remained a challenge	Theme 2: Academic Challenges 2. Transition Adjusted to the environment and became focused 3. Workload Prioritised their work, continued to apply effective time management techniques and work harder 4. Challenging modules Paid attention in class, asked questions, found help and went for consultation and worked in groups
Theme 3: Social Challenges 8. Peer pressure Started to resist peer-pressure and made 'right' type of friends	Theme 3: Social challenges 5. Choice of friends Had the 'right' type of friends
Theme 4: Institutional Challenges The Faculty should: 9. Provide more resources 10. Provide academic support 11. Provide moral support and encouragement	Theme 4: Institutional Challenges The Faculty should: 6. Provide resources 7. Provide academic support 8. Provide moral support and encouragement

This table reveals three findings, namely:

1. some of the challenges to learning in Case 1 were unresolved;
2. the students in Case 2 were consistent in their approach and behaviour; and
3. the students' suggestions to the Faculty corresponded, irrespective of whether they were successful or not.

An interpretation of finding no. 1 could be that the students in Case 1 were not in a position to solve their challenges, even if they attempted to do so. They needed assistance from the other role players in the learning process (for example, the fact that they could not pay their study fees, buy textbooks, come to campus regularly, did not have money to buy food or to provide in their living expenses). The first reason therefore, as to why some students achieve success and others not, could be that the nature of the challenges, the severity thereof and assistance received, play a decisive role in whether students will be able to succeed in the learning process or not.

Finding number two implies that consistent hard work and commitment are required from the start of a student's study career in order for successful learning to occur. The students in Case 2 exhibited this kind of behaviour because they reported these factors as reasons why they had passed all their first semester modules, and they continued to approach their studies in the same manner in the second semester. The students in Case 1, however, did not do this from the start of the first semester because they reported that they struggled with the transition from school to university, they were distracted by peers and they were focusing on the challenges that they experienced and not on their studies as such. Consequently, a second reason why some students are successful in their studies and others are not could be ascribed to the fact the successful ones realised from the start that they need to work hard and approach their studies with commitment and dedication in order to take responsibility for their own learning (Price & Maier 2007:1).

In addition, it should also be noted that the students in Case 2 were 100% successful in their first year because they received support from the other role players (family, friends, peers and academic staff) and the support further assisted them to be successful. The students in Case 1, however, did not receive the same level of support which the students in Case 2 seemed to have had, and that could have contributed to why they were less successful at the end of their first year of study. Therefore, support in the learning process is a very important enabler (Killen 2000, 2005, Kuh *et al.* 2005; Strydom & Mentz 2010).

Finding number three shows that the students in both Cases realised the need for assistance from the institution. However, in the analysis of these suggestions, it was noted that the Faculty (and thus UWC) would not have been in a position to assist them with all their challenges due to UWC's status as a former HBU and its ideological context (CHE 2010; Letseka *et al.* 2010). Overall, the students' experiences in this study accentuate the fact that learning is socially situated and constructed and that "Pursuing a higher education qualification becomes an academic journey for all parties concerned" (De Beer 2006:39).

I now move to Chapter 7, the concluding chapter of this dissertation, in which I examine the findings and relate them to existing theories and previous findings on research conducted, as discussed in Section 2.3 in order to ascertain what contribution this study makes to the creation of new knowledge. I then make recommendations and note the limitations of the study. Finally, I conclude Chapter 7 with a personal reflection on what this study meant to me.

CHAPTER 7

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 INTRODUCTION

In this final chapter, the findings from Chapters 5 and 6 are synthesised in order to respond to the research question and the aim and objective of the study. I first summarise the findings and interpretations from the analysis of the data in both Cases in Chapters 5 and 6. Thereafter, I relate the findings to existing theories and previous research findings, as discussed in Chapter 2, to ascertain what contribution this study makes to the creation of new knowledge. This is followed by recommendations for a socially situated, supportive and holistic learning approach that the Faculty could use for prospective first-year students, as well as recommendations for future research. Lastly, I conclude this chapter by noting the limitations of the study, and providing a personal reflection on what I have learnt.

7.2 AIM AND OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

In Chapter 1, the aim of the study was described as one that would investigate factors that impact on the successful completion of the first year of study for registered first-year students in the three-year degree programme in the EMS faculty at UWC. Chapter 2 saw the students being positioned as the fourth layer in the learning context (see Section 2.3.3) and Chapter 3 narrowed the focus to discuss the immediate environment of UWC as a research site. In Chapters 5 and 6 I endeavoured to describe what students experienced in their first year of studying at a higher education institution. The argument was, firstly, that students who are successful can provide powerful pointers for academic support approaches and that was why I not only identified challenges to learning but more importantly, factors that enabled successful learning. Secondly, students cannot solely be held responsible for successful learning because the learning process is socially situated and constructed; and it is not only the institution that has a responsibility towards them (Beyer *et al.* 2007; Kuh *et al.* 2005; Pascarella & Terenzini 2005) but also the society in which they live. The objective was to arrive at a socially situated, supportive and holistic learning approach that could assist more students to be successful in their first year of study. In order to realise this aim and to achieve the objective, the main research question was:

Which factors emerge as the primary drivers of success in the first year of the three-year degree programme of study for students registered in the EMS faculty at UWC?

Four sub-questions were posed:

1. Who is the UWC student in the EMS faculty?
2. What are the challenges to learning for a UWC student in the EMS faculty?
3. How do these challenges to learning influence student performance?
4. Why do some students within the same context achieve success and others do not?

Realising this aim has been achieved throughout the preceding chapters. In Chapter 2, the learning process was conceptualised through discussions of selected learning theories and the theoretical orientation of the study which was based on Vygotsky's (1979, 1994) social cultural theory and Bandura's (1986, 2001) social cognitive theory. In addition, a review of five studies conducted on student learning, failures and dropouts was done in order to (i) ascertain what factors were identified as challenges to learning for those students; and (ii) determine whether I would find similar factors in this study. In Chapter 3, an overview of the South African higher education context and how it impacted on UWC as a higher education institution was provided as well as UWC's role in academic development, the kinds of students it admits, and a brief overview of the structure and the courses offered to undergraduate students in the EMS faculty. At the end of Chapter 3 and in conjunction with the synthesis of the findings from the five studies conducted in Chapter 2, a student centred analytical framework was arrived at which I used as a guide and organizing principle to sort and analyse the data in a logical manner. Chapter 4 provided a thorough description of the research process and the actions taken in this study, while the research data were analysed and discussed in Chapters 5 and 6.

The research data consisted of six data sets. One of the six data sets (Data set no. 4 — the questionnaire) consisted of both quantitative (questions 1 to 7) and qualitative (questions 8 to 13) data. Thus, there were three quantitative data sets and four qualitative ones. Two of the three quantitative data sets (Data set 2 and questions 1 to 7 of Data set 4) contained the students' biographical and geographical information and were used to find answers to the first sub-question. These data sets were analysed and discussed in Chapter 4, Section 4.5.3 under the research participant section. The third quantitative data

set (Data set 5) was the students' final results and was used to triangulate and validate the students' responses in the four qualitative data sets. The four qualitative data sets, Data set 1 (Written reflection no. 1), Data set 3 (Written reflection no. 2), Data set 4 (the questionnaire, questions 8 to 13) and Data set 6 (the individual written interview responses), provided answers to the remaining three sub-questions. What is presented next is a summary of the findings in relation to the sub-questions asked.

7.3. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS PER SUB-QUESTION

The data elicitation devices in both Cases assisted me in finding answers to the main research question and the sub-questions. The findings that were identified from the analysis were interpreted in Sections 6.4.1 and 6.4.2 and a summary per sub-question is provided below.

7.3.1 Sub-question 1: Who is the UWC student in the EMS faculty?

The collection of factual data was the first step in the data collection process and was used to find answers to this sub-question. The factual data was collected from Data set 2 and verified against the students' responses in Data set 4, and analysed in Section 4.5.3 as mentioned already above.

The findings from these two data sets revealed that the thirty-two students in the study represented some of the diversity that characterises the student body at UWC and South African society in general. While most of the students came from the Western Cape as would be expected, three other provinces (the Eastern Cape, Northern Cape and KwaZulu-Natal) were also represented. The particular demographics of the Western Cape were reflected in the number of coloured students (16) compared to the number of African (14) and Indian students (2). The influence of Afrikaans, which is strong in the Western Cape, was limited, with only three students claiming this as their first language, while students claiming that English was their first language were the most (16). The group also consisted of 12 students claiming that IsiXhosa was their first language, and one student claiming IsiZulu as first language. The students' schooling backgrounds (twenty-four from former DEC and DET schools and eight from former model C schools) reflected the pool from which UWC draws its student body. It is safe to suggest that the majority of the students admitted to UWC to date could still be regarded as so-called 'disadvantaged' and 'underprepared' students. The mean age of 19 was also representative of the age of the

full-time students that UWC admits. The 2009 first-year cohort included the first learners (19 students) who had completed their schooling under the new curriculum (Grade 12), while the remaining thirteen students had written the National Senior Certificate under the previous curriculum dispensation. The students' matriculation results (see Section 4.4.3) revealed that the majority had an average pass (C average), while 28% of the students' results were not good (D average) and 6% were poor (E average). Again, the results reflect the academic performance of the learners that UWC generally admits to its undergraduate programmes. Lastly, the fact that twenty-two students were registered for the B.Com. Gen. degree and ten for the B.Admin. degree, three-year programmes, corresponds with the numbers in the EMS faculty, where the B.Com. Gen. students are in the majority, followed by the B.Admin. students (until 2009). It was for this reason that I purposively selected students from these two degree programmes, as explained in Section 4.5.3. This description of the thirty-two students thus answered the first sub-question of this study.

7.3.2 Sub-question 2: What are the challenges to learning for a UWC student in the EMS faculty?

The analysis of the qualitative data sets provided answers to what the challenges to learning were for new first-year students in the EMS faculty at UWC. In answering this sub-question, the challenges to learning for new first-year students in the EMS faculty at UWC are combined and provided in the table below.

Table 7.1 Challenges to learning

<p>Theme 1: Personal Challenges</p> <p>1. Accommodation 2. Financial means 3. Family support</p>
<p>Theme 2: Academic Challenges</p> <p>4. Attitude and personal orientation 5. Transition 6. Time management 7. Workload 8. Learning styles 9. Foundational knowledge 10. Language 11. Home environment and family crises 12. Studying and working simultaneously 13. Resources at home</p>
<p>Theme 3: Social Challenges</p> <p>14. Peer-pressure</p>
<p>Theme 4: Institutional Challenges</p> <p>15. Tutorial support 16. Lecturer's teaching methods and teaching style</p>

The table represents the challenges to learning as identified and reported by the students who participated in this research project. Two findings were identified from the analysis, namely:

1. The students in Case 1 had more challenges to learning (thirteen sub-themes were reported) which they had to deal with and had to overcome compared to the students in Case 2 from which eight sub-themes emerged (see Section 6.4.1).
2. The sub-themes under Theme 2, *academic factors* (challenges) were more than the other sub-themes in both Cases (see Section 6.4.1).

7.3.3 Sub-question 3: How do these challenges to learning influence student performance?

It was found from the comparison of the findings between the two Cases that there are degrees of influence; that different combinations of challenges can have different results; that some students deal with challenges more effectively than others; and that experiencing challenges to learning simultaneously could become too severe and overwhelming for students. The challenges to learning emerged over time for especially the students in Case 1. At the start of the academic year, the financial challenge, for example, was not perceived as serious, but it then became a serious challenge in the course of the year when some of the students did not receive the financial support they had hoped for or had expected. Similarly, some of these students failed some of their

modules in the first semester, and they continued to fail them in the second semester — which demotivated and discouraged the students to such an extent that they could not see anything ‘positive’ in their learning.

The analysis also revealed how different combinations of challenges can have different results, for example, if the combination included a lack of comprehensive financial support, a lack of foundational knowledge and a language challenge, the influence on the academic performance of the student was severe and could result in complete failure in the learning process. In contrast, if the combination included a lack of effective time management techniques, procrastination and a perceived ‘heavy’ workload, the influence on the academic performance was not severe and it was possible to overcome the challenges.

The comparison between the students in the two Cases further illustrated the differences in how students deal with challenges to learning and how social embeddedness, individual ability (personal agency) and motivation strengthen and support each other. Three distinct differences emerged from the comparison between the students who were less successful (Case 1) and those who were successful (Case 2). The first was that the students in Case 2 understood the learning goals and what was required of them and they were also more confident in their language use. For the students in Case 1, these elements were not obvious. The second was that the students’ will to learn in Case 2 emerged more strongly in their description of how they deal with challenges compared to the students’ in Case 1 and, because of that, the Case 2 students presented themselves as self-regulated students with intrinsic motivation. They reported applying different learning strategies to assist them to overcome their challenges and to be successful in their studies. In Case 1, the students’ will to learn seemed to have been weakened by the severity of the challenges to learning that they experienced and they could not overcome the challenges successfully. The third difference was that the students’ responses and explanations in Case 2 were characterised by positive attitudes and problem-solving and empowering language usage, whereas for many students in Case 1, it was the opposite — their language usage was characterised by negative and disempowering language because of the severity of their challenges.

Lastly, the analysis of the challenges to learning revealed that if the challenges are not resolved or overcome, they could become severe and overwhelming, and the influence on the academic performance of students could be devastating. The answer to this research

question is therefore two-fold. Certain challenges to learning could influence students' performance negatively and if that happened, students were less successful in their studies or they experienced complete failure. On the other hand, some challenges seemed to strengthen students' will to learn and made them more productive with the result that they did not surrender, but persevered, overcame the challenges and became academically successful.

7.3.4 Sub-question 4: Why do some students within the same context achieve success and others do not?

Three reasons were derived from the findings in Chapter 6 as answers to this sub-question, namely:

1. The nature of the challenges, the severity thereof and assistance received play a decisive role in whether students will be able to succeed in the learning process or not. The challenges to learning for the students in Case 1 became severe as the year progressed and they could not overcome them, despite their best attempts. However, the opposite happened for many of the students in Case 2. Their challenges lessened and became fewer as the year progressed and that seems to have contributed to their success.
2. The fact that successful students realised from the start of their academic studies that they needed to take responsibility for their own learning. From this group of students (Case 2), it emerged that a strong will, commitment and hard work supported their efforts to resolve problems and become successful students. Overall, the students in Case 2 exhibited more of these qualities which seemed to have contributed to their success. The majority of the students in Case 1, on the other hand, struggled to adapt to the University environment and could not completely master the appropriate techniques needed for successful study. In many instances, their will to learn seemed to have been weakened because of the severity of the challenges experienced and that was why some only achieve partial success and others none at all.
3. Successful learning requires that students receive support and assistance from all the role players in the learning process. The first source of support should come from the students' families and friends; second would be the academic institution

(all the staff and the institutional practices and regulations) and their peers; and the last form of support should come from the education department and the communities. It is a striking finding that students in both cases identified similar institutional problems (see 6.3.2.4), thereby dispelling the myth that ‘weak’ students ‘blame’ the institution for their problems. The students in Case 2 generally had more support or looked for support compared to the students in Case 1 and that was another contributing factor in their success.

Support from the institution is especially needed since one of the challenges to learning that some students in Case 2 identified related to the tutors, and it highlighted the power relationship that exists between the institution and the students. The power relationship draws attention to goal five in the NPHE (see Section 1.1) with regard to the building of “new institutional and organisational forms”, “identities” and “cultures” (Ministry of Education, 2001:19). UWC as a higher education institution could perhaps consider renewing its ‘institutional and organisational forms, identities and cultures’ in order to become more supportive of its students and in that way assist more students to be successful in their studies.

In addition, the analysis also revealed that for the students in Case 2, making use of consultation and communicating with the lecturers outside of formal lectures assisted not only in relationship building between lecturers and students, but also helped with the students’ social and academic integration. It thus implies that if more lecturers could build positive relationships with their students, the social and academic integration of more students could be enhanced and their chances of successful learning strengthened.

To conclude, the following sub-themes (in alphabetical order) are proposed as being the most essential enabling factors and, therefore, the primary drivers for successful learning for first-year students in the EMS faculty at UWC.

Under theme 1: *Personal factors*:

1. A good support system (that can provide motivation and encouragement)
2. A need to be focused and goal driven (attitude and personal orientation)
3. Comprehensive financial assistance (allowing students to focus on learning)
4. Hard work, dedication and commitment (thus a strong will to learn)
5. Suitable accommodation (to avoid the travelling challenges)

Under theme2: Academic factors:

1. Adjustment to the University environment
2. A home environment that is conducive to work and study
3. Attendance of all classes and submission of all coursework components
4. A willingness to ask questions and go for consultation
5. Effective time management and study techniques
6. Study groups for moral and academic support ('right' friends)
7. The need for language support
8. The need for sufficient background knowledge
9. The need to understand the subject content

Under theme 3: Social factors:

1. The right friends (in order not to not be exposed to negative peer pressure)

Under theme 4: Institutional factors:

1. The provision of academic support
2. The provision of moral support and encouragement
3. The provision of sufficient resources

These sub-themes signal that factors for failure and success are not only located in the student, the institution and the higher education department, but they also require the participation of the other role players and especially the students' family and friends on the one hand, and the institution on the other hand. These constitute the environmental factors that Vygotsky (1979, 1994) and Bandura (1986, 2001) advocate. It also underlines the fact that successful learning is a complex and multi-layered process that is ongoing and that needs to be monitored, sustained and evaluated throughout (Beyer *et al.* 2007; Pascarella & Terenzini 2005). Furthermore, while universities tend to separate certain functions so that, for example, financial issues are dealt with separately from accommodation issues, which are again dealt with separately from academic problems, the issues identified and reported by the students in this study highlight the need for a more integrated and holistic approach. Such an approach would acknowledge that the themes and sub-themes identified and discussed in this study are interrelated and interdependent. For the students in this study, all these factors played out on a very personal level, and the need for a safe and supportive learning environment in which their affective needs were being met was evident. Therefore, successful learning would only occur when all or most of the above factors and variables are in place for the students (Killen 2000, 2005; Kuh *et al.* 2005; Strydom & Mentz 2010).

These findings will now be related to the theory as discussed in Chapter 2 in order to arrive at possible contributions that this study makes with regard to the creation of new knowledge.

7.4 CONTRIBUTION TO THE CREATION OF NEW KNOWLEDGE

While most of the studies conducted on student learning usually focus on failures and dropouts, this study focused on both — factors that were challenges to learning and factors that enabled successful learning for students coming from similar backgrounds and circumstances. Therefore, as stated in Section 1.8, the area to which I propose this study will make a contribution is in the identification of enabling factors (the primary drivers of the main research question) and the way in which their interaction is socially embedded, resulting in successful learning by students.

First, from the analysis of the challenges to learning, I found that many of the factors that were identified were similar to those identified by Tinto (1975) and Louw (2005), and a few with those identified by the Department of Education (2000-2004) and REAP & RAD (Rural Education Access Programme (REAP) & Research & Academic Development (RAD)(2008) studies. This study revealed that the factors could either be experienced by new first-year students as challenges to learning, or, depending on their intensity and gravity, as motivation for continued hard work that resulted in successful learning.

Second, other sub-themes that were not included in the analytical framework emerged from the analysis of the data. These were under the themes *personal factors*, *academic factors* and *social factors* and they are listed below.

Theme 1: *Personal factors* – new sub-themes:

1. Attitude and personal orientation
2. Travelling (as a result of accommodation being too far away)
3. Working and studying simultaneously

Theme 2: *Academic factors* – new sub-themes:

1. Home environment not conducive to academic work
2. Interaction with tutors (perceptions of students about tutors)
3. Resources (for students at home)

Theme 3: *Social factors* – new sub-theme:

1. Peer pressure / choice of friends

It is acknowledged that there is no real 'fixed' theme that these sub-themes could be grouped under because they are interrelated and interdependent, as was discussed in Chapters 5 and 6. However, the sub-themes as they are presented here are based on the explanations given by the students and the manner in which they were analysed in Chapters 5 and 6.

The contribution to new knowledge that this study makes is the identification of the enabling factors (the primary drivers of success) as listed towards the end of the previous section (7.3.4); and the new sub-themes which create a more complete picture of factors that could influence learning at higher education level. As already mentioned, these factors could either be enabling factors for some first-year students, or challenges to learning for others. For example, the 'choice of friends' sub-theme came out strongly in both Cases; if you make and choose the 'right' type of friends, it could be an enabling factor in that you could work together, motivate and encourage each other, and provide academic support to each other, whereas if you make and choose the 'wrong' type of friends — friends that do not encourage you to attend all classes but rather persuade you to play dominoes in the cafeteria, it could lead to failure in the learning process.

The third and final contribution to new knowledge that this study makes is the fact that the comparison of the two Cases' findings highlighted four overall findings. These were:

1. In order for successful learning to occur, a student needs to take responsibility for his/her own learning. That means that a strong will to learn must be present. It is a strong will that will sustain students to persevere and work harder when the challenges arise.
2. The findings revealed how challenges changed in the course of the year; appearing later on or being resolved earlier on. In this instance, the contribution that this study makes is the identification of "the fleeting", "the distributed", "the multiple" and "the complex" nature of the challenges experienced (Haggis 2009:389). For example, financial challenges may not appear to be serious at the beginning of studies and the study showed how stressful and discouraging the learning situation becomes when students' financial challenges are not resolved. Being distressed about that diverted the students' attention away from their learning and resulted in failure and students not returning to learning. In a situation such as this, the 'blame' could be placed elsewhere — the problem could be located mainly in outside factors (historical and socio-economic factors), and not so much in internal or personal factors (not in the students themselves). Another example is a lack of time management skills, which over time will impact increasingly on students' ability to complete and submit assignments, thereby minimising their chances of being successful. Moreover, this finding showed that an initial and one-off analysis of

student needs (by the institution) may not take sudden changes or growing concerns into account.

3. The experiences of the students highlighted the fact that successful learning needs the cooperation and contribution of the other role players in the learning process. The role players who provided support (both moral and academic) were highlighted. These were the students' families and friends, their peers and lecturers. This was evident from the responses in especially Case 2 on how the fact that their families motivated and encouraged them carried them through; how the 'right' friends and study groups at university (thus their peers) did not only provide motivation and encouragement, but academic support as well; and how attending all classes, asking questions and going to consultation (utilising the institutional practices and staff) assisted them to understand the work better and to succeed. But it also built positive relationships between the students and lecturers and, in that way, enhanced their social and academic integration. Again, the contribution that this study makes is not only in the identification of challenges to learning in a specific higher education context and how these challenges influenced the students' behaviour, but equally important, the students' experiences revealed the "dynamic interaction and process through time in relation to learning situations" (Haggis 2009: 389). By collecting a variety of data sets in the course of the year, the analysis and discussions illustrated how multiple challenges accumulated over time, how it influenced and affected the students in Case 1 personally and academically, and what the end result was for them: partial success for some and complete failure for others.
4. The sub-themes under the themes *personal factors*, *academic factors* and *social factors* were the most important factors in achieving success for the students in this study. These factors (a good support system, the ability to adjust and integrate to the academic environment, and the 'right' friends) were identified by the students who were successful at the end of 2009. It therefore would be fair to say that it was not only personal attributes, but also academic and social factors that enabled them to be successful. This finding provided further evidence that learning is socially situated and constructed and it strengthened previous research that a supportive and an enabling socially situated learning environment is needed for successful learning to occur. Consequently, this study provided a set of enabling factors

(primary drivers) for successful learning for new first-year students and it therefore achieved the first part of its objective.

These findings are now used as recommendations for factors that should be considered in a socially situated, dynamically supportive and holistic learning approach for new first-year students in the EMS faculty at UWC.

7.5 RECOMMENDATIONS

The latter part of the objective as stated in Chapter 1 was that this study would lead to guidelines for a socially situated, supportive and holistic learning approach for new first-year students in the EMS faculty at UWC. Based on the findings identified above, I now put forward recommendations for such a learning approach in order to realise this latter part of the objective.

7.5.1 Towards a socially situated, supportive and holistic learning approach

A socially situated, supportive and holistic learning approach should be comprehensive and needs to include as many enabling factors as possible. Therefore, using the theoretical orientation, the themes, sub-themes and new sub-themes identified as a guide, and on the basis of the findings identified above, a socially situated, supportive and holistic learning approach should be comprehensive. The focus should be on reducing the learning challenges and increasing the enabling factors in order to make the learning experience positive and meaningful for students. In addition, closer cooperation and deliberation should be sought from all the other role players in the learning process. If all the different role players work together, e.g. staff dealing with financial support cooperating with those providing academic support and accommodation, they would be able to provide a holistic view of challenges. This would enable staff to assist students to overcome their learning challenges as early as possible, leading to successful learning for more students.

7.5.1.1 Recommendations for the EMS Faculty

It is recommended that urgent attention should be given to the theme *personal factors* and its sub-themes. This was one of the themes that the students identified as an enabling factor. On their arrival, and during orientation, the students ought to be made aware that having a strong will and a positive attitude and personal orientation towards their studies combined with the willingness to work hard, often result in success. They need to be encouraged to adopt such a frame of mind for themselves (if they do not already have

such a focus). But these factors should be reinforced and strengthened during the course of the academic year, and the people involved — family, friends, lecturers, tutors, fellow students and staff, should make them their top priority. Furthermore, the students need to be encouraged and motivated on an ongoing basis by their families, friends and staff members in all departments, and regular discussion groups and feedback sessions should be arranged. This might be ideally located at the EMS Student Support and Research Unit in the Faculty(ESSRU) (this unit currently works only with first-year students in the four-year degree stream and was established with this mandate in 2006 to support and mentor ‘at-risk’ students in the four-year degree programme only). The problem with this approach is that students could become ‘at risk’ students later on in the year or they may be identified as ‘at risk’ and manage to solve their problems themselves, as the students in Case 2 proved. It is therefore necessary to monitor all students throughout the academic year to allow for the contingent nature of factors that influence learning. In addition, if possible, financial resources should be provided by the University at large in order to appoint dedicated student advisors that could work with small groups of students during their undergraduate studies to fulfill a supervisory, tracking and mentoring role. Having students assigned to dedicated student advisors from the start of their study careers would also enhance the students’ social and academic integration.

Also, the Faculty should pay attention to the theme *academic factors* and its sub-themes. Given that students appear to be relatively uninformed about degree choices and subject content, a starting point might be that the orientation programme be revisited to consider including specific and detailed information sessions that would address these issues. Follow-up subject information sessions, for example, at the end of Term 1 and Term 2 and during the first week of Term 3 (at the beginning of the second semester when students have a chance to change, de-register or add modules) could be of further benefit. Secondly, measures need to be put in place that could detect learning challenges on an on-going basis. First-year lecturers could be requested to identify and report ‘at-risk’ students to the student advisors and ESSRU during the course of the academic year. These staff members could contact the students individually, place them in mentoring and additional tutorial groups and monitor them throughout the academic year. In this way students would also be introduced to the ‘right’ type of friends and would work together and support each other academically. Thirdly, students should be encouraged to become self-regulated and self-reflective students who will use their self-efficacy capabilities optimally. They need to be taught how to use their cognitive skills and agency in order to

become self-regulated students. They need to be guided and steered in this direction by academic staff and support staff in particular, and they need to be monitored by the student advisors and first-year lecturers. This could be done through lecturing on self-esteem, critical thinking, problem solving and finding solutions and alternatives to problems, and study skills in the different disciplines.

It is further recommended that the Faculty reflect and re-shape thinking around the theme *institutional factors*. The issues that students reported on — a lack of foundational knowledge in some courses, finding the course content challenging and not attending classes because they could not understand the lecturer, or because they found the classes boring and uninteresting are important and require more investigation in the Faculty. The appointment of a task team is recommended that could investigate these and other related factors. Consideration should also be given to converting some of the challenging modules such as Academic Literacy for Commerce, Information Systems, Quantitative Skills for Foundation and Management back to year courses (as was the case until 2008 for some of them). This would allow for establishing a foundation and carefully scaffolding of the content that needs to be understood by the students.

The findings revealed that class attendance and consultation were two very important enablers. It is therefore recommended that the Faculty should consider having a specific policy for attendance and consultation for all first-year students. For example, attendance registers could be kept for the classes and consultation and a 2% could be included as part of the coursework mark for students at the end of each semester. Through this policy, the practice of attending all classes and going regularly for consultation could be instilled in students from the first year onwards and this would further assist with the challenging modules and lack of foundational knowledge. It could also strengthen the students' relationships with the lecturers and tutors and thus assist with the students' social and academic integration to the University environment. The fact that people in general, and first-year students in particular, are not very good with planning and time management was also highlighted. It is therefore recommended that first-year students should be taught effective planning and time management techniques and they should be supported and guided in all their first-year modules in order to reinforce skills taught. If more students knew how to plan and manage their time effectively, they would not experience the workload as too 'heavy' and would be able to submit quality work as the top performer in the study alluded to. But lecturers should also liaise with one another in order to plan due

dates for assignments and test dates in such a way that they do not clash. An assignment and test schedule could be drawn up among the relevant lecturers when they plan and prepare their study guides and module content in order to facilitate this process. Such a schedule would support the students in their attempt to plan and manage their time effectively and could ultimately contribute to the students' academic success.

Also evident from the study was the fact that students felt that they would benefit from more academic and learning support. The provision of smaller lecture groups, supplementary instruction, ongoing language support programmes, and the formation of small study groups and mentoring groups are all ways in which such support could be facilitated. Ongoing tutor training and feedback sessions could also be instituted in the different departments in order to supervisor and monitor tutors and to provide assistance to them during the course of the year. Therefore, the findings of this study should be presented and made available to all the lecturers in the Faculty to not only make them aware of how students perceive lecturers and tutors, but to also encourage further investigation of student perceptions about academic staff and how the relationship between these two role players could be strengthened.

7.5.1.2 Recommendations for the Academic Development Department (ADD)

Since this study was conducted from an ADD perspective, it is recommended that ADD, as support department in the Faculty, drive the process of disseminating and executing the findings of this study, and the recommended holistic learning approach. It is also recommended that lecturers in the department start as soon as possible to discuss and reflect on some of the recommendations in the ALC course with a view to possible implementation. In view of the problems identified in Section 3.4.2, staff members should liaise and work closely with other first-year lecturers in the different departments to establish core issues that need to be addressed first, and to decide collectively on the desired action. Lastly, it is recommended that members of this department form part of the task team that need to be appointed to not only drive the process, but also to fulfil a monitoring and supportive role.

7.5.1.3 Recommendations for UWC

While the challenge of providing suitable accommodation (preferably on-campus) for students that come from outside the Western Cape and who are residing beyond a 30km radius is acknowledged, the institution is strongly encouraged to give such provision a key priority. It was reported that there are organised support programmes available at the residences, and if more students could be accommodated on-campus, more students would have access to these programmes and thus benefit from them, which means that more students would be enabled and empowered to pass their first year of study. However, it is acknowledged that this has financial implication for the University and could therefore, only be a long term solution. Nevertheless, an interim arrangement should be explored. For example, the University could negotiate with families in the surrounding suburbs to offer affordable private accommodation to students, and the University could provide transport for such students.

It is fact that many of the undergraduate students are in need of financial assistance and therefore a further recommendation is that comprehensive financial support (including travelling money and living expenses and food) where possible, be provided by the University through the education department. The University's marketing and fundraising team could also negotiate with and find more financial institutions that would be willing to provide bursaries, loans and internships to more students. If the provision of financial assistance could happen, if possible as early as orientation, the impact of the financial challenges on students would be lessened and students would be able to focus and concentrate on what they are there for — the construction of knowledge and a meaningful learning experience. However, a financial needs analysis cannot be done once a year, since students may run into difficulties later on in the year. The student advisors could fulfill this role and could monitor the students' financial situations in order to detect such problems throughout the year and to provide assistance and guidance to the students to overcome their financial challenges.

Lastly, the University should provide (build or find) more resources in the form of computer laboratories and recreational activities. A possible way in which this recommendation could be realised is that the University could form partnerships and/ or exchange programmes with computer companies and major financial institutions to negotiate lending, rental and working agreements. More computer laboratories and computer facilities would enable

more students to do their work and to submit it by the due dates. More recreational activities will allow the students to become involved in constructive and healthy extramural activities during which they could learn different life and social skills, such as communication skills, interpersonal skills, conflict management and team-building skills.

While the findings of this study were from two specific Cases in a specific faculty at UWC, it is envisaged that the recommendations may also be useful to other faculties at UWC. Because each institutional context is different, institution-specific studies are needed to identify enabling factors for students. It is therefore suggested that future studies could apply the student centred analytical framework used in this study to determine how their social situations will add or take away from the framework and what the enabling factors in their specific institutional contexts would be.

7.6 POSSIBILITIES FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The findings of this study made me realised how important the preparation of learners at the high school level is (especially in public schools) for successful university studies. In future, I would therefore want to investigate what is happening in high schools with regard to the preparation of learners for higher education. Findings from such an investigation would assist in identifying and addressing learning challenges at the start of an academic year. Because this study was limited in that it focused only on the first year of study, a second research area could be to conduct a longitudinal study in which one could track first-year students' progress from first year to final year; and it could include all four degree programmes in the Faculty (i.e. B.Admin., B.Com. Gen., B.Com. Accounting and B.Com. Law) and perceptions from the Faculty and the staff as well. This would enable one to ascertain whether or not students continue to perform well or badly, it will allow for intervention throughout their academic careers (where necessary) and it will reveal the experiences of the staff in the Faculty with relation to the students, their interaction and performance in the different subjects. It would also assist in monitoring the implementation of the second recommendation above. Lastly, since I am also involved in teaching first-year students in the four-year degree programme, a third research area could be an investigation of the first two years of study of these students to ascertain whether the support programmes are effective or not and, if not, how they could be improved in order to enable more students to be successful in the learning process.

7.7 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

A limitation of this study is that a longitudinal investigation over three or four years would have provided richer data on success and persistence by following and monitoring the students from the start to the end of their undergraduate study programmes. Although the purpose of this study was to examine new first-year students because of literature on the importance of the first year of study (Beyer *et al.* 2007; Leibowitz *et al.* 2009; Scott 2009a), follow-up investigations must be done to track student persistence and success beyond the first year. It was a specific case study design, focusing on two Cases in a specific setting and social context, in order to identify enabling factors that could be used to assist other new first-year students in the same setting to be successful in their first year of study, and hopefully in subsequent years. Therefore, as explained in the previous section (7.6), such a longitudinal study can still be done. It is also acknowledged that data on the curriculum and the views of the academic staff about how students learn could change some of the findings and recommendations of this study. Such research projects are envisaged as a logical follow-up to this investigation.

7.8 FINAL REFLECTION

Successful student learning is paramount in the South African educational context today. This is clear from the many research projects on and investigations of student learning which I had reviewed in this study. With this study, I have attempted to make a contribution to this growing body of knowledge. It is anticipated that readers of this dissertation will appreciate that which is presented here, and that they will gain a glimpse into the lives of so-called 'disadvantaged' and 'underprepared' students at an historically black university. I have tried to narrate the stories of these students as objectively as possible, and I have attempted to take the reader on an insightful, meaningful and enriching reading experience. Personally, I have learnt and gained tremendously in the process. I always believed that anything is possible if one has the will to do something. The students in this study confirmed that belief. I also had some idea that learning was a complex and socially situated practice, but the extent of that was demonstrated through the experiences of the students in this study. The findings had revealed that successful learning is a multilayered and complex socially situated and constructed process that requires the involvement of all the role players. Lastly, I have learnt that challenges to learning sometimes seem overwhelming, but they can be conquered with a strong will, determination, hard work and support. The students in this study are testimony to this statement. I SALUTE THEM!

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Addendum 1: Project registration at UWC


3 November 2008

To Whom It May Concern


I hereby certify that the Senate Research Committee of the University of the Western Cape has approved the methodology and the ethics of the following research project by: Mrs V McGhie, Dept. of Academic Development: Economic and Management Sciences.

Research Project: The learning process: Factors impacting on first-year students' progress in mainstream academic literacy course

Registration number: 08/9/33


Petrus Syster
Research Development
University of the Western Cape





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ACADEMIC DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

Addendum 2: Permission of HOD to conduct the research in the Academic Development Department at UWC

23 January 2009

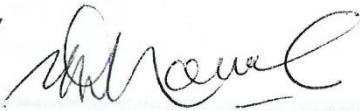
Prof. C. van der Walt
Faculty of Education
University of Stellenbosch
Stellenbosch

Dear Prof. van der Walt

Re: Mrs V. F. McGhie - Doctoral research studies

I herewith grant permission for Mrs McGhie to conduct her doctoral research on Academic Literacy in our department.

Sincerely



Dr M. D. November

HOD: Academic Development Department



Addendum 3: Approval of ethical clearance – University of Stellenbosch

UNIVERSITEIT • STELLENBOSCH • UNIVERSITY
jou kennisvenoot • your knowledge partner

26 May 2009

Tel.: 021 - 808-2687
Enquiries: Sidney Engelbrecht
Email: sidney@sun.ac.za

Ms V McGhie
Department of Academic Development
University of the Western Cape
BELLVILLE
7505

Reference No. 173/2009

Dear Ms V McGhie

APPLICATION FOR ETHICAL CLEARANCE


With regards to your application, I would like to inform you that the project, *The learning process: Factors impacting on first-year students' process in a mainstream academic literacy course*, has been approved on condition that:

1. The researcher/s remain within the procedures and protocols indicated in the proposal;
2. The researcher/s stay within the boundaries of applicable national legislation, institutional guidelines, and applicable standards of scientific rigor that are followed within this field of study and that
3. Any substantive changes to this research project should be brought to the attention of the Ethics Committee with a view to obtain ethical clearance for it.
4. The researcher will implement the foregoing suggestions to lower the ethical risk associated with the research.

We wish you success with your research activities.

Best regards




MS. M. HUNTER-HÜSELMANN
Co-ordinator: Research (Human and Social Sciences)

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Privaat Sak/Private Bag XI • 7602 Stellenbosch • Suid-Afrika/South Africa
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Addendum 4: Copy of consent form

STELLENBOSCH UNIVERSITY CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

Title:

Factors impacting on first-year students' academic progress in the EMS faculty at UWC

You are asked to participate in a research study conducted by Ms Venicia McGhie from the Department of Academic Development, Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences (EMS), UWC.

This research study is partially conducted towards the completion of the researcher's Ph D thesis at the University of Stellenbosch.

You were selected as a possible participant in this study because you are a registered first-year student in the EMS Faculty at UWC.

1. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The aim of the study is to investigate factors that impact on the successful completion of the first year of study for registered first-year students in the three year degree programme in the EMS faculty.

2. PROCEDURES

If you volunteer to participate in this study, I would ask you to do the following - to:

1. Write two written reflections in which you are reflecting on your own learning as a first year student in the EMS faculty by answering different questions (one at the beginning of Term 2 and the second at the beginning of Term 3, 2009).
2. Give me permission to draw your biographical and geographical information from the university's official database and your final results at the end of 2009 to use as part of the data collection process.
3. Complete a questionnaire during Term 4 in which you will be asked different questions, again with the aim of reflecting on your own learning during the academic year.
4. Have a follow-up session in the form of a group interview early in the first semester in 2010 for a final reflection on your learning progress and in which you will be asked to give advice to prospective first-year students on what they should do and should not do in order to be successful in their first-year of study.

The sessions will take place in Mrs McGhie's office, room number 2.14, and level 2, EMS building during a time suitable for you.

3. POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS

No potential risks and discomforts are envisaged at this stage. However, if something might come up, it will be dealt with in a sensible and sensitive manner.

4. POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO SUBJECTS AND/OR TO SOCIETY

Potential benefits could be that the students would feel valued and safe (from the interaction between them and myself and the fact that they could share their experiences in the learning process), and this could result in them acquiring a higher self-esteem and self-confidence in their own abilities, which could result in better performance in the courses that they are registered for.

Furthermore, the EMS Faculty at UWC would benefit directly from the results and recommendations that will be made in that these recommendations will be implemented in the coming years and hopefully, would assist more students to successfully complete their first-year of study. If this could happen, the faculty's failure and dropout rates would decrease, and a higher throughput rate would be achieved. Other faculties at UWC could also benefit in this way, and possibly other higher education institutions that are similar to UWC.

5. PAYMENT FOR PARTICIPATION

No payments to the participants will be made.

6. CONFIDENTIALITY

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with you will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission or as required by law. Confidentiality will be maintained by means of referring to students as Student 1, 2, 3, etc, and by means of themes and categories that will be identified and used in the analysis and discussions of the findings and the outcomes, in the research report, the thesis, and in conference papers and articles that would be submitted for possible publication in academic journals.

The researcher further pledge that any information given by participants will be handled in the strictest confidence, and that the information students give will not be used to reflect negatively on them in any way. The information will be stored in files that will be locked in the filing cabinet of the researcher, in her office in the EMS building.

7. PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL

You can choose whether to be in this study or not. If you volunteer to be in this study, you may withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind. You may also refuse to answer any questions you don't want to answer and still remain in the study. The investigator may withdraw you from this research if circumstances arise which warrant doing so such as you not participating over the course of the research period.

8. IDENTIFICATION OF INVESTIGATORS

If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please feel free to contact me at (021) 959-3041 (o); (021) 932-2802 (h); 072-773-7289 (cell); fax (021) 959-3780; and e-mail vfmcghe@uwc.ac.za

9. RIGHTS OF RESEARCH SUBJECTS

You may withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue participation without penalty. You are not waiving any legal claims, rights or remedies because of your participation in this research study. If you have questions regarding your rights as a research subject, contact Dr Melvyn November, Head of the Academic Development Department, room 2.14, Level 2, EMS building, UWC, or telephonically, (021) 959-3187; or via e-mail at mnovember@uwc.ac.za

SIGNATURE OF RESEARCH SUBJECT OR LEGAL REPRESENTATIVE

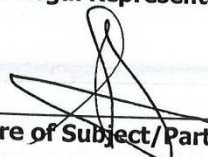
The information above was described to *me, the participant* by Ms Venicia McGhie in *English* and *I am the participant* in command of this language. I was given the opportunity to ask questions and these questions were answered to *my* satisfaction.

I hereby consent voluntarily to participate in this study. I have been given a copy of this form.

Student no 4.

Name of Subject/Participant

Name of Legal Representative (if applicable)

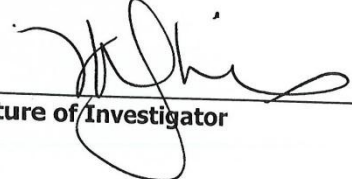


Signature of Subject/Participant or Legal Representative

30/04/09
Date

SIGNATURE OF INVESTIGATOR

I declare that I explained the information given in this document to Student no 4 [name of the participant]. He/she was encouraged and given ample time to ask me any questions. This conversation was conducted in *English* and *no translator was used.*



Signature of Investigator

30/04/09
Date

Addendum 5: Copy of Data set no 1 – Written Reflection no 1

1. My experiences at UWC.

I was excited when I started and I was scared because my sister was not accepted at UWC so I thought I might not make any friends. But I was excited because to my sister and me are always together this will give me an opportunity to make my own friends. I wasn't expecting High School level work and that scared me because I am walking ~~to~~ into UWC with no knowledge on what to expect.

2. How am I doing so far?

I am passing IFS and QSC but not as well as I hoped. Because IFS is a new subject for me I find it hard to adjust although I am computer literate and know the basics of the subject. ALC and MAN I am not sure how I am doing but I will when I get my results. ALC for me is a challenge for me because there is a lot to take in and for MAN I hope I'm doing ok because I have failed my first tut it has brought my mark down but the rest I have passed. When I study I try to read my work twice then my summaries and associations so that I can remember more things.

3. What are the challenges that I face??

One thing that is hard for me is that more ~~than~~ ^{than} one task is due for the same day it's not really a problem but it is hard for me to give my all for each task. especially when we have a task and a test it is hard to focus on the test when a task is upcoming as well. I find it hard to study at UWC because it is so busy everywhere and when I do find a quiet corner someone else will make use of it too and make a noise.

I cannot study at home because we are 5 in a house and it is hard for all of them to keep quiet when I need them to be.

4. Good things.

Lectures are very helpful when you ask them questions and when I plan my time I can study all my subjects for upcoming tests. There is a lot of freedom!!!

5. Suggestions.

Space Tuts and tests from each other and give summarised ~~versions~~ versions of lecture.



Student Personal Detail

Student Search	Personal Info	Foreigner Info	Other	Contacts	Next of Kin	Responsible Person	Account
Programmes	Modules	High School	Tertiary Study	Workshops	Notes	Documents	Audit Trail
int # NO 5							Type: <i>Current - Status: Act</i>

me
 us Surname
 Names

Initials

Identity Number
 Date of Birth

Passport Number

Gender
 Population Group
 Nationality
 Marital Status
 Home Language

Church
 Residential Area
 If Other, specify
 Residential Area Type

Coloured
 Citizen
 Never Married
 English

WESTERN CAPE
 Urban

Student: Occupation
 Employer

Education: Father
 Mother
 Guardian
 Work: Father
 Mother

Services

Disability
 Other Disability
 Medical Condition

Visual Impaired
 Hear Impaired
 Speech Impaired
 Learn Disability
 Dyslexia
 Paraplegia
 Motor Impaired

Do On-screen Validations

Inquire Update

using ST02F

**Addendum 7a: Copy of Data set no 3 – Written Reflection no 2
Case 1**

1. I've pass MAM 126 & MAN 131, because with that two modules my time to study was enough, I had time to space all the different overcis in that module and my coursework mark for both was good. FIA 131, I qualified to do FIA 132, cause you can continue if you get a final mark 4.0 ~~or~~ ^{or} more. My FIA coursework mark was down, because ~~my~~ most of the tutorial, tutorial test came out of the textbook, and I didn't have one, couldn't afford it. Sometimes I went to the library but not for long because I have to think about my safety cause I travel via train to Paarl. ~~I~~ I do failed IFS 131 because I failed my exam, cause most of the long questions in the exam came out of the textbook, which I didn't have as well.

Student no ~~2~~ 2

1

2. I failed ACC because in the exam and in the reveal, I didn't really understand the question on the essay. My coursework mark was 50%, so my work during last semester wasn't my best, cause it was the way university assesses a student is different from school, and for me as a African speaking student it's being a huge challenge. My tutor did her work she was told to do but never made the tutorials a place to feel free and ask, what you was not sure of.

3. During this semester I going to work hard and do all my coursework to the best of my ability and also go for consultation, when I don't understand something.

U Addendum 7b: Copy of Data set no 3 – Written Reflection no 2
Case 2

Steele ...

I achieved my results by following system.

Goals:

1) It was important for me to set goals and keep track of them. Besides other techniques, I ensured that I monitored the progress of my goals monthly. This gave me an indication of where I was in terms of achievement and allowed me to analyze and conclude where I needed to focus to push up my year mark. Setting a goal, kept my focus strong and helped me to motivate myself - this brings me to the next point.

2) Consistency.

This is probably one of the most important aspects I concentrated on. It is very hard to be consistent every single day but it can be done. Hard work is impossible without consistency. I always tried to put in as much attention and concentration as I could on a daily basis. Even if I was not consistent at times, I made sure I compensated for it the following day or on a weekend.

3) Time Management / Prioritizing.

My social life was extremely important to me, so I had to manage my time correctly and prioritise what was most important and required my time. I worked from a system whereby I created an electronic diary via an excel spreadsheet. I would update this sheet weekly or even daily.

The sheet portrayed information about assignment tests; tutorial test etc. as well as due dates, my progress as well as the next date I need to progress on it. I used "auto filter" to filter check what

I needed to focus on for the specific week.

This allowed me to plan my week and avoided time wasted on projects and tests only one or two weeks away. Once the task was completed I changed its status on my sheet and only filtered "incomplete" to keep track of my progress etc. I found that putting in this little bit of effort when updating the diary, freed up a lot of time and allowed me to have my social life and still work hard and consistently. I learnt time management from my ALC module, I just created a system that worked for me.

4) Motivation

It's tough to stay motivated - especially if you need to motivate yourself. Everyday is not a good day and on those bad days it's important to have things and people around you that are positive and encouraging. My family had high expectations for me, and this motivated me in some ways as they had so much faith in my abilities. I chose friends who had the same focus and determination - I found that when we worked together; things always seemed more positive and we enjoyed our studies and tried to make even the worst subjects fun by talking about it. We inspired other people when we could, and tried to include them or help them. The result was that they in turn could inspire and motivate us as well. Sometimes your best is not enough - and you need to put in 110% - thereafter, you can

Say you put in ~~the~~ all your effort. I worked for 5 years - my last motivation was that I felt like I wanted to empower myself. After being told I was not really qualified for a position after getting the promotion and that they could not pay me what they paid someone qualified; really pushed me to study and its the strongest motivation. Paying for my studies is another factor; hard earned money is difficult to spend - therefore it didn't make sense to waste any time as time is money.

5) Try to be a perfectionist even if you're not one. I always tried to be very thorough and didn't mind doing some 100 times if it meant that the end result would be an excellent test result or a strong assignment mark. Something you produce as an individual reflects on you as a person. It is a representation of your potential and effort - therefore it is important to do yourself proud. It is not only a reflection ~~to~~ to your lecturer and tutor but more importantly to yourself. You need to have faith in yourself. This is the best way to do this.

6) Lastly - try and be ~~an~~ passionate about life, your goals and your studies. Think about the future, how you can make a difference oneday, strive to be a leader; embrace your individuality be pro-active, work parttime - challenge yourself; be competitive in a healthy way. Reward yourself when its due and help others - it all makes a big difference ~~to~~ to your mindset; ~~in~~ your studies and ult 235 to your entire life.

Yearmark and exams

Another goal I had was to work hard for a yearmark that was high. I tried to keep it an A or B for my modules - for the most challenging modules I aimed for a B - others which I knew I enjoyed and loved - I aimed for an A. Once your yearmark is high - it is that last push in exams that will guarantee you your success in whatever goal you set. My motto is do not aim to just pass!! You need to stand out when you apply to a company one day.

Addendum 8: Copy of Data set no 4 – Questionnaire

Research Project: 2009 (Venicia McGhie)

Questionnaire

1. **Name:** Student no 11
 2. **Age:** 00
 3. **Male/Female:** Female
 4. **Home language:** English
 5. **Born in the Western Province / Outside – where?**
Cape Town, Western Cape
 6. **Family: Father, Mother, brothers and sisters? Or single parent, brothers and sisters? Or other (please explain):**
Father, Mother, younger sister and myself
 7. **Name and place of high school attended:** 00
 8. **Why did you decide to study towards a degree in the EMS Faculty at UWC**
I always knew I wanted to study towards a degree in commerce and the EMS faculty at UWC seemed like the perfect option for me. I wanted to obtain my degree however I was not sure as to what I wanted my major to be and UWC's EMS faculty offers the BCom General degree that directly addresses the issue that I had. It allowed me the opportunity to start studying towards obtaining my degree without having the pressure of having to decide exactly which direction I wanted to go in.
- Do you have a problem with accommodation? – Yes/no:**
- No
9. **Do you have a problem with paying your fees, paying textbooks, travelling money, food, living expenses? (please explain if you have a problem with any of these:**
Thus far I have acquired a student loan to cover my first year's tuition fees and am currently waiting on word of a bursary application to cover my second year tuition fees.

10. Do you have family and friends that support you? If no, please explain why not:

Yes I do.

11. What is good/positive about your studies?

It exposes young people to a whole new perspective on life and the world of academics. It grants us the opportunity to expand our opinion on things and think beyond that which we previously had.

12. What are your challenges and why?

The biggest challenge for me is time management. Trying to juggle all my lectures, assignments and test dates that I have as well as maintaining a healthy social life, sometimes proves to be a challenge for me. However I do believe that it is important that one does not allow ones social life to take priority. I have to admit that I am a procrastinator and sometimes put things off to the last minute which is definitely another challenge for me.

13. Any suggestions on how to overcome the challenges?

Drawing up a schedule and writing down exactly what needs to be done and when it needs to be done by. By doing this and following this set out schedule it will ease the pressure of trying to keep up with all my deadlines and ensure that my work is done on time and still have enough time to study and be well prepared for my tests and exams. I also think that having a good support system is essential in dealing with the pressure of varsity. It is important to realize that it is ok to sometimes ask for help when you struggling with something; no one expects you to be 100% sure of everything that you do.

Study Record of :
 Student Number : **Addendum 9a: Copy of Data set no 5 – Students' final results**
 Date of Birth : **Case 1**
 Identity Number :
 Study Type :

This is to certify that the above Student was registered as below

2009 Level:1 B Admin - General [1011]

	NQF	CREDIT	MARK	
ACADEMIC LITERACY FOR COM (ALC) 131	50	15.0	47.0	E Supp.Exam Granted
			47.0	E FAIL Supp. Supp.Exam.
ACADEMIC LITERACY FOR COM (ALC) 132	50	15.0	54.0	D PASS
SA POLITICS & GOVERNMENT 132	50	15.0	0.0	Supp.Exam Granted
			59.0	D PASS Supp.
INFORMATION SYSTEMS 132	50	15.0	40.0	F FAIL
POLITICAL STUDIES 131	50	15.0	51.0	D PASS
PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION 131	50	15.0	59.0	D PASS
QUANTITATIVE SKILLS FOR FOUND 131	50	15.0	0.0	Absent
			11.0	G FAIL Supp.

Promoted

 2010 Level:2 B Admin - General [1011]

	NQF	CREDIT	MARK	
ECONOMICS 134	5	15.0		Mark not yet availabl
INFORMATION SYSTEMS 131	5	15.0		Mark not yet availabl
INDUSTRIAL PSYCHOLOGY BPS 132	5	15.0		Mark not yet availabl
POLITICAL STUDIES 211	6	10.0		Mark not yet availabl
POLITICAL STUDIES 213	6	10.0		Mark not yet availabl
POLITICAL STUDIES 221	6	10.0		Mark not yet availabl
POLITICAL STUDIES 224	6	10.0		Mark not yet availabl
PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION 211	6	10.0		Mark not yet availabl
PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION 212	6	10.0		Mark not yet availabl
QUANTITATIVE SKILLS FOR FOUND 131	5	15.0		Mark not yet availabl

 REGISTRAR

 DATE

Student no 16.

Study Record of :
 Student Number : -
 Date of Birth : .
 Identity Number : <
 Study Type :

**Addendum 9b: Copy of Data set no 5 – Students' final results
 Case 2**

This is to certify that the above Student was registered as below

2009 Level:1 B Com - General FT - 3 Year [1001]

	NQF	CREDIT	MARK	
ACCOUNTING FOR MANAGEMENT 132	50	15.0	78.0	A PASS
ACADEMIC LITERACY FOR COM (ALC) 131	50	15.0	76.0	A PASS
BUSINESS STATISTICS 132	5	15.0	77.0	A PASS
ECONOMICS 134	50	15.0	62.0	C PASS
INFORMATION SYSTEMS 131	50	15.0	66.0	C PASS
INDUSTRIAL PSYCHOLOGY BPS 132	50	15.0	84.0	A PASS
MANAGEMENT 131	50	15.0	71.0	B PASS
QUANTITATIVE SKILLS FOR COMM 131	5	15.0	92.0	A PASS

Noted

2010 Level:2 B Com - General FT - 3 Year [1001]

	NQF	CREDIT	MARK	
ACCOUNTING FOR MANAGEMENT 231	6	20.0		Mark not yet availabl
ACCOUNTING FOR MANAGEMENT 232	6	20.0		Mark not yet availabl
BUSINESS ANALYSIS 201	6	10.0		Mark not yet availabl
BUSINESS ANALYSIS 202	6	10.0		Mark not yet availabl
BUSINESS ANALYSIS 203	6	10.0		Mark not yet availabl
BUSINESS ANALYSIS 204	6	10.0		Mark not yet availabl
MANAGEMENT 231	6	10.0		Mark not yet availabl
MANAGEMENT 233	6	10.0		Mark not yet availabl
MANAGEMENT 234	6	10.0		Mark not yet availabl
MANAGEMENT 235	6	10.0		Mark not yet availabl

 REGISTRAR

 DATE

Addendum 10: Copy of Data set no 6 – Written answers to interview questions

1. NO
2. NO

3. Students should:

- * Always pre-read → this helps as you will understand what is being discussed in class and can ask questions.
- * Go through your work at the end of each day
- This makes it easier when exams come, as you will already know most of the work.
- * Always ask questions - Be it in class or tutorials.
There is no such thing as A STUPID QUESTION!
- * Always make use of the University's services. If you are struggling meet with consultants from ESCRU or consult with lecturers.
- * Do your homework! It may seem boring but then you will know where your weak points are. You can then improve and find out where you went wrong by asking for assistance.
- * Manage your time wisely. Time is one thing that you will never get back. Work out a time-table and stick to it! Have time for work but also time to socialize. You need to balance it out.
- * Be themselves. Do not follow the crowd. If your friends decide to 'bunk' class, let them. They will feel the results of it. Be a leader not a follower.

for any slip: ...
...
...
...
...

Advice for first year students to pass:

4. Students should not:

- * Miss lectures - important information and course work is covered, which is not necessarily covered in the slides.
- * Play dominoes in the cafeteria - It becomes addictive and course work suffers.
- * Not play truant in tutorials - important practical work gets covered, as well as preparation for ~~tests~~ tests
- * Students should not procrastinate.
 - Students who procrastinate tend to underperform and not realise their true potential and capabilities.
- * Be afraid to ask for help. Tutors and lecturers are there to help you, but you need to first try and help yourself.

ADDENDUM 11: QUALITATIVE DATA SETS: OPEN CODING PROCESS

CASE 1 - STAGE 1: INITIATION (GENERAL READING AND NOTING OF RESPONSES)

Data set no. 1: Written Reflection (WR) no. 1

Question 1: What were my expectations to be at UWC?

- Excited, feeling great but anxious:3 responses
- Feeling scared: 1 response
- Different from school & hard work is needed: 5 responses
- Making friends, new cultures, and having freedom:4 responses
- Adjusting to university life was hard: 8 responses
- Stressful experience: 1 response
- Experience was bad: 1 response
- Did not attend orientation and was confused and stressed: 1 response
- Thought university would help me with the outside world and areas I cannot cope with: 1 response

Question 2: How am I doing so far?

- Things are going reasonably well (pass three out of the four): 7 students
- Not going well (passing two, failing two): 5 students
- Not going well (passing one, failing three): 3 students
- Things are going really bad (failing everything): 5 students

Question 3: What are the challenges and why?

- I struggled to adjust to university life: 2 students
- Students feeling alone and are not coping:2 students
- I struggle to manage my time:1 student
- I did not use my freedom wisely: 1 student
- I gave in to peer pressure: 2 students
- I had no time to spend with family and friends:3 students
- I should not be studying towards a B Com: 1 student
- My fellow students were not helpful: 1 student
- I do not make friends easily: 1 student
- Public transport was problematic (trains were late and I missed lectures): 1 student
- I did not know how to study:1 student
- I have a single parent (mother) and I was worrying about failing: 1 student

- The workload is too much:12 students
- Do not understand the subject content:6 students
- Do not understand the lecturer: 5 students
- Language difficulties:2 students
- Students not having resources to do their work (i.e. completing assignments on time) : 3 students
- Class time was too far apart: 1 student

- I worrying about how to pay the class fees:1 student
- I had no money for travelling:2 students
- I am struggling financially (no money to pay fees, buy books, travelling and food): 1 student

- I do not having on-campus accommodation: 2 students
- I cannot study at home: 1 student
- I did not have a place to stay: 1 student

Question 4: What is good/positive so far about my studies?

- Students are happy, motivated and are studying: 2 students
- Apply effective time management techniques(1 student)
- Study harder (3 students)
- Work effectively in groups and when doing research (1 student)
- Make use of consultation (2 students)
- Students receiving help from lecturers: 2 students

Questions 5: Suggestions on what I could do and what the university could do to overcome the challenges

What I could do:

- Use their time management skills effectively to have adequate time to spend on all subjects;
- Try to adjust to handle the pressure of the heavy workload;
- Go for consultation more often;
- Try to make the right decisions;
- Stay focused at all times;
- Study more and try harder;

What the faculty could do:

- Make more bursaries and loans available to all students that covers textbooks, traveling and food costs (early enough – should not take so long to respond);
- Reduce the workload and spread assignments and tests evenly so that they could have more time to improve on the quality of work;
- Ensure that all modules have tutorials because it is easier to ask questions in smaller groups and to get assistance from the tutors;
- Make Management (reduce the content – 19 chapters were covered in Term 1 alone), ALC and Information Systems year courses because there is too much work that needs to be covered, and it will help students to better understand the content thereof if it is spread over a year;
- Make more resources available to students and allow more time to work in the computer labs;
- Appoint more permanent lecturers to explain the work more fully to students; and
- There should be more residences to accommodate all the students that are in need of accommodation
- Look at how students doing and find out what they are struggling with in order to assist them

The faculty should ask lecturers to:

- Ensure that students understand the work by explaining more fully, do revision regularly (before tests) and have more patience with students;
- Help students by giving more specific criteria for assignments and set questions that make complete sense and be clear on what they require from students;
- Support and motivate students more and be more attentive and helpful to students;
- Make lectures more interesting and productive and stop being boring and just reading from the slides;
- Encourage students to come for consultation (because some students are afraid and scared of some of the lecturers), and be available for that purpose;
- Give extra classes to assist with learning and technology, and coping skills;
- Not only e-mail assignments to students because not all students have technology at home;
- Not to be so strict with due dates – students are not lazy, the work is too much;
- Suggest books that students could use for research purposes, and
- Interact with the students on a more personal level in order to understand them better.

Data set no. 3: Written Reflection (WR) no. 2

Question 1: Which modules did I pass and why?

B. Admin.	Passed	Failed	B.Com. Gen.	Passed	Failed
ALC 131	0	6	ALC 131	5	9
PUA 131	6	0	IFS 131	5	9
Pol Stud 131	5	1	QSC 131	5	7
OSF 131	0	6	Man 131	6	8

B. Admin.: Reasons why they passed PUA and POL Studies

- Put a lot of effort in and was passionate about it:3 responses
- Went for consultation:1 response
- Planned work effectively and efficiently:1 response
- Attended all the lectures:3 responses
- Worked hard:2 responses
- Did pre-reading and asked for clarification when not understanding the work:1 response
- Submitted all assignments on time:2 responses
- Not too much work and straight forward:3 responses
- Could understand the work:3 responses

B Com Gen: Reasons why they passed some of the modules:

- Worked hard:2 students
- Attended all lectures:1 student
- Attitude towards QSC was positive:1 student
- Liked and was interest in the subject (Man):1 student
- Paid attention in class:4 students
- Practice various questions for QSC:2 students
- Showed more interest and enjoyed the subject (IFS):1 student
- Spent enough time on my subjects:1 student
- Submitted all my assignments on time: 1 student
- Mathematically inclined and strong subject from young age (QSC):1 student
- Have past knowledge about OSC and IFS (computers):1 student
- Lecturers and tutors were understandable:1 student
- OSC did not require memorising – just understanding:2 students
- Tutorial classes were helpful:1 student
- Did understand the content (Man):2 students
- Did have background information about the subject (Man):1 student

Question 2: Why did you fail some of your modules?

B.Admin. students:

- Had a bad attitude towards QSF (ending up hating it):1 student
- Was stressed out and lost focus:1 student
- Did not manage my time well:2 students
- Miss some lectures: 1 student
- Did not prepare well for the exams in QSF:1 student
- OSF was hard and difficulty to understand because of not having Maths at school: 6 students
- Did not understand the lecturer/tutor:1 student
- Did attend all lectures in ALC:2 students
- Did go for consultation but still failed it:3 students
- Did not understand the work in ALC:4 students
- Too much work in ALC: 2 students
- Submit all my assignments on time:1 student
- Work hard:1 student
- Spend more time at university than at home:1 student
- Lecturer should explain things differently : 1 student
- Tutors should give more relevant information so that we could improve:1 student

B.Com. Gen. students:

- Thought ALC and IFS were easy and did not work hard: 2 students
- Did attend all my work and attended all lectures (I tried very hard):1 student
- My attitude was “easy and what a waste of time”:2 students
- Took the subject for granted:4 students
- Did not manage my time well:2 students
- Travel for long hours and arrived late at home:1 student
- Struggle to adjust from school to university and (did not know where to ask for help):3 students
- Was not interested in the subjects (ALC, IFS, QSC):1 student
- Fall behind and could not catch up with my work:1 student
- Used my freedom incorrectly and having too much fun:3 student
- Did not submit all my work:3 students
- Did not attend all my lectures in ALC & IFS:2 students
- Did not spend enough time on ALC:2 students
- I was lazy and did not pay attention in class:2 students
- Did not like my lecture (IFS):1 students
- Did not prepare well for exams and panicked:2 students
- I struggle to write essays and did not submit them:1 student
- Not a first language speaker of English:2 students
- Did not understand the work in Man and IFS:2 students
- Tutor was not very helpful:1 student
- ALC was challenging:2 students

Question 3: What could you do differently this semester (all students)?

- Will not take anything for granted ever again:1 student
- Attend all my lectures and tutorials:2 students

- Concentrate in class:1 student
- Doing all my work: 4 student
- Make sure that I understand the work:1 student
- Go for consultation when I do not understand something:1 student
- Prepare myself better:1 student
- Do my pre-reading:1 student
- Recognise my priorities and have balance in my life:1 student
- I will improve: 1 student
- Work hard:1 student

Data set no. 4: Questionnaire

Note: Questions 1 – 7 were analysed and reported already in the biographical details under section 4.5.3 in Chapter 4.

Question 8: Why did you decide to study towards a degree in the EMS faculty at UWC?

- Because I liked Politics so much: 1 student
- I wanted to make my dream a success and UWC can make that happen. (It is one of the best universities):2 students
- Because I have a passion working with people and that is why I chose B Admin, I want to do human resource management and I love politics:1 student
- Because the field I wanted to go into was in the EMS faculty:1 student
- Ever since school, commerce was my dream career of choice (my passion):2 students
- Having a degree is the key to success. It empowers you for your future and opens doors for you for:2 students
- I wanted to obtain the financial part of business in order to run my own Educare centre one day (equipped myself with business knowledge):3 students
- At school, business subjects were my strong points and the logical choice was to study in a business faculty. In addition, I want to become a chartered accountant and my dream is to work for a top firm before I go on my own:1 student
- Business subjects are the subjects I liked most of all the subjects:3 students
- The EMS faculty offers marketing modules and Information Systems that will compliment my Diploma in Graphic Design that I already have:1 student
- I want to study Information Systems and business analysis. I find them interesting and I think that I stand a chance of succeeding in them:1 student
- I have been told that I have leadership skills and that I have a keen sense of commerce. I also achieved an 'A' symbol for my commerce subjects in high school:1 student
- Because the B Com degree has too many opportunities in the field of work, and I think that I have the potential to pass my degree in time:1 student

Question 8b: Do you have a problem with accommodation?

- Yes, because I stay with a relative and not my parents, and I am not sure what could happen:1 student
- Yes: 7 students (I stay on private accommodation and travelling is taking up a lot of my time)
- No: 12 students

Question 9: Do you have a problem with paying your fees, buying textbooks, travelling money, food, living expenses?

- Yes: with everything: 9 students (I am stressed because I don't have something to eat) (my parents are facing financial difficulties because of the recession, and cannot support me financially) (my father is the only one working and we are a family of seven) (my mother is a single parent and she is only one working and looking after the family)
- Yes: with travelling money and other expenses (the person who was paying for that lost her job and cannot help me anymore): 3 students (I applied for a study loan to pay my fees and to buy textbooks because my father is the only one working and he cannot pay for me)
- Only with living expenses: 1 student (I have a NSFAS loan for the rest)
- Only with buying textbooks: 1 student (I have a NSFAS loan that is paying for my fees). (my mother has a low income job and she cannot support me financially)
- No: 6 students (I received a study loan from NSFAS and my mother and grandparents are supporting me)

Question 10: Do you have family and friends that support you? If no, please explain why not.

- Yes: 8 students (all my family and friends)
- Yes: 2 students (family only)
- Yes: 1 student (friend and siblings)
- Yes: 2 students (friends in second and third year)
- Yes: 4 students (my mother only)
- Yes: 1 student (my big sister)
- Yes: 1 student (only my friends and my lecturer – my family do not show an interest in my student life)

- No: 1 student (people have their own agendas)

Question 11: What is good/positive about your studies?

- I do not see anything good about my studies because I am failing and panicking about everything. I am always too stressed and sometimes decide not to come to school:1 student
- So far nothing:1 student
- To be honest, there is nothing positive or good because of the modules that I failed, they just make me feel that I stupid and dumb:1 student
- I am a theory or visual learner, so Im very when it comes to theory because I can spend a lot of time studying my books but not calculating:1 student
- I try and make my studies positive because Im striving for a better life, and I want to have a well paying job. Also I would just like to better myself:1 student
- The fact that I have the resources to gather information. It requires a lot of determination so it prepares me for the working world:1 student
- Studying keep me busy about not thinking about my hunger. I at least passed modules:1
- The good thing is that I am actually doing well at all the other subjects. My future is back on track now:1 student
- What is good is that I have less risk of being unemployed one day. Another good point is that I am receiving knowledge:1 student
- I am very dedicated to my studies, knowing that I always go for what I want is something positive:1 student
- I am putting my whole effort in order to pass and finish my degree in 3 years time:1 student
- The good thing about my studies is that I can obtain, through self-will, a better and higher education enabling me to build a career for the future:1 student
- I really enjoyed my course even though my marks don't show it:1 student
- What is good is that we have mentors and tutors that are trying to help us succeed:1 student
- I am learning new things, and when I pass I feel like I have achieved something due to UWC being a place of higher education and well recognised as a great academic institution:1 student
- It broadens my knowledge and teaches me ways of how to better myself as a person and my lifestyle:1 student
- It is a good degree to do as it opens up opportunities: 1 student
- I enjoy learning new things. I am grateful to be her and further my education. I believe that I am capable to go very far. Its just a matter of my determination and logistical problems:1 student
- The fact that I work so hard and well during my semester and handing in my tuts and assignments:1 student
- Positive cause I came to the university with a goal to achieve, seeing that Im the first child in my family to study at a university: 1 student

Question 12: What are the challenges and why?

- I am worrying about money all the time and I am stressed out because of that. I forgot why I came to university. Sometimes I feel that I cannot do anything because of money:1 student
- The medium of instruction is too difficult. I cannot understand the presentation. Its not esay to attempt some questions. I have difficulty communicating with peers and lecturers. Difficulties in writing proper register and language when writing things like essays. I have financial worries too:1 student
- Challenges with QSF, even though I am repeating it, there is no difference. Another challenge that I face is not able to have money to come to school:1 student
- My challenges are: Not being taught certain things at school and learning it for the first-time at university. Sometimes I cannot grasp the knowledge quickly, and at the end of the day its to my loss. I also don't read often as I have many things to do at home, for example cleaning and making food:1 student
- One of my biggest challenges is the workload that one gets at university, and not being able to manage time effectively. These are my challenges because I have to be responsible now, whereas in school I was being chased after for my work:1 student
- My challenge is to get a part-time job so that I can have food and a comfortable place to stay. If I can get food, I will pass because I will concentrate on my studies:1 student
- My greatest challenge is to focus if only I can get focus I would receive exceptional results. Another problem I was facing was transportation – it took me an hour and a half to just get to school (and back):1 student
- My challenges are coping with all the work at once and struggle with finance:1 student
- My challenge is my home environment. They argue a lot because of past events and this has a really bad impact on myself and my studies. If they argue, I need to go and I do not have any family or friends living nearby where I can study, and I have to leave my work for the next day. I find it challenging to learn out of a textbook. I will rather have someone explaining the work to me and do a demonstration or an exercise with me:1 student
- Academically I have a problem with English because of my background. Now that I am putting my whole effort but still I don't make it. Too much is expected from us, e.g the work to have in order to pass:1 student
- I have many challenges. At home the low household income is a challenge (being able to sustain ourselves is not easy). I lack a greater self-will to tell myself to go to classes, and I gave into peer pressure in the first semester. I get bored easily in class and then I fell asleep. I find it easier to listen and do a test or task on the work learnt. That is how I remember work. My main challenge is juggling between life, your family, your friends and education. Cuts have to be made:1 student
- It is hard to study knowing that you do not have a stable place to stay, especially if you used to Cape Town and also not knowing when your loan would come through to buy enough food every day. Also some of the subjects need more tutors:1 student

- The challenges are we are finding difficult to understand lecturers sometimes because we used to be taught by teachers who understand our language then they translate us to understand fluent:1 student
- Above being lazy, I feel burnt out at times, because I am always busy, because I am involved with the church as well. And with my time management ability to be quite poor, I struggle to balance all the activities in my life. I am also a slow learner in meaning that I take a lot of time studying but cover a little work. I must also stop leaving work to last minute:1 student
- My challenges are getting to study. I don't have enough motivation to work harder or even good competition. Being at a tertiary institution like UWC makes me feel smaller and like a failure:1 student
- Maths – didn't do it at high school so had to do it at varsity so that caused problems:1 student
- At the moment, transport, emotional support and stability. Sometimes I feel like I go through these things alone:1 student
- Firstly, the transition from year to semester work. It takes me longer to understand and grab hold of content, so when the time comes for exams I don't fully understand the work and its content. Secondly, the change in work environment. I am used to education being structured and strict, but at varsity things are not structured, you may attend lectures anytime, you may choose not to write a test. You are easily distracted by others. Thirdly, my attitude towards my studies. Yes, I work hard during the semester and I meet DP or I obtain an average of 55 -65 in my coursework mark, but when it comes to the exams I am so lazy, I don't give my all and I die out, which is what hurt me in the first semester, that is what failed me:1 student
- One of the challenges I face here at university is the issue of many students in one class because that does not give you a chance to have a one-on-one conversation with your lecturer. The issue modules, some of the modules I was not aware that Im going to them in my degree:1 student
- The language of lecturers, because I am Afrikaans and the time it takes me to get to campus via train. I have to wake up early in the morning to be in time and get home late:1 student

Question 13: Any suggestions on how to overcome the challenges?

- I think that I need counselling, maybe that could help me because I think the stress got to me. Sometimes I smile and pretend to be fine even though Im not:1 student
- Read a lot of book and famirialise my self with the English language. Book must be translated in other languages too. Get NSFAS:1 student
- If I get a residence because of the challenges what I face at home and school and that can help me to have more time of studying:1 student
- To get extra lessons and ask for assistance in the areas that Im struggling with. Also just to make time for reading and note-making:1 student
- Concentration, determination and drive. Knowing what you want and doing every possible thing to achieve that. That is all that one needs:1 student
- By looking for a job and getting food. So that I can not worry with it.
- Keep reading material that relates to those subjects and always practice the skills acquired when lectured:1 student
- I will overcome the finance challenge by working during the holidays:1 student
- Moving out is an option to get away from the chaos at home, however, there is no finance for accommodation. I could live with family but that would cause conflict with regard to me being a practical person – getting help from tutors could help:1 student
- Extra classes for English should be offered to students. Marks shouldn't be reduced that much because the marks we get during the semester gives us hope, but only after exam then we see we didn't do well:1 student
- To be able to juggle life you need to balance and too much in one's plate can make you full at the sight. Having a cut made with some areas of life. Where peer pressures are concerned there are many ways to deal, but we just do not want to see or use those ways. We can say no, it is our right. But the pleasure of the world are enticing to the human eye. We can be an individual and not give in or simply just be stubborn and to class. It is what we want now, rather than in the late future. Where my finances are concerned the only option is for me to get a job to be able to get, at least, registration fee monies together. Other than that a raise in my maintenance is an option, but my father is reluctant and my faith in the justice system has deteriorated. So for now, the job will do:1 student
- Some of classes need to be more learner friendly:1 student
- The faculty and lecturers must try to help us and use the easy concept so that we can understand it:1 student
- If someone could help me manage my time. Also to have some to help me pick up some study skills so that my studying time can be more productive:1 student
- It is a personal thing. I must be self-motivated:1 student
- Getting help from friends who did it at high school and are good at it:1 student
- Maybe if I could talk to someone who can relate and offer encouragement:1 student
- In the beginning, there are PF's that tell what to expect in varsity and show the school. They don't do their jobs properly. Varsity needs to make first years welcomed in the manner that they understand all variables in the university, yes, varsity is not here to spoon feed, but you can't someone who has never swam to swim, you give them a life jacket, so that when they are comfortable they will swim on their own. The rest is up to you as a student. I know that now, because Im learning it the hard way, but in my learning I will pass:1 student
- I think the issue of many students can not be easy to overcome because we know that many students come from different schools. The university/faculty must give a full awareness of what a student must expect before he/she can choose a particular course/degree:1 student
- The challenge with the travelling, I think I must get a place to live closer to campus but don't have the money to cover the living expenses:1 student

Data set no. 6: Answers to individual interview questions

Question 1: Were you the first child from your family to study at a university?

No: 2 students

Yes: 11 students

Question 2: Were you infected or affected by HIV/Aids (personally, or a close relevant or someone responsible for you)?

No: 10 students

Yes: 3 students

Question 3: Advice on what new students should do:

- Have someone that you can speak to when things are getting tough and you need help (in your personal life and to help with your emotions):2 students
- Choose the correct friends (that can support you and that you can talk to):1 student
- Remain optimistic and focused:2 student
- Be focused and goal driven because you cannot pass well if you have not set goals and fulfil it. If you are goal driven (you will be serious) and you will notice the change in your results and you feel much better:2
- After I failed the first semester I was despondent but I encouraged myself through the help of friends and families and I was able to pass all my subjects in the second semester. This helped me to come back and now in my second year I know what to do:1 student
- Know what your objectives are:1 student
- Work hard because it always results in positive results:2 students
- Hard work and determination are those that keep you strong as well as disciplined:1 student
- Study hard and pray, that is the remedy to success especially when you in an institution of higher learning that has a lot to offer you:1 student
- Motivate yourself and tell yourself that you will work hard and do your best:1 student
- Attend all you classes and tutorials and do your pre-reading before class so that you can have background information before the lecture:3 students
- Preparation for class is very important because at tertiary level of education one is suppose to have a more keen and matured approach about one's success and must therefore be able to go the extra mile of doing self-study when required to do so:2 students
- Participation in lecture discussions is also critical. This will enable students to think independently and address issues critically:1 student
- Do all your assessments and assignments to the best of your ability so that you can have a good coursework mark:3 students
- When you not in class, go to the lecturer and ask what was discussed:1
- Go for consultation if you feel shy to ask in class:3 students
- Only you have the power to overcome hardships, you have the authority over you studies:2 students
- Know what you are getting yourself into from day one, don't underestimate the work because you fool yourself into thinking that you can get away with it or that it looks easy initially:1 student
- Make it easier for yourself by taking it seriously:1 student
- Planning is important, plan everything, your day, what due when, plan mentally and also write it down:1 student
- Adjust your attitude. I am so glad that I am back, it is an incredible opportunity to be at university, remember that not everyone gets this opportunity and maybe because I had such a tough time last year, I thought about how I can improve:1 student
- Don't be afraid to ask for help and then help yourself:1 student
- Sit in the front row or close to the front:1 student
- If you feel burn out, make changes to what you usually do in your day. In varsity you need to if you want to make it. Im doing much better and feeling better so good luck to future students:1 student
- Understand that university is far totally different from high school, it is not what you expected at school:1 student
- Associate yourself with good people who understand what they are here for and get to adjust to the university environment then everything will be fine for you:1 student
- The first year of study is a crucial year. You are forced to learn how to deal with your studies as well as your student account, books, stationery and many other factors. It requires that you are responsible:1 student
- Time management is also crucial factor because you have to manage all of the above factors. University is not like school where mommy or daddy can take care of you account or books for that matter:2 students
- A laptop is a requirement because your load is easier and when in the work place you have been trained for the use of equipment:1 students
- Study two weeks before the time:1 student
- For ALC, try and practice the skills that you were taught in class:1 student
- Use your freedom wisely and to your advantage:1 student
- Keep reminding yourself why you wanted to study and ask yourself if you are making any effort at being successful:1 student

- Adapting to the new environment and requirements are crucial because that determines the excellence of your success. All efforts will pay at the end of the day:1 student
- Students should have healthy competition among their fellow students in order to stay motivated and in turn, creating a better environment to work in:1 student
- Train yourself to at least read over the day's notes which have been covered to determine how well the student knows the work or whether consultation is needed. This will also lesson the stress when it comes to exams and tests:1 student
- Start paying attention to their books because time wasted never returns. They must think about their parents also about their future:1 student
- Seek help if you do not know or understand something and do so to someone who you trust like the lecturer but if you do not feel comfortable asking the lecturer ask your tutor or one of your friends who understand the work:1 student
- All I have to say is that we blame so many people for our study failures. University gives people that opportunity to be equal with those who have been more fortunate than others so the fact that someone comes from Bishop does not matter in universities the fact that someone comes from a school in the Eastern Cape makes no difference everything is equalised same lectures same resources. So it is up to the individual on how hungry they are in succeeding but not only succeeding but getting good grades while they are at it. So students should just dedicate their 3 years on their studies and focus on obtaining their degrees:1 student

Question 4: Advice on what new students should not do:

- Stay away from the cafeteria because it waste precious time: 2 students
- You get influenced easily and skip classes and automatically your studies will suffer because you will not have a proper understanding of the content of the modules: 1 student
- Do not bunk classes to play dominoes:4 students
- Do not get involved in big crowds:1 student
- Do not keep to yourself if things are tough:1 student
- Party less:2 students
- Do not do an assignment a day before the due date or studying a day before the test it is not going to help you:2 students
- You should not let other people influence you because at the end you would be the one that would suffer:1 student

ADDENDUM 12

CASE 1 -STAGE 2: DATA REDUCTION AND CROSS CHECKING (CLASSIFICATION OF UNITS OF MEANING INTO CATEGORIES AND THEMES)

CATEGORY 1: CHALLENGES TO LEARNING

Theme 1: Personal factors

Data set no. 1: Written Reflection no. 1

Question 3: What are the challenges?

- I worrying about how to pay the class fees:1 student
- I had no money for travelling:2 students
- I am struggling financially (no money to pay fees, buy books, travelling and food): 1 student
- I do not having on-campus accommodation: 2 students
- I did not have a place to stay: 1 student
- I have a single parent (mother) and I was worrying about failing: 1 student
- I should not be studying towards a B Com: 1 student
- Public transport was problematic (trains were late and I missed lectures): 1 student
- The time it takes me to get to campus via train. I have to wake up early in the morning to be in time and get home late:1 student

Data set no. 3: Written Reflection no. 2

Question 2: Reasons why I failed some of my modules at the end of the first semester:

- Had a bad attitude towards QSF (ending up hating it):1 student
- Was stressed out and lost focus:1 student
- My attitude was “easy and what a waste of time”:2 students
- Took the subject for granted:4 students
- Travel for long hours and arrived late at home:1 student
- Was not interested in the subjects (ALC, IFS, QSC):1 student
- Thought ALC and IFS were easy and did not work hard: 2 students
- I was lazy and did not pay attention in class:2 students
- Did not like my lecture (IFS):1 students

Data set no 4: Questionnaire

Question 8b: Do you have a problem with accommodation?

- Yes, because I stay with a relative and not my parents, and I am not sure what could happen:1 student
- Yes: 7 students (I stay on private accommodation and travelling is taking up a lot of my time)
- No: 12 students

Question 9: Do you have a problem with paying your fees, buying textbooks, travelling money, food, living expenses?

- Yes: with everything: 9 students (I am stressed because I don't have something to eat) (my parents are facing financial difficulties because of the recession, and cannot support me financially) (my father is the only one working and we are a family of seven) (my mother is a single parent and she is only one working and looking after the family)
- Yes: with travelling money and other expenses (the person who was paying for that lost her job and cannot help me anymore): 3 students (I applied for a study loan to pay my fees and to buy textbooks because my father is the only one working and he cannot pay for me)
- Only with living expenses: 1 student (I have a NSFAS loan for the rest)
- Only with buying textbooks: 1 student (I have a NSFAS loan that is paying for my fees). (my mother has a low income job and she cannot support me financially)
- No: 6 students (I received a study loan from NSFAS and my mother and grandparents are supporting me)

Question 10: Do you have family and friends that support you? If no, please explain why not.

- Yes: 8 students (all my family and friends)
- Yes: 2 students (family only)

- Yes: 1 student (friend and siblings)
- Yes: 2 students (friends in second and third year)
- Yes: 4 students (my mother only)
- Yes: 1 student (my big sister)
- Yes: 1 student (only my friends and my lecturer – my family do not show an interest in my student life)
- No: 1 student (people have their own agendas)

Question 12: What are the challenges and why?

- I am worrying about money all the time and I am stressed out because of that. I forgot why I came to university. Sometimes I feel that I cannot do anything because of money:1 student
- Another challenge that I face is not able to have money to come to school:1 student
- My challenge is to get a part-time job so that I can have food and a comfortable place to stay. If I can get food, I will pass because I will concentrate on my studies:1 student
- My greatest challenge is to focus if only I can get focus I would receive exceptional results. Another problem I was facing was transportation – it took me an hour and a half to just get to school (and back):1 student
- My challenges are coping with all the work at once and struggle with finance:1 student
- I have many challenges. At home the low household income is a challenge (being able to sustain ourselves is not easy). I lack a greater self-will to tell myself to go to classes, I get bored easily in class and then I fell asleep: 1 student
- It is hard to study knowing that you do not have a stable place to stay, especially if you used to Cape Town and also not knowing when your loan would come through to buy enough food every day: 1 student
- My challenges are getting to study. I don't have enough motivation to work harder or even good competition. Being at a tertiary institution like UWC makes me feel smaller and like a failure:1 student
- At the moment, transport, emotional support and stability. Sometimes I feel like I go through these things alone:1 student
- Thirdly, my attitude towards my studies: 1 student

Data set no 6: Written answers to individual interviews

Question 1: Were you the first child from your family to study at a university?

No: 2 students
Yes: 11 students

Question 2: Were you infected or affected by HIV/Aids (personally, or a close relevant or someone responsible for you)?

No: 10 students
Yes: 3 students

Question 4: Advice on what new students should not do:

- Do not keep to yourself if things are tough:1 student

Theme 2: Academic factors

Data set no. 1: Written Reflection no. 1

Question 3: What are the challenges?

- I struggled to adjust to university life: 2 students
- Students feeling alone and are not coping:2 students
- I struggle to manage my time:1 student
- I had no time to spend with family and friends:3 students
- My fellow students were not helpful: 1 student
- I did not know how to study:1 student
- The workload is too much:12 students
- Do not understand the subject content:6 students
- Do not understand the lecturer: 5 students
- Language difficulties:2 students
- Students not having resources to do their work (i.e. completing assignments on time : 3 students
- I cannot study at home: 3 student

Data set no. 3: Written Reflection no. 2

Question no. 2: Reasons why I failed some of my modules at the end of the first semester:

- Did not manage my time well:2 students
- Miss some lectures: 1 student
- Did not prepare well for the exams in QSF:1 student
- OSF was hard and difficulty to understand because of not having Maths at school: 6 students
- Did not understand the work in ALC:4 students
- Too much work in ALC: 2 students
- Spend more time at university than at home:1 student
- Struggle to adjust from school to university and (did not know where to ask for help):3 students
- Fall behind and could not catch up with my work:1 student
- Did not submit all my work:3 students
- Did not attend all my lectures in ALC & IFS:2 students
- Did not spend enough time on ALC:2 students
- Did not prepare well for exams and panicked:2 students
- I struggle to write essays and did not submit them:1 student
- Not a first language speaker of English:2 students
- Did not understand the work in Man and IFS:2 students
- Tutor was not very helpful:1 student
- ALC was challenging:2 students
- Did attend all lectures in ALC but still failed:2 students
- Did go for consultation but still failed it:3 students
- Submit all my assignments on time but still failed:1 student
- Did all my work and attended all lectures (I tried very hard) but still failed:1 student

Data set no. 4: Questionnaire

Question 12: What are the challenges and why?

- The medium of instruction is too difficult. I cannot understand the presentation. Its not easy to attempt some questions. I have difficulty communicating with peers and lecturers. Difficulties in writing proper register and language when writing things like essays. I have financial worries too:1 student
- Challenges with QSF, even though I am repeating it, there is no difference: 1 student
- My challenges are: Not being taught certain things at school and learning it for the first-time at university. Sometimes I cannot grasp the knowledge quickly, and at the end of the day its to my loss. I also don't read often as I have many things to do at home, for example cleaning and making food:1 student
- One of my biggest challenges is the workload that one gets at university, and not being able to manage time effectively. These are my challenges because I have to be responsible now, whereas in school I was being chased after for my work:1 student
- My challenge is my home environment. They argue a lot because of past events and this has a really bad impact on myself and my studies. If they argue, I need to go and I do not have any family or friends living nearby where I can study, and I have to leave my work for the next day. I find it challenging to learn out of a textbook. I will rather have someone explaining the work to me and do a demonstration or an exercise with me:1 student
- Academically I have a problem with English because of my background. Now that I am putting my whole effort but still I don't make it. Too much is expected from us, e.g the work to have in order to pass:1 student
- I find it easier to listen and do a test or task on the work learnt. That is how I remember work. My main challenge is juggling between life, your family, your friends and education. Cuts have to be made:1 student
- The challenges are we are finding difficult to understand lecturers sometimes because we used to be taught by teachers who understand our language then they translate us to understand fluent:1 student
- Above being lazy, I feel burnt out at times, because I am always busy, because I am involved with the church as well. And with my time management ability to be quite poor, I struggle to balance all the activities in my life. I am also a slow learner in meaning that I take a lot of time studying but cover a little work. I must also stop leaving work to last minute:1 student
- Maths – didn't do it at high school so had to do it at varsity so that caused problems:1 student
- Firstly, the transition from year to semester work. It takes me longer to understand and grab hold of content, so when the time comes for exams I don't fully understand the work and its content. Secondly, the change in work environment. I am used to education being structured and strict, but at varsity things are not structured, you may attend lectures anytime, you may choose not to write a test. Yes, I work hard during the semester and I meet DP or I obtain an average of 55 -65 in my coursework mark, but when it comes to the exams I am so lazy, I don't give my all and I die out, which is what hurt me in the first semester, that is what failed me:1 student
- The language of lecturers, because I am Afrikaans: 1 student

Data set no. 6: Answers to individual interviews

Question 4: Advice on what new students should not do:

- Do not do an assignment a day before the due date or studying a day before the test it is not going to help you:2 students

Theme 3: Social factors

Data set no. 1: Written Reflection no. 1

Question 3: What are the challenges?

- I did not use my freedom wisely: 1 student
- I gave in to peer pressure: 2 students
- I do not make friends easily: 1 student

Data set no 3: Written Reflection no. 2

Question 2: Reasons why I failed some of my modules at the end of the first semester:

- Used my freedom incorrectly and having too much fun:3 student

Data set no. 4: Questionnaire

Question 3: What are the challenges and why?

- I gave into peer pressure in the first semester: 1 student
- You are easily distracted by others: 1 student

Data set no. 6: Answers to individual interviews

Question 4: Advice on what new students should not do:

- Stay away from the cafeteria because it waste precious time: 2 students
- You get influenced easily and skip classes and automatically your studies will suffer because you will not have a proper understanding of the content of the modules: 1 student
- Do not bunk classes to play dominoes:4 students
- Do not get involved in big crowds:1 student
- Party less:2 students
- You should not let other people influence you because at the end you would be the one that would suffer:1 student

Theme 4: Institutional factors

Data set no. 3: Written Reflection no. 2

Question 2: Reasons why I failed some of my modules at the end of the first semester:

- Did not understand the lecturer/tutor:1 student
- Tutor was not very helpful:1 student

Data set no. 4: Questionnaire

Question 12: What are the challenges?

- Also some of the subjects need more tutors:1 student
- One of the challenges I face here at university is the issue of many students in one class because that does not give you a chance to have a one-on-one conversation with your lecturer. The issue modules, some of the modules I was not aware that Im going to them in my degree:1 student
- Class time was too far apart: 1 student

CATEGORY 2: OVERCOMING THE CHALLENGES TO LEARNING

Theme 1: Personal factors

Data set no. 1: Written Reflection no. 1

Question 5: Suggestions on what I can do to overcome the challenges:

- Try to make the right decisions
- Stay focused at all times
- Study more and try harder

Data set no. 3: Written Reflection no. 2

Question 1: Reasons why I passed some of my modules at the end of the first semester:

- Put a lot of effort in and was passionate about it:3 responses
- Worked hard:5 responses
- Attended all lectures:1 student
- Attitude towards QSC was positive:1 student
- Liked and was interest in the subject (Man):1 student
- Showed more interest and enjoyed the subject (IFS):1 student

Question 3: What could you do differently this semester?

- Will not take anything for granted ever again:1 student
- Recognise my priorities and have balance in my life:1 student
- I will improve: 1 student
- Work hard:1 student

Data set no. 4: Questionnaire

Question 13: Any suggestions on how to overcome the challenges?

- I think that I need counselling, maybe that could help me because I think the stress got to me. Sometimes I smile and pretend to be fine even though I'm not:1 student
- Get NSFAS:1 student
- If I get a residence because of the challenges what I face at home and school and that can help me to have more time of studying:1 student
- Concentration, determination and drive. Knowing what you want and doing every possible thing to achieve that. That is all that one needs:1 student
- By looking for a job and getting food. So that I can not worry with it.
- I will overcome the finance challenge by working during the holidays:1 student
- Moving out is an option to get away from the chaos at home, however, there is no finance for accommodation. I could live with family but that would cause conflict with regard to me being a practical person: 1 student
- To be able to juggle life you need to balance and too much in one's plate can make you full at the sight. Having a cut made with some areas of life. It is what we want now, rather than in the late future. Where my finances are concerned the only option is for me to get a job to be able to get, at least, registration fee monies together. Other than that a raise in my maintenance is an option, but my father is reluctant and my faith in the justice system has deteriorated. So for now, the job will do:1 student
- It is a personal thing. I must be self-motivated:1 student
- The rest is up to you as a student. I know that now, because I'm learning it the hard way, but in my learning I will pass:1 student
- The challenge with the travelling, I think I must get a place to live closer to campus but don't have the money to cover the living expenses:1 student
- Maybe if I could talk to someone who can relate and offer encouragement:1 student

Data set no. 6: Answers to individual interviews

Question 3: Advice on what new students should do:

- Have someone that you can speak to when things are getting tough and you need help (in your personal life and to help with your emotions):2 students
- Don't be afraid to ask for help and then help yourself:1 student
- Seek help if you do not know or understand something and do so to someone who you trust like the lecturer but if you do not feel comfortable asking the lecturer ask your tutor or one of your friends who understand the work:1 student

Theme 2: Academic factors

Data set no. 1: Written Reflection no. 1

Question 5: Suggestions on what I can do to overcome the challenges:

- Go for consultation more often
- Use their time management skills effectively to have adequate time to spend on all subjects
- Try to adjust to handle the pressure of the heavy workload

Data set no. 3: Written Reflection no. 2

Question 1: Reasons why I passed

- Went for consultation:1 response
- Planned work effectively and efficiently:1 response
- Attended all the lectures:3 responses
- Did pre-reading and asked for clarification when not understanding the work:1 response
- Submitted all assignments on time:2 responses
- Not too much work and straight forward:3 responses
- Could understand the work:3 responses
- Paid attention in class:4 students
- Practice various questions for QSC:2 students
- Spent enough time on my subjects:1 student
- Submitted all my assignments on time: 1 student
- Mathematically inclined and strong subject from young age (QSC):1 student
- Have past knowledge about OSC and IFS (computers):1 student
- OSC did not require memorising – just understanding:2 students
- Did understand the content (Man):2 students
- Did have background information about the subject (Man):1 student

Question 3: What could you do differently this semester (all students)?

- Attend all my lectures and tutorials:2 students
- Concentrate in class:1 student
- Doing all my work: 4 student
- Make sure that I understand the work:1 student
- Go for consultation when I do not understand something:1 student
- Prepare myself better:1 student
- Do my pre-reading:1 student

Data set no. 4: Questionnaire

Question 13: Any suggestions on how to overcome the challenges?

- Read a lot of book and familiarise my self with the English language: 1 student
- Also just to make time for reading and note-making:1 student
- Keep reading material that relates to those subjects and always practice the skills acquired when lectured:1 student
- Getting help from friends who did it at high school and are good at it:1 student

Data set no. 6: Answers to individual interviews

Question 3: Advice on what new students should do:

- Remain optimistic and focused:2 student
- Be focused and goal driven because you cannot pass well if you have not set goals and fulfil it. If you are goal driven (you will be serious) and you will notice the change in your results and you feel much better:2
- After I failed the first semester I was despondent but I encouraged myself through the help of friends and families and I was able to pass all my subjects in the second semester. This helped me to come back and now in my second year I know what to do:1 student
- Know what your objectives are:1 student
- Work hard because it always results in positive results:2 students
- Hard work and determination are those that keep you strong as well as disciplined:1 student
- Study hard and pray, that is the remedy to success especially when you in an institution of higher learning that has a lot to offer you:1 student

- Motivate yourself and tell yourself that you will work hard and do your best:1 student
- Only you have the power to overcome hardships, you have the authority over you studies:2 students
- Know what you are getting yourself into from day one, don't underestimate the work because you fool yourself into thinking that you can get away with it or that it looks easy initially:1 student
- Make it easier for yourself by taking it seriously:1 student
- If you feel burn out, make changes to what you usually do in your day. In varsity you need to if you want to make it. Im doing much better and feeling better so good luck to future students:1 student
- Understand that university is far totally different from high school, it is not what you expected at school:1 student
- Adjust your attitude. I am so glad that I am back, it is an incredible opportunity to be at university, remember that not everyone gets this opportunity and maybe because I had such a tough time last year, I thought about how I can improve:1 student
- The first year of study is a crucial year. You are forced to learn how to deal with your studies as well as your student account, books, stationery and many other factors. It requires that you are responsible:1 student
- University is not like school where mommy or daddy can take care of you account or books for that matter:2 students
- Keep reminding yourself why you wanted to study and ask yourself if you are making any effort at being successful:1 student
- Start paying attention to their books because time wasted never returns. They must think about their parents also about their future:1 student
- All I have to say is that we blame so many people for our study failures. University gives people that opportunity to be equal with those who have been more fortunate than others so the fact that someone comes from Bishop does not matter in universities the fact that someone comes from a school in the Eastern Cape makes no difference everything is equalised same lectures same resources. So it is up to the individual on how hungry they are in succeeding but not only succeeding but getting good grades while they are at it. So students should just dedicate their 3 years on their studies and focus on obtaining their degrees:1 student
- Time management is also crucial factor because you have to manage all of the above factors: 1 student
- Planning is important, plan everything, your day, what due when, plan mentally and also write it down:1 student
- Attend all you classes and tutorials and do your pre-reading before class so that you can have background information before the lecture:3 students
- Preparation for class is very important because at tertiary level of education one is suppose to have a more keen and matured approach about one's success and must therefore be able to go the extra mile of doing self-study when required to do so:2 students
- Participation in lecture discussions is also critical. This will enable students to think independently and address issues critically:1 student
- Do all your assessments and assignments to the best of your ability so that you can have a good coursework mark:3 students
- When you not in class, go to the lecturer and ask what was discussed:1
- Go for consultation if you feel shy to ask in class:3 students
- Sit in the front row or close to the front:1 student
- A laptop is a requirement because your load is easier and when in the work place you have been trained for the use of equipment:1 students
- Study two weeks before the time:1 student
- For ALC, try and practice the skills that you were taught in class:1 student
- Adapting to the new environment and requirements are crucial because that determines the excellence of your success. All efforts will pay at the end of the day:1 student
- Train yourself to at least read over the day's notes which have been covered to determine how well the student knows the work or whether consultation is needed. This will also lesson the stress when it comes to exams and tests:1 student

Theme 3: Social factors

Data set no 4: Questionnaire

Question 13: Any suggestions on how to overcome the challenges?

- Where peer pressures are concerned there are many ways to deal, but we just do not want to see or use those ways. We can say no, it is our right. But the pleasure of the world are enticing to the human eye. We can be an individual and not give in or simply just be stubborn and to class: 1 student

Data set no. 6: Answers to individual interviews

Question 3: Advice on what new students should do:

- Choose the correct friends (that can support you and that you can talk to):1 student
- Associate yourself with good people who understand what they are here for and get to adjust to the university environment then everything will be fine for you:1 student
- Use your freedom wisely and to your advantage:1 student

- Students should have healthy competition among their fellow students in order to stay motivated and in turn, creating a better environment to work in:1 student

Theme 4: Institutional factors

Data set no. 1: Written Reflection no. 1

Question 5: Suggestions on what the faculty could do to assist with overcoming the challenges:

- Make more bursaries and loans available to all students that covers textbooks, traveling and food costs (early enough – should not take so long to respond);
- Reduce the workload and spread assignments and tests evenly so that they could have more time to improve on the quality of work;
- Ensure that all modules have tutorials because it is easier to ask questions in smaller groups and to get assistance from the tutors;
- Make Management (reduce the content – 19 chapters were covered in Term 1 alone), ALC and Information Systems year courses because there is too much work that needs to be covered, and it will help students to better understand the content thereof if it is spread over a year;
- Make more resources available to students and allow more time to work in the computer labs;
- Appoint more permanent lecturers to explain the work more fully to students; and
- There should be more residences to accommodate all the students that are in need of accommodation
- Look at how students doing and find out what they are struggling with in order to assist them

The faculty could ask lecturers to:

- Ensure that students understand the work by explaining more fully, do revision regularly (before tests) and have more patience with students;
- Help students by giving more specific criteria for assignments and set questions that make complete sense and be clear on what they require from students;
- Support and motivate students more and be more attentive and helpful to students;
- Make lectures more interesting and productive and stop being boring and just reading from the slides;
- Encourage students to come for consultation (because some students are afraid and scared of some of the lecturers), and be available for that purpose;
- Give extra classes to assist with learning and technology, and coping skills;
- Not only e-mail assignments to students because not all students have technology at home;
- Not to be so strict with due dates – students are not lazy, the work is too much;
- Suggest books that students could use for research purposes, and
- Interact with the students on a more personal level in order to understand them better.

Data set no 3: Written Reflection no. 2

Question 3: What can be done to assist with overcoming the challenges:

- Tutors should give more relevant information so that we could improve:1 student
- Lecturer should explain things differently : 1 student
- Lecturers and tutors were understandable:1 student
- Tutorial classes were helpful:1 student

Data set no. 4: Questionnaire

Question 13: Any suggestions on how to overcome the challenges?

- Getting help from tutors could help:1 student
- Extra classes for English should be offered to students. Marks shouldn't be reduced that much because the marks we get during the semester gives us hope, but only after exam then we see we didn't do well:1 student
- To get extra lessons and ask for assistance in the areas that Im struggling with: 1 student
- Some of classes need to be more learner friendly:1 student
- The faculty and lecturers must try to help us and use the easy concept so that we can understand it:1 student
- If someone could help me manage my time. Also to have some to help me pick up some study skills so that my studying time can be more productive:1 student
- In the beginning, there are PF's that tell what to expect in varsity and show the school. They don't do their jobs properly. Varsity needs to make first years welcomed in the manner that they understand all variables in the university, yes, varsity is not here to spoon feed, but you can't someone who has never swam to swim, you give them a life jacket, so that when they are comfortable they will swim on their own: 1 student
- I think the issue of many students can not be easy to overcome because we know that many students come from different schools. The university/faculty must give a full awareness of what a student must expect before he/she can choose a particular course/degree:1 student
- Book must be translated in other languages too.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION FROM DATA SETS

Data set no. 1: Written Reflection n. 1

Question 1: What were my expectations to be at UWC?

- Excited, feeling great but anxious:3 responses
- Feeling scared: 1 response
- Different from school & hard work is needed: 5 responses
- Making friends, new cultures, and having freedom:4 responses
- Adjusting to university life was hard: 8 responses
- Stressful experience: 1 response
- Experience was bad: 1 response
- Did not attend orientation and was confused and stressed: 1 response
- Thought university would help me with the outside world and areas I cannot cope with: 1 response

Question 2: How am I doing so far? (This question was used to select the students)

- Things are going reasonably well (pass three out of the four): 7 students
- Not going well (passing two, failing two): 5 students
- Not going well (passing one, failing three): 3 students
- Things are going really bad (failing everything): 5 students

Question 4: What is good/positive so far about my studies?

- Students are happy, motivated and are studying: 2 students
- Apply effective time management techniques(1 student)
- Study harder (3 students)
- Work effectively in groups and when doing research (1 student)
- Make use of consultation (2 students)
- Students receiving help from lecturers: 2 students

Data set no. 4. Questionnaire

Question 8: Why did you decide to study towards a degree in the EMS faculty at UWC?

- Because I liked Politics so much: 1 student
- I wanted to make my dream a success and UWC can make that happen. (It is one of the best universities):2 students
- Because I have a passion working with people and that is why I chose B Admin, I want to do human resource management and I love politics:1 student
- Because the field I wanted to go into was in the EMS faculty:1 student
- Ever since school, commerce was my dream career of choice (my passion):2 students
- Having a degree is the key to success. It empowers you for your future and opens doors for you for:2 students
- I wanted to obtain the financial part of business in order to run my own Educare centre one day (equipped myself with business knowledge):3 students
- At school, business subjects were my strong points and the logical choice was to study in a business faculty. In addition, I want to become a chartered accountant and my dream is to work for a top firm before I go on my own:1 student
- Business subjects are the subjects I liked most of all the subjects:3 students
- The EMS faculty offers marketing modules and Information Systems that will compliment my Diploma in Graphic Design that I already have:1 student
- I want to study Information Systems and business analysis. I find them interesting and I think that I stand a chance of succeeding in them:1 student
- I have been told that I have leadership skills and that I have a keen sense of commerce. I also achieved an 'A' symbol for my commerce subjects in high school:1 student
- Because the B Com degree has too many opportunities in the field of work, and I think that I have the potential to pass my degree in time:1 student

Question 11: What is good/positive about your studies?

- I do not see anything good about my studies because I am failing and panicking about everything. I am always too stressed and sometimes decide not to come to school:1 student
- So far nothing:1 student
- To be honest, there is nothing positive or good because of the modules that I failed, they just make me feel that I stupid and dumb:1 student
- I am a theory or visual learner, so Im very when it comes to theory because I can spend a lot of time studying my books but not calculating:1 student
- I try and make my studies positive because Im striving for a better life, and I want to have a well paying job. Also I would just like to better myself:1 student

- The fact that I have the resources to gather information. It requires a lot of determination so it prepares me for the working world:1 student
- Studying keep me busy about not thinking about my hunger. I at least passed modules:1
- The good thing is that I am actually doing well at all the other subjects. My future is back on track now:1 student
- What is good is that I have less risk of being unemployed one day. Another good point is that I am receiving knowledge:1 student
- I am very dedicated to my studies, knowing that I always go for what I want is something positive:1 student
- I am putting my whole effort in order to pass and finish my degree in 3 years time:1 student
- The good thing about my studies is that I can obtain, through self-will, a better and higher education enabling me to build a career for the future:1 student
- I really enjoyed my course even though my marks don't show it:1 student
- What is good is that we have mentors and tutors that are trying to help us succeed:1 student
- I am learning new things, and when I pass I feel like I have achieved something due to UWC being a place of higher education and well recognised as a great academic institution:1 student
- It broadens my knowledge and teaches me ways of how to better myself as a person and my lifestyle:1 student
- It is a good degree to do as it opens up opportunities: 1 student
- I enjoy learning new things. I am grateful to be here and further my education. I believe that I am capable to go very far. Its just a matter of my determination and logistical problems:1 student
- The fact that I work so hard and well during my semester and handing in my tuts and assignments:1 student
- Positive cause I came to the university with a goal to achieve, seeing that Im the first child in my family to study at a university: 1 student

ADDENDUM 13

CASE 1 - STAGE 3: SYNTHESIS AND REDUCTION (GROUPINGS OF CATEGORIES AND THEMES INTO SUB-THEMES)

CATEGORY 1: CHALLENGES TO LEARNING

Theme 1: Personal factors

Sub-theme 1: Accommodation

Satisfactory: 16 in April, 12 in October

Problematic: 4 students in April, 8 students in October

Sub-theme 2: Financial means

No financial problems: 16 in April; 6 in October

Have financial problems: 4 students in April; 14 students in October

Sub-theme 3: Family support

Family is supportive: 16 students

Family is not supportive but friends and lecturers are: 4 students

Sub-theme 4: First generation students

Yes: 11 students

No: 2 students

Sub-theme 5: Infected or affected by HIV/Aids

Yes: 3 students

No: 10 students

Theme 2: Academic factors

Sub-theme 1: Attitude and personal orientation

Attitude and personal orientation was problematic / negative: 5 students in April; 13 students in July

Sub-theme 2: Transition

Struggle to adjust to university environment: 8 students

Sub-theme 3: Time management

Struggle with time management: 7 students

Sub-theme 4: Workload

Perceived the workload as 'heavy': 12 students

Sub-theme 5: Learning styles

Problems with learning styles: 4 students

Sub-theme 6: Foundational knowledge / Finding some modules challenging

6 students in April; 14 students in July

Sub-theme 7: Language

Second / additional language speakers of English: 7 students

Sub-theme 8: Home environment and family crises

Home environment not conducive and experiencing family crises: 3 students

Sub-theme 9: Studying and working simultaneously

Studying and working simultaneously: 3 students

Theme 3: Social factors

Sub-theme 1: Peer pressure

Gave into peer pressure: 4 students

Students should not give into peer pressure: 11 students

Theme 4: Institutional factors

Sub-theme 1: Large classes

Finding large classes challenging: 1 student

Sub-theme 2: Subject information

Did not receive adequate information: 1 student

Sub-theme 3: Resources at the university

Resources are not sufficient: 2 students

CATEGORY 2: OVERCOMING THE CHALLENGES TO LEARNING

Theme 1: Personal factors

Sub-theme 1: Accommodation

One student suggested finding closer accommodation in order to overcome the traveling challenge

Sub-theme 2: Financial means

Three students suggested finding a job to overcome their financial difficulties

One student suggested applying for NSFAS

Sub-theme 3: Support

Two students were in need of emotional and professional support

Four students suggested that new students should seek help when in need

Theme 2: Academic factors

Sub-theme 1: Attitude and personal orientation

Eight students suggested that they will change their attitude and personal orientation

Thirteen students suggested that new first-year students should have the right attitude and personal orientation

Sub-theme 2: Time management

Six students suggested that they will plan and manage their time better

Seven students suggested that they will do all their work and submit it on time

Sub-theme 3: Hard work

Eight students suggested that new first-year students should work hard

Sub-theme 4: Learning styles

Four students reported that they used effective study techniques

One student suggested that new students should practise the skills learnt in ALC

Sub-theme 5: Foundational knowledge

In order to overcome the foundational knowledge challenges, the following suggestions were made: do their pre-reading (7 students); attend all classes and concentrate (8 students); go for consultation and ask questions (5 students) and seek support from peers (1 student)

They suggested that new students should attend all their classes, they should do their pre-reading, ask questions and go for consultation

Sub-theme 6: Language

One student suggested that she will read books and familiarise herself with the English language

One student suggested that books must be translated

Theme 3: Social factors

Sub-theme 1: Peer pressure

Four students suggested that new first-year students should choose the right friends

Theme 4: Institutional factors

Sub-theme 1: Provide more resources

Five suggestions were made in terms of the provision for comprehensive financial aid, more on-campus accommodation and more human and infrastructure resources

Sub-theme 2: Provide academic support

Five suggestions were made on how lecturers and tutors could assist students with their academic integration to the university environment

Sub-theme 3: Provide moral support and encouragement

Two suggestions were made that lecturers should try to support and motivate students more and show empathy

ADDENDUM 14

CASE 2- STAGE 1: INITIATION (GENERAL READING AND NOTING OF RESPONSES)

Data set no. 1: Written Reflection (WR) no. 1

Question 1: What were my expectations to be at UWC?

- I know that it would be much difficult and complicated than That the workload would be heavy and I needed to work hard: 1 student
- Expected good lecturers: 1 student
- Expected the administration to be better and more organised:1 student
- University is different from school and that I have to work hard and spent lots of my time on concentrating on my work: 2 students
- The way they teach is different to school: 1 student
- I was amazed at the beginning. We even write tests on a Saturday: 1 student
- The work is interesting but also done very differently that it was at school. This had made it kind of difficult for me. This has in a way made me feel stupid but I am getting the hang of things now: 1 student
- When I entered university I expected a fast pace of work, but not such an extreme pace. The work is not difficult but it is really too much at a time: 1 student
- I expected to see strict lecturers who speak bomberstres words (English), unapproachable. I thought every pass must be an 'a' symbol only. I expected so many things: 1 student
- I just love UWC so much. It is the best: 1 student
- It is exciting and I am learning a lot: 1 student
- It is exciting and a pleasant experience:1 student
- The orientation programme helped to let me settle in and to make friends:1 student
- UWC is a very welcoming institution and I was overwhelmed because I was very scared that no provision would be made for me (student that is partially sighted):1 student
- After orientation I felt at home from day one: 1 student
- Attending lectures are fun and very interesting: 2 students
- I am enjoying it:1 student
- It was a fun and exciting experience at orientation:1 student
- I made friends during orientation: 1 student
- I was very excited when I was finally registered: 1 student
- When lectures started I was ready to learn and motivated: 1 student
- UWC had a nice vibe when I got here: 1 student
- At the beginning of the year I had this huge fear and even thought I would never make it. Now I am more comfortable: 1 student
- It was boring socially: 1 student
- I was very confused at first, but met a friend who helped me to settle in:1 student
- It was a culture shock and experience racism and segregation between coloureds and black students:1 student
- I never realized that it would be so hectic that I hardly ever have free time to spend with my family and friends. I hardly even have time for myself. I am always busy and never have time for anything else besides my studies: 1 student
- At first, coming to the university gave me a feeling of nervousness: 1 student
- I hated orientation. I didn't want to come and was miserable. I am not a social person and I was alone because of this. The 1st week of class was awful as I had nothing to do between lectures and no one to talk to either. I started picking up when I began using the library. I could do work at varsity and relax at home. I have since made a few friends and am enjoying UWC a little more: 1 student
- My experience at university was tougher than I thought. Trying to balance everything is quite difficult. The workload especially has hit me the hardest, I feel that there should be more hours in a day. If you not a very disciplined student it is especially hard and the difference between school and university is quite vast and overwhelming. I do find university difficult and Im barely coping: 1 student
- The registration process was a nightmare: 1 student

2. How am I doing so far?

- I am doing reasonably ok at my studies: 17 students
- I am doing pretty well. I pass all my modules so far: 3 students

3. What is positive?

- UWC is trying to help students academically:1 student
- People are much friendlier than at school:1 students
- UWC has tried to incorporate me as a partially sighted student:1 student
- I am involved in a ruby club socially:1 student
- My favourite subjects are Management and QSC, I naturally enjoy working with numbers and management is my future main stream. Im definitely passing these subjects: 1 student
- Positive outcomes of being at this institute is that I always feel as if I have learned more and more everyday: 1 student
- The lecturers are always around to help us and give advice on certain things: 1 student
- We are exposed to a variety of activities also, which broadens one's mind: 1 student
- Everything at UWC is organised. The lecturers are always prepared with a lesson: 1 student
- Our tasks are always ready: 1 student
- Another good thing about UWC is that they offer a lot of services such as support services: 1 student
- So far I enjoy UWC. I will cry if I must leave: 1 student
- I am satisfied with UWC and its structure and system: 1 student
- The campus is very nice and I've met some really funny people. The work isn't to bad yet, so I'm coping all right: 1 student
- Good things about me is that I know how to manage time although sometimes I face so many assignments to do that must be submitted at same time and test as well: 1 student
- I am a fully registered student now and am studying, am attending all the classes according to the timetable by focusing on my dreams while controlling my time which is time management. I am looking forward to achieve a B com Economics degree in the record time: 1 student
- The good things of university are that lectures are well conducted especially ALC by mrs McGhie and Management by mr Mentor. Here again tutorials classes in these two subjects are well prepared for by the tutors: 1 student
- I am passing all my assignments and tutorials:1student
- Once we started with the work it was not that bad. The workload during the first term was manageable: 1 student
- The work is understandable: 1 student
- The resources made available on campus and the caf atmosphere: 1 student

4. What are the challenges and why?

- Sometimes there are problems at home: 1 student
- I stay off campus and traveling is a challenge (public transport makes me late for class): 2 students
- Struggle to manage my timetable and to fit everything in: 2 students
- Time management skills, discipline and trying to study. I have a short concentration span: 1 student
- So far there are no challenges that am facing and with that I would like to thank the almighty God for guiding me, for leading and controlling my life because am copying very good with my studies and I know that with Him I will pass all my modules that I am doing this semester: 1 student
- Once submitted assignments late because of a virus on my usb. Don't feel comfortable on my ALC tutorials because of a personal reason: 1 student.
- The workload is heavy:3 students
- Sometimes I do not have the resources:1 student
- Not having the resources at home to type my assignments and the resources on campus are limited:1 student
- ALC is a tricky subject:1 student
- The tutors explaining the work a day before it is due, this is not giving me enough time to complete the work:1 student
- Struggle with referencing since it is new to me:1 student
- QFS is a challenge as I am not enthusiastic about Maths:1 student
- I feel that am packed with too many things to do at the same time. I do not know what to concentrate on therefore Im not able to do it with my full ability. I don't know what to see to all at the same time. 1 student
- My biggest challenge is reading because I am partially sighted, I cannot read a lot because my eyes start to pain and them I must stop. University requires one to read, and that I cannot do. It angers me when this happens and I worry that I am going to fail:1student
- I do not face major challenges. The only thing is that I do not understand my IFS lecturer. That is an academic challenge. 1 student
- Settling in was a big challenge and so is listening to some of the lecturers when my mind is bored. Concentration is a bit of a problem. Getting a really good mark for an ALC tutorial is also a bit of a challenge: 1 student

- I also have problems with ALC and even DAL as I did not have the programmes necessary at home to do my tasks. 1The second term's work however started becoming heavier, which caused more stress and still is: 1 student
- The marking is quite strict, you get mark down for the last thing on university. 1 Adopting to getting all your own information: 1 student
- The IFS lectures are sometimes not understandable: 1 student
- I sometimes feel attending some of the lectures is ublbs because then you can always study in your room either than sitting in the class and understand nothing from what's said: 1 student
- University is nothing like high school. We get a lot of work at the same time and write tests in the same week, even on Saturdays. Researching for assignments can be challenging. My responsibilities have increased a lot. 1
- I do not have any major challenges facing me. The only challenge I have on university is understanding my IFS lecturer. By this happening it makes me find ifs boring and I tend not to attend lectures and rather stud on my own without the lecturer clarifying certain sections: 1 student
- Lot of work, stress: 1 student
- Challenges which I face are just all the tasks we receive, meaning, they are all due on dates close to each other, then we still need to study which also needs a lot of time. All of this tends to get to much for me but for some reason, I m able to force myself to complete these tasks: 1 student
- My biggest challenge is finances, I did not have the money to register and when I finally could, NSFAS applications were closed: 1 student
- My father is unemployed at the moment. I applied at NASFAS but up until today I did not receive any response. Sometimes I just want to quit before it is too late but it is not something I want t do. I want to study and be successful: 1 student
- Many times I have financial problems. Struggling to buy food and even worse, struggling to get to campus because I don't have taxi fare:1 student
- No accommodation challenges were reported

5. Any suggestions on what I can do, and what the university can do?

What I could do:

- Work harder: 1 student
- I try to put in all my time and effort because I know at the end there would always be light: 1 student
- The only way I can make a real success out of this study period is to stay focused at all times possible: 1 student
- Improve my time management skill and prioritise as this is what I need to get ahead, but it is difficult: 1 student
- Pay special attention: 1 student

What the university could do:

- Have psychologists on campus:1 student
- Cut down on the workload, make it more manageable:1 student
- Should allow students to register for more modules since I have a hunger for knowledge:1 student
- The resource center should stay open in the evenings and over weekends:1 student
- Due dates assignments and tests should not be so close to each other: 1 student
- The university can implement strategies and measures to alleviate the problem areas:1 student
- Lecturers should also motivate students with personal problems and students from harsh backgrounds:1 student
- UWC can help its students by providing more student loans:1 student
- If they replace the IFS lecturer (hope that IFS will be better taught for future university entrants): 2 students
- Financial aid and traveling expenses would help a lot: 1 student
- More computers made available to b com students would also help a lot as we sometimes have to wait in lines for up to an hour. The Microsoft software could be made available to students at a cheaper price because we cannot all afford to buy it and therefore suffer during the times we have to do dal and other assignments.
- The best lecturers possible must be used to teach the students. I have problems with the IFS lecturer. He knows the work, but is not able to carry it over well. This is why many children do bad in this subject: 1 student
- The university should supply more computers:1 student
- To improve the ALC marks, I would strongly suggest that they move the course back to a year course. I do understand that university is a much higher level than school but forcing a year's work into a 6 month course is looking for complications: 1 student
- Give us more time to prepare for tests: 1 student
- Understand me when I tell my problems: 1 student
- Offer better ways of dealing with the workload: 1 student

What lecturers and tutors could do:

- Tutors should explain the work days before the due date to give more time to students: 1 student
- Lecturers should be lenient with first years when it comes to plagiarism: 1 student
- Lecturers should make the lectures more interesting and understandable: 1 student

Data set no. 3: Written Reflection (WR) no. 2

Question 1: Which modules did I pass and why?

B Admin students	Modules passed	B Com Gen students	Modules passed
ALC 131	4	ALC 131	8
QSF 131	4	QSC 131	8
PUA 131	4	IFS 131	8
Pol Stud 131	4	Man 131	8

Question 2: What did I do to pass all my modules in the first semester?

- Was determined to succeed: 1 student
- Worked hard: 12 students
- Had the will to learn: 6 students
- Had confidence and enjoyed the work: 5 students
- Was motivated: 6 students
- Did my pre-reading: 2 students
- Attended all my classes: 8 students
- Set goals and monitor them: 3 students
- Applied effective time management and planning techniques: 7 students
- Looked after my health: 2 students
- Was motivated: 6 students
- Had a good support system: 8 students
- Choice their friends wisely: 8 students
- Was not afraid to ask questions and to go for consultation: 6 students
- Had faith: 2 students
- As with anything we do, success is the one thing that we as all human beings strive for in life and my tertiary education was no different. Time is the one thing one can never get back so I knew that if I was going to obtain my degree that I was going to have to put my very best in. Even though I must shamefully admit at times I did not, but when it came to crunch time I put in everything I could. The modules which I had in my first semester was Academic Literacy for Commerce 131, Management 131, Information Systems 131 and Quantitative Skills for Commerce 131. That painful uncertainty of not knowing whether you pass or fail is one of the longest waits one could ever endure. The constant thought of “if only I had studied that extra hour” pains you until that moment you open your results for the first time...then it is all over. Your fate now lies within an A4 size paper and there is nothing that you can do to change it. When I received my results at the end of the semester I was over the moon; I had passed all four my modules. It was at that moment that all the sleepless nights and long hours of studying suddenly did not matter anymore. A time for celebration had come, and it could not have come any sooner: 1 student
- The reason I think I passed all my modules was because I knew from the very beginning that it was not going to be easy. With all the assignments, tutorials and tests that had to be done effective time management was going to be of utmost importance. I would then record all test dates and due dates as soon as they were made available to me and then try and allocate time, that I estimated to be, efficient for each task at hand. I also tried my best to study before the time for a test and not leave things for the last minute as I found that it only creates more anxiety and stress that does not help you with what you have to do: 1 student
- In my opinion, the best thing one can do is to ensure that you have a good support base. Be open with family and friends about what you may be struggling with, you would be surprised at the response you get: 1 student
- And also do not be afraid to ask for help, nobody expects you to always be good at everything. I often stayed after class and asked the lecturer questions about things I did not understand and they would stay behind and explain it to me until I did, if they could, or I made use of consultation times: 1 student
- Another thing that I think is also important is to select the right group of friends that you wish to surround yourself with. This will be the people that you spend most of your time with and if it is a crowd that does not like going to class very much, you are most likely to fall into the same trap. Share notes, form study groups and help each other where you can: 1 student

- I consider myself as one of the lucky ones to have made it this far. I am registered for eight modules in total, namely: Academic Literacy for Commerce, Quantitative Skills for Foundation, Information Systems, Political Studies, Public Administration, Management, South African Government Politics and Economics. These are all the modules that I had to pass, something not all first year students managed to do. To know this has made me realise something special in me and how I have been blessed, as we all had to battle for success while at the same time dealing with all the changes in our lives. To be honest I do not know how I managed to achieve this, however some believe that if one succeeds in something, he/she must have done at least one thing right. For this reason I believe there are various factors that could have contributed to my success, such as the benefits of living on campus and my determination to succeed. Was determined to succeed: 1 student
- Staying on campus residence for me has been really helpful. Some parents believe that letting a young adult live on campus is bad for the person, as it exposes that person to too much freedom, which sometimes is hard to handle. However, I decided to use that freedom to my advantage, to learn new things about myself, others and the world at large. This knowledge has somehow made me wiser and to realise that I have definitely lost and gained something from this experience. Staying on campus: 1 student
- Since I have been staying on campus, I have managed to do all my work and assignments on time because academic resources are easily available. Therefore it is one's choice to take this opportunity or not, and I chose to use it to my advantage as it also helped me to adapt easily to the new environment. Being on campus all the time has made it easy for me to get used to university life. This made me tough and ready to make the right decisions for my future and this has increased my chances to succeed in my first year: 1 student
- University is also a scary place for first years, as it was for me too. This is the reason which made me work really hard and sometimes push myself to the limit because I did not know what to expect next. The study material made available in campus residence helped me to keep focus and utilised my free time effectively in order to prevent the unknown. This past year I chose to make the best of residence life doing nothing but what I came here for (my studies). I used the freedom to advance my learning in all areas of life that I feel are appropriate and necessary for my success: 1 student
- Being on campus means that I do not have to travel, deal with family dramas and all the everyday issues surrounding our townships and communities. It therefore helped me to concentrate on what is most important at this time in my life (my studies). I wake up every day thinking of nothing else but going to class, even though sometimes I am tempted not to go. But the fact that I live on campus residence kept me grounded and reminds me of those who have to travel and deal with a lot just to get to campus, and that makes me realise how lucky I really am to be at university, therefore I should make the best of every opportunity at my disposal in order to succeed in life: 1 student
- There are also specialised programmes for first year residence students, designed to assist students with regard to their academic work and to adapt to the new environment and there ways to overcome the challenges which arise. These residence benefits have contributed a lot to the positive choices I make for my future. All the negative influences on residence life are what made me strong and firm, with the hope of achieving what others have failed to do and not to fall in the same trap that the ones before me have gone into and have not been able to pick themselves out. This has always been good medicine for me as I am also inspired by those who have had the same experiences and made it through. The first semester was the hardest, most challenging and exciting, and to have known this has been a blessing and I would not trade my first year for anything: 1 student
- Ever since I was accepted at University of the Western Cape as student, I was determined to make my mark in the world. Being a university student for me has been a privilege, no one could have ever thought I would make it this far. For that reason I am very determined to make a success of my life, as I realise that university is a gateway to greater things, a doorway to my success and it is necessary to provide me with an escape to a better life. I know that working hard in my studies, might provide me with a good job after graduating, which is the reason most students come to university (including myself). The socio-economic issues of our country everyone in the same position as I to come to university with a purpose to make it in the world, not only for ourselves but for the ones we leave behind (at our homes). I am here for the purpose of getting a degree and the only way to do that is if I stay strong and study hard, which is exactly how I got to pass in the past semester. The will to succeed has been the driving force behind any effort I make towards my academic work. I really did work hard last year just as many students have done, the only difference is the thinking behind that hard work and for me it is really necessary to make my dreams come true. My family and friends have been very supporting throughout this whole process, which encourages me even more, and every day I wake up and realise the little things in my life and how important they are towards shaping the mentality of an individual. To succeed one does not need only to work hard but also has to have a positive attitude with great determination to find a way to get to that point. This is the person I have been working to become, and in a way I think I have achieved, which could also be one of the reasons that contributed to the success of last semester: 1 student
- In order to succeed here, we have to realise our individuality and not be afraid to be different. The fact that I might be different from others with regard to our life styles, preferences, appearance, behaviour and backgrounds, has made me strong and firm and to always show determination in everything I do. I always feared for the unknown about university life and I have made sure that does not cloud my judgements and let me forget where I come from. With determination comes love and passion, I have come to love and be and am passionate about my studies. I actually enjoy picking up a book as if I am going to watch a movie. This has definitely contributed to even greater determination to succeed and to get there I have to complete every little detail: 1 student
- My life, my family, my home and my community are my inspiration to go forward, to strive for perfection and reach for the stars even if I might never come to know how it feels like to be there. These are all the reasons that keep me going and determined to succeed with everything in me, which further reflects in my academic work. This is the reason why I passed. I was proud to have passed all my subjects and hoped to do even better in the following year: 1 student
- There are eight subjects required to pass during the first year of B Com General, four of which are done in the first semester and four in the second. The subjects I completed first semester were: Information System (IS), Management, Quantitative Skills for Commerce (QSC) and Academic Literacy for Commerce (ALC). Fortunately, I had passed all four subjects in the first semester and as mentioned above it came with hard work and commitment. Worked hard, was committed and dedicated: 1 student

- Information Systems (IS) is the study of the operations of the computer and it tests ones practical and theoretical skills of the computer. Personally, I am better skilled at practicals than at theory, therefore, I attended tutorials (DAL Practical) regularly. I thoroughly enjoy working with computers and I therefore found the DAL practicals to be both a fun and learning experience: 1 student
- Management involves learning how to manage a business. Management was one of my weakest subjects as it only required theoretical skills. I struggled quite a bit in the beginning, so much so that I failed both my first assignment and term test. Fortunately, it was the management tutorials that helped me pass Management at the end of the semester. Every tutorial required us to complete a comprehensive exercise and I, together with my partner, worked extremely hard at obtaining only 80% and above for every tutorial: 1 student
- Quantitative Skills for Commerce or rather known as QSC involves mathematical calculations related to the business environment. Mathematics always remained one of my favourite subjects and I found myself quite eager to get started with this module. The university offers a very helpful service namely the “hot seat”. The “hot seat” offers a one-on-one basis tuition, in which tutors explain and help learners with whichever section of the module they find challenging and difficult. Personally I feel that the “hot seat” helped me tremendously and I made use of it whenever I had difficulty with a section of the work covered. I also had the help of my best friend who is fortunately for me a “mathematics genius”. It is quite advised to attend the “hot seat” as it helps a great deal: 1 student
- Lastly, Academic Literacy for Commerce (ALC), the subject which constantly kept me occupied. ALC involves language techniques and the use of various skills. Personally, this was my favourite subject as it reflected in my results that it was my highest mark obtained for the semester. The ALC tutorials helped me throughout the semester and prepared me well for the final exam. Also I completed all the tasks which was handed to us and attended class regularly so that I would not miss out on any work covered, tips for the exams and also spot tests which counted towards the semester mark. I also made sure that before I attended the lecture I did a bit of pre-reading as Mrs. McGhie strongly recommended it as she would randomly ask questions based on the work which was going to be covered in the lecture. This instilled a sense of fear in me and motivated me to do the pre-reading. ALC is fun and I looked forward to attending and participating in lectures and tutorials: 1 student
- Overall, I attended lectures and tutorials regularly and completed all tasks and assignments with much effort and accuracy. I prepared myself well for the final examination by starting to study three weeks in advance. I was also conscious about the things I ate, as it was important for me stay fit and healthy: 1 student
- First semester for first years can become quite challenging for many students as it is difficult having to adjust to the change in environment and at the same time, having to concentrate on studies. I therefore felt extremely anxious and nervous about my results, but at the same time I knew that did not have much to worry about it much as I remained a hardworking and competent student throughout the semester. Upon receiving my results, I felt most happy and excited and it was a great achievement for me. I felt quite relieved that I did not have to repeat any subjects. My family was all very proud and I myself felt proud at my great achievement: 1 student
- When I received my results during the June holidays I was so excited. Before I opened the envelope with my results I was scared and nervous, when I opened it and I saw that I passed all my modules, I felt overwhelmed and full of joy, I had overcome all my challenges, I was a winner. I couldn't stop smiling. All my tears, sleepless nights, hard work and dedication had paid off. The confidence I gained from that day onwards I shall never leave behind. I started to look at life a lot differently. Gained confidence: 1 student
- In the first semester things were hard, I failed my first QSF and ALC test, I cried for 2 nights in a row. For the first time in my life I failed a test, it was frustrating. I thought I will not make it, I did not talk to anyone about it, I suffered in silence. I then realized that I am no longer in high school I am at university, therefore I needed to start talking to people (lecturers, tutors, friends and my mentor). Talking would not solve my problems but it was going to help lighten my problems. When I got to my room one day I wrote a list of reasons why I was at university and why I needed to succeed. That helped me reflect every time I felt I could not make it or when I wanted to give up. With all that done the real work had to start ‘studying’. I studied 6 hours a day and that was on a normal day, when examination started I studied more than 1- hours a day. I consulted my tutors, lecturers and my mentor. I attended group study sessions which helped me tremendously: 1 student
- After realizing that what I did last semester helped me a lot, I did not change, but one thing changed, my confidence. I became more confident about what I am doing and mostly I started to love and enjoy my studies. When one has a disability you have to work twice as hard as people who are not disabled. It was hard to adapt in the first semester because I did not share with people the challenge that I face, but in the second semester I started telling people about it, even though they treat me differently (which I dislike). At least they are aware and it makes it easier to adapt: 1 student
- It was Monday morning during the July holiday. My left leg moving up and down continuously trying to get onto the Student Portal. I got in and as it opened I took a breath, closed my eyes and when I opened them up again this feeling I can't explain came over me. I tried calming myself down, reached for my calculator and started working out my average. I just sat there and wept, knowing that I what I worked for has come true. Finally everything made sense. The family functions I never attended because I had to study, getting up from my desk not to get into bed at 1 am in the morning but to make myself another cup of coffee to go over certain sections or two for one more time. There were a lot of things and people who contributed to my final marks. I think I'll start with the people. I could never in my life ask for better parents. I would come home after a paper, my father would ask, “did you try your best?” I would say yes and he would tell me that if I fail or pass he is still proud. I guess that kept me happy, it gave me comfort in a way most students would die for. Some parents pressure their children and I am just one lucky girl: 1 student
- My boyfriend played a huge role too. Instead of sitting whispering sweet nothings to each other, we sat whispering accounting ratio's and Labour Relations Act. We have been together for almost 3 years and if things go our way we want to get engaged end of next year and get married a year later. What pushes me has a lot to do with the above. We both have goals, we both know to get where we want to be we need to work for it. There is so many things happening, young people dying, things which opens my eyes. I try to make a success of my studies so I'll be able to establish myself. I think if my husband passes away and I have young children I'll have that degree, I'll be able to look after myself as well as my kids. It

may seem very farfetched but it goes through my mind. I also believe I need to give back to my parents not that I can ever repay them. In short-term high marks keep them happy and long term I want to let them travel, see the world. I'm not like a lot of people who use short term goals as a guide, I use long-term ones: 1 student

- Those were all the emotional reasoning to why I work as hard as I do but to be honest I have the lowest self-esteem. Most times I don't believe in myself and feel weak. I've struggled with this for a long time. Sometimes I became so overwhelmed, a bit too overwhelmed. Luckily I have people there for me, but what do those do who don't have that. Perhaps that is the reason for this project, those people who have that potential but can't handle other things which make studies hard. Without a right support system who knows how many potential students slipped through UWC's records? 1 student
- What I did to pass? Beginning of the semester I would go to each lecture group of each subject to find the lecturer who I understood better. I steered away from the caf! I form study groups in tut rooms, did homework and exercises together. I surrounded myself with people who wanted to work. I used consultation hours! Very important. I made Mondays and Tuesdays busy days so if I write Friday or Saturday I don't have too much on my plate. I never went out every weekend, when I had free time I slept! : 1 student
- I took down all tutors contact numbers. I would go over work especially ACM and QSC in front of the TV. If I could get answers right there while in front of the TV. I can do it under any conditions: 1 student
- The dean's list played a massive role in my hard-work. There are times my friend and myself would just stare at it in hope that we'll be staring at our own names on it the following year. It served as a strong form of motivation. At the end of the day my faith plays the foundation in everything I do. Priorities are so important at the end of the day if one knows our purpose on earth and grab all opportunities that our Almighty has blessed us with there is no way any of us can go wrong.
- My achieved my results by following the system below:
 - Goals. It was important for me to set goals and keep track of them. Besides other techniques, I ensured that I monitored the progress of my goals monthly. This gave me an indication of where I was in terms of achievement and allowed me to analyse and conclude where I needed to focus to push my year mark. Setting a goal, kept my focus strong and helped me to motivate myself- this brings me to the next point: 1 student
 - Consistency. This is probably one of the most important aspects I concentrated on. It is very hard to be consistent every single day but it can be done. Hard work is impossible without consistency. I always tried to put in as much attention and concentration as I could on a daily basis. Even if I was not consistent at times, I made sure I compensated for it the following day or on a weekend: 1 student
 - Time management / prioritizing. My social life was extremely important me, so I had to manage my time correctly and prioritise what was most important and required my time. I worked from a system whereby I created an electronic diary via an excel spreadsheet I would up date this sheet weekly or even daily. The sheet portrayed information about assignments, tests, tutorial test etc. As well as due dates, my progress as well as the next date I need to progress on it. I used "auto filler" to filter check what I needed to focus for the specific week. This allowed me to plan my week and avoided time wasted on projects and tests only one or two weeks away. Once the task was completed I changed its status on my sheet and only filtered "incomplete" to keep track of my progress etc. I found that putting in this little bit of effort when updating the diary, freed up a lot of time and allowed me to have my social life and still work hard and consistently. I learnt time management from my ALC module, I just created a system that worked for me. Applied effective planning and time management techniques: 1 student
 - Motivation. Its tough to stay motivated – especially if you need to motivate yourself. Every day is not a good and on those bad days its important to have things and people around you that are positive and encouraging. My family had high expectations for me, and this motivated me in some ways as they had so much faith in my abilities. I chose friends who had the same focus and determination – I found that when we worked together, things always seemed more positive and we enjoyed our studies and tried to make even the worst subjects fun by talking about it. We inspired other people when we could, and tried to include them or help them. The result was that they in turn could inspire and motivate us as well. Sometimes your best is not enough – and you need to put in 110% Thereafter you can say put in all your effort. I worked for 5 years – my last motivation was that I felt like I wanted to empower myself. After being told I was not really qualified for a position after getting the promotion and that they could not pay me what they paid someone qualified, really pushed me to study and it's the strongest motivation. Paying for my studies is another factor, hard, earned money is difficult to spend – therefore it didn't make sense to waste any time as time: 1 student
- Try to be a perfectionist even if you're not one. I always tried to be very thorough and didn't mind doing something 100 times if it meant that the end result would be an excellent test result or a strong assignment mark. Something you produce as an individual reflects on you as a person. It is a representation of your potential and effort –therefore it is important to do yourself proud. It is not only a reflection to your lecturer and tutor but more importantly to yourself. You need to have faith in yourself. This is the best way to do this. Try to be a perfectionist: 1 student
- Lastly – try and be passionate about life, your goals and your studies. Think about the future, how you can make a difference one day, strive to be a leader, embrace your individuality, be pro-active, work part-time – challenge yourself, be competitive in a healthy way. Reward yourself when its due and help others – it all makes a big difference to your mindset. Your studies and ultimately your entire life: 1 student
- Year mark and exams. Another goal I had was to work hard for a year mark that was high. I tried to keep it an A or B for my modules – for the most challenging modules I aimed for a B – others which I knew I enjoyed and loved – I aimed for an A. Once your year mark is high – it is that last push in exams that will guarantee you your success in whatever goal you set. My motto is do not aim to just pass!! You need to stand out when you apply to a company one day: 1 student

Data set no. 4: Questionnaire

Questions 1 – 7 were analysed and reported already in the biographical and geographical information under section 5.5.3 in chapter 5.

Question 8a: Why did you decide to study towards a degree in the EMS faculty at UWC?

- At school numbers, calculations really interested me. I weighted my options and after deliberation and prayer, I thought studying through the EMS faculty would be more challenging, exciting and something I enjoyed: 1 student
- Always wanted to be a social worker, that's what we are in the EMS faculty 'social works' and I always wanted a career in the corporate world: 1 student
- I always knew I wanted to study towards a degree in commerce and the EMS faculty at UWC seemed like the perfect option for me. I wanted to obtain my degree however I was not sure to what I wanted my major to be and UWC's EMS faculty offers the B Com Gen degree that directly addresses the issue that I had. It allowed me the opportunity to start studying towards obtaining my degree without having the pressure of having to decide exactly which direction I wanted to go in: 1 student
- While saving to study, I gained experience and got valuable exposure to the corporate world. Although considered to be more of an artistic/creative individual, I gained and developed an appreciation and energy for the commerce industry, EMS therefore became my first choice: 1 student
- Reason being I enjoy handling numbers so I decided to do B Com Gen and major in Finance. I have always wanted to do Accounting or Finance as a career: 1 student
- I decided to study a degree in the EMS faculty as it has always been a dream of mine to become a successful business woman: 1 student
- I would like to have a career in business, and eventually start my own business: 1 student
- EMS subjects are more marketable than other faculties. I have a passion to work in the commerce world: 1 student
- Having a passion in finance, accounting and business from high school. I want to become a business woman one day so B Com Finance will help me achieve that: 1 student
- Because the degree I am studying in my dream career and it is offered in the EMS faculty: 1 student
- Because in my secondary school I was studying commerce subjects and I am business minded person: 1 student
- To ensure that I will in the future be employed. Business is something that will always be part of our lives: 1 student
- I want to work in financial companies and be able to do my own and family budget and even be a financial advisor for my parent: 1 student
- Because I want to be in a business world. I know what's happening in the business world: 1 student
- I matriculated in the year 2007 and after much persuasion, decided on taking a "gap year" in 2008. The reason why I preferred to take the year off was mainly due to being unsure of the career choice I wanted to enter, and also, I think I was quite afraid of adjusting to the sudden change in environment. During the year I had worked as an administrator and this fortunately kept me quite occupied. The year was coming to an end and I had still not decided on a career choice until a cousin of mine advised me to apply for Bcom General. His advice to me was: "Bcom General leaves one open to many choices..." 1 student

Question 8b: Do you have a problem with accommodation? Yes/no

No: 12 students

Question 9: Do you have a problem with paying your fees, buying text books, travelling money, food, living expenses?

- Yes: 1 student (paying my own fees, and buying text books and travelling money is problematic)
- Yes: 1 student (my father is currently unemployed and my mother is the only source of income in our household)
- Yes: 1 student (I have a problem with living expenses because my mother could not afford to give me money for clothes and funny stuff.)
- Yes: 1 student (have to keep a tight budget and therefore I tend to run out of cash at the end of the month)
- No: 8 students

Question 10: Do you have family and friends that support you?

- Yes: 8 students (everyone is encouraging and supportive)
- Yes: 3 students (I have because my family motivate me every day as I am the first person to study at university) (My family support me throughout)
- Yes: 1 student (my grandmother. My step father alienates me because I am not his child and my mother does not support me because she is afraid of my step father)

Question 11: What is good/positive about your studies?

- They boost my self-esteem and self-confidence. They make me a better person and I love studying: 1 response
- It exposes young people to a whole new perspective on life and the world of academics. It grants us the opportunity to expand our opinion on things and think beyond that which we previously had: 1 response
- It empowers me literally and figuratively. Although I do not love every module, I hold what it has taught me as valuable. It broadens my thinking and knowledge and will allow me to make a difference one day – knowledge is definitely power: 1 response

- The mere fact that I won't struggle to find work once I have completed my degree or honours degree. All business are looking for finance people to handle their money: 1 response
- Most of my studies give me information about what has happen previously and also about current things that happen in our daily life which is good for to learn: 1 response
- Applicable in real life situations and finding a job will be easy once graduated: 1 response
- It is reality, the environment keeps you sane (campus and friends) and focussing on the end result keeps me going: 1 response
- The fact that I enjoy what I am doing is good. I am empowering myself. Knowledge is power: 1 response
- You can interact with the lecturer during lectures and there are consultation times. I also enjoy all my modules: 1 response
- It will ensure that I have a good job when I am done with my studies. Also it keeps me busy and updated with life: 1 response
- Learning new and important information on how business is conducted. The opportunity it gives you to find a good job when qualified: 1 response
- That I am exposed to so much information and knowledge. Everyday is a new learning experience and I wouldn't trade it in for anything: 2 responses
- It is good because there is a lot of work based in finance and economists who are needed in the economy. So after I get my degree its easier for me to find a job in companies and banks: 1
- Is the fact that I am doing what I love and understanding it: 1 response

Question 12: What are your challenges and why?

- I think my worst challenge is concentration. I tend to be distracted by the most frall things in class. Difficulty managing time between varsity, social and family life. Thirdly is leaving homework, assignments and studying for tests till the last minute. I have this tendency where I tell myself that I work better under pressure, it worked up until now but I don't think it will in future: 1 student
- My challenge is my disability. I am partially sighted, I can only see 30% and the fact that I have this challenge sometimes impacts my life negatively: 1 student
- The biggest challenge for me is time management. Trying to juggle all my lectures, assignments and test dates that I have as well as maintaining a healthy social life sometimes proves to be a challenge for me. However I do believe that it is important that one does not allow ones social life to take priority. I have to admit that I am a procrastinator and sometimes put things off to the last minute which is definitely another challenge for me: 1 student
- My challenge was group work, being much older and very serious about my studies, my peers were always 5 years younger. I found it hard to relate to anybody in the first term. Another challenge was having to familiarise myself with new work as I matriculated 5 years ago and the syllabus was completely different for me. Business, financial Maths etc were great challenges. The last challenge was the load of work due to the new 8 module system. No time to reflect, just studying and writing: 3 students
- My challenges are that in university you should always be responsible with your school work. Meaning on one will go after you asking you to please submit your assignments, tutorials and so on. Another challenge is, it may be possible to write two term test the same day, tutorial test and also submit an assignment the same day: 1 student
- Time management (finding time for all the work load) and travelling challenges (availability of transport when needed): 1 student
- Well, at times time management is a problem. Having so much things to do and so little time becomes quite challenging: 1 student
- Taking the time to study by myself as I am easily distracted or I always have important work that needs to be done: 1 student
- The production of constant assignments and tests, because it is draining on the mind and body especially if you are involved in other activities. Not having the freedom to adjust your timetable. Boring lectures, because it makes going to class a bad experience: 1 student
- One of my major challenges is time management. I always seem to procrastinate and cram everything up. Another challenge is my ability to concentrate. I get easily distracted by friends. This is easy as some lecturers just come across as monotonous and can't really keep me captivated: 1 student
- My challenges are leaving the exam as they come due: 1 student
- There is not a day I do not sit and worry about getting a job after I study. I worry about this. The way everything is going I do not even know if I will get a job and there is no comfort or guarantee that I will. It bothers me 99% of the time. It is as if I am working so hard but I don't even know if I will reap benefits: 1 student

Question 13: Any suggestions on how to overcome the challenges?

What I can do:

- Choosing classes where you aren't with your friends or sitting apart from one another where possible. Diarising tasks, homework, assignments and setting them as priority. Thereafter, I realised I have more time on hand to attend to other things. I now do homework or start on assignments when I get them, utilising free periods are of utter importance: 1 response
- Mostly, to talk about it and lose the pride, let people assist if they need to: 1 response
- Drawing up a schedule and writing down exactly what needs to be done and when it needs to be done by. By doing this and following this set out schedule it will ease the pressure of trying to keep up with all my deadlines and ensure that my work is done on time and still have enough time to study and be well prepared for my tests and exams: 10 responses
- I also think that having a good support system is essential in dealing with the pressure of varsity: 1 response
- It is important to realise that it is ok to sometimes ask for help when you struggling with something; no one expects you to be 100% sure of everything that you do: 4 responses
- Group work is not only about working as a team. A good strong & focused leader will guide and help the group. Choose group members wisely, look for commonalities with regards to group members' standards. Assignments count for a lot, therefore every assignment deserves 110%. With regard to work and workload, prioritise, use time management to manage each week and surround yourself with positive peers or better yet, help encourage and motivate others to join you in reaching a goal. Knowing you can help & support each other, makes learning less stressful and fun: 1 response
- My suggestions are to be responsible, to multi task and have a good time management because this is not longer high school and no teacher will go after you and ask you to please hand in your assignments. Always remind yourself why you are here perhaps it may help you to succeed: 1 response
- Finding closer residence and making time to do school work earlier: 1 response
- Have to make sacrifices, and manage time well. I should also not leave work or studying for the last minute: 1 response
- Yes, I made a schedule where I can use my time to full potential and maximise my working output: 1 response
- I would suggest students to do their work ahead of time to prevent late submission or unnecessary stress. Always ask for help by your lecturer or tutor and consult with work that you do not understand: 2 responses
- Using your time wisely, and completing tasks early: 1 response
- Self-study, because it is difficult to concentrate and stay awake in some classes: 1 response
- By studying very hard and give my best of all. Have faith in myself: 1 response
- All I do is work as hard as I possibly can and trust in the grace of the Almighty: 1 response

Data set no 6: Answers to interview questions

Question 1: Were you the first child from your family that came to study at a university?

- No: 3 students
- Yes: 9 students

Question 2: Were you infected or affected by HIV/Aids (personally, or a close relevant or someone responsible for you)?

- No: 11 students
- Yes: 1 students

Question 3: Advice on what new students should do:

- Recognise that you're privileged to be studying at a university, because there aren't many people out there who get that opportunity: 1 student
- Being a first year student is one of the happiest moments of your life, having excitement but you need to leave behind all high school behaviour because now you are in the real world of study, no one is going to push to study all its up to you, you pass or fail: student
- First semester for first years can become quite challenging for many students as it is difficult having to adjust to the change in environment (can be scary) and at the same time, having to concentrate on studies: 2 students
- New first year students should work hard from the beginning, university is hard and challenging. One needs to be prepared to make sacrifices and put in extra time to make it: 1 student
- In the end its your decision, your commitment, if you plan to fail then fail to plan, don't waste your parents money please: 1 student
- I think that if you follow these few guidelines you are more likely to stay focused, work harder and be successful at university: 1 student
- Learn to control your life, take charge because if you don't someone will do it for you. Know what you want from life, set goals and reward yourself when you achieve them: 1 student

- Good luck for the year, stay focused on the end result and have passion for the work you do. Its going to be difficult but don't give up, when you fail just get up, wipe the dirt off and move forward: 2 students
- My second recommendation is think of the future. Its important to remind yourself everyday about why you are studying. If you have a dream – remind yourself of it to keep the motivation going. If students are feeling demotivated - they need to think about the money that is spent to be afforded this opportunity and the possibilities of their future when they get their degree. I feel that a student that is aware of the unemployment rate and how companies want the best of the best graduates will see the essence of driving themselves: 2 students
- My fourth recommendation is to enjoy what you are studying even if you dislike some of your modules. Its all in the mind of the student that they hate a subject-when you apply yourself, and start making sense of things, you will start enjoying the module. Try studying by associating the theory to something you are familiar with. This really helped me to enjoy studying as I could understand things better and simpler - in my own terms and in my own world. I hope this advice made sense - its what I did and it really is continuing working for me:1 student
- Be determine to make a success of your studies, it is a privilege to be a student at university. Realise that university is a gateway to greater things, a doorway to your success and it is necessary to provide you with an escape to a better life: 1 student
- To succeed one does not need only to work hard but also has to have a positive attitude with great determination to find a way to get to that point. We have to realise our individuality and not be afraid to be different: 1 student
- Guys if you want to succeed in university pay attention to the following: Remember why you are here: 2 students
- Realise that working from day one is of utmost importance, taking university easy is not an option: 2 students
- The most important thing to do is to study very hard each and every day: 3 students
- I do not pretend to be an expert or have all the answers to be a successful university student however I can only give advice based on personal experience. The best piece and maybe the most important piece of advice which I can give to you, is to work hard and put your all into your studies from the very beginning: 1 student
- University is also a scary place for first years, as it was for me too. Work every hard and push yourself to the limit because you do not know what to expect next: 1 student
- Study hard for the first test and be ready on time: 1 student
- Study well in advance in order to pass well: 1 student
- Go to each lecturer at the beginning of the semester in order to understand them better. Take down all tutors contact numbers: 1 student
- Have balance in life - In tertiary everything is at your disposal, the Barn for fun and alcohol, the student centre for playing dominoes and just 'chilling' with friends and lectures to attend in body or attending both in body and mind. Have fun to a certain extent and do you school work putting in more effort than you put in when having fun: 1 student
- Pre-reading is very important too, it's okay to understand what the lecturer is teaching but having broader view of the topic and being able to interact in the class is a bonus: 2 students
- The key points of wanting to pass your studies, firstly you need to do pre-reading before you get to the lecture so that when a lecturer introduce the topic, you be familiar with it, participant is important and asking questions to your studies: 1 student
- Pre-reading is a must without it you will find it very hard to cope. In this place no one will spoon-feed you, no one will go after you to hand in assignments, no one will tell you to go to class so everything is on you, you are accountable for your own life, and you are an adult now: 1
- Time management, no-one says you cannot party but limiting yourself is important, and of course the extent to which you party should also be considered: 1 student
- Manage your time wisely. Time is one thing that you will never get back. Work out a time table and stick to it! Have time for work but also time to socialize. You need to balance it out: 1 student
- The first recommendation I would give is to **prioritize their time**. Student life is tough and like they say in Economics there is always a trade-off or opportunity cost. The opportunity cost for socializing in the two period you get free is two chapters of work that you could have completed for a test at the end of that week. Therefore it is crucial that a student realizes the value of time - we cannot complain that we do not have time if we waste it. At the same time, we do also need to enjoy student life, and we cannot always choose our friends but we should try and motivate and encourage them to join us in utilizing our time properly. There can be social interaction and work happening at the same time. However, it is not sometimes as easy as I am making it sound so if the odds are against you - you need to make choices and sacrifices. Sometimes sacrificing that time to work and complete work, will be more rewarding when the results are out: 2 students
- Planning , Organising, Leading and Controlling in Management are similar in chores that are delegated at home. Planning is when the kitchen is a mess and your mother identifies that it needs to be cleaned, and that she needs to get it cleaned by you or your brother. Organizing is when she calls you to the kitchen to give you your duties like you will wash the dishes and your brother will dry the dishes, she then shows you that you need to use Sunlight liquid and a dry cloth etc - these items are resources and you and your brother are the employees, Leading is when you mom guides you by telling you what must be washed again or what must pack where and lastly, controlling is your mother coming into the kitchen to check that it is clean. Using your mom as an example of a Manager and a situation you are familiar with - will cause that you never forget the concept: 1 student

- Manage your time – Do all your work immediately to avoid missing deadlines. Every mark counts so attend your tutorials, hand in assignments, and write your tests. A time table could help you manage your time as you slot in all the activities you have to do on a daily basis, including watching TV, cooking and studying: 1 student
- Choosing friends that you can benefit from, such as studying together, working together, comparing etc: 2 students
- Be themselves. Do not follow the crowd. If your friends decide to ‘bunk’ class, let them. They will feel the results of it. Be a leader not a follower: 1 student
- Find friends that will build you and encourage studying together: 1 student
- Lastly be sure to make the right kind of friends, the type of friends that are fun to party with but when it comes to crunch time, are the some ones motivating you to study and study’s with you:1 student
- Asking questions or attending consultations. Consultation is provided for a reason, and you can pick up extra tips for semester tests, exams and also just clarity of the work you’re busy with: 1
- Ask your tutors or lecturers for help with work that you do not understand: 1 student
- Always ask questions –be it in class or tutorials. There is no such thing as A STUPID QUESTION!: 1 student
- Work that was covered in class should be revised again on that same day and study ahead of time: 2 (this makes it easier when exams come, as you will already know most of the work)
- Also assignments must be done ahead of time to ensure that you get done in time: 1 student
- Do your homework! It may seem boring but then you will know where your work points are. You can then improve and find out where you went wrong by asking for assistance: 1 student
- Revise your work on a daily basis and constantly go for consultation: 3students
- They should always submit their work on the due dates: 2 students
- Do all your work and assignments on time because academic resources are easily available: 1 student
- Secondly, try your best to do have your assignments done at least a day before the submission date. Study ahead of time for your test and exams, the lack of anxiety that last minute studying brings allows you to be more relaxed and better prepared when writing your tests: 1 student
- My third recommendation is to be consistent. It is not only about completing the test or the assignment but also the quality of your work. Be consistent in the quality of your work and constantly challenge yourself to improve your work on a regular basis. This will not only improve your marks but also provide you will a learning experience. These assignments and tests are there to teach you something important and for you to gain knowledge there from so try and do it thoroughly and consistently every time. The only way to do this is be consistent in the standard of work and also prioritize as mentioned in the first paragraph. Receiving a good mark for something that you put effort in will motivate you, at the same time - a bad mark is also a motivation to put more time in that area or try and improve the quality of work: 1 student
- It will also help you to talk to someone when you feel unhappy or stressed out, it helps a lot, and don’t be afraid to ask for help: 2 students
- Have a support system – you have to able to talk to someone when you’re feeling down in life because bottling up emotions always ends up in a huge breakdown. To avoid this you have to find someone who is willing to listen, someone you trust whether its your parents, a friend you attend with, a student who is higher in education that you (2nd or 3rd year) or a lecture because they are always willing to help out: 1 student
- You need to have a support group – your family and friends, they will encourage and inspire you to work hard and to succeed: 4 students
- Always make use of the university’s services. If you are struggling meet with consultations from ESSRU or consult with lecturers: 1 student
- My last recommendation is use what you have learnt to benefit you and your other modules on a every day basis. For instance, learning how to write an essay and referencing it properly will help you in any module where you need to write an essay as an assignment. If you watch the news, and there may be news on the inflation rate - try and think about what you learnt about it and enquire about it the next time you sit with that module. This is the only way that you will benefit at the end of the day and it will help you to excel as you are taking advantage of your knowledge by allowing your mind to question and be pro-active all the time: 1 student
- It is advantageous to stay on campus residence. This is especially so for first year students, as they can be able to access resources easily: 1 student
- Use the specialised programmes for first year residence students, these are designed to assist students with regard to their academic work and to adapt to the new environment and there are ways to overcome the challenges which arise: 1 student
- But there are also negative influences on residence life, therefore one has to be strong and firm, with the hope of achieving what others have failed to do and not to fall in the same trap that the ones before you have gone into and have not been able to pick themselves out of: 1 student
- Be conscious about the things you eat, as it is important to stay fit and healthy: 1 student
- It is quite advised to attend the “hot seat” for QSC as it helps a great deal: 1 student

Question 4: Advice on what new students should not do:

- Miss classes – important information and course work is covered which is not necessarily covered in the slides: 5 students (it is also the main reason why students fail)
- Not play truent in tutorials – important practical work gets covered as well as preparation for tests: 1 student
- Play dominoes in the cafeteria – it becomes addictive and course work suffers: 3 students (and getting mixed up with the wrong crowds, such as the smoking hubbly and also playing dominoes and cards in the cafeteria, those people have no problem in bringing you down with them): 1 student
- Not procrastinate – students who procrastinate tend to underperform and not realise their true potential and capabilities: 1 student
- Firstly don't make the mistake that many students, including myself, have made by getting caught up in the care free atmosphere that varsity life brings causing yourself to fell behind always struggling to meet your deadlines. Young people such as us are so easily distracted and that can be very dangerous for your academic career: 2 students
- Be afraid to ask for help. Tutors and lecturers are there to help you, but you need to first try and help yourself: 2 students
- Be afraid of asking questions because in turn you're helping your classmates: 4 students
- Not do coursework, the least percent you could've gained by doing can determine whether you write exams or not: 1 student
- Not be turned down if you are no longer the A student. When you get to tertiary this happens as you need to adapt to the new environment: 1 student
- Never write sick tests unless you are really sick because sometimes they can be harder than the first test and you could end up regretting it: 1 student
- Not go out every weekend catch up on sleep instead: 1 student

ADDENDUM 15

CASE 2 -STAGE 2: DATA REDUCTION AND CROSS CHECKING (CLASSIFICATION OF UNITS OF MEANING INTO CATEGORIES AND THEMES)

CATEGORY 1: CHALLENGES TO LEARNING

Theme 1: Personal factors

Data set no. 1: Written Reflection no. 1

Question 3: What are the challenges?

- Sometimes there are problems at home: 1 student
- I stay off campus and traveling is a challenge (public transport makes me late for class): 2 students
- So far there are no challenges that am facing and with that I would like to thank the almighty God for guiding me, for leading and controlling my life because am copying very good with my studies and I know that with Him I will pass all my modules that I am doing this semester: 1 student
- Lot of work, stress: 1 student
- My biggest challenge is finances, I did not have the money to register and when I finally could, NSFAS applications were closed: 1 student
- My father is unemployed at the moment. I applied at NASFAS but up until today I did not receive any response. Sometimes I just want to quit before it is too late but it is not something I want t do. I want to study and be successful: 1 student
- Many times I have financial problems. Struggling to buy food and even worse, struggling to get to campus because I don't have taxi fare:1 student

Data set no. 4: Questionnaire

Question 8b: Do you have a problem with accommodation? Yes/no

No: 12 students

Question 9: Do you have a problem with paying your fees, buying text books, travelling money, food, living expenses?

- Yes: 1 student (paying my own fees, and buying text books and travelling money is problematic)
- Yes: 1 student (my father is currently unemployed and my mother is the only source of income in our household)
- Yes: 1 student (I have a problem with living expenses because my mother could not afford to give me money for clothes and funny stuff.
- Yes: 1 student (have have to keep a tight budget and therefore I tend to run out of cash at the end of the month)
- No: 8 students

Question 10: Do you have family and friends that support you?

- Yes: 8 students (everyone is encouraging and supportive)
- Yes: 3 students (I have because my family motivate me every day as I am the first person to study at university) (My family support me throughout)
- Yes: 1 student (my grandmother. My step father alienates me because I am not his child and my mother does not support me because she is afraid of my step father)

Question 12: What are your challenges and why?

- My challenge is my disability. I am partially sighted, I can only see 30% and the fact that I have this challenge sometimes impacts my life negatively: 1 student
- There is not a day I do not sit and worry about getting a job after I study. I worry about this. The way everything is going I do not even know if I will get a job and there is no comfort or guarantee that I will. It bothers me 99% of the time. It is as if I am working so hard but I don't even know if I will reap benefits: 1 student
- Availability of transport when needed: 1 student

Data set no. 6: Answers to questions asked in the individual interviews

Question 4: What should new students not do:

- Should not go out every weekend catch up on sleep instead: 1 student

Theme 2: Academic factors

Data set no. 1: Written Reflection no. 1

Question 3: What are the challenges?

- Struggle to manage my timetable and to fit everything in: 2 students
- Time management skills, discipline and trying to study. I have a short concentration span: 1 student
- Once submitted assignments late because of a virus on my usb. Don't feel comfortable on my ALC tutorials because of a personal reason: 1 student.
- The workload is heavy:3 students
- Sometimes I do not have the resources:1 student
- Not having the resources at home to type my assignments and the resources on campus are limited:1 student
- ALC is a tricky subject:1 student
- I feel that am packed with too many things to do at the same time. I do not know what to concentrate on therefore Im not able to do it with my full ability. I don't know what to see to all at the same time. 1 student
- My biggest challenge is reading because I am partially sighted, I cannot read a lot because my eyes start to pain and them I must stop. University requires one to read, and that I cannot do. It angers me when this happens and I worry that I am going to fail:1student
- Struggle with referencing since it is new to me:1 student
- QFS is a challenge as I am not enthusiastic about Maths:1 student
- Settling in was a big challenge and so is listening to some of the lecturers when my mind is bored. Concentration is a bit of a problem. Getting a really good mark for an ALC tutorial is also a bit of a challenge: 1 student
- I also have problems with ALC and even DAL as I did not have the programmes necessary at home to do my tasks. The second term's work however started becoming heavier, which caused more stress and still is: 1 student
- University is nothing like high school. We get a lot of work at the same time and write tests in the same week, even on Saturdays. Researching for assignments can be challenging. My responsibilities have increased a lot: 1 student
- Challenges which I face are just all the tasks we receive, meaning, they are all due on dates close to each other, then we still need to study which also needs a lot of time. All of this tends to get to much for me but for some reason, I m able to force myself to complete these tasks: 1 student

Data set no. 4: Questionnaire

Question 12: What are your challenges and why?

- I think my worst challenge is concentration. I tend to be distracted by the most frall things in class. Difficulty managing time between varsity, social and family life. Thirdly is leaving homework, assignments and studying for tests till the last minute. I have this tendency where I tell myself that I work better under pressure, it worked up until now but I don't think it will in future: 1 student
- The biggest challenge for me is time management. Trying to juggle all my lectures, assignments and test dates that I have as well as maintaining a healthy social life sometimes proves to be a challenge for me. However I do believe that it is important that one does not allow ones social life to take priority. I have to admit that I am a procrastinator and sometimes put things off to the last minute which is definitely another challenge for me: 1 student
- My challenge was group work, being much older and very serious about my studies, my peers were always 5 years younger. I found it hard to relate to anybody in the first term. Another challenge was having to familiarise myself with new work as I matriculated 5 years ago and the syllabus was completely different for me. Business, financial Maths etc were great challenges. The last challenge was the load of work due to the new 8 module system. No time to reflect, just studying and writing: 1 student
- Too much work: 3 students
- My challenges are that in university you should always be responsible with your school work. Meaning on one will go after you asking you to please submit your assignments, tutorials and so on. Another challenge is, it may be possible to write two term test the same day, tutorial test and also submit an assignment the same day: 1 student
- Time management (finding time for all the work load): 1
- Well, at times time management is a problem. Having so much things to do and so little time becomes quite challenging: 1 student

- Taking the time to study by myself as I am easily distracted or I always have important work that needs to be done: 1 student
- The production of constant assignments and tests, because it is draining on the mind and body especially if you are involved in other activities: 1 student
- One of my major challenges is time management. I always seem to procrastinate and cram everything up. Another challenge is my ability to concentrate. I get easily distracted by friends. This is easy as some lecturers just come across as monotonous and can't really keep me captivated: 1 student
- My challenges are leaving the exam as they come due: 1 student

Data set no. 6: Answers to questions asked in the individual interviews

Question 4: Advice on what new students should not do:

- Miss classes – important information and course work is covered which is not necessarily covered in the slides: 5 students (it is also the main reason why students fail)
- Not play truent in tutorials – important practical work gets covered as well as preparation for tests: 1 student
- Not procrastinate – students who procrastinate tend to underperform and not realise their true potential and capabilities: 1 student
- Be afraid to ask for help. Tutors and lecturers are there to help you, but you need to first try and help yourself: 2 students
- Be afraid of asking questions because in turn you're helping your classmates: 4 students
- Not do coursework, the least percent you could've gained by doing can determine whether you write exams or not: 1 student
- Not be turned down if you are no longer the A student. When you get to tertiary this happens as you need to adapt to the new environment: 1 student
- Never write sick tests unless you are really sick because sometimes they can be harder than the first test and you could end up regretting it: 1 student

Theme 3: Social factors

Data set no. 1: Written Reflection no. 1

No social factor challenges were reported.

Data set no. 6: Answers to questions asked in the individual interviews

Question 4: What should new students not do:

- Play dominoes in the cafeteria – it becomes addictive and course work suffers (and getting mixed up with the wrong crowds, such as the smoking hubbly and also playing dominoes and cards in the cafeteria, those people have no problem in bringing you down with them): 3 students
- Firstly don't make the mistake that many students, including myself, have made by getting caught up in the care free atmosphere that varsity life brings causing yourself to fell behind always struggling to meet your deadlines. Young people such as us are so easily distracted and that can be very dangerous for your academic career: 2 students=

Theme 4: Institutional factors

Data set no. 3: Written Reflection no. 1

Question 3: What are the challenges?

- The tutors explaining the work a day before it is due, this is not giving me enough time to complete the work: 1 student
- I do not face major challenges. The only thing is that I do not understand my IFS lecturer. That is an academic challenge. 1 student
- The marking is quite strict, you get mark down for the last thing on university. 1 Adopting to getting all your own information: 1 student
- The IFS lectures are sometimes not understandable: 1 student
- I sometimes feel attending some of the lectures is ublbs because then you can always study in your room either than sitting in the class and understand nothing from what's said: 1 student
- I do not have any major challenges facing me. The only challenge I have on university is understanding my IFS lecturer. By this happening it makes me find ifs boring and I tend not to attend lectures and rather stud on my own without the lecturer clarifying certain sections: 1 student

Data set no. 4: Questionnaire

Question 12: What are your challenges and why?

- Not having the freedom to adjust your timetable. Boring lectures, because it makes going to class a bad experience: 1 student

CATEGORY 2: OVERCOMING THE CHALLENGES TO LEARNING

Theme 1: Personal factors

Data set no. 1: Written Reflection no. 1

Question 5: Suggestions on what I can do to overcome the challenges:

What I could do:

- Work harder: 1 student
- I try to put in all my time and effort because I know at the end there would always be light: 1 student
- The only way I can make a real success out of this study period is to stay focused at all times possible: 1 student

Data set no. 3: Written Reflection (WR) no. 2

Question 2: What did I do to pass all my modules in the first semester?

- Was determined to succeed: 1 student
- Had the will to learn and was focused: 6 students
- Had a good support system: 8 students
- Had confidence and enjoyed the work: 5 students
- Was motivated: 6 students
- Worked hard, was committed and dedicated: 12 student
- Had faith: 2 students
- As with anything we do, success is the one thing that we as all human beings strive for in life and my tertiary education was no different. Time is the one thing one can never get back so I knew that if I was going to obtain my degree that I was going to have to put my very best in. Even though I must shamefully admit at times I did not, but when it came to crunch time I put in everything I could. The modules which I had in my first semester was Academic Literacy for Commerce 131, Management 131, Information Systems 131 and Quantitative Skills for Commerce 131. That painful uncertainty of not knowing whether you pass or fail is one of the longest waits one could ever endure. The constant thought of “if only I had studied that extra hour” pains you until that moment you open your results for the first time...then it is all over. Your fate now lies within an A4 size paper and there is nothing that you can do to change it. When I received my results at the end of the semester I was over the moon; I had passed all four my modules. It was at that moment that all the sleepless nights and long hours of studying suddenly did not matter anymore. A time for celebration had come, and it could not have come any sooner: 1 student
- In my opinion, the best thing one can do is to ensure that you have a good support base. Be open with family and friends about what you may be struggling with, you would be surprised at the response you get: 1 student
- I consider myself as one of the lucky ones to have made it this far. I am registered for eight modules in total, namely: Academic Literacy for Commerce, Quantitative Skills for Foundation, Information Systems, Political Studies, Public Administration, Management, South African Government Politics and Economics. These are all the modules that I had to pass, something not all first year students managed to do. To know this has made me realise something special in me and how I have been blessed, as we all had to battle for success while at the same time dealing with all the changes in our lives. To be honest I do not know how I managed to achieve this, however some believe that if one succeeds in something, he/she must have done at least one thing right. For this reason I believe there are various factors that could have contributed to my success, such as the benefits of living on campus and my determination to succeed. Was determined to succeed: 1 student
- Staying on campus residence for me has been really helpful. Some parents believe that letting a young adult live on campus is bad for the person, as it exposes that person to too much freedom, which sometimes is hard to handle. However, I decided to use that freedom to my advantage, to learn new things about myself, others and the world at large. This knowledge has somehow made me wiser and to realise that I have definitely lost and gained something from this experience: 1 student
- University is also a scary place for first years, as it was for me too. This is the reason which made me work really hard and sometimes push myself to the limit because I did not know what to expect next. . Therefore it is one’s choice to take this opportunity or not, and I chose to use it to my advantage as it also helped me to adapt easily to the new environment. Being on campus all the time has made it easy for me to get used to university life. This made me tough and ready to make the right decisions for my future and this has increased my chances to succeed in my first year. Being on campus means that I

do not have to travel, deal with family dramas and all the everyday issues surrounding our townships and communities. It therefore helped me to concentrate on what is most important at this time in my life (my studies). I wake up every day thinking of nothing else but gong to class, even though sometimes I am tempted not to go. But the fact that I live on campus residence kept me grounded and reminds me of those who have to travel and deal with a lot just to get to campus, and that makes me realise how lucky I really am to be at university, therefore I should make the best of every opportunity at my disposal in order to succeed in life: 1 student

- This past year I chose to make the best of residence life doing nothing but what I came here for (my studies). I used the freedom to advance my learning in all areas of life that I feel are appropriate and necessary for my success. The study material made available in campus residence helped me to keep focus and utilised my free time effectively in order to prevent the unknown: 1 student
- Ever since I was accepted at University of the Western Cape as student, I was determined to make my mark in the world. Being a university student for me has been a privilege, no one could have ever thought I would make it this far. For that reason I am very determined to make a success of my life, as I realise that university is a gateway to greater things, a doorway to my success and it is necessary to provide me with an escape to a better life. I know that working hard in my studies, might provide me with a good job after graduating, which is the reason most students come to university (including myself). The socio-economic issues of our country everyone in the same position as I to come to university with a purpose to make it in the world, not only for ourselves but for the ones we leave behind (at our homes). I am here for the purpose of getting a degree and the only way to do that is if I stay strong and study hard, which is exactly how I got to pass in the past semester. The will to succeed has been the driving force behind any effort I make towards my academic work. I really did work hard last year just as many students have done, the only difference is the thinking behind that hard work and for me it is really necessary to make my dreams come true. My family and friends have been very supporting throughout this whole process, which encourages me even more, and every day I wake up and realise the little things in my life and how important they are towards shaping the mentality of an individual. To succeed one does not need only to work hard but also has to have a positive attitude with great determination to find a way to get t that point. This is the person I have been working to become, and in a way I think I have achieved, which could also be one of the reasons that contributed to the success of last semester. Had the will to learn: 6 students
- In order to succeed here, we have to realise our individuality and not be afraid to be different. The fact that I might be different from others with regard to our life styles, preferences, appearance, behaviour and backgrounds, has made me strong and firm and to always show determination in everything I do. I always feared for the unknown about university life and I have made sure that does not cloud my judgements and let me forget where I come from. With determination comes love and passion, I have come to love and be and am passionate about my studies. I actually enjoy picking up a book as if I am going to watch a movie. This has definitely contributed to even greater determination to succeed and to get there I have to complete every little detail.
- My life, my family, my home and my community are my inspiration to go forward, to strive for perfection and reach for the stars even if I might never come to know how it feels like to be there. These are all the reasons that keep me going and determined to succeed with everything in me, which further reflects in my academic work. This is the reason why I passed. I was proud to have passed all my subjects and hoped to do even better in the following year: 1 student
- There are eight subjects required to pass during the first year of B Com General, four of which are done in the first semester and four in the second. The subjects I completed first semester were: Information System (IS), Management, Quantitative Skills for Commerce (QSC) and Academic Literacy for Commerce (ALC). Fortunately, I had passed all four subjects in the first semester and as mentioned above it came with hard work and commitment.
- First semester for first years can become quite challenging for many students as it is difficult having to adjust to the change in environment and at the same time, having to concentrate on studies. I therefore felt extremely anxious and nervous about my results, but at the same time I knew that did not have much to worry about it much as I remained a hardworking and competent student throughout the semester. Upon receiving my results, I felt most happy and excited and it was a great achievement for me. I felt quite relieved that I did not have to repeat any subjects. My family was all very proud and I myself felt proud at my great achievement: 1 student
- When I received my results during the June holidays I was so excited. Before I opened the envelope with my results I was scared and nervous, when I opened it and I saw that I passed all my modules, I felt overwhelmed and full of joy, I had overcome all my challenges, I was a winner. I couldn't stop smiling. All my tears, sleepless nights, hard work and dedication had paid off. The confidence I gained from that day onwards I shall never leave behind. I started to look at life a lot differently. Gained confidence: 1 student
- After realizing that what I did last semester helped me a lot, I did not change, but one thing changed, my confidence. I became more confident about what I am doing and mostly I started to love and enjoy my studies. When one has a disability you have to work twice as hard as people who are not disabled. It was hard to adapt in the first semester because I did not share with people the challenge that I face, but in the second semester I started telling people about it, even though they treat me differently (which I dislike). At least they are aware and it makes it easier to adapt: 1 student
- It was Monday morning during the July holiday. My left leg moving up and down continuously trying to get onto the Student Portal. I got in and as it opened I took a breath, closed my eyes and when I opened them up again this feeling I can't explain came over me. I tried calming myself down, reached for my calculator and started working out my average. I just sat there and wept, knowing that I what I worked for has come true. Finally everything made sense. The family functions I never attended because I had to study, getting up from my desk not to get into bed at 1 am in the morning but to make myself another cup of coffee to go over certain sections or two for one more time. There were a lot of things and people who contributed to my final marks. I think I'll start with the people. I could never in my life ask for better parents. I would come home after a paper, my father would ask, "did you try your best?" I would say yes and he would tell me that if I fail or pass he is still proud. I guess that kept me happy, it gave me comfort in a way most students would die for. Some parents pressure their children and I am just one lucky girl: 1 student
- My boyfriend played a huge role too. Instead of sitting whispering sweet nothings to each other, we sat whispering accounting ratio's and Labour Relations Act. We have been together for almost 3 years and if things go our way we want

to get engaged end of next year and get married a year later. What pushes me has a lot to do with the above. We both have goals, we both know to get where we want to be we need to work for it. There is so many things happening, young people dying, things which opens my eyes. I try to make a success of my studies so I'll be able to establish myself. I think if my husband passes away and I have young children I'll have that degree, I'll be able to look after myself as well as my kids. It may seem very farfetched but it goes through my mind. I also believe I need to give back to my parents not that I can ever repay them. In short-term high marks keep them happy and long term I want to let them travel, see the world. I'm not like a lot of people who use short term goals as a guide, I use long-term ones. Set goals and monitor them: 3 students

- Those were all the emotional reasoning to why I work as hard as I do but to be honest I have the lowest self-esteem. Most times I don't believe in myself and feel weak. I've struggled with this for a long time. Sometimes I became so overwhelmed, a bit too overwhelmed. Luckily I have people there for me, but what do those do who don't have that. Perhaps that is the reason for this project, those people who have that potential but can't handle other things which make studies hard. Without a right support system who knows how many potential students slipped though UWC's records? 1 student
- The dean's list played a massive role in my hard-work. There are times my friend and myself would just stare at it in hope that we'll be staring at our own names on it the following year. It served as a strong form of motivation: 1 student
- At the end of the day my faith plays the foundation in everything I do. Priorities are so important at the end of the day if one knows our purpose on earth and grab all opportunities that our Almighty has blessed us with there is no way any of us can go wrong: 1 student
- Another goal I had was to work hard for a year mark that was high. I tried to keep it an A or B for my modules – for the most challenging modules I aimed for a B – others which I knew I enjoyed and loved – I aimed for an A. Once your year mark is high – it is that last push in exams that will guarantee you your success in whatever goal you set. My motto is do not aim to just pass!! You need to stand out when you apply to a company one day.

Data set no. 4: Questionnaire

Question 5: What can I do to overcome the challenges?

- Mostly, to talk about it and lose the pride, let people assist if they need to: 1 response
- I also think that having a good support system is essential in dealing with the pressure of varsity: 1 response
- It is important to realise that it is ok to sometimes ask for help when you struggling with something; no one expects you to be 100% sure of everything that you do: 4 responses
- Finding closer residence and making time to do school work earlier: 1 response
- By studying very hard and give my best of all. Have faith in myself: 1 response
- All I do is work as hard as I possibly can and trust in the grace of the Almighty: 1 response

Data set no. 6: Answers to questions asked in the individual interviews

Question 3: Advice on what new students should do:

- Recognise that you're privileged to be studying at a university, because there aren't many people out there who get that opportunity: 1 student
- Being a first year student is one of the happiest moments of your life, having excitement but you need to leave behind all high school behaviour because now you are in the real world of study, no one is going to push to study all its up to you, you pass or fail: student
- First semester for first years can become quite challenging for many students as it is difficult having to adjust to the change in environment (can be scary) and at the same time, having to concentrate on studies: 2 students
- New first year students should work hard from the beginning, university is hard and challenging. One needs to be prepared to make sacrifices and put in extra time to make it: 1 student
- In the end its your decision, your commitment, if you plan to fail then fail to plan, don't waste your parents money please: 1 student
- I think that if you follow these few guidelines you are more likely to stay focused, work harder and be successful at university: 1 student
- Learn to control your life, take charge because if you don't someone will do it for you. Know what you want from life, set goals and reward yourself when you achieve them: 1 student
- Good luck for the year, stay focused on the end result and have passion for the work you do. Its going to be difficult but don't give up, when you fail just get up, wipe the dirt off and move forward: 2 students
- My second recommendation is think of the future. Its important to remind yourself everyday about why you are studying. If you have a dream – remind yourself of it to keep the motivation going. If students are feeling demotivated - they need to think about the money that is spent to be afforded this opportunity and the possibilities of their future when they get their degree. I feel that a student that is aware of the unemployment rate and how companies want the best of the best graduates will see the essence of driving themselves: 2 students
- My fourth recommendation is to enjoy what you are studying even if you dislike some of your modules. Its all in the mind of the student that they hate a subject-when you apply yourself, and start making sense of things, you will start enjoying the module. Try studying by associating the theory to something you are familiar with. This really helped me to enjoy studying

- as I could understand things better and simpler - in my own terms and in my own world. I hope this advice made sense - its what I did and it really is continuing working for me: 1 student
- Be determine to make a success of your studies, it is a privilege to be a student at university. Realise that university is a gateway to greater things, a doorway to your success and it is necessary to provide you with an escape to a better life: 1 student
 - To succeed one does not need only to work hard but also has to have a positive attitude with great determination to find a way to get to that point. We have to realise our individuality and not be afraid to be different: 1 student
 - Guys if you want to succeed in university pay attention to the following: Remember why you are here: 2 students
 - Realise that working from day one is of utmost importance, taking university easy is not an option: 2 students
 - The most important thing to do is to study very hard each and every day: 3 students
 - I do not pretend to be an expert or have all the answers to be a successful university student however I can only give advice based on personal experience. The best piece and maybe the most important piece of advice which I can give to you, is to work hard and put your all into your studies from the very beginning: 1 student
 - University is also a scary place for first years, as it was for me too. Work every hard and push yourself to the limit because you do not know what to expect next: 1 student
 - Have balance in life - In tertiary everything is at your disposal, the Barn for fun and alcohol, the student centre for playing dominoes and just 'chilling' with friends and lectures to attend in body or attending both in body and mind. Have fun to a certain extent and do you school work putting in more effort than you put in when having fun: 1 student
 - It will also help you to talk to someone when you feel unhappy or stressed out, it helps a lot, and don't be afraid to ask for help: 2 students
 - Have a support system – you have to able to talk to someone when you're feeling down in life because bottling up emotions always ends up in a huge breakdown. To avoid this you have to find someone who is willing to listen, someone you trust whether its your parents, a friend you attend with, a student who is higher in education that you (2nd or 3rd year) or a lecturer because they are always willing to help out: 1 student
 - You need to have a support group – your family and friends, they will encourage and inspire you to work hard and to succeed: 4 students
 - Always make use of the university's services. If you are struggling meet with consultations from ESSRU or consult with lecturers: 1 student
 - It is advantageous to stay on campus residence. This is especially so for first year students, as they can be able to access resources easily: 1 student
 - But there are also negative influences on residence life, therefore one has to be strong and firm, with the hope of achieving what others have failed to do and not to fall in the same trap that the ones before you have gone into and have not been able to pick themselves out of: 1 student
 - Be conscious about the things you eat, as it is important to stay fit and healthy: 1 student

Theme 2: Academic factors

Data set no. 1: Written Reflection no. 1

Question 5: Suggestions on what I can do to overcome the challenges:

- I can improve my time management skill and prioritise as this is what I need to get ahead, but it is difficult: 1 student
- I can pay special attention: 1 student

Data set no. 3: Written Reflection (WR) no. 2

Question 2: What did I do to pass all my modules in the first semester?

- Attended all my classes: 8 students
- Applied effective time management and planning techniques: 7 students
- Was not afraid to ask questions and to go for consultation: 6 students
- The reason I think I passed all my modules was because I knew from the very beginning that it was not going to be easy. With all the assignments, tutorials and test that had to be done effective time management was going to be of utmost importance. I would then record all test dates and due dates as soon as they were made available to me and then try and allocate time, that I estimated to be, efficient for each task at hand. I also tried my best to study before the time for a test and not leave things for the last minute as I found that it only creates more anxiety and stress that does not help you with what you have to do.
- And also do not be afraid to ask for help, nobody expects you to always be good at everything. I often stayed after class and asked the lecturer questions about things I did not understand and they would stay behind and explain it to me until I did, if they could, or I made use of consultation times: 1 student

- Since I have been staying on campus, I have managed to do all my work and assignments on time because academic resources are easily available: 1 student
- There are also specialised programmes for first year residence students, designed to assist students with regard to their academic work and to adapt to the new environment and there ways to overcome the challenges which arise. These residence benefits have contributed a lot to the positive choices I make for my future. All the negative influences on residence life are what made me strong and firm, with the hope of achieving what others have failed to do and not to fall in the same trap that the ones before me have gone into and have not been able to pick themselves out. This has always been good medicine for me as I am also inspired by those who have had the same experiences and made it through. The first semester was the hardest, most challenging and exciting, and to have known this has been a blessing and I would not trade my first year for anything: 1 student
- Information Systems (IS) is the study of the operations of the computer and it tests ones practical and theoretical skills of the computer. Personally, I am better skilled at practicals than at theory, therefore, I attended tutorials (DAL Practical) regularly. I thoroughly enjoy working with computers and I therefore found the DAL practicals to be both a fun and learning experience: 1 student
- Management involves learning how to manage a business. Management was one of my weakest subjects as it only required theoretical skills. I struggled quite a bit in the beginning, so much so that I failed both my first assignment and term test. Fortunately, it was the management tutorials that helped me pass Management at the end of the semester. Every tutorial required us to complete a comprehensive exercise and I, together with my partner, worked extremely hard at obtaining only 80% and above for every tutorial: 1 student
- Quantitative Skills for Commerce or rather known as QSC involves mathematical calculations related to the business environment. Mathematics always remained one of my favourite subjects and I found myself quite eager to get started with this module. The university offers a very helpful service namely the “hot seat”. The “hot seat” offers a one-on-one basis tuition, in which tutors explain and help learners with whichever section of the module they find challenging and difficult. Personally I feel that the “hot seat” helped me tremendously and I made use of it whenever I had difficulty with a section of the work covered. I also had the help of my best friend who is fortunately for me a “mathematics genius”. It is quite advised to attend the “hot seat” as it helps a great deal: 1 student
- Lastly, Academic Literacy for Commerce (ALC), the subject which constantly kept me occupied. ALC involves language techniques and the use of various skills. Personally, this was my favourite subject as it reflected in my results that it was my highest mark obtained for the semester. The ALC tutorials helped me throughout the semester and prepared me well for the final exam. Also I completed all the tasks which was handed to us and attended class regularly so that I would not miss out on any work covered, tips for the exams and also spot tests which counted towards the semester mark. I also made sure that before I attended the lecture I did a bit of pre-reading as Mrs.McGhie strongly recommended it as she would randomly ask questions based on the work which was going to be covered in the lecture. This instilled a sense of fear in me and motivated me to do the pre-reading. ALC is fun and I looked forward to attending and participating in lectures and tutorials. Did my pre-reading: 2 students
- Overall, I attended lectures and tutorials regularly and completed all tasks and assignments with much effort and accuracy. I prepared myself well for the final examination by starting to study three weeks in advance. I was also conscious about the things I ate, as it was important for me stay fit and healthy: 1 student
- In the first semester things were hard, I failed my first QSF and ALC test, I cried for 2 nights in a row. For the first time in my life I failed a test, it was frustrating. I thought I will not make it, I did not talk to anyone about it, I suffered in silence. I then realized that I am no longer in high school I am at university, therefore I needed to start talking to people (lecturers, tutors, friends and my mentor). Talking would not solve my problems but it was going to help lighten my problems. When I got to my room one day I wrote a list of reasons why I was at university and why I needed to succeed. That helped me reflect every time I felt I could not make it or when I wanted to give up. With all that done the real work had to start ‘studying’. I studied 6 hours a day and that was on a normal day, when examination started I studied more than 1- hours a day. I consulted my tutors, lecturers and my mentor. I attended group study sessions which helped me tremendously: 1 student
- What I did to pass? Beginning of the semester I would go to each lecture group of each subject to find the lecturer who I understood better. I steered away from the caf! I form study groups in tut rooms, did homework and exercises together. I surrounded myself with people who wanted to work. I used consultation hours! Very important. I made Mondays and Tuesdays busy days so if I write Friday or Saturday I don’t have too much on my plate. I never went out every weekend, when I had free time I slept! Looked after my health: 2 students
- I took down all tutors contact numbers. I would go over work especially ACM and QSC in front of the TV. If I could get answers right there while in front of the TV. I can do it under any conditions: I student
- My achieved my results by following the system below:
 - Goals. It was important for me to set goals and keep track of them. Besides other techniques, I ensured that I monitored the progress of my goals monthly. This gave me an indication of where I was in terms of achievement and allowed me to analyse and conclude where I needed to focus to push my year mark. Setting a goal, kept my focus strong and helped me to motivate myself- this brings me to the next point: 1 student
 - Consistency. This is probably one of the most important aspects I concentrated on. It is very hard to be consistent every single day but it can be done. Hard work is impossible without consistency. I always tried to put in as much attention and concentration as I could on a daily basis. Even if I was not consistent at times, I made sure I compensated for it the following day or on a weekend: 1 student
 - Time management / prioritizing. My social life was extremely important me, so I had to manage my time correctly and prioritise what was most important and required my time. I worked from a system whereby I created an electronic diary via an excel spreadsheet I would up date this sheet weekly or even daily. The sheet portrayed information about assignments, tests, tutorial test etc. As well as due dates, my progress as well as the next date I need to progress on it. I used “auto filler” to filter check what I needed to focus for the specific week. This allowed me to plan my week and avoided time wasted on projects and tests only one or two weeks away. Once the task was completed I changed its status

on my sheet and only filtered “incomplete” to keep track of my progress etc. I found that putting in this little bit of effort when updating the diary, freed up a lot of time and allowed me to have my social life and still work hard and consistently. I learnt time management from my ALC module, I just created a system that worked for me. Applied effective planning and time management techniques: 1 student

Motivation. Its tough to stay motivated – especially if you need to motivate yourself. Every day is not a good and on those bad days its important to have things and people around you that are positive and encouraging. My family had high expectations for me, and this motivated me in some ways as they had so much faith in my abilities. I chose friends who had the same focus and determination – I found that when we worked together, things always seemed more positive and we enjoyed our studies and tried to make even the worst subjects fun by talking about it. We inspired other people when we could, and tried to include them or help them. The result was that they in turn could inspire and motivate us as well. Sometimes your best is not enough – and you need to put in 110% Thereafter you can say put in all your effort. I worked for 5 years – my last motivation was that I felt like I wanted to empower myself. After being told I was not really qualified for a position after getting the promotion and that they could not pay me what they paid someone qualified, really pushed me to study and it’s the strongest motivation. Paying for my studies is another factor, hard, earned money is difficult to spend – therefore it didn’t make sense to waste any time as time: 1 student

Try to be a perfectionist even if you’re not one. I always tried to be very thorough and did’nt mind doing something 100 times if it meant that the end result would be an excellent test result or a strong assignment mark. Something you produce as an individual reflects on you as a person. It is a representation of your potential and effort –therefore it is important to do yourself proud. It is not only a reflection to your lecturer and tutor but more importantly to yourself. You need to have faith in yourself. This is the best way to do this. Try to be a perfectionist: 1 student

Lastly – try and be passionate about life, your goals and your studies. Think about the future, how you can make a difference one day, strive to be a leader, embrace your individuality, be pro-active, work part-time – challenge yourself, be competitive in a healthy way. Reward yourself when its due and help others – it all makes a big difference to your mindset. Your studies and ultimately your entire life: 1 student

Data set no. 4: Questionnaire

Question 13: Any suggestions on how to overcome the challenges?

What I can do:

- Choosing classes where you aren’t with your friends or sitting apart from one another where possible. Diarising tasks, homework, assignments and setting them as priority. Thereafter, I realised I have more time on hand to attend to other things. I now do homework or start on assignments when I get them, utilising free periods are of utter importance: 1 response
- Drawing up a schedule and writing down exactly what needs to be done and when it needs to be done by. By doing this and following this set out schedule it will ease the pressure of trying to keep up with all my deadlines and ensure that my work is done on time and still have enough time to study and be well prepared for my tests and exams: 10 responses
- Group work is not only about working as a team. A good strong & focused leader will guide and help the group. Choose group members wisely, look for commonalities with regards to group members’ standards. Assignments count for a lot, therefore every assignment deserves 110%. With regard to work and workload, prioritise, use time management to manage each week and surround yourself with positive peers or better yet, help encourage and motivate others to join you in reaching a goal. Knowing you can help & support each other, makes learning less stressful and fun: 1 response
- My suggestions are to be responsible, to multi task and have a good time management because this is not longer high school and no teacher will go after you and ask you to please hand in your assignments. Always remind yourself why you are here perhaps it may help you to succeed: 1 response
- Have to make sacrifices, and manage time well. I should also not leave work or studying for the last minute: 1 response
- Yes, I made a schedule where I can use my time to full potential and maximise my working output: 1 response
- I would suggest students to do their work ahead of time to prevent late submission or unnecessary stress. Always ask for help by your lecturer or tutor and consult with work that you do not understand: 2 responses
- Using your time wisely, and completing tasks early: 1 response
- Self-study, because it is difficult to concentrate and stay awake in some classes: 1 response

Data set no. 6: Answers to questions asked in the individual interviews

Question 3: Advice on what new students should do:

- Pre-reading is very important too, it’s okay to understand what the lecturer is teaching but having broader view of the topic and being able to interact in the class is a bonus: 2 students
- The key points of wanting to pass your studies, firstly you need to do pre-reading before you get to the lecture so that when a lecturer introduce the topic, you be familiar with it, participant is important and asking questions to your studies: 1 student
- Study hard for the first test and be ready on time: 1 student
- Study well in advance in order to pass well: 1 student

- Go to each lecturer at the beginning of the semester in order to understand them better. Take down all tutors contact numbers: 1 student
- Pre-reading is a must without it you will find it very hard to cope. In this place no one will spoon-feed you, no one will go after you to hand in assignments, no one will tell you to go to class so everything is on you, you are accountable for your own life, and you are an adult now: 1
- Time management, no-one says you cannot party but limiting yourself is important, and of course the extent to which you party should also be considered: 1 student
- Manage your time wisely. Time is one thing that you will never get back. Work out a time table and stick to it! Have time for work but also time to socialize. You need to balance it out: 1 student
- The first recommendation I would give is to **prioritize their time**. Student life is tough and like they say in Economics there is always a trade-off or opportunity cost. The opportunity cost for socializing in the two period you get free is two chapters of work that you could have completed for a test at the end of that week. Therefore it is crucial that a student realizes the value of time - we cannot complain that we do not have time if we waste it. At the same time, we do also need to enjoy student life, and we cannot always choose our friends but we should try and motivate and encourage them to join us in utilizing our time properly. There can be social interaction and work happening at the same time. However, it is not sometimes as easy as I am making it sound so if the odds are against you - you need to make choices and sacrifices. Sometimes sacrificing that time to work and complete work, will be more rewarding when the results are out: 2 students
- Planning, Organising, Leading and Controlling in Management are similar in chores that are delegated at home. Planning is when the kitchen is a mess and your mother identifies that it needs to be cleaned, and that she needs to get it cleaned by you or your brother. Organizing is when she calls you to the kitchen to give you your duties like you will wash the dishes and your brother will dry the dishes, she then shows you that you need to use Sunlight liquid and a dry cloth etc - these items are resources and you and your brother are the employees, Leading is when your mom guides you by telling you what must be washed again or what must pack where and lastly, controlling is your mother coming into the kitchen to check that it is clean. Using your mom as an example of a Manager and a situation you are familiar with - will cause that you never forget the concept: 1 student
- Manage your time – Do all your work immediately to avoid missing deadlines. Every mark counts so attend your tutorials, hand in assignments, and write your tests. A time table could help you manage your time as you slot in all the activities you have to do on a daily basis, including watching TV, cooking and studying: 1 student
- Asking questions or attending consultations. Consultation is provided for a reason, and you can pick up extra tips for semester tests, exams and also just clarity of the work you're busy with: 1
- Ask your tutors or lecturers for help with work that you do not understand: 1 student
- Always ask questions –be it in class or tutorials. There is no such thing as A STUPID QUESTION!: 1 student
- Work that was covered in class should be revised again on that same day and study ahead of time: 2 (this makes it easier when exams come, as you will already know most of the work)
- Also assignments must be done ahead of time to ensure that you get done in time: 1 student
- Do your homework! It may seem boring but then you will know where your work points are. You can then improve and find out where you went wrong by asking for assistance: 1 student
- Revise your work on a daily basis and constantly go for consultation: 3students
- They should always submit their work on the due dates: 2 students
- Do all your work and assignments on time because academic resources are easily available: 1 student
- Secondly, try your best to do have your assignments done at least a day before the submission date. Study ahead of time for your test and exams, the lack of anxiety that last minute studying brings allows you to be more relaxed and better prepared when writing your tests: 1 student
- My third recommendation is to be consistent. It is not only about completing the test or the assignment but also the quality of your work. Be consistent in the quality of your work and constantly challenge yourself to improve your work on a regular basis. This will not only improve your marks but also provide you will a learning experience. These assignments and tests are there to teach you something important and for you to gain knowledge there from so try and do it thoroughly and consistently every time. The only way to do this is be consistent in the standard of work and also prioritize as mentioned in the first paragraph. Receiving a good mark for something that you put effort in will motivate you, at the same time - a bad mark is also a motivation to put more time in that area or try and improve the quality of work: 1 student
- My last recommendation is use what you have learnt to benefit you and your other modules on a every day basis. For instance, learning how to write an essay and referencing it properly will help you in any module where you need to write an essay as an assignment. If you watch the news, and there may be news on the inflation rate - try and think about what you learnt about it and enquire about it the next time you sit with that module. This is the only way that you will benefit at the end of the day and it will help you to excel as you are taking advantage of your knowledge by allowing your mind to question and be pro-active all the time: 1 student
- Use the specialised programmes for first year residence students, these are designed to assist students with regard to their academic work and to adapt to the new environment and there are ways to overcome the challenges which arise: 1 student
- It is quite advised to attend the “hot seat” for QSC as it helps a great deal: 1 student

Theme 3: Social factors

Data set no. 3: Written Reflection (WR) no. 2

Question 2: What did I do to pass all my modules in the first semester?

- Another thing that I think is also important is to select the right group of friends that you wish to surround yourself with. This will be the people that you spend most of your time with and if it is a crowd that does not like going to class very much, you are most likely to fall into the same trap. Share notes, form study groups and help each other where you can. Choice of friends: 8 students

Data set no 6: Answers to questions asked in the individual interviews

Question 3: Advice on what new students should do:

- Choosing friends that you can benefit from, such as studying together, working together, comparing etc: 2 students
- Be themselves. Do not follow the crowd. If your friends decide to 'bunk' class, let them. They will feel the results of it. Be a leader not a follower: 1 student
- Find friends that will build you and encourage studying together: 1 student
- Lastly be sure to make the right kind of friends, the type of friends that are fun to party with but when it comes to crunch time, are the some ones motivating you to study and study's with you:1 student

Theme 4: Institutional factors

Data set no. 1: Written Reflection no. 1

Question 5: Suggestions on what the faculty could do to assist with overcoming the challenges:

What the university could do:

- Have psychologists on campus:1 student
- Understand me when I tell my problems: 1 student
- Give us more time to prepare for tests: 1 student
- Offer better ways of dealing with the workload: 1 student
- Cut down on the workload, make it more manageable:1 student
- Financial aid and traveling expenses would help a lot: 1 student
- Lecturers should also motivate students with personal problems and students from harsh backgrounds:1 student
- Should allow students to register for more modules since I have a hunger for knowledge:1 student
- The resource center should stay open in the evenings and over weekends:1 student
- Due dates assignments and tests should not be so close to each other: 1 student
- The university can implement strategies and measures to alleviate the problem areas:1 student
- UWC can help its students by providing more student loans:1 student
- If they replace the IFS lecturer (hope that IFS will be better taught for future university entrants): 2 students
- Make more computers available to b com students would also help a lot as we sometimes have to wait in lines for up to an hour. The Microsoft software could be made available to students at a cheaper price because we cannot all afford to buy it and therefore suffer during the times we have to do dal and other assignments: 1 student
- The best lecturers possible must be used to teach the students. I have problems with the IFS lecturer. He knows the work, but is not able to carry it over well. This is why many children do bad in this subject: 1 student
- The university should supply more computers:1 student
- To improve the ALC marks, I would strongly suggest that they move the course back to a year course. I do understand that university is a much higher level than school but forcing a year's work into a 6 month course is looking for complications: 1 student

What lecturers and tutors could do:

- Tutors should explain the work days before the due date to give more time to students: 1 student
- Lecturers should be lenient with first years when it comes to plagiarism: 1 student
- Lecturers should make the lectures more interesting and understandable: 1 student

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION FROM DATA SETS

Data set no. 1: Written Reflection (WR) no. 1

Question 1: What were my expectations to be at UWC?

- I know that it would be much difficult and complicated than That the workload would be heavy and I needed to work hard: 1 student
- Expected good lecturers: 1 student
- Expected the administration to be better and more organised:1 student
- University is different from school and that I have to work hard and spent lots of my time on concentrating on my work: 2 students
- The way they teach is different to school: 1 student
- I was amazed at the beginning. We even write tests on a Saturday: 1 student
- The work is interesting but also done very differently that it was at school. This had made it kind of difficult for me. This has in a way made me feel stupid but I am getting the hang of things now: 1 student
- When I entered university I expected a fast pace of work, but not such an extreme pace. The work is not difficult but it is really too much at a time: 1 student
- I expected to see strict lecturers who speak bomberstres words (English), unapproachable. I thought every pass must be an 'a' symbol only. I expected so many things: 1 student
- I just love UWC so much. It is the best: 1 student
- It is exciting and I am learning a lot: 1 student
- It is exciting and a pleasant experience:1 student
- The orientation programme helped to let me settle in and to make friends:1 student
- UWC is a very welcoming institution and I was overwhelmed because I was very scared that no provision would be made for me (student that is partially sighted):1 student
- After orientation I felt at home from day one: 1 student
- Attending lectures are fun and very interesting: 2 students
- I am enjoying it:1 student
- It was a fun and exciting experience at orientation:1 student
- I made friends during orientation: 1 student
- I was very excited when I was finally registered: 1 student
- When lectures started I was ready to learn and motivated: 1 student
- UWC had a nice vibe when I got here: 1 student
- At the beginning of the year I had this huge fear and even thought I would never make it. Now I am more comfortable: 1 student
- It was boring socially: 1 student
- I was very confused at first, but met a friend who helped me to settle in:1 student
- It was a culture shock and experience racism and segregation between coloureds and black students:1 student
- I never realized that it would be so hectic that I hardly ever have free time to spend with my family and friends. I hardly even have time for myself. I am always busy and never have time for anything else besides my studies: 1 student
- At first, coming to the university gave me a feeling of nervousness: 1 student
- I hated orientation. I didn't want to come and was miserable. I am not a social person and I was alone because of this. The 1st week of class was awful as I had nothing to do between lectures and no one to talk to either. I started picking up when I began using the library. I could do work at varsity and relax at home. I have since made a few friends and am enjoying UWC a little more: 1 student
- My experience at university was tougher than I thought. Trying to balance everything is quite difficult. The workload especially has hit me the hardest, I feel that there should be more hours in a day. If you not a very disciplined student it is especially hard and the difference between school and university is quite vast and overwhelming. I do find university difficult and Im barely coping: 1 student
- The registration process was a nightmare: 1 student

2.How am I doing so far?

- I am doing reasonably ok at my studies: 17 students
- I am doing pretty well. I pass all my modules so far: 3 students

3. What is positive?

- UWC is trying to help students academically: 1 student
- People are much friendlier than at school: 1 student
- UWC has tried to incorporate me as a partially sighted student: 1 student
- I am involved in a rugby club socially: 1 student
- My favourite subjects are Management and QSC, I naturally enjoy working with numbers and management is my future main stream. I'm definitely passing these subjects: 1 student
- Positive outcomes of being at this institute is that I always feel as if I have learned more and more everyday: 1 student
- The lecturers are always around to help us and give advice on certain things: 1 student
- We are exposed to a variety of activities also, which broadens one's mind: 1 student
- Everything at UWC is organised. The lecturers are always prepared with a lesson: 1 student
- Our tasks are always ready: 1 student
- Another good thing about UWC is that they offer a lot of services such as support services: 1 student
- So far I enjoy UWC. I will cry if I must leave: 1 student
- I am satisfied with UWC and its structure and system: 1 student
- The campus is very nice and I've met some really funny people. The work isn't too bad yet, so I'm coping all right: 1 student
- Good things about me is that I know how to manage time although sometimes I face so many assignments to do that must be submitted at same time and test as well: 1 student
- I am a fully registered student now and am studying, am attending all the classes according to the timetable by focusing on my dreams while controlling my time which is time management. I am looking forward to achieve a B com Economics degree in the record time: 1 student
- The good things of university are that lectures are well conducted especially ALC by Mrs McGhie and Management by Mr Mentor. Here again tutorials classes in these two subjects are well prepared for by the tutors: 1 student
- I am passing all my assignments and tutorials: 1 student
- Once we started with the work it was not that bad. The workload during the first term was manageable: 1 student
- The work is understandable: 1 student
- The resources made available on campus and the caf atmosphere: 1 student

Data set no 4: Questionnaire

Question 8a: Why did you decide to study towards a degree in the EMS faculty at UWC?

- At school numbers, calculations really interested me. I weighed my options and after deliberation and prayer, I thought studying through the EMS faculty would be more challenging, exciting and something I enjoyed: 1 student
- Always wanted to be a social worker, that's what we are in the EMS faculty 'social works' and I always wanted a career in the corporate world: 1 student
- I always knew I wanted to study towards a degree in commerce and the EMS faculty at UWC seemed like the perfect option for me. I wanted to obtain my degree however I was not sure to what I wanted my major to be and UWC's EMS faculty offers the B Com Gen degree that directly addresses the issue that I had. It allowed me the opportunity to start studying towards obtaining my degree without having the pressure of having to decide exactly which direction I wanted to go in: 1 student
- While saving to study, I gained experience and got valuable exposure to the corporate world. Although considered to be more of an artistic/creative individual, I gained and developed an appreciation and energy for the commerce industry, EMS therefore became my first choice: 1 student
- Reason being I enjoy handling numbers so I decided to do B Com Gen and major in Finance. I have always wanted to do Accounting or Finance as a career: 1 student
- I decided to study a degree in the EMS faculty as it has always been a dream of mine to become a successful business woman: 1 student
- I would like to have a career in business, and eventually start my own business: 1 student
- EMS subjects are more marketable than other faculties. I have a passion to work in the commerce world: 1 student
- Having a passion in finance, accounting and business from high school. I want to become a business woman one day so B Com Finance will help me achieve that: 1 student
- Because the degree I am studying in my dream career and it is offered in the EMS faculty: 1 student
- Because in my secondary school I was studying commerce subjects and I am business minded person: 1 student
- To ensure that I will in the future be employed. Business is something that will always be part of our lives: 1 student
- I want to work in financial companies and be able to do my own and family budget and even be a financial advisor for my parent: 1 student
- Because I want to be in a business world. I know what's happening in the business world: 1 student
- I matriculated in the year 2007 and after much persuasion, decided on taking a "gap year" in 2008. The reason why I preferred to take the year off was mainly due to being unsure of the career choice I wanted to enter, and also, I think I was

quite afraid of adjusting to the sudden change in environment. During the year I had worked as an administrator and this fortunately kept me quite occupied. The year was coming to an end and I had still not decided on a career choice until a cousin of mine advised me to apply for Bcom General. His advice to me was: "Bcom General leaves one open to many choices..." I student

ADDENDUM 16

CASE 2 - STAGE 3: SYNTHESIS AND REDUCTION (GROUPINGS OF CATEGORIES AND THEMES INTO SUB-THEMES)

CATEGORY 1: CHALLENGES TO LEARNING

Theme 1: Personal factors

Sub-theme 1: Accommodation

Not problematic but traveling was a problem for four students

Sub-theme 2: Financial means

No financial problems: 13 in April; 8 in October

Have financial problems: 7 in April; 4 in October

Sub-theme 3: Family support

All the students reported that their families and friends were supportive

Sub-theme 4: Disability

One student was partially sighted

Sub-theme 5: Career opportunities

One student was worried about finding a job after completing her degree

Sub-theme 6: First generation students

No: 3 students

Yes: 9 students

Sub-theme 7: Infected or affected by HIV/Aids

No: 11 students

Yes: 1 students

Theme 2: Academic factors

Sub-theme 1: Transition

Struggle to adjust to the university environment: 10 students in April

Was not reported as a challenge in October

Sub-theme 2: Time management

Struggle with time management: 5 students in April; 5 students in October

Leave work for the last minute (procrastination): 2 students

Sub-theme 3: Heavy workload

The workload is 'heavy': 7 students in April; 5 in October

Sub-theme 4: Finding some modules challenging

6 students in April; 1 student in October

Sub-theme 5: Resources

A lack of resources at home: 4 students

Theme 3: Social factors

No social factor challenges were reported.

Theme 4: Institutional factors

Sub-theme 1: Tutorial support

Problems with tutors: 3 students

Sub-theme 2: Teaching methods and teaching style

Not understanding the lecturer: 4 students

CATEGORY 2: OVERCOMING THE CHALLENGES TO LEARNING

Theme 1: Personal factors

Sub-theme 1: Accommodation

One student suggested finding closer accommodation in order to overcome the traveling challenge

One student suggested that new students should try and find on-campus accommodation

Sub-theme 2: Support

Support was not identified as a challenge, but one student reported that it was her grandmother who supported her and not her parents

Eight students reported that they had a good support system

Most of the students suggested that new students should have a good support system

Sub-theme 3: Motivation and encouragement

Six students reported that they were motivated

One student suggested that students should motivate and encourage each other

Theme 2: Academic factors

Sub-theme 1: Transition

One student reported that she was determined to succeed

Six students reported that they had the will to learn and was focused

Most of the students suggested that new students should know why they are at university, that they should stay focused and be responsible

Sub-theme 2: The students' strengthen their academic integration through:

Hard work

Twelve students reported that they worked hard and that was why they had passed all the modules

They suggested that new students should also work hard from the start

Prioritise their work

Six students reported that they prioritised and planned their work

They suggested that new students should prioritise and management their time effectively

Effective time management techniques

Nine students reported that they started to apply effective time management techniques

Class attendance and concentration

Thirteen students reported that they attended their classes and concentrated in class

They suggested that new students should attend all their classes and submit all their work

Asking questions and going for consultation

Six students reported that they were not afraid to ask when they did not understand something and that they went for consultation

They suggested that new students should ask questions and make use of consultation

Finding help when help was needed

Five students reported that they asked for help

Two students suggested that new students should also ask for help when in need

Theme 3: Social factors

Sub-theme 1: Choice of friends

Eight students reported that they choose their friends wisely

All the students suggested that new students should choose the right friends

Theme 4: Institutional factors

Sub-theme 1: Provide resources

Five suggestions were made for the provision of comprehensive financial aid, and more human and infrastructure resources

Sub-theme 2: Provide academic support

Eight suggestions were made for the provision of academic support

Sub-theme 3: Provide moral support and encouragement

Two suggestions were made that lecturers should provide moral support and encouragement to students