THE ROLE OF A WRITING CENTRE IN ENHANCING THE QUALITY OF STUDENTS' ACADEMIC WRITING AT A UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY

PULENG GLADYS SEFALANE- NKOHLA

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Department of Curriculum Studies

Stellenbosch University

Supervisor: Prof. M. Fourie-Malherbe

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Decleration

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ABSTRACT

The role of a writing centre in enhancing the quality of students' academic writing at a university of technology is a research study that determined students' perceptions about a writing centre, as one form of academic literacy support amongst a suite of academic development and support programmes designed to assist students to acquire epistemological access. The study was based at the Writing Centre of the Cape Peninsula University of Technology (CPUT). Research participants were drawn from students registered in various faculties, and in varying levels of academic study i.e. 1st, 2nd, 3rd and fourth-year (B-Tech) level study. They came from diverse linguistic, cultural, social and economic backgrounds. A significant qualification criterion for student participants was that they must have been exposed to, or experienced the services offered by the Writing Centre either through a one-on-one form of academic consultation, or through an academic literacy workshop. The empirical methods employed to gather data for this mixed methods study involved a survey in the form of a questionnaire that collected quantitative data, and a qualitative component which employed content analysis of 20 students' academic essays chosen using the above criteria. Overall, the findings from the quantitative study revealed overwhelmingly positive perceptions of students about the services offered by the Writing Centre, including perceptions about their own academic writing capabilities. However, these findings were not consistent with the findings emanating from the qualitative content analysis of students' academic essays. Content analysis revealed, among other things, lexico-grammatical errors pointing to a lack of conceptualisation by student participants of the academic task at hand; lack of presence in text; macro-structural issues (introductions, conclusions, paragraphing, etc.), and micro-structural issues (arrangement of sentences, language usage, grammatical errors and plagiarism, etc.). The findings also highlighted issues identified by student participants for improvement such as the need for the employment of additional consultants, and student participants' desire for additional services such as editing and proofreading to be added to the services currently offered by the Writing Centre.

Key words: Higher education, academic writing, academic literacy, epistemological access, student success.

OPSOMMING

Die rol van 'n skryfsentrum in die verbetering van die gehalte van studente se akademiese skryfwerk by 'n universiteit van tegnologie is 'n navorsingstudie wat ten doel gehad het om studente se persepsies oor 'n skryfsentrum, as een vorm van akademiese geletterheidsondersteuning binne 'n suite van akademiese ontwikkelings- en ondersteuningsprogramme wat ontwerp is om studente se epistemologiese toeganklikheid te ondersteun, te ondersoek. Die studie is gedoen by die Skryfsentrum van die Kaap Peninsula Universiteit van Tegnologie (KPUT). Deelnemers aan die navorsing is gewerf uit studente wat in verskeie fakulteite en in verskillende jaargange van akademiese studie, maw 1ste, 2de, 3de en 4de jaar (B.Tech) geregistreer is. Hulle kom uit diverse linguistiese, kulturele, sosiale en ekonomiese agtergronde. 'n Belangrike oorweging vir deelname aan die studie was dat studente blootgestel moes gewees het of ervaring gehad het van die dienste wat deur die Skryfsentrum gelewer word, hetsy deur 'n een-tot-een vorm van akademiese konsultasie, of deur 'n akademiese geletterdheidswerkswinkel. Die empiriese metodes wat gebruik is om data vir hierdie gemengde metode-studie te versamel het 'n opname in die vorm van 'n vraelys wat kwantitatiewe data ingesamel het, en 'n kwalitatiewe komponent wat inhoudsanalise van 20 studente se akademiese werkstukke wat op grond van bogenoemde kriteria gekies is, ingesluit. Oorhoofs beskou het die resultate van die kwantitatiewe studie oorweldigend positiewe persepsies van students oor die dienste wat deur die Skryfsentrum gelewer word opgelewer, insluitend persepsies oor hulle eie akademiese skryfvermoëns. Hierdie resultate het egter nie gerym met die bevindinge van die kwalitatiewe inhoudsanalise van studente se akademiese werkstukke nie. Inhoudsanalise het, onder andere, leksiko-grammatikale foute wat dui op 'n gebrek aan konseptualisering van die akademiese werkopdrag deur studentedeelnemers; 'n afwesigheid van 'n 'eie stem' in die teks; makro-strukturele kwessies (inleiding, slot, paragrawe, ens) en mikro-strukturele kwessies (plasing van sinne, taalgebruik, grammatikale foute en plagiaat, ens) uitgewys. Die bevindings het ook kwessies geïdentifiseer wat studente van mening was verbetering benodig soos die behoefte aan die aanstelling van addisionele konsultante, en studente se behoefte dat addisionele dienste soos redigering en proeflees toegevoeg word tot die dienste wat tans deur die Skryfsentrum aangebied word.

Sleutelterme: Hoër onderwys, akademiese skryfwerk, akademiese geletterdheid, epistemologiese toeganklikheid, studentesukses

DEDICATION

This study is dedicated to the following people who remain an inspiration and motivation that fuelled my desire and commitment to further and complete my studies. These are also people that I have lost in 2018, and may their souls rest in eternal peace: ***robalang ka kgotso banabeso*!!**

Mrs Matsholo Olga Jacobs (my elder sister), 27 May 2018;

Mr Moshongoane Joseph Sefalane (my elder brother), 02 July 2018, and

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

AUGB	USA University in Bulgaria
CEAW	Centre for Academic Writing
CHE	Council on Higher Education
CPUT	Cape Peninsula University of Technology
CSS	Course in Study Skills
CTL	Centre for Teaching and Learning
CTLM	Centre for Teaching, Learning and Media
CUHK	Chinese University of Hong Kong
CV	Curriculum Vitae
DHET	Department of Higher Education and Training
DoE	Department of Education
DTET	Desmond Tutu Education Trust Fund
EAL	English as Additional Language
EAP	English for Academic Purposes
EFL	English as Foreign Language
EHEA	European Higher Education Area
ELF	English Language Fellows
HKU	Hong Kong University
HUS	Hanyang University of Seoul
ILC	Independent Learning Centre
NBT	National Benchmark Test
NEC	National Education Council
NSC	National Senior Certificate

NUS	National University of Singapore
OWL	Online Writing Lab
PIRLS	Progress in International Reading Literacy
QUT	Queensland University of Technology
RPL	Recognition of Prior Learning
SRL	Self–regulated Learning
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics
TDG	Teaching Development Grant
UCC	University of the Cape Coast
UCDG	University Capacity Development Grant
UK	United Kingdom
US	United States
USP	University Scholarship Programme

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CHAPTER 1

ORIENTATION AND BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

This study stemmed from a deep interest in teaching and learning, in particular, student academic writing and the role of writing centres within the constantly changing national and global higher education contexts. Having worked at a writing centre for more than a decade, my intention was to investigate the effectiveness or otherwise of a writing centre, as one in a suite of intervention programmes, designed to assist students entering the higher education sector with academic and epistemological access, in particular, at a university of technology in South Africa.

It is incontrovertible that student writing is at the centre of teaching and learning in higher education, fulfilling a range of purposes according to the various contexts in which it occurs (Coffin, Curry, Goodman, Hewings, Lillis & Swan, 2003:2). These purposes include, among others, assessment, which is often a major purpose of writing as students may be required to produce academic essays, written examinations, or laboratory reports and other written exercises, whose main purpose is to demonstrate their mastery of disciplinary course content. In assessing such writing, lecturers focus on both content and the form of the writing, that is, aspects such as the language used, the text structure, the construction of argument, grammar, and punctuation (Coffin, et al., 2003:2).

Writing has thus grown to be accepted as a complex individual and social phenomenon that neither appears all of a sudden when an individual enters a higher education institution as a student, nor disappears when a person or individual graduates and exits such an institution (Bräuer, 2003:135). According to Björk, Bräuer, Rienecker & Jörgensen (2003: 7), this understanding of the significance of writing in student learning in higher education stands in sharp contrast to the view that holds the idea of the ability to write as a gift, an inborn intellectual, and sometimes even artistic talent which is in its nature unteachable. This may have been the case as well as a dominant and persistent view in old-fashioned and elite higher education institutions where, as one continental philosophy teacher put it, "we do not instruct before writing, our students are supposed to sit at the feet of their masters and absorb their writing themes and styles" (Rienecker & Jörgensen, 2003:107).

Rienecker and Jörgensen (2003:108) explain that this was said in a very different time on university campuses; it was an era with fewer, more able and independent students, more time for teacher-student contact, narrower fields of knowledge, and longer studies with little pressure. However, some of this ambivalence is still evident in higher education institutions that do not endorse the teaching of academic writing because they believe, according to Björk, et al. (2003: 7), that "content is married to form, teaching is married to research, discipline is married to formats for texts, good writing is married to good thinking". All of these are so closely tied together that instruction which separates these 'marriages' may in advance be deemed as fruitless endeavour (Björk, et al., 2003:7).

Rienecker and Jörgensen (2003:108) further explain that, in the fifties and sixties, higher education institutions were elite institutions. It was easier then to uphold the notion that writing instruction was solely the task of the school system.

However, the current pedagogical challenges in higher education are the result of the changing status of the higher education landscape during the last three decades. Manik (2015:227) points out three basic trends and changes in higher education development worldwide: elitism, massification (i.e. the move from a system that served an elite only, to one that every member of society may aspire to experience), and universal access. The large numbers of students and new entrants of non-traditional students into higher education place higher education institutions the world over under pressure to respond to an urgent set of 21st century demands, opportunities and imperatives (Rumbley, Stanfield & de Gayardon, 2014:23). This context, which has been constructed in contemporary discourse as the 'knowledge society', has resulted in higher education being seen by many as a central mechanism for social change and transformation (Burke, Musselin & Kehm, 2008:2).

Altbach (2011:66) explains and summarises these key 21st century global realities for tertiary education worldwide as relating to, among others, the massification of enrolments, the role of the private sector and the privatisation of public higher education, the on-going debate concerning the public versus the private good in higher education, the rise of the Asian countries as academic centres, and recently, the global economic crisis and its impact on higher education.

The widening of educational participation and access to higher education have become central themes in higher education policy as it has moved away from 'elite' to 'mass' systems, and as national governments have identified higher education as central to economic

sustainability and social justice (Burke et al., 2008: 2). According to Altbach (2011:66), this global expansion has been mainly influenced by the demand from an ever-growing segment of the population for access to the degrees that are believed to hold the promise of greater lifetime earnings and opportunities and the needs of the knowledge-based global economy.

However, Altbach (2011:66) explains that the results of massification have also been immense for the higher education sector, with notable major financial implications, infrastructure challenges, questions raised about quality, and potentially diminished returns in labour markets with more higher education graduates than the economy can sustain. Burke et al., (2008:2) maintain that higher education institutions have themselves undergone substantial changes and continue to face significant challenges. On the one hand, these post-secondary institutions and systems have become large and complex organisations, requiring skilled management, innovative leadership, and effective frameworks for decision making (Altbach, 2014:13). According to Altbach (2014:13), these higher education institutions are also communities of scholars and researchers with a long tradition of shared governance and self-management, and are quintessential public good institutions - educating, producing knowledge for society, and in many instances serving as major cultural resources.

On the other hand, and according to Le Grange (2009:103), the primary occupation of the contemporary higher education institution - the production, transmission and acquisition of knowledge - has not changed. What has changed is the nature of knowledge production, transmission and acquisition, and the way that knowledge is legitimated and valued. Barnett and Bengsten (2017:4) identified two major changes that are evident and which extend across knowledge with obvious implications for what it is that counts as a valid understanding of the world. The first is digitisation of knowledge – "a penumbra of interrelated movements, connected to computerisation, cybernetic and algorithmic models of control (of systems), financialisation, the shift towards more iconic understandings of the world (and multimodality more generally), open source processes of communication and also of learning" (Barnett & Bengsten 2017: 4). The second major change, according to Barnett and Bengsten (2017:4), relates to the shift in "the comparative evaluation of disciplines". Barnett and Bengsten (2017:4) explain that "it has become a world in which the humanities are struggling for a hearing and in which so-called STEM disciplines - science, technology, engineering and mathematics - have come to be considered as supplying a worthwhile understanding of the world". This movement, Barnett and Bengsten (2017: 4) maintain, is having a transformative effect on higher education around the world.

The South African higher education system, like its counterparts all over the world, is facing numerous complex challenges which, as Clarence-Fincham and Naidoo (2013:83) explain, include the increasing pressure to address issues of access and retention, to safeguard adequate throughput rates and to respond appropriately to the national skills shortage by developing responsive curricula to ensure that graduating students are well prepared to contribute to the fast-changing world of work. According to Fisher and Scott (2011:1), raising education and skills levels is crucial not only for increasing workforce productivity, but also for enhancing the innovative capacity of the economy and facilitating the absorption and diffusion of new technology. These imperatives, along with the quality of education, are what drive economic growth (Fisher & Scott, 2011:1).

Jaffer, Ng'ambi and Czerniewicz (2007:133) note that the South African government has made it clear that one of its aims is to achieve equitable access to higher education for previously disadvantaged learners, with diverse educational backgrounds. The issue of access and associated challenges specific to the South African context is dealt with more deeply in the section that follows.

1.2 RESEARCH PROBLEM

The Cape Peninsula University of Technology (CPUT) is a product of a merger mainly between, among others, the Cape Technikon and the Peninsula Technikon, following the release of the National Plan for Higher Education that argued that "the number of public higher education institutions could and should be reduced" (DoE, 2001:87). Jansen (2004:294) explains that in December 2001 a National Working Group appointed by the then Minister of Education recommended (in its Report on the Restructuring of the Higher Education System in South Africa) the reduction of higher education institutions (universities and technikons) from 36 to 21, through the specific mechanisms of mergers and incorporations. The specific institutions in various provinces targeted for merging were also listed.

The CPUT Writing Centre (henceforth referred to as the Writing Centre) existed both before and after the institutional merger periods, and now operates at CPUT, in at least three academic sites or campuses, Bellville, Cape Town and Tygerberg, out of a possible eight.

While the size and shape of the higher education landscape in South Africa was altered significantly by the process of mergers and incorporations, student academic access and success at higher education institutions remain a constant, if not more of an accentuated, or a more nuanced challenge in higher education and across all institutional types. Trimbur (2011:2) explains that the questions of transformation and access are vexed ones, as writing centre and composition specialists in the USA found during the days of open admissions in the 1970s. According to Trimbur (2011:2), as North American and South African writing centres know, access is not simply allowing formerly excluded students to enrol in higher education. Rather, it involves concentrated attention to the complicated identity negotiation entailed when 'non-traditional' students seek to perform the kinds of writing demanded at university, and to further acquire the cultural capital of academic literacy (Trimbur, 2011:2).

Trimbur (2011:2) takes the point further and explains that there are complex interactions at work as students face a crisis in their social allegiance, torn between loyalty to home or local community and the desire to get ahead in institutions of higher education that are often alien and sometimes simply unwelcoming. Daniels and Richards (2011:35) maintain that while access to the institution has received a great deal of attention in language policy development, for most students this is not a major hurdle. The chief obstacle, these authors argue, remains the granting of epistemological access to the processes of knowledge construction (Daniels & Richards, 2011:35). This obstacle has immense implications for the academic success of students. Students will often be told that their language skills need attention, as if this will 'fix' their academic difficulties, while the underlying problem is that they do not know how, or why, they should participate in academic discourse (Daniels & Richards, 2011:35). Van Rensburg (2011:60) describes how students continuously have to redefine themselves at various levels of their study. He states that although they are relatively new to their roles as students, they are expected to become expert report writers and as a consequence become 'fixed' in their academic identities. Thus, when these students present to the academy, they are positioned as lacking real academic literacy (Van Rensburg, 2011:60). The Report of the Council on Higher Education (CHE, 2013) further notes that for students from educationally disadvantaged backgrounds, getting to grips with academic writing is also made difficult by students' approaches to text and epistemic practices which include, among others, a propensity towards verbatim reproduction or plagiarism in essays; to describe rather than to analyse, and to offer tautologies in place of justification; to focus on examples (tokens) rather than on principles (types) and the relation between them; to write from a highly subjective

viewpoint without depersonalising, and to be prescriptive or normative when asked to be analytic.

A study conducted at CPUT by Pineteh (2013:15) further summed up the difficulties faced by students and the frustrations of both lecturers and students in relation to institutional expectations and the demands associated with academic writing. Noting that student composition at CPUT is diverse in terms of race, linguistic background and cognitive development, the study found, among other things, that the dominant academic discourse seemed to favour privileged students from middle-class backgrounds, and that students struggled to cope with institutional literacy expectations because the medium of instruction is English, which is not necessarily the native language of many students (Pineteh, 2013:15).

Pineteh (2013:15) further reported that these students were expected to think and write using middle-class literacy practices. While lecturers acknowledged that many students come from backgrounds where English is a second or third language, and from under-resourced schools with different literacy experiences, when marking these students' essays, lecturers expect a logical organisation of ideas and a refined use of language (Pineteh, 2013:15).

The difficulties experienced by students and the institutional expectations outlined above must be understood within the context of challenges currently faced by South African higher education institutions. Jaffer et al. (2007:134) correctly note that South Africa is a multilingual society with 11 official languages. English is, therefore, a second or foreign language for many South African higher education students. In most black South African schools, English as a subject is taught as a second language. This means that students from disadvantaged educational backgrounds have to learn in their second or third language (Jaffer et al., 2007:134).

In addition, Fisher and Scott (2011:47) explain that in some higher education institutions, the range of student preparedness in individual courses, including efficiency in the language of instruction, is too wide to permit teaching to meet the learning needs of a full class. In other words, the very low levels of preparedness of the student body as a whole, as well as weak proficiency in the language of instruction, mean that traditional teaching approaches have major shortcomings in effectiveness and efficiency (Fisher & Scott, 2011:47).

According to Nichols (2011a:20), some of these challenges are a result of a potent legacy of teaching methods which were mainly transmission of knowledge in lectures, influenced by an

official pedagogy of 'Fundamental Pedagogies' taught to Education students, which was as authoritarian in methods and content as it sounds. This challenging situation was further characterised by rote learning, hierarchical classrooms, assessment as gate-keeping, and ideology as static truth. Nichols (2011a:20) explains the mind control of Fundamental Pedagogies as elimination of the possibility of criticism by the removal of ideas from the students' historical and political contexts. By excluding the political as a dimension of theoretical discourse, Fundamental Pedagogies offers neither a language of critique nor a language of possibility (Nichols, 2011a:20).

Germane to the major teaching and learning challenges described above, Fisher and Scott (2011:1) argue that, despite significant progress in expanding access since 1994, higher education in South Africa remains a "low-participation-high attrition" system. They explain that students' outcomes are poor overall and highly unequal across both institutional types and racial groups (Fisher & Scott, 2011:1). Lewin and Mawoyo (2014:26), agree and continue to state that significant numbers of students do not complete university study, and a very few complete degrees in the minimum time set. They cite as evidence the 2005 cohort studies published by the Department of Education (DoE, 1997), concerning a cohort analysis of the 2000 entering undergraduate cohort. Based on the cohort data, coupled with low participation rates, Lewin and Mawoyo (2014:26) maintain that it is clear South Africa has high attrition rates (see also Letseka, 2009; Scott, 2009; CHE, 2013). Van Zyl (2017:1) further explains that it is an established fact that student success rates in South Africa are much lower than might be expected in such a low participation higher education system. He states that the stark picture is that in South Africa, only approximately 18% of people in the 20-24 year age group participate in higher education, and a mere 35% of the 2006 first-year cohort graduated in the five-year period to 2010 (Van Zyl, 2017:1).

A further point worth mentioning and related to high attrition and low participation in the system, is the view advanced by Fisher and Scott (2011:11), namely that increased access alone will not improve equity given the extended time-to-degree patterns and low graduation rates. Their view is that, without addressing "the articulation gap", which is defined as a mismatch or discontinuity between the learning requirements of higher education programmes and the actual knowledge and competencies of first-time entering students, there will not be an efficient increase in graduation outcomes (Fisher & Scott, 2011: 11).

Steyn, Harris and Hartel (2014:1) believe that this low throughput rate may be attributed to a difference in life experiences as a result of students' social, educational, cultural and economic backgrounds, which manifests in unequal readiness for studies in higher education. This is because, in their view, in South Africa, a small group of privileged learners attend well-resourced and previously advantaged state schools or private schools where they receive excellent education (Steyn et al., 2014:1). The majority of learners (about 80%) are, however, dependent on rural and township schools which are under-resourced and may be called dysfunctional (Steyn et al., 2014:1). Thus, according to Badat (2011:7), 80% of senior certificate endorsements are generated by 20% of secondary schools, while the remaining 80% of secondary schools produce a paltry 20% of senior certificate endorsements, and as a result the need to improve the quality of schooling has become more urgent.

In the context of the difficulties and challenges outlined above, it is clear that the teaching of writing in higher education is inextricably linked to student access, which includes both retention and throughput. In some cases, support in writing helps students improve their academic performance, and may mean that the student stays in a higher education institution, and proceed to graduation (Coffin et al., 2003:3). However, writing is often an invisible dimension of the curriculum; that is, the rules and conventions governing what counts as academic writing are often assumed to be part of the common-sense knowledge students have, and are thus not explicitly taught within disciplinary courses (Coffin et al., 2003:3).

However, Coffin et al. (2003:6) explain that, fundamental changes in higher education are taking place, and teachers and researchers are critically reconceptualising, among other things, the purpose and nature of student writing in the academy. As a writing centre practitioner and researcher, I believe there could be no better time and opportunity to understand the role played by a writing centre in academic writing at a university of technology than the present.

1.3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Plowright (2011:8) posits that in an integrated methodologies approach, the research process commences with the main research question, which may be formulated within a number of different contexts. Plowright (2011:7) explains that a decision taken on research questions enables the researcher to take decisions about the choice of, among other things, the

participants, the methods of data collection to be used, type of data to be collected and how the data will be analysed (Plowright, 2011:7).

The research question and sub-questions that informed this study are stated below.

1.3.1 Main research question

The main research question was: To what extent are the services offered by the Writing Centre effective in enhancing the quality of students' academic writing at a university of technology, in particular at CPUT?

In order to understand the nature and full extent of the research problem, it became necessary to break the main question down into sub-questions, to make the research more manageable and focused.

1.3.2 Sub-questions

The following sub-questions became invaluable in carrying out the research:

- How does the Writing Centre support the development of academic writing of students at CPUT?

- What are students' perceptions of the quality of the services offered by the Writing Centre?

- How can the Writing Centre services be improved to enhance students' academic writing?

- Is a writing centre a valuable resource for the development of student writing?

1.4 RESEARCH AIM AND OBJECTIVES

Johnstone (2011:260) writes that one of the defining characteristics of a research problem is that it is a state of affairs that begs for additional understanding. The main aim of this inquiry was, therefore, to evaluate the role of a writing centre in enhancing the quality of student writing at a university of technology, and using CPUT as a locus of the study.

The research objective or purpose gives a broad indication of what a researcher wishes to achieve in her research (Mouton, 1996:101).

The research objectives of this study were the following:

- Evaluate or assess a writing centre's contribution to the development and enhancement of the quality of students' academic writing at a university of technology.

- Determine the perceptions and attitudes of students about a writing centre.

- Explore how strategic interventions can be put in place to enhance the quality and effectiveness of services offered by a writing centre.

In order to meet the research aims and objectives, a research plan and structure was necessary. Below, I outline my plan for this study.

1.5 RESEARCH PARADIGM AND DESIGN

Feilzer (2010:6) explains that a paradigm can be regarded as an "accepted model or pattern", as an organising structure, a deeper philosophical position relating to the nature of social phenomena and social structures. This use of a paradigm relates it directly to research, as an epistemological stance. Feilzer (2010:6) further argues that a paradigm directs research efforts, and serves to reassert itself to the exclusion of other paradigms and to articulate the theories it established earlier. Cameron (2011:100) acknowledges that there are many definitions of a paradigm, but defines it as a way of looking at the world that is composed of certain philosophical assumptions that guide and direct thinking and action. Neuman (2006:81) states that a paradigm is a general organising framework for theory and research that includes basic assumptions, key issues, models of quality research and methods for seeking answers. McManamny, Sheen, Boyd and Jennings (2014:3) emphasise the importance of choosing, as a first step in designing a study, a theoretical lens. They argue that this approach serves as the philosophical underpinning of a study and the ensuing methodological choice.

For the purposes of this study, I opted for pragmatism as a paradigm, which is defined by Martela (2011:3) to mean an attitude of orientation that takes seriously the fact that as human beings we are thrown into a world in which we need to act. Pragmatism argues that research should inform appropriate decisions and effective action that solve problems or impact on the

world (Plowright 2011). In the case of this study the purpose was to impact on the effectiveness of the Language Centre in order to contribute to student success.

Next, I chose mixed methods research as a preferred research design. Trahan and Stewart (2013:60) explain that mixed methods research represents an attempt to move beyond the ideological clashes between quantitative and qualitative purists, and hence focuses instead on the pragmatic approach. De Lisle (2011:92) explains that a research design addresses different aspects of the research procedure, from philosophical assumptions to data analysis. A design might be considered mixed if it employs qualitative and quantitative approaches at any stage, including research questions development, sampling strategies, data collection approaches, data analysis methods, and conclusions (De Lisle, 2011:93).

In this study, both qualitative and quantitative data were collected and analysed rigorously and concurrently in a single study. A logic model of the Writing Centre programme was drawn up to list the intended results in the form of outputs, outcomes and impact of the programme. According to Rogers (2008:29), this design refers to a variety of ways of developing a causal modal linking of programme inputs and activities to a chain of intended or observed outcomes, and then using this model to guide the evaluation. In this study, a questionnaire and content analysis were chosen to elicit views on perceptions of students on the role played by a writing centre in academic writing at a university of technology, using CPUT as a location for the study.

Leech and Onwuegbuzie (2009:267) explain that once a study combines quantitative and qualitative techniques to any degree, the study can no longer be seen as utilising a monomethod design. At this level, the study is a fully mixed design mixed design. A fully mixed methods design represents the highest degree of mixing research methods and research paradigm characteristics (Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2006:267).

1.5.1   Sampling

The criteria used for the selection of participants were based on, among other things, the diversity of the students in terms of socio-economic, linguistic and cultural backgrounds; the frequency of their use of the Writing Centre services; them being officially registered students of CPUT; and the differentiated nature of the students' academic studies at CPUT, specifically in terms of undergraduate and postgraduate study (undergraduate Diploma and B Tech studies).

A total of 70 participants or students were randomly selected to participate in a satisfaction survey, using a scaled questionnaire. Participants or students were drawn from different levels of study, i.e. first-, second-, third- and fourth-year levels of academic study.

1.5.2   Data collection instruments

This mixed method study was designed to gather both quantitative and qualitative data to determine the extent to which students are satisfied with the services of a writing centre at CPUT. A survey was used in the quantitative phase of the study to collect data from participants. The second phase of the study involved qualitative content analysis of student scripts.

Heyvaert, Maes and Onghena (2011:6) explain that in a sequential mixed methods design the quantitative and qualitative research phases are conducted separately. The results of the method first implemented can help to identify and refine the review question and/or to achieve the relevant outcomes of interest, to select the data, to develop a theory or hypothesis, or to inform the analysis of the other method. On the contrary, in a simultaneous design the qualitative and quantitative data are collected concurrently, and parallel analysis is done in a complementary manner. When both methods are implemented simultaneously and interactively within a single study, the interpretability of the results can be enhanced (Heyvaert et al., 2011:6).

Below I outline how and when data were collected for each phase of the study.

1.5.2.1 Student survey

Data were collected in a hard copy for student survey using a scaled or structured questionnaire compiled by the researcher and three academic literacy lecturers, a chemical science lecturer and the head of department of Dental Technology, who also assisted with the distribution and collection of completed questionnaires in the Tygerberg, Bellville and Cape Town campuses of CPUT. The three campuses were chosen out of eight CPUT campuses because each one of them has a writing centre.

1.5.2.2 Content analysis of student scripts

Twenty student scripts and/or academic essays were chosen for content analysis: five first-year, five second-year, five third-year, and five fourth-year (B-Tech) students' scripts. The 20 initial drafts were obtained from students who were informed, requested and voluntarily consented to be part of the process. This phase involved an analysis of students' writing from the initial consultation at the Writing Centre, and before any form of assistance and intervention took place. The second analysis of students' essays occurred after they had been offered assistance (i.e. after the intervention). In both respects (analysis), the purpose remained to determine the impact of the Writing Centre intervention and assistance in students' academic writing, by way of comparison.

1.5.3   Data analysis

The data from the survey were analysed using the expertise of a statistician at CPUT. For the quantitative data, the software program known as SPSS was used. This program enabled me to conduct analysis related to frequency, cross-tabulation, measures of central tendency (mean, median and mode), and correlations.

With regard to qualitative content data analysis, a sample of 20 student essays were analysed, from the pre-consultation phase with a writing centre consultant to a post-consultation phase, in order to determine, among other things, whether the student writing had improved after the Writing Centre intervention, with the single purpose of answering the main research question: to determine the effectiveness or otherwise of the Writing Centre services in students' academic writing, at a particular university of technology.

1.6 SCOPE AND TARGET GROUP OF THE RESEARCH

This study is situated in the field of higher education studies and focuses on the attitudes and experiences of CPUT students regarding the services offered by the Writing Centre. The study may enable self-introspection to occur, and appropriate interventions to be developed to enable the Writing Centre to develop and expand to other campuses at CPUT, thereby to extend its reach but most importantly, to empower and equip students, and provide for epistemological access, thus helping in producing better lifelong writers. The participants for the study were drawn from students who visited the Writing Centre. Most of these

participants were African students, and for many of them English - the language of instruction -was either a second or a third language. Among these were international students from other parts of the continent, some of whom came from former French and Portuguese colonies where, in addition to their home language, the dominant language was either Portuguese or French.

1.7 LIMITATIONS

The scope for this research was limited to participants who had had exposure to the services of the Writing Centre, and who could, therefore, contribute meaningfully because of their prior knowledge. Second-year and B-Tech students from the Faculty of Informatics and Design had enthusiastically approached me to participate in the study but they fell beyond the scope because of the limitations on the target group of the study. The study was further limited by the availability of potential participants due to their academic obligations. Furthermore, no similar study had been carried out previously by the Writing Centre at CPUT, focusing in particular on student views and perceptions of the services offered by the Writing Centre. Perceptions or views of the academics could have further enriched the study.

1.8 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Research involves collecting data from people, about people, and researchers need to protect their participants, develop a relationship of trust with them, promote the integrity of the research, guard against misconduct and impropriety that might reflect on their organisations or institutions, and cope with new and challenging problems (Creswell, 2014:132).

Institutional permission to conduct the study was applied for and obtained from Fundani CHED at CPUT because of the involvement of students as research participants. Similarly, ethical clearance was applied for and granted by the Research Ethics Committee (Humaniora) at Stellenbosch University as this study was done for degree purposes.

Students as research participants were informed in advance of the nature of the research and its purpose, and were told that their informed consent was necessary. They were further advised that they had the right to choose to participate in the study or not to participate. Students were further told that they had a right to withdraw at any time during the course of the research without any form of reprisal or penalties. They were assured that their anonymity would be safeguarded and that all information arising from the research would be treated confidentially. Furthermore, they were informed that they would not be exposed to any

danger, or to physical harm, or to emotional and/or psychological risks. Further, this research was limited to three specific sites or campuses: Bellville, Tygerberg, and Cape Town campus out of a possible eight. In each campus, permission for the study was sought and obtained.

1.9 THE RESEARCHER

Feilzer (2010:8) explains that the choice of social sciences research questions and methods, albeit sometimes dictated by funders, is a reflection of the researcher's epistemological understanding of the world, even if it is not explicit. Moreover, the interpretation of any research findings will expose the researcher's underlying philosophies, drawing on, and extending the notion that "all knowledge is from some point of view" (Feilzer, 2010:8). In addition, Creswell (2014:256) states that the role of the researcher, as the primary data collection instrument, necessitates the identification of personal values, assumptions and biases at the outset of the study. This research study was not funded, and the researcher did not derive any personal financial benefit arising out of this study. There were no potential conflicts of interests in the carrying out of the study, other than the known and disclosed educational interest stated in the applications for ethical approval of the study. Research participants were respected and protected, and their privacy ensured, especially in the diverse cultural context in which this study was conducted.

1.10   CHAPTER OUTLINE

This thesis is organised into the following chapters: Chapter 1 provides the background and orientation to the study. Chapter 2 deals with the theoretical framework and literature review on student academic writing, in particular the challenges relating to, among other aspects, epistemological access and second-language teaching and learning. Chapter 3 focuses on the contextualisation of the study, tracing the international and national origins of the Writing Centre up to an institutional level. Chapter 4 discusses the research design and research methodology. Chapter 5 focuses on the analysis of the quantitative research data, while Chapter 6 deals with the analysis of the qualitative data. Chapter 7, in which the recommendations are presented, concludes the thesis.

1.11   SUMMARY

This chapter provided the background and orientation for my choice of research paradigm and interest in the research problem, and presented the formulation of the research questions. It outlined the aims and objectives of the research, described the research design and methodology, and included an outline of the chapters. The next chapter provides an overview of the literature relevant to the study and relates, in particular, to student writing in higher education, focusing on, among other aspects, epistemological access, and second-language teaching and learning.

CHAPTER 2

STUDENT WRITING IN HIGHER EDUCATION: CHALLENGES AND ISSUES

2.1   INTRODUCTION

This study sought to determine the role of the writing centre in enhancing the quality of students' academic writing at a university of technology. This chapter focuses on challenges in higher education and how they impact on student writing. It is made up of five sections. The introduction briefly introduces the concepts of higher education and globalisation. The second section focuses on general challenges facing higher education. The third section deals with specific challenges facing the South African higher education landscape, such as challenges associated with public schooling, student access to higher education, student success in higher education, the teaching and learning context, complex patterns of participation and curriculum delivery, and shifts in knowledge production. The fourth section deals with academic literacy in higher education and the last section deals with student writing.

2.2   CHALLENGES FACING HIGHER EDUCATION

Boughey (2009:3) explains that developments in communication technology, such as the internet, have resulted in a new global economy which is based on information and knowledge rather than on raw materials and the capacity to process them. The need to be able to produce knowledge which drives the economy, and the ability to process information disseminated by means of the internet, have important implications for any higher education system in terms of both research and teaching (Boughey, 2009:3).

According to Barnett and Bengsten (2017:2), such major changes can be seen through, among other things, "the digitisation of knowledge, which relates to interrelated movements connected with computerisation, cybernetic and algorithmic models of control (systems), financialisation, the shifts towards better understanding of the world, and multimodality, more generally, open-source processes of communication and also of learning, including the Massive Open Online Course (MOOCs)". Barnett and Bengsten (2017:4) emphasise that the world is witnessing the coming of 'artificial reasoning', an epistemology of simulations where virtual and digital realities and forms of knowledge are constantly played out on

personal computers **-** as small**-**scale experiments and enactments of virtual eye-brain movement.

The second major change, according to Barnett and Bengsten (2017:4), relates to the shift in the comparative evaluation of disciplines. They (Barnett & Bengsten, 2017:4) explain that the so-called STEM disciplines - science, technology, engineering and mathematics - are considered the most preferential disciplines or courses that are contributing to the world, whilst the humanities are struggling to get the same level of recognition. This movement, Barnett and Bengsten (2017:4) maintain, is having a transformative effect on higher education around the world.

The South African higher education landscape has equally not escaped this impact. According to Jansen (2004:309), not a single higher education institution in South Africa has been able to evade the sharp downward spiral in humanities enrolments in the past decade. He further argues that, whatever the nature and combination of reasons, the humanities have gone into serious decline in the last decades, leading several institutions to retrench humanities academics, to restructure faculties and terminate certain humanities programmes, such as foreign languages or music, arts and drama (cf. ASSAf, 2011:62).

These were some of the attempts and activities by some of the South African higher education institutions to position themselves in the post-1994 dispensation. According to Cloete, Maassen and Fehnel (2004:247), some institutions also engaged in a range of actions and activities in an attempt to make themselves relevant for the new terrain or globalised environment. These actions and activities further involved, among other things, the diversification of curricula, the introduction of market-related courses, increased access through modularisation by providing a range of flexible delivery modes, establishing 'satellite' campuses to deliver courses to clients in rural and semi-rural areas, and forming partnerships with private colleges.

Jaffer et al. (2007:133) maintain that notwithstanding these efforts, as is the case with higher education globally, the South African higher education system is under extreme pressure to meet the social transformation and skills needs of the new South Africa. They argue that this pressure can be seen at two levels - at one level is the immense external and internal pressure to improve on its policy and delivery performance. In this regard, higher education is expected to increase the demographic representation among graduates and to reduce the demographic difference between student intake and graduate throughput.

This challenge is explained in the National Higher Education Plan (2001), which states that the role of higher education institutions in the new South Africa remains as outlined in the White Paper 1.1, "to redress past inequalities and to transform the higher education system to serve a new social order, to meet pressing national needs, and to respond to new realities and opportunities" (DoE, 2001).

Fisher and Scott (2011:1) explain that higher education is given this responsibility because it is seen to have a uniquely important role to play in resolving the continuing skills shortage in South Africa by producing qualified graduates and postgraduates, and by generating research and innovation. They argue that it is important to raise education and skills levels not only for increasing workforce productivity, but also for enhancing the innovative and creative capacity of the economy, and facilitating the absorption and diffusing of new technology. The interaction of these factors, along with the quality of education, is what drives the economy.

The second external and internal pressure identified by Jaffer et al. (2007:132-133) relates to the demand for increased participation from diverse groups of students, and for higher education to produce the skills required for a rapidly changing society. Education is, therefore, seen as one of the means by which to achieve social transformation through the provision of equitable access to higher education for previously disadvantaged learners from diverse educational backgrounds.

The implications of this are clear. Clughen and Hardy (2012:xxii) explain that higher education must prepare students with the necessary skills for economic advancement, as skills improvement is linked to employment and earnings, economic growth, and the ability to compete globally. They further emphasise that one of the functions of higher education is preparation for the world of work, making sure that students develop enterprise skills to meet the needs of employers, and engaging in more university-industry collaborations, incorporating industrial involvement with the development of the curriculum.

According to Jansen (2000:2), the dispersion of a globalising discourse has very concrete and recognisable pedagogical features. He maintains that the emphasis on terminal outcomes and performativity is perhaps the most common feature of globalised pedagogy. In his view, 'the well‑tempered learner' (Muller, 1998), is one who can demonstrate concrete experiences at the end of that learning; the meaning of that experience, in all its cultural and political richness is less important to performance-based pedagogy. Jansen (2000:2) stresses that the

global economy, nevertheless, requires learners who have flexible skills that are portable across employment contexts and national boundaries.

Archer (2011: 355) claims that the "writing centre aims to promote and facilitate access to higher education, within an ethos of social justice and national redress". According to Trimbur (2014: 67), "social justice and the democratisation of higher education have always been part of the mission of writing centres" in South African higher education. Freire (1970: 71) is of the view that social justice in education allows students to be inquirers of their learning, not empty vessels, and that they are to be presented with an education that encourages dialogue, problem solving and critical thinking. He further claims that ideas are of significance in transforming the way educators think about and approach language teaching and learning. According to him the real value of critical pedagogy lies in its aim to provide an education that is transformative, empowering, and student-centred (Freire, 1970:73). For Freire (1970) dialogue is a key component in the classroom. He claims that "without dialogue there will be no communication, and without communication there can be no real education" (1970, p. 74), in other words, instructional methods should acknowledge the experience and dignity of students and their culture. This study was done within this social justice approach to language teaching and learning.

In the following section, I briefly deal with the higher education context in which student writing takes place.

2.2.1   The higher education context and student writing

Lea and Stierer (2000:3) claim that students come to institutions of higher learning from an increasingly wide range of educational, cultural and linguistic backgrounds, to study in a number of diverse learning contexts which often no longer reflect traditional academic subject boundaries with their attendant values and norms. They further argue that student writing takes place in an environment that is influenced by a number of important changes in the policy and practice of higher education institutions, such as the expansion of student numbers, the opening up of new routes into higher education studies, and the increasing linguistic and cultural heterogeneity of students, in part due to the aforementioned factors.

According to Lea and Stierer (2000:3), other factors include the move away from curriculum delivery within clearly defined academic disciplines to interdisciplinary courses; the growth

of vocationally oriented programmes, including courses for professional training and retraining; the move away from fixed progression through degree programmes; and the diversification of assessment methods, incorporating a wider range of written genres (such as accreditation of prior learning, and the use of portfolios for assessment).

Tomic (2006:55) explains that the impact of globalisation is not only affecting what is 'out there', but also 'what is in here'. He explains that these changes that are taking place at higher education institutions affect how these institutions position themselves in society, what their perceived values are, including a new register of meaning and understanding. These changes are also forcing those who are involved with writing at higher education institutions to look for new locations and positioning. He further contends that those who are involved with writing are revisiting what precisely the discourse of the academic community is.

According to Tomic (2006:55), in addition to the preparation of native English-speaking students for the rigours of undergraduate writing, there are specific needs of those for whom English is not their mother tongue. This further dictates the need for higher education institutions to constantly reflect, develop innovative practices, re-appraise, and mediate between individual students and the institutions' intellectual purpose.

Björk et al. (2003:8) maintain that the shift in higher education from elite to mass institutions, but staffed by people and academics with similar training as decades ago, and the widening of participation in higher education, has led to a need for substantial reforms in teaching writing. Drennan (2017a:1) further argues that, contrary to popular misconception, writing is not a discrete skill that can be taught in isolation and merely applied across disciplines. The act of writing is more complex than this. Writing is a central process through which students learn new subject content and acquire discipline-specific knowledge. Drennan (2017a:1) contends that each discipline is a social space within which students need to learn and master the unique ways of understanding, interpreting and organising knowledge in a particular discipline, referred to as discourse.

Björk et al. (2003:8) highlight the need for more students than ever before to be taught substantial writing skills. Learning through writing, as well as developing writing ability, is necessary today to complete higher education studies. These authors maintain that higher education institutions in many countries are seeing significant cutbacks on the tolerated

length of studies, and less patience on the part of politicians with high drop-out rates and other signs of 'inefficiency' in higher education. Björk et al. (2003:8) further maintain that the retention of students, the amount of writing done in higher education, as well as the demands made on writing skills by employers, serve as overriding concerns as well as major drivers for investing in the teaching of academic writing.

This section has focused on, among other aspects, as a the widening of access and participation in higher education, the movement of students within and across national boundaries, and the shift from elite to mass higher education institutions. It has also highlighted the response of some of South Africa's higher education institutions to the global pressures and challenges, and the importance of academic writing.

2.3   SPECIFIC CHALLENGES RELATING TO HIGHER EDUCATION IN SOUTH AFRICA

This section of the chapter focuses specifically on challenges facing the South African higher education system and their impact on, among other things, student academic writing. In this section, attention is given to, among other things, the public schooling system, student access to higher education, student success in higher education, the teaching and learning context, complex patterns of participation and curriculum delivery, the shift in knowledge production and the challenges relating to the curriculum.

In the next section I deal with the public schooling system in South Africa and associated challenges.

2.3.1.   The public schooling system

According to McKenna (2016:174), most universities in South Africa continue to use the National Senior Certificate (NSC), a South African school-leaving certificate, as their main admission tool. Steyn et al. (2014: 2) agree that students obtain entrance or an opportunity to study at South African higher education institutions based on their NSC or matriculation results, which are assumed to be indicators of their readiness for tertiary studies.

The NSC was introduced in 2008 to replace the old Senior Certificate or 'Matric'. This was accompanied by the removal of the higher grade and standard grade system, and the introduction of Life Orientation as a compulsory subject, along with the requirement that all students take either Mathematics or Mathematical Literacy (McKenna, 2016:174). However, Van Zyl (2014:2) maintains that, although research has shown that pre-tertiary academic achievements strongly and constantly correlate with the possibility of attending tertiary institutions, the NSC results cannot predict student success in higher education.

McKenna (2016:174) highlights that universities are also augmenting their admission processes by looking at prospective students' results on the national benchmark tests (NBTs). These tests are designed to reflect the extent to which the prospective student is prepared for the core academic literacies, qualitative literacies and mathematics demands of higher education (McKenna, 2016:174).

However, these NBTs are not used by universities to replace the NSC results for admission purposes. According to McKenna (2016:174), NBTs are used by many universities as a tool to allocate students to either mainstream or extended curricula, or to make decisions between prospective students with similar NSC results.

The evidence suggests that the new national secondary school curriculum and the NSC may have led to lower levels of performance in first-year university courses, particularly in mathematics, science, engineering and technology subjects (Fisher & Scott, 2011:12). These authors further maintain that, the analysis of the cognitive, or "challenge level" of school-leaving examinations, coupled with the omission of topics required for higher education study from the "examinable school syllabus", indicates a decline in the level of difficulty in key subjects such as Mathematics and English as a second language (Fisher & Scott, 2011:12).

This contention, however, is disputed by McKenna (2016:174), who contends that, while there have been questions raised about 'grade inflation' and 'lowering of standards', with regard to the NSC, an investigation of equivalence found these examinations to be at the same level as the Cambridge International Examinations Advanced Subsidiary Level, and the International Baccalaureate Standard Level.

Notwithstanding this contention by McKenna (2016:174), Fisher and Scott (2011:12) claim that further evidence of the downgraded or lowered nature of the new curriculum and the NSC can be found in international assessments where South African school children have

consistently shown poor performance in reading, mathematics and science, with the country's average (302) on the last Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) in 2006, the lowest national average of the 41 participating countries (NEC, 2011). Moreover, Fisher and Scott (2011:12) point out that in 2011 South Africa was ranked 137 out of 150 countries in terms of literacy and numeracy achievement in schools.

Another argument raised with regard to NSC relates to what is called under-preparedness. According to the Council on Higher Education (CHE, 2013), it is well accepted that within the academic community and beyond, the dominant view of under-performance is that a high proportion of entering students are under-prepared for study at university level owing to poor schooling. Furthermore, at the core of under-preparedness is academic literacy and its associated challenges faced by students, which have been described as those aspects of literacy required by the context of learning and teaching that are highly dependent on reading and writing as vehicles for meaning construction (CHE, 2013:203).

Jaffer et al. (2007:134) maintain that students from disadvantaged educational backgrounds as well as students from privileged backgrounds generally enter higher education with gaps in the knowledge and skills required for studying, particularly in key areas such as mathematics and science. Fisher and Scott (2011:10) refer to this as an "articulation gap", which is defined as a mismatch or discontinuity between the learning requirements of higher education programmes and the actual knowledge and competencies of first-time entering students. In other words, there is a mismatch between the statutory minimum requirements for admission to higher education and the level of academic preparedness that is needed for succeeding in conventional higher education programmes (Fisher & Scott, 2011:10).

Despite the desegregation of the South African education system, and the more equitable allocation of resources, traditional black schools are still to a great extent disadvantaged, and are therefore failing in preparing students sufficiently for tertiary demands (Steyn et al., 2014: 2).With their prior experiences as successful learners with acceptable matriculation scores, black students approach their university studies with the same expectations and academic behaviours that they exhibited in secondary school (Steyn et al., 2014: 2). Once these students get involved in their studies, they experience the transition from school to university as daunting, since they are faced with increasing linguistic demands, more rigorous performance requirements and diverse cultural environments that may conflict with their personal values and beliefs.

The next section deals with student access in higher education with a particular focus on epistemological access.

2.3.2. Student access in higher education

Following 46 years under apartheid government, South Africa underwent a major transformation in 1994 to become a democratic state. From then on, educational reformers, according to Steyn et al. (2014:4), attempted to "provide a system of education that builds democracy, human dignity, equality and social justice".

These authors argue that the aim of the reforms was to broaden participation in higher education so as to reduce the highly stratified race and class structure of society (Steyn et al., 2014:2). As a result, higher education institutions in South Africa went through major changes due to the government's policy to transform higher education, as well as globalisation and internationalisation (Steyn et al., 2014:1). According to Steyn et al. (2014: 1), tertiary institutions also experienced an impressive growth in student numbers, and historically white universities experienced a dramatic shift in demographics. This widened access resulted in an increased enrolment of black students which now accounts for over 72% of enrolments in higher education.

Lewin and Mawoyo (2014) explain that the issues of access are addressed in higher education policy and in numerous programmes located within and across universities. However, they emphasise that it must be recognised that 'access' is not simply about providing a place for a student to study at university. Rather, they argue, access is conceptualised in more complex ways that concern the kind of environment and curricula necessary for "epistemological access" (Lewin and Mawoyo, 2014:13).

Du Plooy and Zilindile (2014:194) explain that the term 'epistemological access' was coined by Morrow (2009:iv), a South African scholar, who describes two dimensions of access to higher education: the first relates to institutional access (formal access), and the other to access to the knowledge the institution distributes (epistemological access). They further explain that epistemological access is not a product that could be bought and sold, given to someone or stolen, nor is it some kind of natural growth, such as the growth of plants or bodies. Using the term coined by Morrow (2009), Lewin and Mawoyo (2014:13) contend that epistemological access describes "access to the academic ways of knowing that sustain the

university" Conceived of in this way, they argue, access allows students to participate fully and effectively in higher education (Lewin & Mawoyo, 2014:13). Shay (2011:315) agrees with this stance and contends that what is required is access to the disciplinary communities and their ways of knowing.

Epistemological access, according to Du Plooy and Zilindile (2014:195), cannot be supplied or 'delivered' or 'done' to the learner, nor can it be 'automatically' transmitted to those who pay their fees, or even to those who collect the hand-outs in class regularly. The reason for this is that epistemological access is learning how to be a successful participant in academic practice.

Shay (2011:315) maintains that the changing conditions in higher education in South Africa - and indeed globally - have placed a spotlight on issues of access and success. Of particular concern are students who have been historically marginalised from higher education, but increasingly there are also concerns about the success of 'mainstream' students.

Ironically, however, according to Shay (2011:315), educational development interventions aimed at enabling access and success of under-prepared students have largely ignored knowledge. Shay (2011:316) claims that on the whole, these interventions have privileged knowers (the cultural and social nature of the learner) and knowing (the process of learning), and have ignored or taken for granted knowledge.

To approach the problem of access from the point of view of knowledge, that is, the requisite forms of knowledge privileged in any given curriculum, is not to disregard the knower and their ways of knowing. According to Shay (2011:316), the argument is simply that, alongside one's understanding of the formation of learners and their learning, there needs to be an understanding of the formation of curricula and their constituent forms of educational knowledge.

According to Clarence-Fincham and Naidoo, (2013:86), within the knowledge domains, there is also differentiation between knowledge types, ranging from theoretical to practical knowledge. She argues that most disciplines are a combination of the two. She maintains that because different knowledge types are differently valued in the social world, access to disciplinary knowledge is the means by which students are given access to the complexity of the world (Clarence-Fincham and Naidoo, 2013:86). The curriculum is the vehicle used to provide access to this knowledge. She further contends that student access to different domains of knowledge should be facilitated in such a way that the implicit underlying

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conventions, procedures, attributes and values are made explicit so that students can actively engage with them and act purposefully in relation to them in a range of different situations (Clarence-Fincham and Naidoo, 2013:87)

Barnett and Bengsten (2017:4) expand on the concept of epistemology to fit the changing environment in the world. They acknowledge, as above that, largely unrecognised, the university conducts itself through epistemologies that for the most part remain hidden and are on the move. They maintain that presuppositions as to what it is to count as a valid understanding of the world continues to change.

Apart from the argument raised by Barnett and Bengsten (2017:44), there is an even more important critique raised by Lange (2017:41) concerning epistemological access. She argues that epistemological access is useful shorthand to describe the articulation gap between, especially, first-generation university students and the tacit assumptions of knowledge made in the 'mainstream' university curriculum. Further, that the acceptance of epistemological access as a problem has resulted in the creation of special programmes offered by special lecturers to 'special' students who need help to succeed in higher education (Lange, 2017:42).

Lange (2017: 42) argues that, as a result of this, the focus on curriculum is displaced by a focus on the 'special, disadvantaged' students. She further contends that the notion moves away from the knowledge embedded in the curriculum, and focuses on building student capabilities to access that knowledge. She maintains that the very notion of epistemological access seems to be confined to this special environment, while the institution abdicates its responsibility to 'teach properly' all students (Lange, 2017: 42).

There are two critical points advanced by Lange (2017:42). The first is that providing epistemological access is the task of the university and not of academic development units or extended programmes. In other words, every student that enters the university has to be initiated into the construction of academic knowledge within specific disciplinary fields. As a result, students who are taught in this way will not only be able to comprehend information in those fields, but will also acquire the behaviours, practices and identities expected from them as engineers, doctors and historians.

The second point put forward by Lange (2017:42) is the inversion of the notion of epistemological access as something that staff, particularly at historically white universities, need to be helped with in order to understand the different ways of knowing and making

sense of the world that their students have, and which can actually constitute the point for epistemological access to university knowledge, instead of its opposite.

The challenge of access to higher education is linked to the educational challenge of success in higher education. I will now focus on this challenge.

2.3.3   Student success in higher education

Van Zyl (2017:1) notes that it is now an established fact that student success rates in South Africa are much lower than might be expected in such a low participation higher education system. Indeed, Fisher and Scott (2011:1) make a similar argument that, notwithstanding the great progress that has been made in increasing access to higher education in South Africa, it remains a "low participation-high attrition system". They explain that student outcomes are poor overall and highly unequal across both institution types and racial groups. Fisher and Scott (2011:4) maintain that the participation rates for whites is well over 50% compared with 37% for Africans, and white students are almost twice as likely as African students to graduate within a five-year period. By contrast, African students constitute almost two-thirds of higher education enrolments, yet only 5% of African youth succeed in any form of higher education (Fisher & Scott, 2011:19).

Van Zyl (2017:1) explains that only approximately 18% of people in the 20-24 year age group participate in higher education, and a mere 35% of the 2006 cohort graduated in the five-year period until 2010. According to Van Zyl (2017:7), this problem has been continuing for a number of years, and systematic investigations during the last decade have shown that despite much effort and expenditure have been focused on effectively addressing the problem, very little positive impact has been made.

Providing further details, Van Zyl (2017:7) notes that when first-year drop-out rates are expressed as a percentage of the overall five-year drop-out rate, between 5% (3-year study diploma) and 64.7% (all national institutions) of all five-year drop-out occurs during the first year of study. In other words, the top 18% of matriculants enter the South African higher education system, and thousands of them leave before the end of their first year (Van Zyl, 2017:1). Van Zyl (2017:1) suggests that this might be as a result of, among other things, at least two factors: it may imply that many institutions are at least equally as under-prepared as the students they are accepting, or that the system has not yet come to terms with the needs of the majority of the student body.

The next section focuses on teaching and learning challenges in higher education.

2.3.4   The teaching and learning context

Gravett (2009:27) contends that a delivery view of education, which is common at many institutions of higher education, assumes that knowledge is composed of discrete, pre-formed units, which leaners ingest in smaller or even greater amounts until graduation or indigestion takes over. She explains this point by way of an example that, to become a physicist, this view would suggest that one needs to take in a lot of formulas and absorb a lot of experimental data.

However, in criticising this conception of education, Gravett (2009:27) argues that "knowledge is not static, or a pre-formed substance: it is constantly changing. Learning involves active engagement in the process of that change".

These contentions can be better understood when the context in which teaching and learning takes place in higher education is explained. In this regard, Ivanič and Lea (2006: 6) explain that the development of mass higher education has not come without its costs. They argue that, as a result of an unprecedented rise in student numbers, academic members of staff are teaching larger classes, and are spending less time with individual students, and more time on administrative tasks.

This state of affairs is exacerbated by the fact that teachers are increasingly confronted with students who are not adequately prepared for higher education (Bitzer, 2009:41). Teachers are not only expected to teach in an outcomes-based mode and foster generic outcomes for all students across curricula, but they also have to promote active learning and increasingly involve students in their own learning (Bitzer, 2009:41).

According to Ivanič and Lea (2006:7), the issue of the lived experience of teaching and learning, from both student and tutor perspectives, is central to understanding student writing in a system which now precludes most students from receiving the individual, discipline-based tuition that was available when higher education was an elite rather than a mass system.

The challenge for university teachers is thus to identify the ways of teaching implicit to the knowledge domain, and to develop teaching and learning activities that embed the effective

ways of learning in different situations which are then explored with students (Gravett, 2009: 28).

Scott (2009:31) explains that there is evidence locally and internationally that institutional ethos and approaches to the education process are a key variable in who succeeds and fails in higher education. He further posits that "in the South African higher education context, a major focus of attention needs to be on developing and implementing mainstream course design and teaching approaches that cater effectively for the realities and diversity of the student body" (Scott, 2009:31).

In the next section, I discuss the complex patterns of participation in higher education and curriculum delivery.

2.3.5   Complex patterns of participation and curriculum delivery

The introduction of a range of modes of curriculum 'delivery' has been profoundly shaped by the developments in information technology, most notably the shift away from conventional face-to-face teaching and learning modes towards the use of computer conferencing systems and web-based materials as part of campus-based provision, and increasingly, in distance education courses (Ivanič & Lea, 2006:8).

Lea (2000:69) points out that although there is a substantial body of research which is concerned with computer skills and student learning, it appears that very little is known, as yet, about the nature of these written texts from a linguistic perspective and, more particularly, the relationship between students' use of computer conferencing and their assessed written work.

In order to make the most appropriate use of these new learning environments, students have to learn how to negotiate what are usefully described as multi-modal texts (Lea, 2000:71). She claims that students have to use knowledge of both visual and written codes in order to become successful participants in these conference settings.

At first sight, these created spaces may appear neutral and arbitrary, merely a place within which written communication can take place between students, or students and tutors (Lea, 2000:71-72). However, moves towards more collaborative modes of teaching and learning, based on students working together in online environments, challenge some of the deeply

held assumptions about how knowledge is constructed and who has the right to claim ownership of that knowledge (Ivanič & Lea, 2009:7).

2.4   ACADEMIC LITERACY IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Narsee (1994: 107) maintains that literacy is intimately connected to language itself, grounded in the historical and cultural background of the student, and centred on personal and social construction. Literacy has to do with an individual's ability to use language in negotiations with the world, and in making sense out of this world both inside and outside academic institutions.

Blue (2003: 1) claims that literacy has always been an important theme in education, but in recent years it has been the focus of a great deal of attention. Traditionally, literacy has been seen as uniting the skills of reading and writing. In mother tongue teaching in schools, it is seen as involving speaking and listening, which feed into and complement skills in handling the written word, especially in the early years. On the other hand, when academic literacy is considered, a similar and major focus (but not exclusive) is on reading and writing.

Hyland and Hamp-Lyons (2002:4), however, contend that the term 'academic literacy' has come to be applied to "the complex set of skills (not necessarily only those relating to the mastery of reading and writing), which are increasingly argued to be vital underpinnings or cultural knowledge required for success in academic communities".

Similarly, McMillan (2000:149) maintains that writing in higher education is a challenging task for many students. Such 'literate acts' or individual constructive acts, are, according to Flower (1994:19), "sites of construction, tension, divergence, and conflict. They happen at the intersection of diverse goals, values and assumptions, where social roles interact with personal images of one 's self and one's situation … they are often sites of negotiation where the meaning that emerges may reflect resolution, abiding contradiction, or perhaps just a temporary stay against uncertainty".

With regard to meeting the literacy needs of English second-language students, Narsee (1994:107) quotes Freire (1973):

> [T]o acquire literacy is much more than to psychologically and mechanically dominate reading and writing techniques. It is to dominate these techniques in terms

of consciousness, to understand what one reads and to write what one understands; it is to 'communicate' graphically. Acquiring literacy does not involve memorising sentences, words or syllables, lifeless objects unconnected to an existential universe, but rather an attitude of creation and recreation, a self- transformation producing a stance of intervention in one's context.

Narsee (1994:107) contends that Freire's words illuminate a view of literacy that is purposeful, contextual and transformative. Freire's position places the student rather than the teacher or the text at the centre of the literacy process, and it defines this process as more than the skills associated with reading and writing as such. Literacy is understood as a creative activity through which learners can begin to analyse and interpret their own lived experiences, and make connections between those experiences and those of others.

2.5 ACADEMIC WRITING

Hardy and Clughen (2012:46) maintain that, to succeed at university, students must demonstrate their learning and thinking through academic writing, and this requires an understanding of and expertise in various genres and writing conventions. For the majority of students though, this represents an abrupt change from the limited and directed reading and supported writing practices pre-higher education to largely independent reading and writing in higher education, where they are expected to read widely, synthesise that reading into their writing, to structure coherent arguments and reference appropriately with little or no guidance (Hardy and Clughen, 2012:46).

The written work that students encounter at university is often not the same as the writing they have previously done, both in terms of genres and writing conventions. According to Ganobcsik-Williams (2004:14), students are expected to possess or to acquire a working knowledge of a variety of written forms and writing conventions, to which university students are exposed in the course of their studies.

According to Bynham (2000:18), there are three perspectives on the theorisation of academic writing in higher education. The first perspective, a 'skills-based' approach to the teaching of academic writing, assumes that there is a generic set of skills and strategies that could be taught and then applied in particular disciplinary contexts. The second, a 'text-based', linguistic approach assumes a relatively homogeneous discipline, with text types to be discovered, analysed and taught. The third, a 'practice-based' approach investigates student

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writing as both text and practice, arguing that, most crucially, the student writer is learning to take up disciplinary positions in a discourse community (Bynham, 2000:18). Bynham (2000:18) further explains that, where the disciplinary positions are conflictual, overlapping, or blurred, the student academic writer will be working within the disciplinary misunderstandings caused.

However, the perspectives outlined by Bynham (2000) are not the only ones that attempt to describe student writing in higher education. Lea and Street (2000:33) have similarly identified three approaches to student writing in higher education. They argue that educational research into student learning in higher education has tended to concentrate on ways in which students can be helped to adapt their practices to those of the university. From this perspective, they maintain, the codes and conventions of academia can be taken as given.

Lea and Street (2000: 33) maintain that educational research into student writing in higher education falls into three main perspectives, or models: study skills, academic socialisation, and academic literacies. They argue that the models are not mutually exclusive and should not be viewed in a simple linear dimension, whereby one model supersedes or replaces the insights provided by another. Rather, each model should be thought of as successfully encapsulating those above it, so that the socialisation perspective takes account of study skills but includes them in the broader context of the acculturation processes, and likewise, the academic literacies approach encapsulates the academic socialisation model, building on the insights developed there as well as the study skills view.

The academic literacies model, according to Lea and Street (2000:33), incorporates both of the other models into a more encompassing understanding of the nature of student writing within institutional practices, power relations and identities. They take a hierarchical view of the relationship between the models, privileging the academic literacies approach. They believe that in teaching as well as research, addressing specific issues around student writing such as how to open or close an essay, or whether to use the first person, takes on an entirely different meaning if the context is solely that of study skills, or if the process is seen as part of the academic socialisation, or is viewed more broadly as an aspect of the whole institutional and epistemological context.

These models are presented in Table 2.1 below. A discussion of each model follows the table.

Table 2.1 Modes of writing in higher education

Modes of writing	Focus and content	The origins/source	Underlying belief
Study skills	Focuses on student deficit: • 'Fix it' approach: automised skills; surface language, grammar, and spelling	Behavioural and experimental psychology; programmed learning	Student writing involves technical and instrumental skills.
Academic socialisation	Focuses on acculturation of students into academic discourse: • Believes in inculcating a 'new culture' in students; the focus is on student orientation to learning, and interpretation of learning task, e.g. 'deep', 'surface', 'strategic' learning; homogeneous 'culture'; lack of focus on institutional practices, change and power.	Social psychology; anthropology; constructivism	Student writing is a transparent medium of representation.
Academic literacies	Focuses on students' negotiation of literacy practices: • Literacies are seen as social practices; at the level of epistemology and identities;	New literacy studies; critical discourse analysis; systemic functional linguistics; cultural anthropology	Student writing is meaning making and contested.

	institutions are seen as sites of/constituted in discourses and power; variety of communicative repertoire, e.g. genres, fields, disciplines; switching with respect to linguistic practices, social meanings and identities.		

Source: Adapted from Lea and Street (2000)

Each of these models is discussed below, beginning with the study skills model.

2.5.1   The study skills model

Van Rensburg and Lamberti (2009:69) point out that the study skills model pre-dates the other models with its roots still in epistemological objectivity, where language is seen as a transparent medium that reflects the real world. Although epistemological objectivity is no longer relied upon, the idea of language as a transparent medium of meaning exists in the belief that it can accurately reflect reality. According to Lea and Street (2000:33), the study skills approach assumes that literacy is a set of automised skills which students have to learn, and which are then transferable to other contexts. The focus is on attempts to 'fix' problems with student learning which are treated as a kind of pathology (Lea & Street, 2000: 33). Van Rensburg and Lamberti (2009: 69) maintain that the focus is on the "surface features" of language such as grammar, punctuation and spelling. Language development is viewed as the responsibility of language specialists, who are often based in academic development programmes away from disciplinary learning; in for example, English departments. According to Lea and Street (2000: 34), the sources of this model lie in behavioural psychology and training programmes in which student writing is conceptualised as technical and instrumental.

2.5.2   The academic socialisation model

Lea and Street (2000:35) explain that, from the academic socialisation perspective, the task of the tutor/teacher is to inculcate a new 'culture' into students, namely that of the academy. The focus is on student orientation to learning and interpretation of learning tasks through conceptualisation, for instance, of a distinction between a 'deep', 'surface' and 'strategic' approach to learning. According to Van Rensburg and Lamberti (2009:69-70), this model focuses on the textual conventions (genres) of the disciplines, and is generally seen as more effective than the study skills model. Central to this approach is the notion of language as discourse. This means that language is an integral part of the social interaction with which it is associated; as a result, it is acknowledged that each discipline has its own unique conventions of behaviour, speech and writing, and that students need to be made aware of these conventions, and taught to master them by means of explicit instruction (Van Rensburg & Lamberti, 2009:69-70). Lea and Street (2000:35) explain that the source of this perspective lies in social psychology, in anthropology and in constructivist education. Although sensitive both to the student as learner and to the cultural context, the approach could be criticised on a number of grounds, one of which is that such an approach appears to assume that the academy is a relatively homogeneous culture, whose norms and practices simply have to be learned to provide access to the whole institution.

2.5.3   The academic literacies model

This third approach, according to Lea and Street (2000:35), is one most closely allied to 'new literacy studies', and is referred to as 'academic literacies'. It sees literacies as social practices, and views student writing and learning as issues at the level of epistemology and identities rather than skill or association. Lea and Street (2000:35) explain that the academic literacies approach views the institutions in which academic practices take place as constituted in, and as sites of, discourse and power. It also sees literacy demands of the curriculum as involving a variety of communicative practices, including genres, fields and discipline.

Van Rensburg and Lamberti (2009:70) argue that, as with the academic socialisation model, the focus is on the textual conventions of the disciplinary discourse and genres. Academic writing is viewed as a complex activity that consolidates and advances thought and learning, and is integral to disciplinary knowledge. Flawed writing is viewed as indicative of students

coming to terms with the systems of disciplinary thought and their linguistic codes and conventions. This means that learners' struggle to write cannot be seen as separate from their struggle to understand disciplinary concepts. Lea and Street (2000:70) posit that the emphasis on identities and social meanings draws attention to the deep affective and ideological conflicts in such switching and use of the linguistic repertoire. A student's personal identity - who am 'I'? - may be challenged by the forms of writing required in different disciplines, notably prescriptions about the use of impersonal and passive forms as opposed to first person and active forms, and students may feel threatened and resistant - 'this isn't me'.

2.5.4   Student writing in higher education

Lillis (2006:30) suggests that the changing nature of the student body within the context of official support for widening access and lifelong learning raises fundamental questions about what and how academics should teach in higher education. These questions are particularly prevalent in debates about student writing, not least because students' written texts continue to constitute the main form of assessment in higher education.

The current approaches to student writing are represented in Table 2.5 above (adapted from Lillis, 2006:31). Lillis (2006:31) explains that the categories presented in bold type in the third column, on the right, lists the student writing pedagogy, as drawn from Lea and Street (1998). Lea and Street (2000) offered a three-level model theorising approaches to student writing in higher education. These three levels are defined as 'skills', 'socialisation' and 'academic literacies', and these are marked as a, b, and e, in the table and in bold type.

Lillis (2006:31) further explains that Ivanič (1999) identified categories which correspond in some ways to those of Lea and Street (2000). These are what Lillis (2006) refers to in the table as 'creative self-expression' and 'socialisation (2)'. The differences between these approaches are indicated in Table 2.2 in terms of pedagogic focus, the 'theories of language they embody' (Ivanič, 1999), and their relative status within higher education (Lillis, 2006: 31).

Table 2.2 is a simplified representation of actual practice. However, it helps to identify and situate the dominant approach to writing pedagogy in many higher education institutions. This can be summarised as a combination of two intersecting models, what Lillis (2006) refers to as 'socialisation (1)' and 'skills'. Briefly, socialisation (1) functions as the

institutional default model: students will 'pick up' writing as part of their studies without any specific teaching or practice (Lillis, 2006:32). When this implicit induction approach seems to fail, for example, when students are not writing according to expected conventions, the skills model often comes into play. This is most evident in the type of guidance offered on writing and in feedback comments on students' written texts submitted for assessment.

The focus tends to be on the more visible 'common sense' notions of what academic writing is or should be, such as surface language features (including spelling and a cluster of features referred to as grammar), simplified notions of structure (for example, 'introductions', 'conclusions'), and the mechanics of citation conventions (Lillis, 2006: 32).

Table 2.2 Main approaches to student writing

Status within higher education institutions	Theory of language	Student writing pedagogy
Dominant	Language as a transparent and autonomous system made up of discrete elements	**a.** Skills - explicit teaching of discrete elements of language
	Language as discourse practices appropriate to different contexts	**b.** Socialisation (1) - teaching as (implicit) induction into established discourse practices
	Language/meaning as the product of individual mind	**c.** Creative self-expression - teaching as facilitating individual expression
Explicit	Language as genres which are characterised by specific clusters of linguistic features	**d.** Socialisation (2) - explicit teaching of features of academic genres
Oppositional	Language as socially situated discourse practices	**e.** Academic literacies - what are the design

	which are ideologically inscribed	implications for pedagogy?

Source: Lillis (2006: 31)

Mitchell and Evison (2006:68) argue that, when writing is talked about, it tends to be as an idealised form, often an argumentative essay, representing a kind of pinnacle in undergraduate achievement. Or more frequently, as a counterpoint to this, writing is talked about as something students cannot do - and that, seemingly every year they do worse. Referred to thus as a deficit, writing has the tendency to be reduced to little more than a technical activity involving rules of punctuation and grammar, with no connection to knowledge, thinking or activity within the discipline.

According to Lillis (2006:32), the skills approach to writing and writing pedagogy is often considered to be a welcome improvement over implicit induction approaches (socialisation (1) in Table 2.2), but two fundamental criticisms can be made: the skills model assumes *transparency* in relation to language, and *transition* in relation to pedagogy.

Lillis (2006:32) explains that emphasis tends to be on language as a transparent medium, as a reflector of meanings - the idea that individuals put meaning to words - rather than on language as a discourse which constitutes whole areas of meaning. Telling students about the most visible aspects of writing, briefly outlined above, is often viewed as the obvious and relatively straightforward way of teaching students how to produce written academic texts. When students do not do well, the refrain is that 'they can't write', not that they are struggling with learning. When students write well, on the other hand, their writing becomes a transparent conduit to the meanings they have grasped (Mitchell & Evison, 2006:69).

Furthermore, Lillis (2006:32) argues that problematising these notions of transparency and transmission has been central to an academic literacies critique of current approaches to student writing. The academic literacies approach (category (e), in Table 2.5.2), has proved to be a useful theoretical framework for researching student writing, raising fundamental questions such as: What is the nature of academic writing? What does it mean to 'do' academic writing? What is involved for different participants in different disciplinary and institutional contexts? Thus, according to Lillis (2006:32), while categories (a- (d) in Table 5.2 describe current approaches to student writing pedagogy in higher education, the last category, (e), works as a critique by serving as an oppositional frame to conventional approaches to student writing.

2.6 CONCLUSION

In this chapter, and through literature review, I have sought to demonstrate the importance of language, academic writing, student access and success at higher education institutions in South Africa. In the introduction and in section 1, I discussed the remarks by the President of Johns Hopkins University in order to highlight the internationalisation of higher education. The second point that arises from this discussion is the issue of globalisation and its impact on higher education. Both of these points are elaborated upon by way of comparison with the experiences of international students in higher education in foreign lands.

A further important aspect drawn from the introduction and experiences of international students is the issue of identity. Many students in South Africa have to write in a language that is not their own and have to adopt specific discourses or genres. As in the case of their international counterparts, this may mean sacrificing aspects of their identity, as many approach academic tasks, in particular academic writing, without any degree of confidence or belief that they may have important and useful contributions to make. Most importantly, they have to deal with issues of adaptation, a cultural shift from traditional African settings to a modern Western culture that does not acknowledge their existence, experiences and culture. Just like international students, they have to worry about issues of grammar and spelling in their academic work, and/or being generally identified as having a 'language problem' requiring remediation.

The issues of globalisation, the internationalisation of higher education and student writing are carried through most of sections 1, 2 and 3. It focused on schooling and related challenges. Notwithstanding the significant progress that has been made with regard to the integration of the schooling system in South Africa post 1994, there still remain critical issues of quality and performance as evidenced by the number of results from comparative international studies. In section 4, the focus is mainly on the issues of academic writing and academic literacy. Drawing again from international and national research into student writing, the chapter explores modes of student writing that are usually privileged in higher education. This section The term 'academic literacies' is drawn from an understanding that literacy is a multiple rather than a singular phenomenon, as different kinds of texts are valued in different disciplines.

The chapter concludes with the discussion of academic literacy, as a preferred mode of writing. All these factors are inter-related, and give context to the challenges of low throughput rates in higher education. Equally, because of the multilingual nature of the South African society, and the privileging of English as a language of instruction, the issues of academic writing and language are put firmly on the agenda of higher education.

The next chapter contextualises this study: to determine the role of the writing centre in enhancing the quality of students' academic writing at a university of technology. This contextualisation is done by tracing the origins of the writing centre up to the present form, especially at the Cape Peninsula University of Technology.

CHAPTER 3

CONTEXTUALISATION OF THE STUDY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter contextualises the study by providing an overview of the origins of writing centres from an international, national and institutional perspective. This is done mainly through literature review amplified by the researcher's experience as a writing centre and academic literacy practitioner. The first section deals with the writing centre's USA origins and subsequent European, Asian, Australian and African influences. This section is then followed by a specific focus on the South African higher education context, in particular the development, operations, funding and challenges facing writing centres in South Africa. The chapter concludes with a specific focus on the Writing Centre at CPUT, dealing, similarly, with the development, operation, funding and staffing of the Writing Centre and challenges faced by students at CPUT.

Summerfield (2001:25) argues that people do not write in a vacuum, and the writing centre, given its constraints and challenges, allows practitioners to build what Scholes (2002:165) calls a "local curriculum which grows out of the student's needs and interests, and the instructor/ tutors' awareness of those needs." A writing workshop, or in this case, a writing centre programme, is one that builds a community of writers, readers, learners, talkers and thinkers who are encouraged to understand how they write as individuals, but equally important, as members of a community. It is this understanding that informs the background to the establishment, operations and perspectives that have been key to the existence of the writing centre as we know it today. In the section that follows, I trace the origins of the writing centre from the initial inceptions of a writing laboratory and the writing clinic.

3.2   INTERNATIONAL ORIGINS OF THE WRITING CENTRE

The writing laboratory and the writing clinic have been credited as having given birth to the idea of a writing centre. However, Carino (2001:11) argues that although the origins of the writing centre can to a certain extent be traced, its history does not easily present itself as a clear progression. This is because the early writing centres were a much more diversified, imperfect, differentiated or complex phenomenon than have customarily been presented in the writing discourse.

Carino (2001:12) believes that the writing laboratory may have started as early as 1904, through the initiatives of Philo Buck, a teacher at Loui High School in the US, who made his students write together on their chosen topics while he spent time with each one of them individually, before asking them to read, evaluate and review one another's papers. It is believed that he might have created the term 'laboratory method' from similarities in writing development with already established laboratory work in the sciences.

Literature indicates that early versions of the writing centre existed before the 1970s, even though they may not have been the same as writing centres of today. However, according to Carino (2001:10), the writing centre discourse has mainly ignored these centres, or has uniformly characterised them as deficient. When they have been mentioned, they have been presented as 'poor cousins' of English departments, or stereotypically as 'remedial fix-it shops', where poorly trained staff members became responsible for teaching underprepared and poorly regarded students.

In the next section, I focus on the development of the writing centre during the period of massification and open admissions in US higher education institutions.

3.2.1   The US writing laboratory and writing clinic

Writing laboratories and writing clinics became popular among US universities and colleges as remedial establishments for addressing students' deficiencies and imperfections (Moore, 2001:3). These two organisational forms were sufficiently successful to allow universities and colleges to depend on them for all their remedial work. Moore (2001:3) further notes that the methods of the laboratory and the clinic overlapped, and so does the terminology that was used. However, he argues that the methods of the writing laboratory and the writing clinic were far more popular than their formal organisational identities. There are, however, notable differences between the two, and I deal with these below, starting with the writing laboratory.

3.2.1.1.   The writing laboratory

First, it seems important to note that, after mid-to late 1950's, there was a noticeable scarcity of literature on the writing laboratory. The writing laboratory is an organisational unit that is usually funded by and located within the English department of a university. The laboratory focuses on finding and amending errors in student academic writing. As an institution, the writing laboratory was not always

sufficiently staffed, nor held in high regard in the academy as it was usually considered to be a place where 'bad' writers were sent in order to be 'fixed'. Usually these were first year undergraduate students (Carino, 2001:10).

Ordinarily, students who attend the writing laboratory, do so voluntarily, or under an obligation and/or against their wishes because of their failure to pass proficiency examinations, or as a result of a referral by a faculty member with the threat of withholding a course credit subject to the improvement of deficiencies in the student's writing (Moore, 2001:7). Classes would meet for one hour per week in the writing laboratory instead of the classroom, just like in a science laboratory. During that hour, the instructor, assisted by two or three graduate students, would teach all students rather than focusing only on those students who came voluntarily, or those who were referred to the laboratory for remediation (Carino, 2001:13).

In assisting students, the instructor would work with the individual student as a member of a group consisting of 10 or 20 students in a given hour, as students planned and wrote their academic tasks in class, and sometimes with individual students in conference. According to Carino (2001:45), the writing laboratory assumed an independent identity first during the 1920s, when it was recognised as a teaching method, and later in the 1940s when structurally, it continued to resemble a classroom setting and formed part of the institutional desire to track students according to ability. However, after the mid- to late 1950s, literature on the writing laboratory itself disappeared. This could be linked to the emergence of the writing centre, which I deal with below. However, first the discussion that follows focuses on the writing clinic.

3.2.1.2.   *The writing clinic*

The writing clinic has initially been viewed as "an institution, class, or conference, etc., for instruction in or study of a particular subject; a seminar" (Boquet, 2002:9). However, most of the time, the writing clinic was used as an addition to, or part of a suite of remedial schemes designed to assist students whose writing ability was considered to fall short of the standards of the academy, or seen to be insufficient to satisfy the requirements for graduation (Moore, 2001:4).

Student consultations with the clinic occurred voluntarily, arising from the students' own desire, and most of the time instigated by teachers' comments that the students' writing skills

were not up to the required standards, and may be an obstacle in the writing of examinations, assignments and academic reports. Moore (2001:4) further explains that a student was sometimes forced to consult the writing clinic under threat of failing a course in which the students' writing imperfections were apparent. The clinic's identification of the cause of the students' problems was not seen as an insurmountable challenge or difficulty, because although the students could personally and voluntarily seek help, initial consultations could be conducted which often indicated the underlying inabilities of students' writing, especially with graduate students who had had exposure to university or college writing challenges (Moore, 2001:5).

Once the cause of a student's writing inabilities had been identified through a consultation, or through the analysis of the student's written work, the clinician could recommend several ways to help the student remove the defect. These may have included new proposals to deal with the problem, mainly through self-help, or the student may, in some higher education institutions, have been required to register for remedial classes, or to obtain private tutoring.

Moore (2001:6) further explains that other forms and means of helping the student may have been used subject to the nature of the challenge. If, for instance, the problem was concerned with spelling, or a lack of originality in the student's writing, or dealing with technical aspects of writing, then the student may alternatively have been advised to join a specialised study group, or a remedial pamphlet or reading material could be recommended.

In the writing clinic, graduate student clinicians conducted individual consultations with students, using the Rogerian non-directive counselling method to assist students to improve their academic results, promote their self-esteem, collect personal background information about the students in order to help them overcome their fears, and to assist those who were considered to be "poor in English largely through the accident of their environment or education" (Carino, 2001:14). However, Carino (2001) points out that this method was subsequently condemned for allowing graduate students to practise amateur psychology and to interfere with students' personal lives.

In the section that follows, I deal with the development of the writing centre following the period of dominance by the writing laboratory and the writing clinic. This seeming disappearance of the writing laboratory, and the emergence of the writing centre, is considered next.

3.2.2 The evolution of the writing centre in the United States (US)

Notwithstanding the fact that writing laboratories appeared to have a promising future in the early part of the 1950s, they shortly thereafter disappeared. Boquet (2001:49) argues that this disappearance could be attributed to the re-emergence of linguistics from the late 1950s, which also signalled the return of earlier periods' scientific, objectivist thinking on justifying the study of language.

The effect was that the writing laboratory was replaced by whole-class mechanisms which, once acquired and perfected by students, would allow any student, at least theoretically, to write an examinable five-paragraph academic essay. Student writers who were not able to grasp and perfect these grammatical rules and language mechanisms were transferred to community colleges and 'budget campuses' in the late 1950s and 1960s. According to Boquet (2001:50), this explains two issues: it accounted for the lack of literature on language laboratories during this period, and it paved the way for the establishment of the writing centre.

Carino (2001:10) explains that the origins of the writing centre can be found in the early 1970s when open admissions initiatives or massification of higher education resulted, at least partly, in their establishment. Boquet (2001:50) maintains that even though there are insufficient historical accounts of writing centres during the 1970s, the writing centres which were established during the period of massification were mainly created to deal with problems such as increased enrolment, large student numbers from diverse cultural and minority populations, and the perceived public perception of declining literacy standards.

According to North (2001:69), the writing centre outlined its scope or mandate, not in terms of a given curriculum, but in terms of the student writers it needed to service. It was an expression of an approach that represented the combination of, at the time, the two most authoritative views on teaching writing: firstly, that writing is most efficiently seen as a process, and secondly, that writing curricula need to be student centred.

The objective of a writing centre, according to North (2001:69), was, among others, to ensure that student writers, and not necessarily their writings or texts, were altered or changed by teaching. In an axiomatic form, he explained that, "our job is to produce better writers, not better writing" (North, 2001:69). He argued that in any given writing project, such as a class written assignment, a university application letter, a report, or a dissertation proposal, the student writer is the most important priority, and the one and only writing concern.

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According to Bräuer (2003:135), the goal of yielding "better student writers, and not better student writing" was consistent with an overall idealised view of the student writer and student writing as an individual occurrence in composition studies in the late 1980s.

Since the late 1980s, there was a noticeable shift in the focus of writing centres from the individual writer to the writer within discourse communities. Hence, collaboration constitutes a principal element of the current and most prominent forms of the writing centre model. This model is composed of two major elements: the first concerns peer tutorials for one-on-one student consultations, where the individual circumstances of the student come into focus, and the second relates to writing across the curriculum courses, where writing in and beyond academic disciplines is dealt with (Bräuer, 2003:138-139).

Boquet (2001: 51) argues that there are three types of writing centres prevalent in higher education today. The first type is a writing centre that advocates or promotes and practises the use of auto-tutorial methods and materials. The fundamental or distinctive characteristics of these auto-tutorial laboratories are headsets, audio tapes and workbooks, which allow students to work individually and independently, without a tutor, on correcting grammatical errors in their academic writing.

The second type of writing centre, according to Boquet (2001:51), is one advocated by those who criticise computer-programmed teaching methods. These critics call for a more thorough consideration of education tasks suitable to students' needs, which are also respectful of their intelligence. Notwithstanding their appreciation for the attractiveness of computer-programmed teaching methods or aids in well-known, under-staffed, sometimes under-resourced writing laboratories and writing centres, critics believe that one-on-one student consultations with a human being who cares are essential underpinnings for the writing centre.

The third and the last type concerns those who are looking for a substitute to the conventional and traditional forms of teaching practised by writing laboratories. Peer tutoring is seen as a method that changes or alters "not what students learn but rather the social context in which they learn it" (Boquet, 2001:52). The use of peer tutors addressed both the call for human contact, and the genuine monetary constraints faced by writing centres, because peer tutors are cheaper to employ than permanent academic staff members.

North (2001:69) explains that the writing centre outlines its scope or mandate, not in terms of a given curriculum, but in terms of the student writers it services. It is an expression of an approach that represents the combination of, at the time, the two most authoritative views on teaching writing. The first of these views is that writing is most efficiently seen as a process; and secondly, that writing curricula need to be student centred.

The objective of a writing centre, according to North (2001:69), is, among other things, to ensure that student writers, and not necessarily their writings or texts, are altered or changed by teaching. He explains that "our job is to produce better writers, not better writing" (North, 2001:69). He explains that in any given writing project, such as a class written assignment, a university application letter, a report, or a dissertation proposal, the student writer is the most important priority, and the one and only writing concern.

Bräuer (2003:135) points out that the goal of yielding "better student writers, and not better student writing" was consistent with an overall idealised view of the student writer and student writing as an individual occurrence in composition studies in the late 1980s.

North (2001:71) further explains that writing centres primarily operated through referrals of students, and in some cases, these student referrals would even have sections outlining the errors discovered in students' writing or a checklist filled in by lecturers for writing centre practitioners to look at. At times students would act of their own accord as a result of comments written at the bottom of their own scripts. Nonetheless, the preferred approach would be for students themselves to visit the writing centre because they wanted to, and not because they were obliged to. On the other hand, writing centres often reached out to students directly to explain the services they offer, and on certain occasions, through an invitation by a subject lecturer (North, 2001:71). Writing centres are usually part of an English department in traditional universities and in US colleges (North, 2001: 68, 73).

Since their inception in the form of a writing laboratory and clinic, or in the early years of Philo Buck, writing centres have proliferated across the globe as a result of, among other factors, globalisation and internationalisation of higher education and massification. Scott (2017:12) maintains that notwithstanding this growth, the writing scholarship published in North US journals remains largely monolingual and US centric in its orientation.

While the three types of writing centres described by Boquet (2001: 51) still remain, innovative practices within and outside of the US continue to have an impact on the form and

nature of the writing centre. Internationally, the development of these writing centres has largely been shaped by factors such as institutional cultures, writing and research tradition, and multilingualism. In the next section, I explore the development of writing centres in some of the European, Asian, Australian and African higher education institutions.

3.2.2   European developments

This section deals with the development and influence of the US writing centre on some European higher education institutions. The European higher education context, unlike its US counterpart, is characterised by at least three different perspectives on academic writing, and is influenced by the Bologna Process and Bologna Declaration, in particular, the signatories to the Declaration.

Briefly, the Bologna Process concerns an initiative to transform higher education in Europe and further seeks to create the European Higher Education Area (EHEA). The Bologna Declaration, initially signed by 29 countries in 1999 (which has increased to more than 46 at present), strives to promote the following, among other things: qualifications framework based on a three-cycle system, mobility of staff and students, EHEA in a global context, joint academic degrees, recognition of academic degrees across the EHEA, the social dimension of education, and lifelong learning (Kitis, Hatzitheodorow, Kontouli & Matheoudakis, 2016:125).

The relevant shift brought about by this process is the discussion by European higher education institutions of the need for a more supportive and explicit way of teaching writing at higher education institutions in Europe (Breuer & Schindler, 2016:97). This change of mind-set has, in turn, led to the establishment and/or moves towards the establishment of writing centres in some European countries.

The context within which these changes are taking place occurs against the backdrop of at least three different and dominant perspectives on academic writing prevalent in Europe. The first is that described by Björk, Bräuer, Rienecker and Jörgenson (2003:7), dominant in much of European higher education pedagogical custom that holds, in principle, that it is not necessary to teach academic writing, as well as other skills such as presentation and teaching in higher education. In essence, this view is based on the notion that, once a student has learned how to write in one genre, she or he will be able to write well in other generic circumstances, and that language is there to carry content and does not affect the formulation

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of ideas (Sofianou-Mullen 2016:43). Referring to what is called the continental custom, Rienecker and Jörgensen (2003:107) explain that, as a general rule, continental teachers do not make much use of teaching materials, or any kind of teaching before or during writing, other than the one-on-one conversation with students. As a result, students are often left with less teaching in and discussion about their academic writing than the students of Anglo-American traditions.

The second perspective on academic writing concerns the Anglo-American mode of academic writing, which is used by a large number of students who write, study and conduct research. Rienecker and Jörgensen (2003:102) maintain that the common features of the Anglo-American tradition are that they are often based on observation or experiment, or on real-world objectives, people and events and that they are problem-based, methodologically oriented, systematic, argumentatively written in a clear, concise, unmistakable and often, in an impersonal language. The view is that the subject is conspicuous or in the foreground, not the academic or scholar who wrote the study, and that sometimes as a reader, one can barely remember their names. In contrast, according to Rienecker and Jörgensen (2003:102), in the continental custom, studies and academic papers are usually interpretive, hermeneutical and epistemological in nature.

The third and the last perspective on academic writing in Europe concerns the Anglo-Saxon style of writing. This system is characterised by a narrow research question and an emphasis on methodological inquiry (whether it is into empirical or theoretical issues). It is also mostly prevalent in those fields that represent the original and first university disciplines in the history of universities, such as nursing, teaching, pedagogy, and some social sciences (Rienecker & Jörgensen, 2003: 59).

It is this context that informs the discussion on the establishment of writing centres in Europe. Sofianou-Mullen (2016:45) explains that another way of improving writing is the establishment of the writing centre, which is of US origin but is now an international practice on the rise.

In this section, the focus was on the development of writing centres in the US and Europe. At the beginning of the section, I highlighted contextual factors that have a direct bearing on the development of academic writing support and/or the development of writing centres in higher education. These issues relate to, among others, the writing customs informed by the continental, Anglo-American and Anglo-Saxon traditions and forms of writing in higher

education institutions in most of Europe. Further, the impact of the Bologna Process and the Bologna Declaration on these traditions was also dealt with. It should further be noted with regard to the latter that, even though to date there have been 46 countries that have signed the Bologna Declaration, the impact has not been the same for all countries.. Nevertheless, it is evident that the higher education landscape in Europe has been greatly influenced by, among other factors, globalisation, internationalisation, exchange of staff and students, and massification.

In the next section, I look at the developments in African higher education institutions.

3.2.4 Writing centre developments on the African continent

This section focuses on the development of writing centres in Africa, with the exception of South Africa. The latter is discussed separately below and is not part of this section.

Muchiri, Mulamba, Meyers and Ndoloi (1995:176) emphasise the point already made above that there is no composition industry outside the US and Canada. But that does not mean that there is no interest or research in academic writing.

As will be evident in the discussion of academic writing at some of the higher education institutions on the continent, academic writing support programmes for students whose first language is not English are usually located within Applied Linguistics or English language departments, under such titles as English for Academic Purposes (EAP), or English for Specific Purposes (ESP). Benjamin and Afful (2007:142) explain that EAP is an essential subject that is offered in many English-medium universities to facilitate the acquisition of academic literacy skills. They argue that EAP originated in the UK and was created in response to the increasing internationalisation of higher education.

Muchiri et al. (1995:188) argue that on the African continent English will always be one of the many languages that are used. They maintain that within African higher education institutions English may be students' third, fourth or fifth language after, for example, Gikuyu and Kiswahili, or Kichaga and Kiswahili, Chiluba and Kikonyo and French, and that English is usually prioritised for special purposes such as school, church or business. The challenge is that it may be difficult to learn well in so many languages, and most students drop out of school before they can even gain admission to university education. They further posit that most students who are determined to learn become fluent in English and are able to obtain entry into the highly selective number of higher education institutions.

The use of English as a medium of instruction in multilingual settings usually carries a social and political meaning. Muchiri et al. (1995:188) argue that the use of English has a different meaning in, for example, Kenya, Tanzania, Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Republic of Congo (formerly Zaire). In both Congo Republics, French is the main European language in higher education institutions and in public life, and English occupies a limited space. Seeing that in these cases English is not the language of the former colonial power, students' willingness to learn English stems from their hopes and desires for a career in business. It is a marketable practical skill, easily comparable to computer programming.

However, this may not be completely true for all African countries, and Ghana may be an exception in point. Notwithstanding the fact that Ghana had more than three hundred years of contact with three European countries, Portugal, the Netherlands and the UK, it is the English language that has exerted much influence over Ghana. According to Benjamin and Afful (2007:144), Ghana is one of the countries in the world where English is the only official language. They explain that, in terms of education, English is used as a medium of instruction in Ghanaian universities, including the University of the Cape Coast (UCC). In addition to the fact that English is one of the major entry requirements for higher education in Ghanaian public universities, prospective students are required to have 12 years of study of English from the primary school level to the secondary school level (Benjamin & Afful, 2007:145).

Similarly, in Kenya and Tanzania, English cannot be divorced from the colonial past. In Kenya, for example, English is popularly used in education, government, and business or the private sector, although Kiswahili is generally used as a national language.

There are other equally critical factors that characterise the higher education landscape and context on the African continent. One of these is that, according to Muchiri et al. (1995:180), students at universities such as Kenyatta, Dar es Salaam, and Lubumbashi, are usually taught English to a certain degree, but many of them continue to face difficulties with their academic writing at universities. The other important factor to consider is that university attendance still remains a privilege for a small minority. As a result, students in these countries come to university not just bearing the hopes of their families, but those of the entire village, for whom they will, on completion of their studies, become an indispensable link to the world of government and business. Students in African universities are, first of all, members of groups: of a small band of students with whom they survive at university, of the body of students as a whole, and of a community beyond the university, a family, a village, and a

tribe. According to Muchiri et al. (1995:180), these loyalties are embodied in the daily practices of the students' academic life on university campuses.

Within this context, and more than two decades later, Mwangi (2017:16-21), in her study on the challenges faced by undergraduate students in academic writing in Kenyan universities, discusses the writing centre as one strategy, among many, that may be adopted by Kenyan universities to enhance students' academic writing skills.

In her view, a writing centre can be a place where students can be encouraged and guided in their academic writing, including essays, term papers, research projects and dissertations. She further envisions a writing centre that would take students through the academic writing process, from conceptualisation, to developing an argument, to editing and finally to proof reading. Such a centre could be a place that would be open to all students (undergraduate and postgraduate), provide individualised attention to students, and organise training, writing workshops, essay competitions and conferences.

Kenyan higher education institutions continue to experience challenges similar to higher education institutions the world over. These relate to, among other factors, massification, insufficient and declining public funding, declining quality and curricula that are seen to be not responsive to the modern-day economic and labour market's needs. Within this context Kenyan students, in particular foreign or second-language students, face difficulties in various areas of academic writing, from vocabulary, correct spelling of words and on how to structure and develop arguments (Mwangi 2017: 2).

This is partly because, as stated by Muchiri et al. (1995), Kenya is a multilingual society, and English is, for most students, a second language (L2), and as such students' abilities in the language are hampered by challenges associated with second-language learning. Mwangi (2017:9) explains that currently, higher education institutions in Kenya offer a compulsory or mandatory module to all first-year students on academic writing, as an attempt to address some of the challenges identified above.

Similarly, higher education institutions in Zimbabwe do not have a formalised programme in the nature and form of the writing centre or writing laboratory. According to Gonye, Mareva, Dudu and Sibanda (2012:71), first-year undergraduate students at higher education institutions are obliged to study for a semester-long, compulsory communication skills course that introduces students to, among others, the theory of communication, and in particular,

concentrates on listening, speaking, reading and academic writing. This is because for the majority of university students in Zimbabwe, as in Kenya, English is used as a language of instruction, even though for many it is a second language. Further, according to Gonye et al. (2012:72), for students to enter and study at universities in Zimbabwe, they must have passed 'O' levels English language, and an advanced level English Language and Communication Skills general paper.

Although English is a medium of instruction from Grade 3 in Zimbabwe, at home students switch to their first language (L1), making it difficult for them to become proficient in English, even at university level. From their research on academic writing at universities in Zimbabwe, Gonye et al. (2012:79), found, among other things, that first-year undergraduate students at universities showed a number of weaknesses in their academic writing which, in their view, require that the semester course on communication skills should be extended from one semester to two, and that it should especially focus on grammar, punctuation, paragraphing, spelling, linking devices, diction/word choice, referencing and citing of sources (Gonye et al., 2010:79).

Compulsory first-year writing courses are also applied in Lesotho. In Lesotho, students are required to study a compulsory Communication and Study Skills Course (CSS), which is comprised of study materials produced within the National University of Lesotho (Letsoela, 2013:150). The National University of Lesotho does not have a writing centre or a writing laboratory to provide support for students' academic writing; the CSS operates under the Centre for Teaching and Learning (CTL) (Lefoka, 2018).

In Namibia, according to Broekhoff (2014:66), the concept of a writing centre is new in the higher education context. The opportunity for the establishment of a writing centre came about as a result of an advertisement, in March 2007, on the English Language Fellows (ELF) website which was sponsored by the US State Department AY, 2007) to start a writing centre at a technical college in Namibia. This centre, which would be established at the Polytechnic of Namibia in the capital city, Windhoek, would be the first writing centre in Namibia, and it was meant to service about 8 000 students. It was designed to offer writing development and pedagogical foundations which were suitable for the University of Namibia. The stated aim for this development was, among others, to provide essential guidance for the Centre for Teaching and Learning (CTL) on setting up and running the centre, training staff members, and collaborating with content area lecturers. Broekhoff (2014:66) notes that the main

mission of the writing centre was to provide assistance with sentence-level grammar and coherence. This function is important, particularly for struggling English foreign language (EFL) students. She further points out that funding for EFL operations is provided by the US State Department in response to specific project requests made by the host institution.

Some universities offer academic writing development support for their students in the same style as other writing centres in the world. They make use of language learning units or English departments because some universities in Africa do not have writing centres.

In this section I focused on the development of writing centres on the African continent. However, the history of the development and establishment of writing centres in Africa does not begin to compare with their counterparts in the US, Europe, Asia and Australia. This is to be expected owing to the history of higher education in Africa which has been greatly affected by years of colonialism, political strife, financial deprivation experienced by a number of higher education institutions, political conflicts and instability, to name but some of the challenges. What I have presented instead, are measures and initiatives developed to support academic writing by several higher education institutions notwithstanding the difficulties such institutions face.

However, and as stated earlier, although South Africa is an integral part of the African continent, the next section focuses on the development and origins of the writing centre in the South African higher education landscape. A number of aspects discussed under this section, and relating, in particular, to multilingualism and the use of English as a medium of instruction, resonate with and are also true for the African higher education context, including the history of colonialism. These issues are dealt with in the next section.

3.4 THE DEVELOPMENT OF WRITING CENTRES IN SOUTH AFRICAN HIGHER EDUCATION

The origins of the writing centre in South Africa can be characterised in two different political, social and economic contexts. The first is that characterised by the history of colonialism and apartheid, and the second relates to the post-1994 democratic dispensation.

Within the first context, the higher education landscape in South Africa, just like the school system, was directed by apartheid practices and laws. Pavlich and Orkin (1993:1-4) explain

that even though the first universities in South Africa were created for and targeted white students, they were, at least in theory, open to all students. However, very few black students obtained the required secondary education passes, or financial resources to meet the admission criteria and costs of higher education. They maintain that the introduction in 1959 of the Extension of University Education Act made matters even more difficult for black students.

The Act prescribed, among others, that university education was to be made available separately, and along segregated lines for whites, blacks, coloureds and Indians. In terms of this Act, black students who wanted to study at white higher education institutions needed to obtain special permission from the Minister of Education before their applications could be processed by these institutions.

Pavlich and Orkin (1993:1-5) maintain that the so-called 'permit system' drastically reduced access for black students to institutions such as the University of the Witwatersrand (Wits), Rhodes University, the University of Natal and the University of Cape Town (UCT) that were known as the so-called 'open' universities and were ideologically not opposed to such applications. As a result, UCT had only one black African student out of a total of 7 575 students in 1970, and only 71 black African students out of a total of 10 383 in 1980. In 1983 the permit system was replaced by 'racial quotas' for different higher education institutions, determined by the Minister of Education. This is just an example of the apartheid practices and laws in existence at the time and their devastating consequences.

Archer and Richards (2011:6) note that from the late 1970s and early 1980s the historically white higher education institutions began to open their doors to students of all races. According to Badat (2010:2), this opening up of admissions to higher education institutions was especially important because, at the time and as a result of apartheid, social inequalities were set firmly and mirrored in all spheres of life, as an outcome of systemic exclusion of blacks and women under colonialism and apartheid.

Initially, the opening up of these opportunities appeared as a victory, but were immediately characterised by forms of discrimination and educational deprivation in existence at the time. According to Archer and Richards (2011:6), students from educationally disadvantaged backgrounds were regularly compared, adversely, with their more privileged peers. They argue that these students were often channelled into specialised classes in which the supposed purpose was to help them acquire the 'skills' necessary for success at university. This stigma

of deficit haunted these students, who were considered to be lacking in knowledge, skills and even personal attributes necessary for academic success.

By the 1990s, writing centres in South Africa were a new phenomenon, occurring in only a few university campuses, namely UCT, the University of the Western Cape (UWC) and Wits, either starting out as small projects and programmes under the umbrella of academic development, or under an English department, or even under the Faculty of Education.

Dison and Clarence (2017:5) explain that these academic development units, such as the former Academic Development Centre at UWC, and the Academic Support Programmes (ASPs) at Wits, were focused on disadvantaged, underprepared, and predominantly black students who entered higher education during the transition from apartheid to democracy in the early to mid-1990s. These programmes were remedial in nature and designed to close the gap between students' prior schooling and the expectations of higher education institutions. Described differently, these programmes were informed by a deficit perspective of students' academic writing which held that students lacked the correct types of educational capabilities to succeed, and required additional time and support through a writing centre or academic writing course to acquire the capabilities in order to participate in the dominant communicative practices within the university.

Boughey and McKenna (2016:2) argue that these approaches concentrated on the different forms of the English language, along with a set of supposedly neutral reading and writing skills in the belief that this was what students required to succeed in the academe. This, they maintain, resulted in a number of language courses known, for example, as 'English for Academic Purposes', or 'English for Second Language'. At times, these courses were mandatory for all students; at other times, they were designed just for those students classified as having a 'language problem' which needed to be corrected, or 'fixed' through some assistance or support situated outside of the mainstream curriculum. In socio-cultural terms, Moore (1994:37), characterised this challenge as the acquisition of "academic literacy", a mixture of linguistic, conceptual and epistemological rules and norms of the academe.

The courses were, therefore, meant to teach those students who spoke English as an additional language a set of skills such as how to write generic argumentative essays, how to construct parts of an essay such as paragraphs and introductions, and how to reference their sources accurately. Some also provided instruction on requisite skills like note-taking in

lectures, mind-mapping or essay planning, and basic grammar and comprehension (Dison & Clarence, 2017:7).

At the beginning of this section, I indicated that there were two important contextual factors that are related to the origins of the writing centre in South Africa: firstly, the socio-economic contexts of colonialism and apartheid, and secondly, the democratic dispensation, in particular the constantly changing nature of the higher education landscape, and the role of the writing centre, which I will focus on in more detail.

Wilmot and Lotz-Sisitka (2015:4) argue that the context of higher education is changing constantly, both within South Africa and internationally. Increased access to higher education as a result of globalisation, massification and diversification of higher education internationally continues to challenge the existing and dominant forms of knowledge, and how students obtain entry or access into the disciplinary communities and their ways of knowing, as contested spaces. They maintain that, adding to the difficulties and complexities of the higher education landscape is the unavoidable diversity that increased access has brought about. These increased numbers of students have also created a need to accommodate and cater for the learning styles, languages and disciplinary specifics of a wide range of students, who enter higher education institutions with varying and diverse histories, interests and learning experiences.

While it has been generally accepted that significant progress has been made in expanding access to higher education since 1994, the South African higher education system is still considered as a "low-participation-high-attrition" (Fisher & Scott 2011:10) system, where students outcomes are poor overall and highly unequal across institutional types and groups. Fisher and Scott (2011:14) further argue that the South African higher education system is also suffering from an "articulation gap", which is described as a mismatch between the learning requirements and the actual knowledge and academic capabilities of first-time entering students. They maintain that increased access to higher education by students from previously disadvantaged backgrounds has not resulted in increased academic success in terms of the numbers of students that graduate or obtain their academic qualifications within the required period of study.

As a result, according to Wilmot and Sisitka (2015:5), there has been an increase in research on academic literacy, informed by the acknowledged significance of academic writing in higher education. Dison and Clarence (2017: 9) explain that there has, equally, been an

increase in the number of writing centres created in the first half of the 21st century, especially at universities of technology. The creation of these new writing centres, they argue, indicates an acknowledgement that widened access has not necessarily resulted in success for many students, and that students at higher education institutions need additional time and support in order to become expert or proficient writers. Further, while the significance of, and the need for academic writing support in South Africa is widely accepted, a clear and trusted way to provide this form of academic support remains a contentious issue.

According to Dison and Clarence (2017:7), in a number of higher education institutions across South Africa, the types of academic courses and programmes offered to students for support continue to view the language of instruction as a hindrance to students' academic success in their disciplinary fields of study. However, according to Boughey and McKenna (2016:2), this view, especially the view widely accepted in former white higher education institutions, has been criticised as being largely incorrect. They posit that it has been argued that 'language' was being used as a seemingly neutral tool to maintain domination. Dison and Clarence (2017:7) maintain that while there has recently been a change in the thinking behind these approaches to literacy development, they continue to exist outside of the formal curriculum, and concentrate on language support for academic purposes at the expense of the disciplinary nature of academic literacy practices.

However, from the beginning of the 1990s onwards, a different understanding began to emerge which informed the thinking about the 'language problem' based on the work of social anthropologists such as Street (1984, 1993, 1995), working in the field popularly known as 'new literacy studies'. According to Wilmot and Lotz-Sisitka (2015:6), this new transformative approach or model sees academic literacy practices as social practices, which are contextually linked, and often are disputed locations or spaces of struggle, or contestation for dominance. They further explain that academic writing support within this view (an academic literacies model) sees the writing process as a social act, with differing power dynamics at stake, and it makes allowance for the diverse student dispositions at play, while acknowledging the contested nature of creating knowledge through academic writing.

Dison and Clarence (2017:7) further maintain that this model has gone beyond characterisations such as 'deficit' or 'non-traditional' students, and sees literacies instead as being influenced by and based within specific social or practice-based contexts. Explained differently: they (Dison & Clarence, 2015) posit that each discipline forms a community of

practice, and each community uses particular genres or kinds of texts to communicate, create and critique knowledge claims. Thus, to become literate in creating and using these texts, and to join the community of practice as legitimate members or participants, students need to be socialised into the community, and into the specific, as well as the more general rules their community follows in creating, using and acquiring knowledge.

Relating this approach to the South African higher education context, Dison and Clarence (2017:7) explain that this approach introduces students into new communities of learning, including but not limited to students whose home and social backgrounds were less suitable for the development of the methods of writing privileged by the university. They furthermore maintain that the work of the writing centre is steadily informed or underpinned by academic socialisation (Dison & Clarence, 2017:7). The shift from 'study skills' to academic socialisation in teaching students to respond to assessment and learning activities, with relevant forms of research, reading and writing has changed writing centres from being associated with the view of teaching writing as an autonomous act or as consisting of the teaching of autonomous writing skills, to an approach that recognises writing as an act and process that recognises and accepts that literacy practices differ between academic disciplines.

The above discussion lays the foundation for the brief overview of writing centres in various South African higher education institutions presented below. While I do not intend to provide an exhaustive discussion of all writing centres, I cover, where possible, the operation, funding, and staff at writing centres at traditional and comprehensive universities, as well as at universities of technology.

3.3.1 Writing centres at South African higher education institutions

Although writing centres exist at most public universities in South Africa, this section covers only a few centres by way of example and comparison with the CPUT Language Centre. focuses on those writing centres which are the well-establishedat traditional universities followed by other institutional types, as per their relevance and available information. These institutions are UCT, Wits, UWC, Stellenbosch University (SU), the University of Johannesburg (UJ), the Nelson Mandela University (NMU), the University of Fort Hare, the University of Limpopo (UL) and North West University (NWU).

3.3.1.1 *Writing centre at the University of Cape Town*

UCT, which was established in 1829 as a college, obtained full university status in 1918. It is considered to be a liberal university that traditionally catered for white students, but it has seen radical change in its student population, particularly over the past 20 years. It is the most highly ranked university in South Africa, and one of the top universities on the African continent.

The writing centre at UCT was established in 1994, within the Language Development Group, which focuses on research-driven development work, particularly through curriculum involvement. Archer (2008:211) explains that language development is considered to incorporate teaching, research and curriculum development based on the discipline of applied language studies and the associated idea of academic literacy. Both the Language Development Group and the writing centre serve to promote and facilitate access to higher education, in a spirit of social justice and redress. Within the Academic Development Programme, in the Language Development Group, there is also a writing laboratory, specifically located within the Department of Health Sciences Education, in the Faculty of Health Sciences.

According to Archer (2008:212), the writing centre provides a walk-in, one-on-one consultancy service to students from all faculties and all academic levels of the university. She points out that, most commonly, students bring a draft of their academic essay that forms the foundation of the consultation, but that some visit the writing centre even before commencing with their writing. She notes that the writing centre aims to achieve the following objectives: increase students' understanding of writing as a process; allow a 'think-through-writing' approach; help students to focus on tasks at hand; heighten students' sense of 'audience' in writing; alert students to academic writing conventions and disciplinary discourses; educate students on academic voice and plagiarism; help students to understand how to choose information from a variety of sources; improve students' sense of coherence, cohesion and logic in writing; and equip students to self-edit their work and improve their ability to proof-read for some common grammatical errors (Archer, 2008:212).

In 1999, the staffing model of the writing centre at UCT changed from three full-time staff members and two coordinators to one coordinator and 10 part-time postgraduate students. According to Archer (2008:2012), there were various reasons for this change, one of which was that more than three years of one-on-one consulting led to consultant burn-out, whereas

fresh consultants each year keep the energy of the project alive. The second reason was that, by employing ten consultants, various disciplines would be accommodated in the writing centre. Thirdly, the writing centre became a mentoring space for postgraduate students, creating a vibrant cross-disciplinary intellectual community, with many consultants using this as a training ground for moving into academic jobs within their disciplines. Since 2005, some of the writing centre consultants have been part of an internationally funded mentoring and bursary programme, the Mellon Mays Undergraduate Fellowship Programme, which has a long-term objective of addressing the under-representation of black academics in higher education.

The postgraduate student consultants undergo a 20-hour training course, with on-going training throughout the year. The focus of this training is on, among other things, an introduction to the theoretical foundations of the writing centre work, issues related to access and redress, and their practical application (Archer, 2008:212). The current model is most effective, and most of the funding for the part-time consultants is external, from a philanthropic organisation that has consistently funded the writing centre for more than a decade (Archer, 2008:212). Archer and Parker (2016:45) explain that more recently, the writing centre at UCT employs, on average, 14 part-time student consultants each year (master's, PhD and post-doctoral students).

3.3.1.2   *Writing centre at the University of the Witwatersrand*

Wits is one of the leading universities in South Africa; it was modelled on Oxbridge and was established in 1896. The Witwatersrand writing centre (WWC) was initially run by volunteers and once sufficient funds were raised, it became formalised in 1999 (sNichols, 2011a:84). In her article, 'Snowball in Africa with a chance of flourishing: Writing Centres as shifters of power in a South African university', Nichols (2011a:84) chronicles the history of the evolution of the writing centre at Wits from around 1995.

The writing centre at Wits started out as a writing project, associated with the Department of English. Nichols's (2011a) conceptualisation of a writing project as a pilot writing centre was inspired by her observations of a crisis that she characterised as two-pronged: on the one hand was an observation among white students that they were more likely to succeed at university notwithstanding the fact that some of them were writing, according to sNichols (1998b:84), "pompous rubbish". On the other hand, their black counterparts were "writing

sense", but without fluency in English. This was a result of established authority, which in addition to the above could result in black students failing in relatively large numbers.

The Wits writing centre employs a number of consultants, who undergo a six-weeks' training course which focuses on, among other aspects, readings and theory (first session of each training week), with a second session dedicated to a practical (in the form of either role play or writing). The course content includes, among other things, an introduction to the social nature of the language, the idea of writing as thinking, principles and goals of a writing consultant and the role of the audience, activities of a consultation and the role and nature of effective questions, strategies, error analysis, questions of cultural transition, evaluation and the promotion of self-evaluation, and a discussion of ethics and logistics (NicholsNichols, 1998b:89).

Nichols (1998b:89) points out that training is followed by regular staff meetings. Tutorials take place in small groups of undergraduate students. In individual consultations, students come with their drafts or ideas and they are helped by the tutor or consultant to communicate their thoughts, and ultimately to internalise questions of the reader so that students become independent. In this way, the student sets the agenda through talking or reading. In a one-on-one consultation, a student models or writes with the consultant, and is constantly asked by the consultant to explain his or her understanding. The students are, therefore, encouraged to be active, to develop ideas and to use the act of writing as a form of learning.

In addition, Nichols (1998b:89) points out that the work of the writing centre is sometimes marketed to students by staff referrals, or invitations to consultants to advertise the writing project to students in lectures, or when peer tutors from other disciplines ask to attend the training course. At the beginning of the writing project, consultants were volunteers, who worked many hours because they realised the need and value of what they were doing. Since then, they have been able to use the hours they worked for in the writing centre as the form of payment towards their individual student account for the university.

Currently, there are three writing centres at Wits. The main writing centre has been centrally funded by the university since 1999. In addition to these, there are also discipline-specific writing centres in the Law School, and in the School of Education. The writing centre in the Law School is located at and funded by the Law School. The Education writing centre, which is located within the School of Education, is funded by the Council of Education (outside

funders). They also receive a small annual allocation from the Teaching Development Grant (Dison & Nichols, 2018).

3.3.1.3 *Writing centre at the University of the Western Cape*

Leibowitz, Goodman, Hannon and Parkerson (2006:7) explain that the writing centre at the UWC, like its counterparts in other higher education institutions in South Africa, came into existence via the Academic Development Programme (ADP), which was designed, through a process of 'infusion', to transform the learning and teaching processes of the university, encourage academic excellence, as well as extend access to education, among other things. The ADP targeted all students, and not just those who were seen to be academically underprepared. Clarence (2011: 103) explains that the idea behind the ADP was to provide epistemological access to the university by including students in the academic discourses in which they were required to produce written academic work that is compatible with university standards. Many of the students, who came to the university then, as well as the current group of students, speak English as an additional language (EAL).

Leibowitz et al. (2006:7) and Leibowitz and Parkerson (2011:7) indicate that the writing centre was established at UWC in 1994, as part of a variety of initiatives that also included a first-year credit-bearing English academic literacy course. The writing centre was a pilot project of the Academic Development Centre (ADC) with funding that was provided by the Desmond Tutu Educational Trust Fund (DTET). At the beginning, three members constituted the management team, including a director and coordinator (Leibowitz et al. 2006: 8). Consultants were also employed and trained, at least in the first two years, in a training programme that ran over two days and weekly two-hour sessions. The UWC writing centre is staffed by peer writing tutors who work with undergraduate students on their academic writing tasks.

Currently the writing centre at UWC is funded by the institution, as part of the academic development programme, and competes with other institutional priorities in an environment where the university faces financial constraints. The consultants are drawn from postgraduate students.

Clarence (2011:104) further explains that the aim of the writing centre is to support students with their academic writing tasks. It was a walk-in centre, where students brought their written tasks for one-on-one consultation with a trained consultant. Students were also

referred to the centre by course convenors and lecturers. All the tutors employed were master's and PhD candidates, with a great deal of experience. They were paid, because of the limited pool of funding, an hourly rate, which was lower than what senior postgraduate students should have been paid for tutoring work. Each tutor worked a maximum of 20 hours per week.

The Division of Postgraduate Studies provides writing support and development to postgraduate students, allowing the writing centre to focus on undergraduate students (Clarence, 2011:104). Clarence (2011:105) explained that the practices of working with student writers and academic lecturers and tutors at the UWC writing centre were influenced by new literacy studies and the Writing across the Curriculum (WAC) movement.

3.3.1.4   *Writing laboratory at Stellenbosch University*

Daniels and Richards (2011:33) explain that SU is historically an Afrikaans-medium university. However, since 1994 the university's student and staff demographic profile has changed considerably, becoming increasingly diverse in terms of language and culture. Bridgewater (2017:97) notes the perception that the Afrikaans language was used to deny access to higher education for black students. She further highlights the effect of the student protests which indicated that many students continue to view the Afrikaans language as a symbol of oppression that needs to be eradicated, or at least reduced, at SU.

Within this institutional context, Daniels and Richards (2011) note that the SU writing laboratory ('writing lab') became one of the spaces on campus that represent language and cultural diversity. They argue that although most of the South African higher education institutions mainly use English as a language for teaching and learning, out of 11 official languages, SU University uses both English and Afrikaans as media of instruction. This presents its own particular challenges as the combination of the different languages and different types of student discourses, particularly for non‐traditional students, is proving to be challenging for the university in developing relevant and suitable responses.

According to Daniels and Richards (2011:35), the SU writing lab was established in 2001, as a unit within the Language Centre. It was aimed at developing students' academic literacy, and at providing academic access to students from language and cultural backgrounds other than English and Afrikaans. They explain that the writing lab seeks to assist students in developing their academic writing practices beyond the focus on writing skills, or language

and academic literacy of students. It is student-centred, and students' home languages and their community outlook or backgrounds are celebrated as cultural resources. According to Bridgwater (2017:101), the writing lab supports students in a number of languages, in addition to English and Afrikaans, such as isiXhosa, German, French and many others based on the variety of backgrounds of their existing tutors.

Daniels and Richards (2011) maintain that from its inception, the SU writing lab has been committed to language diversity and improving academic literacy, on equal basis, in relation to Afrikaans and English. In this regard, there are two heads responsible for the writing lab: one an Afrikaans first-language speaker, and the other an English first-language speaker. The two heads work together in an integrated collaborative approach not only in the management of the writing lab, but also in dealing with issues related to teaching and learning, and students' concerns. This approach, according to the authors, is also in line with the writing centre pedagogy that prefers a collaborative approach to writing development (Daniels & Richards, 2011:36).

These authors further point out that writing consultants are drawn from postgraduate students coming from different academic disciplines, who are appointed on the basis of their proficiency in Afrikaans and/or English. They are required to be bilingual (Afrikaans and English), but competency in another language other than English and Afrikaans serves as an advantage (Daniels & Richards, 2011:36). Writing consultants undergo a two-day intensive training programme at the beginning of the academic year, and then continuously throughout the year. Training is done mainly in English and so is their training material. The training is interactive and includes Afrikaans sample material and Afrikaans students are encouraged to express themselves in their preferred language.

Daniels and Richards (2011:36) indicate that during consultations with students, a language that suits all participants is used, and both the consultants and student writers are encouraged to engage in collaborative talk. This requires flexibility and for the consultants to follow best practice. However, it is not uncommon for the consultations to be done in both Afrikaans and English.

The last section of this chapter concludes with a specific focus on the writing centre at CPUT.

3.4 THE WRITING CENTRE AT THE CAPE PENINSULA UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY

3.4.1 Institutional background

CPUT is the product of a merger, mainly between the Cape Technikon and the Peninsula Technikon, following the release of the National Plan for Higher Education that argued that "the number of public higher education institutions could and should be reduced" (DoE, 2001:87). This led to the creation of the only university of technology in the Western Cape with the largest student population, compared to its traditional university counterparts, in the region.

Jansen (2004:294) explains that, in December 2001, a national working group appointed by the Minister of Education recommended (in its report on the restructuring of the higher education system in South Africa) the reduction of higher education institutions (universities and technikons) from 36 to 21, through the specific mechanisms of mergers and incorporations, listing the specific institutions in various provinces targeted for merging and incorporation.

These mergers and incorporations of colleges, technikons and universities occurred mostly in the period between 2002 and 2005. At the time, three reasons were identified for this process: transformation, efficiency and diversification. However, the main motive behind this major restructuring of the system was to overcome the influence of the legacy of apartheid on the higher education landscape as quickly as possible (Webbstock, 2016:38). Higher education was seen as a public good, and in order to deal with past inequalities in the context of the changing student racial composition at higher education institutions, redress required the establishment of a diverse and differentiated higher education system and a reduction in the number of institutions to ensure sustainability (Webbstock, 2016:38).

The second reason, according to Webbstock (2016:39), was the need for increased efficiency across the system. This was mainly influenced by the fact that a number of higher education institutions were experiencing financial and leadership problems and challenges. The rationale was that merging some of the institutions, particularly in certain regions, could result in more competent management capacity, and help to rationalise the duplication of educational programmes in certain regions.

The third reason for the mergers advanced by Webbstock (2016:40) was the need to create a system with diverse higher education institutions serving different purposes. Webbstock (2016:40) explains that three institutional types emerged or were created: traditional universities, universities of technology and comprehensive universities. Eleven new higher education institutions came into existence as a result of the mergers: four comprehensive universities were formed through the mergers of former technikons and former universities; four new universities resulted from the merger of previous universities, and three new universities of technology came into existence following the merger of former technikons.

Bunting and Cloete (2010:2) point out that traditional universities offer basic formative degrees and professional undergraduate degrees; at postgraduate level, these universities offer honours degrees and a range of master's and doctoral degrees. Universities of technology, on the other hand, offer mainly vocational or career-focused undergraduate diplomas, and B-Tech degrees which serve as capping qualifications for diploma graduates. They also offer a limited number of master's and doctoral degrees. Comprehensive universities offer programmes typical of traditional universities as well as programmes typical of universities of technology.

CPUT, like its counterparts, has an approved programme and qualification mix that limits the type of qualifications it offers and academic fields in which it may operate. It has a large percentage of three-year undergraduate diploma students. According to the provisional, unaudited 2017 figures from the CPUT's Facts and Stats website, undergraduate students constituted 93.9% of all student enrolments, while 6.1% of the total figure of 32 950 students is comprised of postgraduate enrolments (cput.ac.za/PowerHEDA, 2018).

Enrolment figures by population group indicate that African students were the majority, constituting 65.1% (22 845), slightly more than the 2016 enrolment of 21 897 students. The remaining student numbers are further distributed as follows: white students constituted 8.5%, coloured 25.5% and Indian 0.9%. Enrolment figures for international students indicate that the top 10 countries, mainly from the African continent, have relatively low student numbers at CPUT, with the exception of the Democratic Republic of Congo which had 841 students. Other countries in the top 10 include Zimbabwe (391), Angola (355), Namibia (234) Gabon (176), Nigeria (120), Republic of Congo (107), Cameroon (87), Rwanda (47) and Lesotho (44) (cput.ac.za/PowerHEDA, 2018).

Faculties and programmes with the most students were Science, Engineering and Technology (SET) studies (16 195), Business and Management Science (11 512), and Education (4 027).

The challenges faced by students at CPUT are similar to those faced by students at other universities of technology in South Africa. They relate to, among others, academic literacy and language, the fact that a large percentage of students require financial aid and rely on financial assistance (particularly from the National Student Financial Aid Scheme), and high student to academic staff ratios.

The next section deals with the writing centre at CPUT, which was established in January 2005, following the merger between the Cape Technikon and the Peninsula Technikon.

3.4.2   Origins of the Writing Centre

This section focuses on the origins of the writing centre at CPUT, in particular its establishment, location, funding, administration, staffing, institutional relationship or collaboration, and the main challenges faced by students.

Prior to the merger, writing centres were operational at the Cape Technikon as well as at the Peninsula Technikon. These writing centres were established in the mid-1990s to cater for the linguistic and psychological needs of the students in transition, especially for students whose first language was not English. The establishment of the writing centre at the Cape Technikon, and in particular, at the Peninsula Technikon, was also due to the development of writing centres at universities internationally in the 1980s and 1990s, and in South Africa, as a result of the admission of African students in higher education institutions in the mid-1990s. The Peninsula Technikon was among the first institutions to follow in the footsteps of UWC with regard to open access to the institution and consequently, the establishment of the Academic Development Programme (ADP). Centrally, it had a director who was responsible for the ADP, and who worked closely with the directors of schools (academic departments).

At the Cape Technikon, the writing centre operated under the management and leadership of the head of department (HoD) of the Teaching and Learning Centre (TLC). The HoD was a permanent academic appointment, while the writing consultants were contract appointments with administrative status. On the other hand, the writing centre at the Peninsula Technikon operated in the Educational Development Centre (EDC) under the supervision of the

coordinator, who was employed on a permanent basis with administrative status, and writing consultants were contractual appointments.

The common feature of these writing centres was that they operated, and still operate, under the general umbrella of an ADC, because universities of technology do not have an established English department (Archer & Richards 2011:7), as is typical in traditional universities.

3.4.3 The researcher

My involvement as a researcher at a Writing Centre began in 1999, when I was appointed as a Writing Centre consultant at the former Cape Technikon, in Cape Town, and later, in a similar capacity, at the Peninsula Technikon in Bellville. This involvement continues to date, albeit in various capacities over the years. I am now in a different educational setting and higher education landscape. Currently, I work as the academic literacy lecturer, at the Writing Centre at CPUT.

3.4.4 Location and operational site of the CPUT Writing Centre

The CPUT Writing Centre is currently located in the Student Learning Unit, at the Fundani Centre for Higher Education and Development (CHED). The Writing Centre at CPUT should be seen progressively as both a physical and an ideological space. It currently operates and has an established physical presence at three campuses: the Bellville, Cape Town (recently renamed the District Six campus), and Tygerberg campuses. At the Cape Town campus (District Six campus), it is strategically located in the E-learning Centre. At the Bellville campus, it is situated in the IT Centre, and at the Tygerberg campus, the Writing Centre operates as part of the library, in the Sahara Dorleigh building.

The operations and presence of the writing centre is at present limited to three campuses of the eight CPUT sites that are situated in various parts of the Western Cape. In some of the satellite campuses, the writing centre provides limited support; in others, it has no presence. These sites are Mowbray, Wellington, Athlone, Granger Bay, the Media City building (Cape Town), the Roeland Street building (Cape Town) and the Virtual Tours campus.

The Writing Centre in Bellville operates from Monday to Friday, from 08:00 to 22:00. After 16:00 the Writing Centre operates as an ordinary computer laboratory and provides access to students and serves as a valuable resource for students to do their academic tasks. These

students are supervised by laboratory assistants, since writing consultants' or learning facilitators' working day ends at 16:00pm.

3.4.5 Services offered by the CPUT Writing Centre

The Writing Centre markets itself to students at the beginning of the year during the first-year student orientation. During the course of the academic year, the writing centre constantly sends messages about its services to lecturers and departments, and academic literacy lecturers' interventions that are organised and facilitated in individual departments also assist with advocacy.

A small but significant number of students visit CPUT Writing Centre in Cape Town, Bellville and Tygerberg campuses via referrals from other student support units such as student counselling, the disability unit, residence managers, tutors, mentors, senior students and the office of the student representative council (SRC).

Like many other writing centres in other higher education institutions, the Writing Centre at CPUT still experiences challenges with regard to academic staff collaboration. Even though some staff members readily refer their students for academic assistance and are appreciative of the work that is done by the writing centre, others do not value the support offered by the centre. They claim to be doing the work themselves that is done by the writing centre, and characteristically narrow its focus, as being that of teaching writing, reports and study skills.

However, the writing centre continues to reach out to faculty members, working on raising the awareness of its services. Other marketing initiatives by the writing centre involve continuous engagement with content lecturers, academic literacy interventions, student diaries, the website, posters, and using institutional teaching and learning committees.

3.4.6 The focus of the CPUT Writing Centre

The primary clients of the writing centre are the undergraduate students doing their first-, second-, third- and fourth-year level of study (up to B-Tech level). Thus, the writing centre's scope is limited, and regulated or prescribed by institutional policy. Postgraduate students registered for M-Tech and D-Tech fall beyond the scope of the services of the writing centre, and must, as a consequence, seek assistance from a postgraduate centre specifically created for this purpose.

However, notwithstanding the limitations imposed by the policy, the writing centre does, at times, deal with students who are grappling with the realities of the second transition (from undergraduate to postgraduate studies), who approach the writing centre under the pretence that they do not receive adequate support in the postgraduate centre. Even though as a matter of policy the writing centre is not obliged to assist them, it does sometimes find itself assisting postgraduate students with their academic challenges. This is one of the grey areas that need to be dealt with by the institution if through-put rates at postgraduate level are to be improved and enhanced.

For undergraduate students at CPUT the writing centre serves as a walk-in centre for seeking academic support and assistance, but also allows appointment bookings, and referrals by content lecturers, friends, as well as the Student Counselling Unit and the Disability Unit.

Depending on the volume and density of students' needs, consultations usually last an hour, and are conducted on a one‑on‑one basis. Students are constantly encouraged to make 24-hour booking appointments before they can see a consultant or academic literacy lecturer. Every consultation booking is done through administrators at the writing centre who, in turn, record such consultations via an online calendar. Usually, students bring their initial academic drafts, which form the subject of consultation. Alternatively, consultation takes place before a student undertakes the academic writing tasks.

The consultant does not write on the text or make changes to the text. The consultants write questions on a separate paper. This is one way of ensuring that the consultation remains a dialogue and not an editing session between the consultant and the student. The aim of that is the need for the student to see himself or herself as an equal partner in the consultation process.

When the consultant is done with the reading and writing questions and comments on the paper, the student will be notified by sms or email that the document is ready, he or she can come for consultation. When the student arrives for the consultation, the student will be drawn into the discussion by answering questions that asked them their thoughts on the topic they have written, and sometimes pointing them into discussions that are directly related to the text, a student can begin to feel accepted, acknowledged, and respected. This is the ideal platform to give the student a voice. The consultation then becomes about satisfying the needs of the student as opposed to focusing on what the tutor assumes the student needs

Although the writing centre does not serve as an editing centre, consultants do sometimes point out the obvious when it comes to grammatical and syntactic errors, especially those that are not usually identified by the computer. Effectively, consultants look at the students' general understanding of the task at hand (as per instruction), conceptualisation of the answers, argumentation and rhetorical or stylistic writing, paragraph formation (including issues such as extended analysis and validation, referencing and possibilities of plagiarism, features of introduction and conclusion).

The techniques that are used vary according to the nature of the academic challenge involved, and from practitioner to practitioner. Nevertheless, as consultants assist students, they move from macro-to-meso-to-micro in terms of the intervention, always engaging the student throughout the process. The appropriate assessment criteria are communicated to and shaped organically with the student at the beginning of the consultation, and then the student is encouraged to talk and critically engage with the issues at hand. This is considered to be absolutely essential in breaking the ice, and in establishing a relationship of trust.

The macro-level intervention involves the examination of the student's general sense and conceptual understanding of the task at hand, the issues of strategic approach, confidence and criticality of the voice. At the meso-level, technicalities such as the extent to which disciplinary terminology is used, defined and refined, are evaluated. These include the development of an argument; the use or application of evidence, the synthesis of experts' ideas (that is referencing in-text and at the end of text), logical connection of ideas, coherence, and cohesion. A micro-level intervention entails an analysis of syntax, grammar, spelling and punctuation. While this is considered by students to be an important issue, it is in consultants' view not a critical priority.

Feedback to students occurs in three ways: the first one is face-to-face interaction, commenting on students' script for future reference and referral to material online. Students are always encouraged to come back for follow-up consultations after their first drafts, and for consultation on their second drafts or just to call the writing centre to ask further questions for the sake of clarity. This demonstrates the developmental approach adopted by writing centre consultants.

3.4.7   Writing centre funding and staff at CPUT

Apart from the researcher, there are two other academic literacy lecturers based at the Cape Town campus (District Six campus), whereas administrative support for the writing centre is provided by two administrative support staff. This writing centre has four consultants who are employed part-time and are paid on an hourly basis, and work up to a maximum of 40 hours per month, beginning in March and ending in November of an academic year. These consultants are mainly postgraduate students (honours, master's and doctoral) from the local traditional universities (UWC, UCT and SU). There are many challenges associated with this category of support. The student cohorts from whom these consultants come are in transition, and it is sometimes difficult to get a sizeable number of recruits to fill all the available vacant positions. This situation is also not helped by the fact that the writing centre is unable to grow its own timber, because CPUT does not offer pure languages and linguistics courses as traditional universities do, but offers communications courses, which are not equivalent to what languages and linguistics modules are offering. The absence of employment benefits for consultants also exacerbates the situation.

As a result of these challenges, the staff of the writing centre have constantly had to come up with creative and innovative ways to manage their work environment. However, despite these efforts, the situation is unsustainable and will require the university management to intervene to prevent the total collapse of the programme in the near future.

At the helm of all the writing centres at CPUT is the HoD of the Student Learning Unit, who is in charge of the management of the writing centre. At the Tygerberg campus, there is no administrative assistance for the writing centre, and the academic literacy lecturers undertake the administrative obligations themselves in addition to their official teaching responsibilities.

Funding for the writing centre is always a contentious issue in higher education. However, due to the altered nature of the higher education landscape, following the period of the mergers and incorporations of higher education institutions, new thinking seems to be emerging that recognises the important role played by the writing centres. The CPUT writing centre, which is part of the Fundani CHED, is largely sponsored by the Abe Bailey Trust Fund, through the work study programme. For many years under the former Peninsula Technikon, the writing centre was sponsored by the Desmond Tutu Trust Fund.

The salaries of the laboratory assistants, consultants and one administrative assistant come from the Abe Baily Trust Fund and the work-study programme of the university. There are also consultants or learning facilitators for academic literacy in Mathematics and Chemistry, paid by the work-study programme. The maintenance of computers, printers and other facilities is done by the ITS department, and other relevant sections. The academic literacy lecturers that are instrumental in driving teaching and learning, training workshops, and research and consultation services are employed directly by the institution.

3.5 CONCLUSION

The purpose of this chapter was to contextualise this research study; in particular, to trace the development of university writing centres through international, national and institutional contexts. It has confirmed, through literature review, that the concept of the writing centre is primarily a US invention by tracing its developments as a writing laboratory and writing clinic, to the emergence of the current form of writing centres. It has, however, also become evident that, as the concept was imported and transported through various continents and higher education institutions, it has acquired new forms that are informed by specific challenges and contexts.

Notwithstanding these developments, it has also become evident that the conception of a writing centre as a 'fix-it' shop, associated with its earlier forms, in particular, the writing laboratory, will continue to linger and to taint the work of a current writing centre for some time into the future.

However, there is little doubt that, despite this characterisation, the writing centre still remains an invaluable tool for epistemological access for students, especially when it has become evident that the challenges posed by the schooling system, the high level of drop-out rates, and low throughput, including the other varied challenges students encounter at higher education institutions, will not disappear any time soon. As the writing centre has evolved, and shifted from a focus on text, to the writer and to the social context, it now makes important contributions to students' access, academic development and institutional success.

The next chapter focuses on the research methodology that underpins this study.

CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides an overview of the research methodology and design that guided this study, in particular, the data collection and analysis methods and techniques that were used. The research design, the selection of participants, data collection and data analysis form the focal points of the discussion that follows. In this research study, I aimed to evaluate the role of a writing centre in enhancing the quality of students' academic writing at a university of technology, using CPUT as a locus for the study.

Both the research methodology and the design are discussed at length in the sections that follow. In the immediate section following this introduction, I focus on the research questions that were key to this study. According to Plowright (2011:8), in an integrated methodologies research approach, the start of the process is the main research question. Brannen (2005:11) explains that in many research projects, researchers are likely to ask more than one research question. In this chapter, the main research question is outlined, followed by subsidiary research questions.

4.2 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Brannen (2005:8) argues that the framing of the research question is, in part, shaped by epistemological assumptions, but is also influenced by the need to find a theory that 'fits' a specific set of cases or contexts. Thus, the framing of the research questions may be underpinned by both philosophical and pragmatic issues and some researchers set out to do mixed methods research for both pragmatic and philosophical reasons. Plowright (2011:8) maintains that research questions are formulated in different contexts and that these contexts include the professional, organisational, policy, national and theoretical.

In this study, the context in which the research questions were formulated was influenced by, among others, epistemological, pragmatic, theoretical and professional factors relating to the evaluation of the role of a writing centre in enhancing the quality of students' academic

writing at a university of technology, using CPUT as a site for the study. The questions that underpinned this research study are outlined below.

4.2.1   Main research question

The main research question was formulated as follows:

To what extent are the services offered by a writing centre effective in enhancing the quality of students' academic writing at a university of technology, in particular, at CPUT?

In order to understand the nature and full extent of the research problem, it became necessary to break down the main question into sub-questions, to make the research study more manageable and focused.

4.2.2   Subsidiary research questions

The following sub-questions were invaluable in carrying out this research:

- How does a writing centre support the development of academic writing at a university of technology, in particular, at CPUT?

- To what extent is the CPUT Writing Centre a valuable resource for the development of students' academic writing?

- What are the students' perceptions of the quality of services offered by the CPUT Writing Centre?

- How can the CPUT Writing Centre services be improved to enhance students' academic writing?

Creswell (2014:184) writes that the first signpost in a research study is the purpose statement, which establishes the central intent of the study. In this research study, the central intent is encapsulated in the aims and objectives that are set out below.

4.3   RESEARCH AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The main aim of this inquiry was to evaluate the role of a writing centre in enhancing the quality of students' academic writing at a university of technology. This is in line with what

Mouton (1996:101) argues, namely that the research purpose gives a broad indication of what the researcher wishes to achieve in her research.

The research aim can be distinguished in a number of objectives which were to:

- Investigate the various ways in which a writing centre supports students' academic writing at a university of technology.

- Evaluate or assess a writing centre's contribution to the development and enhancement of the quality of students' academic writing at a university of technology.

- Determine the perceptions and attitudes of students about the writing centre.

- Explore how strategic interventions can be put in place to enhance the quality and effectiveness of services offered by a writing centre.

In order to meet these research aim and objectives, a research plan or design was necessary. This is executed through the theoretical lens or paradigm that informed this study, and which is discussed in the next section.

4.4   RESEARCH PARADIGM AND APPROACH

In this section, I focus on three related issues: the research paradigm, pragmatism and mixed methods research before turning my attention to the discussion of programme evaluation as a research design.

4.4.1   Research paradigm

There are a number of definitions in literature for what is meant by a research paradigm. Sandelowski (2000:247), while acknowledging the many descriptions used by scholars from both the natural and the social sciences, explains paradigms of inquiry as world views that signal a unique or distinctive ontological view of reality, the epistemological view of knowing and the relationship between the knower and the to be known, a methodological view of the mode or manner of the inquiry, and an axiological view of what is valuable or important. She further explains that paradigms of inquiry are best understood as viewing positions, ways and places from which to see.

Plowright (2011:176) broadly concurs by arguing that there are two underlying philosophical concerns that give direction to educational and social research, namely ontology and epistemology. With regard to the former, he explains that ontology is the philosophical investigation of the nature, constitution and the structure of reality, and that it is about the inescapable or unavoidable and ultimate reality that all human beings are part of. Further, Plowright (2011:176) explains epistemology as the theory of knowledge that seeks to provide human beings with beliefs about the true nature of reality; it is also about how knowledge originates.

Within the context of these two philosophical stances, Plowright (2011:177) proceeds to define a paradigm as a system of ideas or theoretical principles that determine, maintain and reinforce people's way of thinking about an issue or topic. He explains that it is a set of basic beliefs that are accepted on faith and without question, but with no way of establishing or determining their truthfulness. Guba and Lincoln (1998: 200) describe a paradigm quite similarly to Plowright (2011) above.

Morgan (2007:49) explains a paradigm somewhat differently, and posits that, within science studies, a paradigm is accepted to mean a consensual set of beliefs and practices that guides a field. Niglas (1992:2) explains that some social and educational researchers imported the natural science view of a paradigm to the context and field of educational research. Hence, a paradigm, according to Feilzer (2010:7), quoting Kuhn (1962:23), could be regarded as an organising structure, a deeper philosophical position relating to the nature of social phenomena and social structures.

Following on references above to paradigmatic differences between the natural and the social sciences, Plowright (2011:177) explains that traditionally, there are two paradigms that inform, influence, or underpin research, and which are often seen as polar opposites, or as characteristically opposed to one another. He explains that on the one end is found the scientific, naturalist tradition (also known as positivism, and favoured by quantitative purists). Quantitative purists advocate clear and distinct assumptions or views associated with a positivist philosophy.

This philosophy, according to Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004:14), holds that social observations should be treated as entities (or things with unique existence) in the same way that physical scientists treat physical phenomena or facts. They contend that the observer exists separately from the entities or things that are the focus or subject of observation.

Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004:14) further explain that quantitative purists believe that social science is objective; that is, time- and context-free generalisations are necessary or desirable, and possible, and that real or actual causes of social scientific results or outcomes can be determined reliably and validly. According to this school of thought, it is argued that educational researchers should eliminate or do away with their biases, remain emotionally detached, impartial and uninvolved with the subject of the study, and test or empirically justify (based on observation and experiment, and not on theory) their stated hypothesis.

On the other hand, Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004:14) argue, qualitative purists (constructivists and interpretivists) reject what they call positivism. The qualitative purists believe in the superiority of constructivism, idealism, relativism, humanism, hermeneutics, and sometimes, postmodernism. The purists believe that multiple-constructed realities abound, and that time- and context-free generalisations are neither necessary nor desirable, or possible. They further maintain that it is impossible to differentiate cause and effect fully, that logic flows from the specific to the general (e.g. explanations are generated inductively from the data), and that the knower and the known cannot be separated because the subjective knower is the only source of reality.

Apart from the differences outlined above, there are at least three main areas of disagreement between the two philosophical positions. Niglas (1993:3) explains some of these differences between quantitative realist and interpretive idealist perspectives, and states that the first area of disagreement relates to the relationship of the investigator to what is being investigated. The second concerns the relationship between facts and values, and the third deals with the goals of social and educational inquiry. According to Niglas (1993:3), the fundamental differences in these three areas determine the variety of roles or procedures in the inquiry process. Feilzer (2010: 6), who also identified areas of disagreement between the two stances, states that the positivist notion or view of singular reality, the one and only truth that is out there, waiting to be discovered by an objective and a value-free inquiry, informs or underpins quantitative research methods. On the other hand, constructivism is derived from the idea that there is no such thing as a single objective reality, and that "subjective inquiry is the only kind possible to do", and for that reason, Feilzer (2010:6) maintains, constructivists favour qualitative methods.

The next section traces the origins and development of pragmatism as an alternative to these two main dominant paradigms.

4.4.2   Pragmatism as a theoretical lens or research paradigm

According to Leech and Onwuegbuzie (2007:266), in the 1960s mixed methods research became popular in many disciplines, including education. The main reason for this is explained by Feilzer (2010:7) who maintains that the advocates or proponents of mixed methods research were looking for an integration or combination of quantitative and qualitative research strategies, in other words, an approach that does not fit comfortably within one or the other world view described above.

Trahan and Stewart (2013:60) explain that mixed methods research represents an attempt to move beyond the ideological clashes between quantitative and qualitative purists, and hence focuses instead on the pragmatic approach. According to these authors, the pragmatic rule posits that the value of any given research methodology is based solely on its empirical and practical efficacy. Morgan (2007:65) states that the pragmatic approach was born as an alternative to the dominant paradigms and sought to resolve irregularities or anomalies in the existing systems. He further explains that pragmatism is an approach most commonly associated with mixed methods research, but is clearly not the only one that presents an alternative or different world view to those of positivism or post-positivism and constructivism. Trahan and Stewart (2013:60) maintain that under this framework, researchers should choose research methods that offer the best opportunities for answering the research questions(s) under investigation. This view concurs with that of Morgan (2007:65) who posits that pragmatism focuses on the problem to be researched, and the consequences of the research.

Feilzer (2010:8) explains that when pragmatism is considered as an alternative paradigm, it side-steps the contentious or controversial issues of truth and reality, and accepts, philosophically, that there are singular and multiple realities that are open to empirical inquiry, and hence orients itself towards solving practical problems in the 'real world'.

Morgan (2007:67) highlights another feature of the pragmatic approach, which, he believes, emphasises shared meanings and joint action. By way of an example, Morgan (2007:67) asks to what extent are two people (or two research fields) satisfied that they understand each other, and to what extent can they demonstrate the success of that shared meaning and understanding by working together on common projects. He explains that issues of language

and meaning are essential to pragmatism, along with an emphasis on the actual interactions that humans use to negotiate these issues. According to Morgan (2007:67), it would be foolhardy to claim that every person on earth could eventually arrive at a perfect understanding of every other person on earth, but for pragmatism, the key issues are, firstly, how much shared understanding can be accomplished, and secondly, what kinds of shared lines of behaviour are possible from those mutual understandings.

Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004:16-17) advance some of the advantages of pragmatism and maintain that epistemological and methodological pluralism should be promoted in educational research so that researchers can avail themselves of a variety of epistemological and methodological possibilities in order to conduct more effective research. They contend that the current research world is becoming increasingly inter-disciplinary, complex, and dynamic; therefore, many researchers need to complement one method with another, and all researchers need a solid understanding of multiple methods used by other scholars to facilitate communication, to promote collaboration, and to provide superior research. They argue further that taking a pragmatic or pluralist position will help improve communication among researchers from different paradigms as they attempt to advance knowledge.

Feilzer (2010:13-14) outlines another advantage of pragmatism, and states that pragmatism does not require a particular method or methods mix, nor excludes others, because it does not expect to find unvarying causal links or truths but aims to interrogate a particular question, theory, or phenomenon with the most appropriate method. That is why pragmatism is the approach most commonly associated with mixed methods research, even though it is clearly not the only one (Feilzer, 2010:7). In the next section I consider mixed methods research.

4.4.3   Mixed methods as a research approach

Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004:17) define mixed methods research as the kind of research where the researcher combines quantitative and qualitative research techniques, methods, approaches, concepts or language into a single study. Along the same lines, Caruth (2013:113) defines mixed methods research as a method using both quantitative and qualitative designs in the same research study, in response to the observed limitations of quantitative and qualitative designs.

Trahan and Stewart (2013:60) agree that mixed methods research represents an attempt to move beyond the ideological clashes between qualitative and quantitative purists, and focuses

instead on the pragmatic value of each approach. They maintain that mixed methods research is based on the pragmatic rule arguing that the value of any given research methodology is based solely on its empirical and practical efficacy.

Brannen (2005:4) explains that mixed methods research also means working with different types of data, and may also involve different investigators - sometimes even different research teams working in different research programmes. She further explains that a mixed methods study may be a mix of qualitative and quantitative methods, or a mix of quantitative methods, or a mix of qualitative methods.

According to Heyvaert, Maes and Onghena (2011:2), a mixed methods research study can be applied at the primary empirical study level, as well as at synthesis level. They explain that in a primary level mixed methods study, a researcher collects qualitative and quantitative data directly from the research participants, for example, through interviews, observations, and questionnaires, and combines these diverse data in a single study. On the other hand, a synthesis level mixed methods study, according to Heyvaert et al. (2011:2), could be a systematic review that applies the principles of mixed methods research, where the data to be included are extracted from published qualitative, quantitative, and mixed primary level articles.

Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004:17) further theorise that the logic of inquiry for mixed methods research includes the use of induction (or discovery of patterns), deduction (testing of theories and hypothesis), and abduction (uncovering and relying on the best of a set of explanations for understanding the researcher's results).

In this study, a mixed methods approach was adopted which combined the use of a questionnaire (generating quantitative data) with a content analysis (of qualitative data), in a concurrent research study that sought to evaluate a role of a writing centre in students' academic writing at a university of technology.

This study essentially adopted a mixed methods approach in accordance with six characteristics identified by Creswell (2003: 7). These characteristics are:

- the collection of both qualitative and quantitative data, involving open and closed-ended questions;

- the analysis of both qualitative and quantitative data;

- the use of persuasive and rigorous procedures for gathering qualitative and quantitative data;

- the integration of the two data sources;

- the use of a specific mixed methods design that involves a concurrent or sequential integration of data; and

- having a specific philosophical foundation.

To reiterate: this study is underpinned by pragmatism as a philosophical foundation, and consistent with this theoretical lens, the study used a mixed methods approach and programme evaluation as a research design. Support for this approach is further explained by Brent and Kraska (2010:418), who maintain that mixing qualitative and quantitative methods requires a more inclusive and compatible orientation that abandons traditional beliefs. They suggest that, while sensitive to differences, this approach assumes that mixing methodologies will ultimately produce a more complete knowledge than any single method might. They further explain that, for this reason, mixed methods research has often been associated with the philosophy of pragmatism and that it views both methodological goals as worth pursuing when combined, as each will ultimately advance the other (Brent & Kraska, 2010:418).

4.5   RESEARCH DESIGN

Mouton (1996:107-108) explains research design as akin to a route planner, a set of guidelines and instructions on how to reach a goal that one has set, the building plans and blueprints, setting out what needs to be done, specifying the materials and specifications according to which they are to be used, and the critical deadlines against which particular stages must be completed. He maintains that the rationale for a research design is to plan and structure a research project in such a way that the validity of the research findings is maximised through either minimising or, where possible, eliminating error.

In explaining research design within the context of mixed methods research, De Lisle (2011: 92-93) states that a research design addresses different aspects of the research procedure, from philosophical assumptions to data analysis. She posits that a design might be considered mixed if it employs qualitative and quantitative approaches at any stage, including the

development of research questions, sampling strategies, data collection approaches, data analysis methods, or conclusions.

Creswell (2014:43-44), agrees that mixed methods research designs involve a combination or integration of qualitative and quantitative research and data in a single research study.

Whereas this research study satisfies many of the characteristics of a mixed methods design highlighted above, for conceptual clarity I distinguish between a mixed methods approach and programme evaluation as my research design, as my study was strongly informed by programme theory evaluation.

Rogers, Patterson and Graham (2007:7) explain that programme theory evaluation is known by many different names, is created in many different ways, and is used for different purposes. Programme theory evaluation is also known as outcomes hierarchies, theory-of-action, programme theory, logic models, theory-based evaluation, theory-oriented, theory-anchored, theory-of-change, and intervention theory. However, for the purposes of this study, programme theory evaluation and programme evaluation were used. The two are separate but interrelated.

Brousselle and Champagne (2011:69), quoting Weiss (1998), define programme theory evaluation as "the mechanisms that mediate between the delivery (and receipt) of the programme and the emergence of the outcomes of interest". Furthermore, Coryn, Noakes, Westine and Schröter (2011:201), explain programme theory-driven evaluation, quoting Coryn, Noakes, Westine and Schröter (2011:201), as conceptually and operationally premised on "an explicit theory or model of how the programme causes the intended or observed outcomes and an evaluation that is at least partly guided by this model".

While Frye and Hemmer (2012:288) explain that a programme may be as small as an individual class session, a course, or clerkship, or it may be as large as the whole of an educational programme. They claim that, at the most fundamental level, evaluation involves making a value judgement about the information that one has at his or her disposal. As a result, they argue, educational programme evaluation uses information to decide about the value or worth of an educational programme. When formally defined, educational programme evaluation refers to a "systematic collection and analysis of information related to the design, implementation, and outcomes of a programme, for the purpose of monitoring and improving the quality and effectiveness of the programme" (Frye & Hemmer, 2012:288).

Frye and Hemmer (2012:290) assert that educational programme evaluation was not developed with education theories in mind; rather, the theories that informed thinking about science and knowledge in general underpinned the development of evaluation programmes. While Brousselle and Champagne (2011:71) concur, they explain further that programme theory in evaluation has received a great deal of attention over the past 40 years based on the realisation that black-box evaluations were insufficient and that better knowledge of the theory underlying the programme was necessary to produce generalisable findings. They argue that the foundational work of Schuman (1967) and Weiss (1972) influenced the field with the observation that failure to find programme effects could, when not attributable to faulty evaluation design, be due either to the wrong theory or to inadequate implementation. As a result, Brousselle and Champagne (2011:71), identified three trends or types of programme theories they consider to be important: logic modelling, evaluability assessment, and programme theory evaluation. They maintain that while each theory has different aims, they were all developed from the initial recognition of the need to work on programme theory.

In this study, I adopted programme theory evaluation as a theory that underpinned the evaluation of the effectiveness of the services offered by the writing centre in enhancing the students' academic writing at a university of technology. The educational programme chosen for this purpose was the Writing Centre at CPUT.

Following from the definition and the distinction drawn above between programme theory and programme evaluation, I next elaborate on programme theory evaluation from the relevant literature and how it was employed in this study. Brousselle and Champagne (2011:71), citing Weiss (2000), state that programme theory evaluation helps "to specify not only the what of programme outcomes but also the how, and the why". Rogers (2008:30) explains that programme theory evaluation refers to a number of ways of developing a causal model that connects programme inputs and activities to a chain of intended or observed outcomes, and then using this model to guide the evaluation. Weiss (1997:73) describes programme theory evaluation as a tool that deals with the mechanisms that intervene between the delivery and the distribution of the services of a programme, and the realisation of the results and/or outcomes of interest. She emphasises that programme theory evaluation focuses on participants' responses to programme services. Weiss (1997:73) argues that "the mechanisms of change are not the programme activities per se, but the responses that the activities generate".

Rogers et al. (2000:5) describe programme theory evaluation as having two essential components. The first component, they maintain, is conceptual, and the second component is empirical. They posit that programme theory evaluation consists of an explicit theory or model of how the programme causes, or results in the intended or observed outcomes, and an evaluation that is, at least, guided by this model.

Similarly, Weiss (1997:71-72) argues that programme evaluation is usually adopted by the researcher for two reasons: the first is usually influenced by the position of the researcher, who could also be a direct participant in the programme, in various capacities, whether as a programme developer, or programme designer, who is involved in efforts, or processes of programme development to address a specific problem or challenge. She further maintains that, where a programme is not an initiative of an individual, but that of an academic institution, or centre, aimed at the development of an intervention, evaluation becomes a critical component of the development of the theory, and changes or alterations in the programme.

The second reason, according to Weiss (1997:72), is where there is an already developed theory or programme which allows the evaluator/researcher to follow the detailed theoretical assumptions as foundation for the creation or evaluation of the programme.

The theory that informed this study in the context of programme theory evaluation is system theory. I decided on system theory out of many other potential theories, such as, for instance, reductionism or complexity theory. The system theory, according to Frye and Hemmer (2011:290) recognises and appreciates that an outcome is not explained simply by component parts, but that the relationships between and among those parts and their environment (context) are important. They further maintain that this theory also acknowledges the organisation of the parts, and that the relationships among those parts and the environment are not static but dynamic and changing. In their view, an educational programme is a social system composed of component parts, with interactions and interrelations among the component parts, all existing within, and interacting with, the programme's environment. Therefore, to understand an educational programme's system would require an evaluation approach consistent with system theory (Frye & Hemmer, 2011: 290).

The importance of the explanation of the system theory by Frye and Hemmer (2011) cannot be over-emphasised. This is especially the case for the present study. As indicated above, the educational programme that was under review is the Writing Centre at CPUT, and within the

higher education environment in South Africa. The object of the evaluation was to answer the research question for this study: To what extent are the services offered by the Writing Centre effective in enhancing the quality of students' academic writing at a university of technology, in particular, at CPUT? Related to this main research question were four sub-questions designed to assist in the resolution of the research problem.

As indicated earlier, the study is essentially about student academic writing in higher education, in particular, at the universities of technology. This research study was undertaken within an educational context where research into student writing in higher education is categorised into three main perspectives or models: study skills, academic socialisation, and academic literacies. The academic literacies perspective, which I prefer, researcher, sees literacies as social practices, and views student writing and learning as issues at the level of epistemology and identities rather than skill or socialisation (Lea & Street, 1998:157-158). These are some of the factors that influenced me in opting for a system theory within programme theory evaluation.

In line with the system theory chosen by for this study, I opted for a logic model. This choice was influenced mainly by the literature reviewed and the desire to find a model that is compatible with, among others, the research study, system theory within programme theory evaluation, and programme evaluation. Frye and Hemmer (2012:292) make the point that "education evaluation" is best understood as a family of approaches to evaluating educational programmes. They further posit that the influence of the system theory in the logic model approach to evaluation can be seen in its careful attention to the relationships between programme components and the components' relationships to the programme's context. They further argue that, with careful attention to building feedback loops and to the possibility of circular interactions between programme elements, the logic model can offer researchers and educators an evaluation structure that incorporates system theory applications into thinking about educational programmes (Frye & Hemmer, 2012:294).

According to Frye and Hemmer (2012:294), the logic model works best when researchers and educators clearly understand their programme as a dynamic system and plan to document both intended and unintended outcomes. Frye and Hemmer (2012:294) maintain that the logic model, like its related theory, has four basic components: inputs comprising all relevant resources (both material and intellectual, available to an educational programme); activities (strategies, innovations or changes planned for the educational programme); outputs

(indicators that one of the programme's activities or parts of an activity is underway or completed and that something-a 'product'-happened; and outcomes (which define the short-term, medium-term, and longer range changes intended as a result of the programmes' activities).

I re-emphasise that the programme that was under review in this study, is a programme that has been in existence for many years. Therefore, some of the elements identified by Frye and Hemmer (2012) might not be applicable in this study. My interest was in the descriptive data about the programme through the research measures of a survey and content analysis for the outcome that is critical to the research question on whether the services offered by a writing centre are effective in enhancing the quality of students' academic writing at a university of technology, in particular, at CPUT.

As indicated earlier, I used programme theory evaluation as a research design in this study, within the context of a mixed methods research approach. Frye and Hemmer (2012:288) posit that researchers and educators engaged in examining an existing educational programme will find that understanding theoretical principles related to common evaluation models will help them be more creative and effective evaluators. Coryn et al. (2011:204) argue that because theory-driven evaluation has no obvious ideological basis, which numerous other forms of evaluation(s) clearly do, and since a wide variety of research practitioners claim to be theory-driven in some capacity, some principles have been established and revised until a reasonable degree of consensus was achieved regarding their organisation and content. They explain that these principles are neither exhaustive nor mutually exclusive, but they approximate the most salient features of theory-driven evaluation, and also provide a limited degree of both conceptual and operational clarity. Coryn et al. (2011:204) maintain that these core principles and sub-principles of theory-driven evaluation can be characterised as consisting of five core elements, or principles: (a) theory formulation; (b) theory-guided question formulation; (c) theory-guided evaluation design, planning and execution; (d) theory-guided construct measurement, and (e) causal explanation, with an emphasis on last-named.

The educational intervention programme that formed part of this study was the Writing Centre at CPUT, which also constituted the locus of the study. The educational context that informed the study is that of academic literacy at a university of technology, in particular, at CPUT. The Writing Centre at CPUT does not offer a new educational programme that required planning and implementation. It has been in existence for many years but its

operation and scope are limited, as it does not have physical and operational presence in all campuses at CPUT. This distinction is essential in emphasising the nature and scope of the present research study, and the relevance of the core principles outlined above. This point is supported by Coryn et al. (2011:204) who emphasise that, at a purely conceptual level, core principles (a), (b), (c) and (d) mentioned above can be seen as evaluation processes, whereas core principle (e) can be seen as an evaluation outcome.

Coryn et al. (2011:203) argue that, at the core, theory-based evaluation has two vital components: the first is conceptual, and the second is empirical. Frye and Hemmer (2012:289) concur, and note that information necessary for programme evaluation is typically gathered through measurement processes. They define assessments as measurements (i.e. assessments=essay), or consider measurements to refer to strategies chosen to gather information to make a judgement. Frye and Hemmer (2012:289) further argue that choices of specific measurement tools, strategies, or assessments for programme evaluation processes are guided by many factors, including the desired understanding of the programme's successes or shortcomings. They explain that evaluation is about reviewing, analysing and judging the importance or value of the information gathered by all these assessments.

In this study, data collection techniques involved a survey of student participants at CPUT, as discussed above. The second component of data collection was comprised of content analysis of 20 student essay scripts chosen from varying levels of student academic study, and involved a before-to-after Writing Centre consultation analysis.

The context of this study was the Cape Peninsula University of Technology. I am an academic literacy lecturer based at the Writing Centre at CPUT. The research study occurred in the context of academic literacy in a multilingual educational environment. The research participants were students at CPUT registered for various academic programmes, and with varying levels of academic performance, and within a multilingual context, and varying socio‑economic backgrounds.

The purpose of the study was to evaluate the role of a writing centre in enhancing the quality of students' academic writing at a university of technology. Towards this end, the study employed a survey and content analysis of students' written scripts. The advantage of using a questionnaire as an instrument for data collection is outlined by Harris and Brown (2010:2), who observe that questionnaires are usually viewed as a more objective tool that can produce generalisable results because of large sample sizes.

Similarly, and in as far as content analysis is concerned, Murray-Thomas (2003:57, 59) describes content analysis as a process that entails searching through one or more communications to answer questions that the researcher brings to the research study. He states that content analysis is the lone technique suitable for gathering information about what communications contain, and hence, it is the only appropriate method of answering a number of research questions.

Graneheim and Lundman (2004:106) argue that a basic issue when performing qualitative content analysis is to decide whether the analysis focuses on manifest or latent content. They hold that the analysis of what the text says describes the visible and obvious components, referred to as manifest content, while an analysis of what the text talks about deals with relationship aspect, and involves an interpretation of the underlying meaning of the text, referred to as latent content.

In this study, while both manifest and latent content were implicated, a great deal of attention focused, for content analysis, on the manifest content of student essay scripts. For this purpose, I developed a logic model to serve as a tool that informed this research study. This is discussed in more detail in sections that follow. For conceptual clarity and summative purposes, I restate the clarification of these relevant concepts below; in particular, the relationship between programme evaluation and the logic model.

Having chosen a theory that informed programme evaluation in this study, I had to settle on a model that was consistent with the chosen theory. Thus, a logic model was chosen as an approach to programme evaluation. In this study, a writing centre's programme was drawn, listing the intended results in the form of outputs, outcomes and impact. Rogers (2008:33) explains that many logic models used in programme theory evaluation show a single, linear, causal path, often involving some variation in five categories, which are inputs, processes, outputs, outcomes and impact.

Frye and Hemmer (2012: 294) concur and state that even though the logic model is often used during programme planning instead of solely as an evaluation approach, the logic model can be strongly linear in its approach to educational planning and evaluation. However, they add that the logic model can offer researchers an evaluation structure that incorporates system theory applications into thinking about educational programmes, and that the logic model works best when the researcher clearly understands his or her programme as a dynamic system and documents both intended and unintended outcomes.

Some of the issues are merely highlighted here; a detailed analysis of data falls beyond the scope of this chapter and is dealt with in Chapter 5. The next section deals with methods of data collection and data analysis.

4.6   METHODS OF DATA COLLECTION AND DATA ANALYSIS

This section focuses on three aspects: sampling, data collection and data analysis.

4.6.1   Sampling

Elo, et al. (2014:4) argue that, as far as a sampling strategy is concerned, it is important for the researcher to ask some basic questions, such as: What is the best sampling method for my study? Who are the best informants for my study? What criteria should be used for selecting participants? Is my sample appropriate? Are my data well saturated? In addition to these questions, the authors also emphasise the importance of thoroughness as a criterion of validity and trustworthiness. In this regard, Elo et al. (2014:4) emphasise that validity and trustworthiness refer to the adequacy of data, and depend on sound sampling.

In this study, participants were registered students at CPUT. These students were chosen on the basis that they were registered for various Diploma and B-Tech qualifications; they were in different levels of their studies, ranging from first-, second-, third- to fourth- (B-Tech) year levels of academic study, and across faculties and academic programmes.

The other essential criterion for qualification for participants was that these students must have visited the Writing Centre on one of the three main campuses where the Writing Centre is operational, and must have received some form of academic support and assistance. Their knowledge of and exposure to the services offered by the Writing Centre was essential. Further, participants were also expected to have come from a variety of socio-economic backgrounds, and also fall within a range where English, as a medium of instruction, was either also their home language, or their first, second, or third language. This was especially important as English is the medium of instruction at CPUT.

The criteria outlined above, lend themselves to purposeful sampling. Greene and Henry (2010:8) explain that qualitative sampling is usually purposeful, aiming for information richness within specified criteria. Elo et al. (2014:4) concur, and further explain that the most commonly used method in content analysis studies is purposeful sampling. They argue that

purposeful sampling is suitable for qualitative studies where the researcher is interested in research participants who have the best knowledge of the research topic.

Heyvaert et al. (2011:248) explain that one of the most important features distinguishing what is commonly referred to as qualitative from quantitative inquiry is the kind of sampling used. They maintain that while qualitative research typically involves purposeful sampling to enhance the understanding of the information-rich case, quantitative research ideally involves probability sampling to permit statistical inferences to be made.

In this study, a survey producing quantitative data and a qualitative content analysis were employed for the empirical part of the research study. For the qualitative component of the study, 20 student academic essays were selected from students who had utilised the services of the Writing Centre, based on the before- and -after Writing Centre consultations for comparable content analysis. The distribution of the essays ranged from first-year to B-Tech (fourth-year) levels of academic study. The questionnaire component of the study involved a sample of 100 student participants chosen on the basis of the criteria outlined above.

4.6.2   Position of the researcher

Creswell (2014:132) highlights some of the critical issues relating to the position of the researcher, participants, and the research study. He asserts that since research involves the collection of data from people, about people, it is necessary to address the relevant ethical issues.

Williman (2009:38) underscores the importance of the researcher's own academic, professional and personal experiences as valuable assets in his or her own research. He posits that the basis of the researcher's knowledge about the subject, and the understanding thereof, may direct the researcher to problem areas that might be researchable. He further maintains that the experience and position of the researcher, the examination of issues relating to, among others, systemic, organisational and performance, and literature review, might be explored via a number of questions which might highlight the nature of the problem, or reveal different aspects of it.

I am an academic staff member and academic literacy lecturer at CPUT. I am employed Fundani CHED. As the researcher, I was therefore closely involved with the research context.

According to Creswell (2014:256), the position of the researcher, particularly in qualitative research where the researcher is seen as the primary data collection instrument, necessitates the identification of personal values, assumptions and biases at the outset of the study. He maintains that the investigator's contribution to the research setting can be useful and positive rather than detrimental.

In carrying out this research study, I ensured that I remained aware of this sensitive role as researcher, since the study did not only involve a qualitative component, but also a quantitative component, that equally demanded strict adherence to ethical behaviour and conduct.

The students, as research participants, were fully informed of my position, interest and involvement in this study. They were further advised of their right not to participate in the study if they chose, or felt the need not to do so. In an effort to make the process more transparent, I informed the research participants that my only interest was to establish their views, in a voluntary manner, and that they were free to withdraw at any time, should they choose to do so. They were also assured of the confidentiality of the process.

Creswell (2014: 256) explains that the ethical questions are apparent today in such issues as personal disclosure, authenticity, and credibility of the research report, the role of the researcher in cross-cultural contexts, and issues of personal privacy in cases of internet data collection.

Prior to carrying out this research study, I had to obtain permission and ethical clearance from Stellenbosch University. Institutional permission was also obtained from CPUT. Documents verifying the ethical clearance from Stellenbosch University (Addendum C) and the permission obtained from CPUT (Addendum D), as well as a copy of the consent form (Addendum A), have been included as part of this study.

At all times, the identity and personal details of the participants were secured. In case of questionnaires, students were assured, and in fact encouraged, not to supply any confidential personal information that may unwittingly or otherwise result in the disclosure of their personal information and/or identity. I strived to remain neutral and objective throughout the process of data collection. Collected data were stored in sealed envelopes, under lock and key, until collected by the researcher in person, and transported to where the researcher is based.

4.6.3   Unit of analysis

The unit of analysis for the study was a sample of students registered at CPUT for various Diploma and B-Tech programmes. The data were collected from 25 first-year students, 25 second-year students, 25 third-year, and 25 B-Tech (fourth-year) students. These students were selected based on their linguistic and cultural backgrounds, underpinned by their frequent use of the services offered by the Writing Centre at CPUT. The corpus for content analysis was similarly collected from five first-year students, five second-year students, five third-year and five B-Tech (fourth-year) students whose academic essays were purposively selected, with their consent, for the study.

4.6.4   Data collection instruments

Williman (2009:37), defines research as a systematic investigation of a question or resolution of a problem based on critical analysis of relevant evidence. He explains that it is not just a matter of collecting facts or shuffling them around, but requires the researcher to define the nature of what he or she wishes to achieve, or study, and how best to achieve it.

In this study, data collection techniques were comprised of, firstly, a survey of CPUT students who frequented and utilised the services offered by the Writing Centre in the three campuses where the Writing Centre operates. These campuses were Bellville, Cape Town and Tygerberg. These student participants were selected on the basis that they had utilised the services offered by the Writing Centre either of their own volition, or as a result of some referral and/or compulsion from their lecturers. The questions that the students had to respond to as part of the questionnaire could only be satisfactorily answered by students who had personally experienced the assistance offered by the Writing Centre, and would thus be able to relate their experiences to what was being asked.

Research participants were drawn from first-year students to B-Tech level of study, with the aim of eliciting the varying levels of student experience in order for the study to be able to benefit from a fuller, balanced, varied, and complete picture of student experience which may shed more light on the research question.

The second component of data collection was comprised of content analysis. For this purpose, the corpus for the study consisted of student academic essays collected as follows:

five from firs-year students, five from second-year students, five from third-year students, and five from B-Tech students. These essays were purposively selected for qualitative content analysis with the full consent of the students concerned.

Creswell (2014:44) describes the advantages particularly applicable to mixed methods data collection research techniques and states that the value of multiple methods resides in the assumption that all methods have biases and weaknesses, and that the collection of both quantitative and qualitative data neutralises the weaknesses of each form of data. He further points out that triangulation of data sources serves as a means for seeking convergence across qualitative and quantitative methods.

According to Creswell (2014:44), through triangulation, one data base, among others, could be used to check the accuracy or validity of the other database, or help to explain the other database, or help to explore different types of questions.

Jick (1979:602), quoting Denzin (1978:291), broadly defines triangulation as the "combination of methodologies in the study of the same phenomenon". He explains that triangulation serves largely as a tool or vehicle for cross-validation when two or more different methods are found to be congruent, and to yield comparable data. Jick (1979:602) argues that triangulation can play other constructive roles such as to stimulate or encourage the creation of inventive methods, and new ways of capturing a problem to balance with conventional data collection methods. He explains the former (inventive methods) and the latter (capturing a problem to balance with conventional data collection methods), through his own research experience or study, which led to the development of what he refers to as an "anxiety thermometer" which unobtrusively measured changes in anxiety levels. He further posits that different viewpoints are likely to produce some elements which do not fit a theory or model, and this may result in old theories being refashioned or re-created, or new theories developed.

However, Brannen (2005:12) argues that triangulation is not the only way to corroborate research results, and that there are other possibilities that can be similarly employed to combine the results from different data analyses. She explains that these include elaboration or expansion, initiation, complementarity and contradiction.

In this study, data were collected with the assistance of three academic literacy lecturers through a survey utilising a self-generated questionnaire. The questionnaire was self-

generated because it was developed by me, the researcher, informed by the research question: To what extent are the services offered by the Writing Centre effective in enhancing the quality of students' academic writing at a university of technology, in particular, at CPUT? The research question was, in turn, identified by me, the researcher, from a research problem that was informed by relevant literature on academic literacy, and my own experience as an academic literacy lecturer at CPUT. The questionnaire was distributed and collected in three sites or CPUT campuses: Bellville, Cape Town and Tygerberg. Essay scripts for content analysis were selected from students in accordance with their levels and years of study, from first-year to B-Tech academic programmes, and they were each limited to five per level of study and totalled 20 in number.

Both of these data collection techniques are further elaborated upon below under separate sub-headings.

4.6.4.1   *Questionnaire*

The first part of this empirical study was comprised of a survey in which 100 questionnaires were distributed to students who visited and made use of the Writing Centre services at CPUT. As indicated, the purpose of the survey was to determine students' perceptions of the role played by the Writing Centre in enhancing students' academic writing at CPUT. Towards this end, the researcher used a questionnaire divided into questions that focused on eliciting information from students on, among others: demographic data; students' perceptions on the usefulness, or otherwise, of the services offered by the Writing Centre; the ease or difficulty participants experience in booking appointments or consultations at the Writing Centre; the suitability or otherwise of the Writing Centre's space in creating and supporting a learning environment; the suitability and functionality of IT resources (computers and software) at the Writing Centre designed for student use; the length of one-on-one student consultations in terms of time; a section inviting students' views on optimal ways that can be used by the Writing Centre to improve students' academic writing; and a final section inviting student participants to provide any additional comments they may have.

The advantages of gathering data by means of a survey and using a questionnaire are, among others, outlined by Purpura (2001:94), who argues that questionnaires allow for a high degree of control over the research study. They can be easily designed to measure multiple constructs simultaneously, and can be administered to large groups of participants. He further maintains that questionnaires lend themselves to statistical analysis, and can reveal systematic

patterns of behaviour in large amounts of data that might otherwise go unnoticed. Equally, the use of questionnaires has its own disadvantages.

Purpura (2001:94) posits that questionnaires are notoriously sensitive to small differences in wording, and they show cross-measurement of content, producing substantial redundancy and correlated error. He explains that they can also produce over- or underestimates of the data. But these disadvantages, according to Purpura (2001:94), could be mitigated through their construct validity being investigated prior to their use, and therefore validation efforts need to be substantially and methodologically rigorous.

As will be evident in the sections that follow, I remained sensitive to these challenges prior to and during the carrying out of the survey in this study. Next, I outline how the questionnaires were distributed and collected in various research sites at CPUT.

Assisted by three academic literacy lecturers, I distributed and collected the questionnaires at three different CPUT campus sites: Bellville, Cape Town and Tygerberg. The distribution at the Tygerberg campus occurred on 16 March 2016, with the assistance of the librarian. The completed questionnaires were returned to me on 6 April 2016. In Cape Town, the questionnaires were distributed on 15 March 2016, and returned to me on 18 March 2016, with the help of the academic literacy lecturers. A major part of the distribution was done by me at the Writing Centre, Bellville campus, where I am based, between February and April 2016. I was assisted by an acting Writing Centre administrative assistant.

At various stages of the distribution and collection of the questionnaires, I was assisted by colleagues in other sections or departments at CPUT. At the Bellville campus, I was assisted by a Biomedical Science lecturer, who volunteered for the distribution of the questionnaires, on 9 and 11 March 2016, and a Chemical Science lecturer who offered to distribute the questionnaires in class, to students who had experienced the services of the Writing Centre. All of these questionnaires were returned to me on 5 April 2016. At the Tygerberg campus, the head of department of Dental Technology volunteered to distribute the questionnaires to second-year, third-year and B-Tech students.

The locus of the study was the Cape Peninsula University of Technology and three sites or campuses were chosen based on the existence of the Writing Centre in those campuses. Since I am based at the Bellville campus, the distance between the Bellville, Cape Town and Tygerberg campuses presented certain challenges.

Eaden, Mayberry and Mayberry (1999:398) argue that, notwithstanding challenges, surveys can be used in the systematic collection of information, and with appropriate attention, a questionnaire can provide reliable information. They explain that questions contained in the questionnaire can be open-ended, multiple-choice, or autonomous. However, regardless of which question type is used, the data collected can be very accurate.

In this study, the questionnaire that was used had a fair distribution of the types of questions referred to above, and consisted of 24 questions. The questionnaire was about six pages long. As indicated above, questions forming the content of the questionnaire were divided into different sections, including sections on the demographic details of the participants, to sections on the evaluation of the Writing Centre as a space, and concluded with a section focused on the improvement of Writing Centre services. This distribution of questions is consistent with guidelines proposed by Eaden et al. (1999:398) who maintain that the first questions of a questionnaire should be simple, objective and interesting, and the overall questionnaire should move from topic to topic in a logical manner, with all the questions on one topic being completed before the respondent is required to move to the next.

The questionnaire I used in this study is attached as Addendum B. In the section that follows, I deal with the second data collection instrument.

4.6.4.2   *Content analysis*

Elo and Kyngäs (2007:108) argue that content analysis as a research method is a systematic and objective means of describing and quantifying phenomena. It is also known as a method of analysing documents. They point out that content analysis allows the researcher to test the theoretical issues to enhance the understanding of the data. They go on to define content analysis as a research method that is used to make replicable and valid inferences from data to their context, with the purpose of providing knowledge, new insights, a representation of facts and a practical guide to action.

In this study, students' essays were collected with the students' consent for content analysis. Essay scripts were purposively selected as follows: five from first-year students, five from second-year students, five from third-year students, and five from B-Tech students. Students' written academic essays were analysed based on pre- and post-Writing Centre interventions. This was done during the research period, and concurrently with the survey. The overriding

aim was to identify progress in academic writing proficiency, and differences in lexico-grammatical skills.

Students were required to submit their original essay drafts to the Writing Centre before they received any form of academic assistance, or help from the Writing Centre. In this way, any errors presented prior to the consultation could easily be identified and classified, as relating to, for example, academic writing proficiency, and differences in lexico-grammatical skills.

The post-Writing Centre intervention analysis of scripts focused on establishing whether there was any discernible improvement in the students' academic writing based on, among others, the students' academic writing proficiency, and in terms of lexico-grammatical skills after they had received academic support.

Carley (1993:77) argues that, within the social sciences, the dominant solution to textual analysis problems has historically been content analysis. She maintains that content analysis enables both qualitative and quantitative analysis of large numbers of texts in terms of which words or concepts are actually used or implied in the texts. She further warns that, although content analysis is extensively used, this approach has met with only limited success for a variety of reasons, including a lack of simple routines, time-consuming data preparation, difficulties in relating textual data to other data, and a lack of a strong theoretical basis.

In this research study, being aware of some of these difficulties, I opted to limit the number of essays subjected to content analysis to 20 scripts, chosen from the first-year level of academic study to the fourth-year (B-Tech) level of academic study. The analysis focused on themes and criteria chosen and adapted by the researcher from Bachman's Model (1990). The criteria and related themes adapted by the researcher are discussed in detail in the next section on data analysis. For this section, I outline the context of the model (Bachman, 1990).

Bacha (2002:15) maintains that writing in the academic community is paramount, and a student cannot be successful without a certain level of academic proficiency. She further argues that recent approaches to academic writing instruction have necessitated testing procedures that deal with both the process and the product of writing. She also emphasises that there are generally two main goals for testing writing which are accepted by both researchers and teachers: the first is to provide feedback to students during the process of acquiring writing proficiency (also referred to as responding or assessing), and the second is

to assign a grade or a score that will indicate the level of the written product (also referred to as evaluating).

In this study, the analysis of student essays was done as a measure of data collection together with a survey as discussed above. Both the survey and content analysis were, therefore, designed to collect data, in a mixed method research study, that would assist in answering the research question. For this purpose, various criteria were utilised, namely those relating to the analysis, the coherence and cohesion, the grammar, and the vocabulary. These criteria were in turn used with specific themes that sought to further guide the analysis by looking for the following: quality and relevance of ideas, academic conventions, coherence and cohesion, whether each body paragraph contained a clear topic sentence, accurate and appropriate application of grammar, range of sentence structures, and appropriate punctuation. These themes enabled me to develop a coding system that allowed the organisation of copious data through the creation of notes and observations. This in turn allowed me not only to begin the process of conceptualisation, but also to review, select, interpret and summarise the information without any form of misrepresentation.

Anderson (2001:13) explains that the Bachman Model, as it is called, has its origins in the applied linguistic thinking by Hymes (1972) and Canale and Swain (1980), and by research, for example by Bachman and Palmer (1996), and by the Canadian Immersion studies (1990), and it has become somewhat modified as it is scrutinised and tested. He further maintains that this model remains very useful as the basis for test construction, and for its account of test-method facets and task characteristics.

According to Motallabzadeh, Baghee and Moghaddem (2011:44), a major achievement of this model over other previous ones seems to be its emphasis on the central role of strategic competence, metacognitive strategies or higher-order processes that explain the interaction of knowledge and affective components of language use. Equally, Alderson (2001:14) points out that one of the criticisms of the Bachman Model (1990), mainly from McNamara (1995), is that the model lacks any sense of the social dimension of language proficiency. He explains that the model is based on psychological rather than socio-psychological or social theories of language use, and that researchers must acknowledge the intrinsically social nature of performance and examine much more carefully its interactional - that is, social -aspect.

Alderson (2001:14) further maintains that, according to Hill and Parry (1992), academic literacy is the socially structured negotiation of meaning, where students are seen as having

social, not just individual identities. According to this view of literacy, an alternative approach to the assessment of literacy that includes its social dimension was required.

The latter argument by Alderson (2001), and the reasons stated above, are some of the motivations that caused me to adapt the model to suit not only the context of the study, but also the theoretical underpinnings of the field within which this study was carried out, which is that of academic literacy. The next section deals with data analysis.

DATA ANALYSIS

In this study, quantitative data were collected through a survey using a self-generated questionnaire, while qualitative data were derived from student essay scripts which underwent qualitative content analysis.

Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004:18) state that one of the principles of mixed methods research is the collection of multiple data, using different strategies, approaches and methods in such a way that the resulting combination is likely to result in complementary strengths and non-overlapping weaknesses. They maintain that the effective use of this principle is a major source of justification for mixed methods research, because the product will be superior to mono-method studies. Trahan and Stewart (2013:61) take the argument further and state that the use of both qualitative and quantitative methods allows a researcher to take advantage of the representativeness and generalisability of quantitative findings, and the rich contextual nature of qualitative data can lend meaning to often unintelligible numerical data used in quantitative research.

Within this context, Mouton (1996:161) defines data analysis as the "resolution of a complex whole into its parts". He explains that, in this way, the term 'analysis' is usually contrasted with the term 'synthesis', which means the "construction of a whole out of parts". He further maintains that these two terms were originally used in the field or domain of logic. In quantitative approaches to empirical research, analysis refers to the stage in the research process where the researcher, through the application of various statistical and mathematical techniques, focuses separately on specific variables in the data set (Mouton, 1996:161).

According to Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004:18), one of the critical defining elements of traditional quantitative research is its focus on deduction, confirmation, theory/hypothesis testing, explanation, prediction, standardised data collection, and statistical analysis. On the

other hand, they maintain that some of the major distinguishing characteristics of traditional qualitative research are induction, discovery, exploration, theory hypothesis generation, the researcher as the primary 'instrument' of data collection, and qualitative analysis.

In this study, the quantitative data generated by the survey were analysed with the assistance of an expert statistician at CPUT.

For the quantitative data analysis, the software program SPSS was used. The use of SPSS made it possible to produce descriptive statistics such as frequencies and measures of central tendency (mean, median, mode), but also to compute cross-tabulations, correlations, and so forth (Greasley, 2008:9). SPSS was also used for drawing graphs such as bar charts to illustrate the data visually. The charts and the tables were copied into a Microsoft Word document in order to include them in this thesis.

With regard to qualitative data, Creswell (2014:245) explains that, because text and images are so dense and rich, usually not all the information can be used in a qualitative study. He maintains that, in the analysis of data, researchers need to winnow, sift or separate the data, in a process of focusing on some parts of the data, and disregarding other parts thereof. Creswell (2014:245) emphasises that this process is different from quantitative research in which researchers go to great lengths to preserve all of the data, and reconstruct or replace missing data. He maintains that in qualitative research the purpose of this process is to aggregate data into a small number of themes, making it more manageable for interpretation.

The qualitative data were analysed by means of content analysis. Elo and Kyngäs (2007:107) note that content analysis is a method of analysing written, verbal or visual communication messages. They maintain that, as a research method, it serves as a systematic and objective means of describing and quantifying phenomena. It allows the researcher to test theoretical issues to enhance the understanding of data. Elo and Kyngäs (2007:108) further point out that content analysis is a research method for making replicable and valid inferences from data to their context, with the purpose of providing knowledge, new insights, a representation of facts, and a practical guide to action.

In this research study, content analysis was employed to test, confirm and serve as a reliable means of verifying insights and patterns emanating from the findings of the quantitative questionnaire. According to Elo et al. (2014:1–2), qualitative content analysis can be used in either an inductive or a deductive way. In addition, Morgan (2007:71) asserts that the

pragmatic approach relies on a version of abductive reasoning that moves back and forth, between induction and deduction, first converting observations into theories and then assessing those theories through action. He maintains that abductive reasoning serves to take forward a process of inquiry that evaluates the results of prior inductions through their ability to predict the future lines of behaviour.

Feilzer (2010:10) explains that abduction occurs when the researcher first converts observations into theories, and then assesses those theories through action.

The measures that were used for content analysis of scripts in this study were those based on the criteria used and adapted from Bachman (1990), and employed to evaluate students' written academic essays for writing proficiency programme assistance. The most salient features of these criteria were the following:

- *The analysis criterion* was based on the depth of knowledge about the issues being discussed in the essays, and the quality and relevance of the ideas presented. The analysis investigated the following: whether a clear and consistent argument was maintained throughout the essay, whether academic conventions such as referencing and quotations were followed appropriately, and whether the structure of the introduction and conclusion was appropriate for an academic text.

- *The coherence and cohesion criterion* was based on whether each paragraph contained a clear topic sentence and one main idea, whether the ideas were developed, supported and logically grouped in paragraphs, and whether there was appropriate use of cohesive devices.

- *The grammar criterion* focused on three aspects: firstly, the accurate and appropriate application of grammar, and the density of lexico-grammatical irregularities and communicative effect; secondly, whether there was a range of sentence structures, and thirdly, appropriate punctuation.

- *The vocabulary criterion*, as the last element, explored whether the writer conveyed precise meaning and tone through the choice of words and the application of a range of appropriate vocabulary, including discipline-specific terms, as well as accuracy of spelling (Bachman 1990).

The themes used for the analysis of the students' written essays are presented in Table 4.1 below.

Table 4.1: Themes used in content analysis of students' essays

Themes identified in scripts	Examples
Quality and relevance of ideas presented	Clear and consistent argument was maintained.
Academic conventions	Referencing and quotations
Coherence and cohesion	Structure of the introduction, body and conclusion
Body paragraphs contained clear topic sentences	Whether ideas were developed, supported, and logically grouped in paragraphs
Accurate and appropriate application of grammar	Density of lexico-grammatical irregularities, and communicative effect
Range of sentence structures	Length of sentence structures.
Appropriate punctuation	Correct use of punctuation

In the next section, details are provided on how validity and trustworthiness were ensured in this research study.

4.7 VALIDITY AND TRUSTWORTHINESS

Caruth (2013:115) argues that validity in mixed methods research is about evaluating the quality of the findings of the data. If the findings or explanation of findings lacks validity, then the study itself becomes useless. Caruth (2013:119) further explains that mixed methods research provides researchers with opportunities to quantify variables and to explain, inform, and validate findings in a research study. She maintains that for evaluation studies, mixed methods research provides opportunities to understand questions of 'who' and 'why'.

In this study, quantitative and qualitative data were collected as part of the empirical evidence, in order to answer the research question, or to evaluate the role of the Writing Centre in enhancing the quality of students' academic writing at CPUT. Towards this end, quantitative data, emanating from responses to a structured questionnaire, were utilised. The targeted participants were students who made use of the Writing Centre services at the Bellville, Cape Town and Tygerberg campuses of CPUT.

The purpose of the study was fully explained to the student participants with a view to encouraging confidence and to ensure, where possible, full participation in the completion of the questionnaire part of the study. The researcher further ensured that the questionnaire achieved validity by making certain that the framing of questions forming part of the questionnaire were all based on the research question.

The researcher also made certain that the combination of quantitative and qualitative data ensured triangulation, which enhanced the trustworthiness of the study.

Graneheim and Lundman (2004:109) emphasise that research findings should be as trustworthy as possible, and that every study must be evaluated in relation to the procedures used to generate the findings. They argue that, within the tradition of qualitative studies, use of concepts related to the quantitative tradition, such as validity, reliability and generalisability, is still common. They also explain that, in qualitative research, the concepts credibility, dependability and transferability, have been used to describe various aspects of trustworthiness (Graneheim & Lundman, 2004:109). Furthermore, Long and Johnson (2000:31) suggest that validity and reliability have the same critical meaning irrespective of the research tradition that is used. They strongly maintain that nothing is gained by changing the labels.

In this study, validity and trustworthiness were ensured within the context advanced by the above authors because of the combination of both quantitative and qualitative methods of data collection, and consequently being a mixed methods study.

Further, in this study, the second component of the data was comprised of 20 student academic essays, selected with the prior consent of the students concerned, and who made use of the services of the Writing Centre. The distribution of the essays ranged from first-year to B-Tech levels of study. Each level of study contributed five written essays to constitute the total of 20 scripts for content analysis. These written essays, along with the questionnaire component of the study, were chosen to answer the research question.

These essay scripts were analysed using grading criteria that are employed to evaluate essays written for writing proficiency programme assessment. Four steps were identified from Bachman (1990): the analysis criterion, the coherence and cohesion criterion, the grammar criterion, and the vocabulary criterion. In addition, seven themes were identified and utilised for the analysis of the essay scripts: (see Table 4.1), quality and relevance of ideas presented, academic conventions, coherence and cohesion, body paragraphs contained clear topic sentences, accurate and appropriate application of grammar, range of sentence structures and appropriate punctuation

Elo et al. (2014:1) argue that a prerequisite for successful content analysis is that data can be reduced to concepts that describe the research phenomenon, by creating categories, concepts, a model, conceptual system, or conceptual map.

In this study, a logic model of the Writing Centre's programme was drawn, listing the intended results in the form of inputs, outputs, outcomes and assessment of the programme. According to Rogers (2008:33), many logic models used in programme theory show a single, linear, causal path, often involving some variation in five categories, namely inputs, process, outputs, outcomes and impact.

Elo et al. (2014:2) further posit that there are four alternatives for assessing the trustworthiness of qualitative research, namely credibility, dependability, conformability, and transferability. However, they also add a fifth criterion referred to as authenticity. Graneheim and Lundman (2004:109) identify three common alternatives identical to those mentioned by Elo et al. (2014): credibility, dependability and transferability.

In explaining the concept of credibility, Elo et al. (2014: 2) maintain that researchers must ensure that those participating in research are identified and described accurately. Graneheim and Lundman (2004:109) add that choosing participants with various experiences increases the possibility of shedding light on the research question from a variety of aspects.

In this study, research participants were chosen from various categories or levels of study, different language backgrounds, and diverse socio-economic backgrounds.

The second aspect of the criterion relating to trustworthiness, and identified by Elo et al., (2014:2), relates to dependability, and refers to the stability of data over time and under different conditions. Lincoln and Guba (1985:299), quoted by Graneheim and Lundman (2014:110), explain this aspect thus: that dependability "seeks means for taking into account both factors of instability and factors of phenomenal or design induced changes"; that is, the degree to which data change over time and alterations made in the researcher's decisions during the analysis process.

In this study, neither of the data sets (the questionnaire and written essays) were tampered with, save for alterations made for the purpose of coding and for statistical reasons. In the design of this research study, the intention was to obtain data that could be used to contribute to academic debates on academic literacy as a broader theory under which this study falls.

Lastly, Elo et al. (2014:2) explain the aspect of transferability, as referring to the potential of extrapolation. They maintain that transferability relies on the reasoning that findings can be generalised or transferred to other settings or groups. Graneheim and Lundman (2004:110) argue that to facilitate transferability, it is essential to give a clear description of culture and context, selection and characteristics of participants, data collection and process of analysis.

By way of illustration Morgan (2007:72), quoting Lincoln and Guba (1985:297), explains the transferability of research results thus: researchers cannot simply assume that their methods and approach to research makes their research results either context-bound or generalisable-instead, researchers need to investigate whether the knowledge they have gained can be transferred to other settings. For example, whether the results from one particular programme evaluation have implications for the use of similar programmes in other contexts.

According to Morgan (2007: 72), researchers need to ask how much of the existing knowledge might be usable in a new set of circumstances, as well as what researchers emphasise for making any such claims.

In this study, data were collected from three campuses at CPUT. Apart from the fact that the participants were chosen on the basis of their encounter and/or experience with the Writing Centre, the majority of students are English second- or third-language speakers. Further, CPUT is a university of technology and not a comprehensive and traditional university. The Writing Centre at CPUT currently only operates in three sites out of eight campuses. For these reasons, among others, I believe that the findings will be transferable within the CPUT context as well as to other similar higher education contexts in South Africa, in particular, the universities of technology.

The ethical considerations that guided this research study are dealt with next.

4.8   ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

This section deals with one of the most critical issues in research studies, in particular, as in this case, a mixed methods study, and the position of the researcher. Teddlie and Yu (2007:97), highlight some of these important and critical issues as relating to, among others, sampling, which includes informed consent by participants, the potential benefits and risks to the participants, the need for absolute assurances that any promised confidentiality can be maintained, and that the right of participants to withdraw, at any stage of the study, will be respected. Williman (2009: 343-358) concurs, and further posits that the main issues of concern are those of confidentiality and negotiation within the research process, access to participants, seeking informed consent, and whether or not to emphasise the role of the practitioner when carrying out the research.

Before the commencement of this study, and during the course of the research, I was intensely preoccupied with these highly sensitive issues; in particular with the obligation to comply with the expected and required ethical conduct. Below I outline the steps taken to ensure that this research study complied with ethical conduct.

First, before embarking on the empirical part of the study, I applied for ethical clearance to undertake this study from the Research Ethics Committee (Humaniora) of Stellenbosch University. Next, I sought and gained institutional permission from CPUT because it would serve as the locus for the study and it was also where the research participants were to be found. Thereafter, both I and the student participants were required to sign an informed consent form, which is included in this study as Addendum A

Williman (2009:358) highlights the role of the Research Ethics Committees in organisations as well as at higher education institutions as being to oversee research studies, and to ensure that they are carried out with ethical issues firmly placed within the relevant ethical code of conduct. He emphasises that participants must be free from coercion, dishonest means of persuasion and unrealistic and untrue promises on the part of the researcher. He, like Teddlie and Yu (2007), argues that an important aspect of the participants' decision to take part or not rests on the quality of information they receive about the research which enables them to make a fair assessment of the study so that they can give informed written consent. In this regard, Williman (2009:347) emphasises that, notwithstanding any agreement by the participants to take part in the research study, they have the right to terminate their participation at any time. He argues that there could be many reasons why a participant may want to withdraw from the study, such as aspects of the research study that they may not have fully understood, unwanted implications that appeared, discomfort or embarrassment, or just too much bother.

Lastly, Williman (2009:351) highlights two further issues critical to any research study. The first relates to the ethical responsibilities of assistants or delegated individuals in a research study, and the second again highlights the importance of securing the collected data. With regard to the former, he posits that the ethical responsibilities of the researcher are equally and completely binding on the individuals who are assisting the researcher; thus the researcher is obliged to make them aware of these obligations. In as far as securing the collected data is concerned, Williman (2009:351) argues that the storage of the collected data is often a sensitive issue as it may contain confidential details about people and/or organisations. He further explains that it is therefore crucial that the researcher creates a safe storage system that is only accessible to him or her, and that paper-based data should be locked away, and computer databases should be protected by a password.

Many of the issues highlighted above by both Williman (2009) and Teddlie and Yu (2007) were an important priority issue for me as the researcher. Apart from the requisite ethical clearance and institutional permission obtained, and the consent form signed by me as well as the research participants, I further ensured that the research study, research topic, the purpose of the study, and my role as the researcher were thoroughly explained and disclosed to the research participants so as to form the basis of their consent to participate in the study as outlined by Williman (2009).

The explanation given to the research participants also outlined the research process and the form the study would take. I explained to the participants that the study was comprised of two parts: a questionnaire to be completed by student participants, with a further request for the submission of two versions of essay scripts: before and after consultation. The submission of scripts, as opposed to the questionnaire, required participation from a small number of students only and was, therefore, limited to only 20 student essay scripts. These 20 were in turn subdivided into five essay scripts per year of study, from first-year up to the fourth-year (B-Tech) level of study.

Potential student participants were assured that there would be no known risks to them if they chose to be part of the study and that no form of reprisals could follow, in whatever form, against them.

The researcher further assured the participants of strict confidentiality with regard to their participation in the study, and any information they may disclose by virtue of their participation in the study. However, there was also a caveat to the effect that where information was required to be disclosed, it could only be done with the express consent of the participant, and by operation of law. Participants were further assured that the information they provided in the questionnaire would be stored safely and electronically, and that only I and my supervisor would have access to such information.

In conducting the study, all the data that I collected from the Bellville campus, were put in sealed envelopes and stored securely, under lock and key. Similarly, data collected from the Tygerberg and Cape Town campuses were secured by the relevant lecturers until collected by the researcher, in sealed envelopes, on the same day. In line with the argument made by Williman (2009) above, everyone who assisted with the distribution and collection of data was were reminded of their ethical responsibilities in the research study. The same responsibilities applied to me as the researcher.

Research participants were apprised of their rights pertaining to this study. They were informed that they were not compelled to participate in the study, and that if they so elected not to participate, or refused to participate, no direct or indirect consequences were to result from their decision, nor were they to be refused assistance to consult, or to seek any other form of academic support offered by the Writing Centre. It was also made clear that they had the right to withdraw from the study at any time during the course of the study, as explained by Teddlie and Yu (2007) and Williman (2009), and that no penalty was to be imposed on

student participants for not answering some of the questions in the study, if they felt uncomfortable or embarrassed in any way, in answering such questions.

These salient features of ethical conduct also formed the basis of the contents of the consent form presented to participants prior to the commencement of the study, and were further explained to the participants, and bound both me and the research participants, and further guided the research process.

4.9   CONCLUSION

This chapter discussed the research paradigm as the theoretical lens or view of the study, and mixed methods as a preferred research approach with programme evaluation as a research design. A detailed explanation was also given of the research instruments used to collect data and how data were analysed to answer the research questions.

The next chapter, Chapter 5, focuses on data presentation and analysis.

CHAPTER 5

PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF PHASE 1 RESULTS: STUDENT SURVEY

5.1. INTRODUCTION

The Cape Peninsula University of Technology (CPUT) has eight campuses in the Western Cape. In the context of this study, the research was conducted on three campuses based in Cape Town, Bellville and Tygerberg. The purpose of the study was to evaluate the role of a Writing Centre in enhancing the quality of students' academic writing at a university of technology. The research was conducted in two phases. The first phase comprised a survey using a questionnaire with questions related to the CPUT Writing Centre services and students' satisfaction. The second phase of the research concerned a comparative analysis of students' written drafts before and after students' visits to the Writing Centre.

This chapter presents and interprets the findings that emerged from the first phase of the research by outlining first the data obtained through the survey.

5.2   PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS FROM THE SURVEY

5.2.1. Demographic information

(a)   *Respondents according to campus*

Table 5.1 and Figure 5.1 below represent the responses of the participants according to the three campuses included in the study. The sample size of the research was 100, of whom 75 responses were received. They were from the Bellville, Cape Town and Tygerberg campuses. The Bellville campus had 42 respondents, the Cape Town campus 19 and the Tygerberg campus had 14 respondents.

Table **5.1** *Distribution of respondents according to campus*

Campus	Frequency distribution	Percentage distribution
Bellville	42	56%
Tygerberg	14	19%
Cape Town	19	25%

Total for all campuses	75	100%
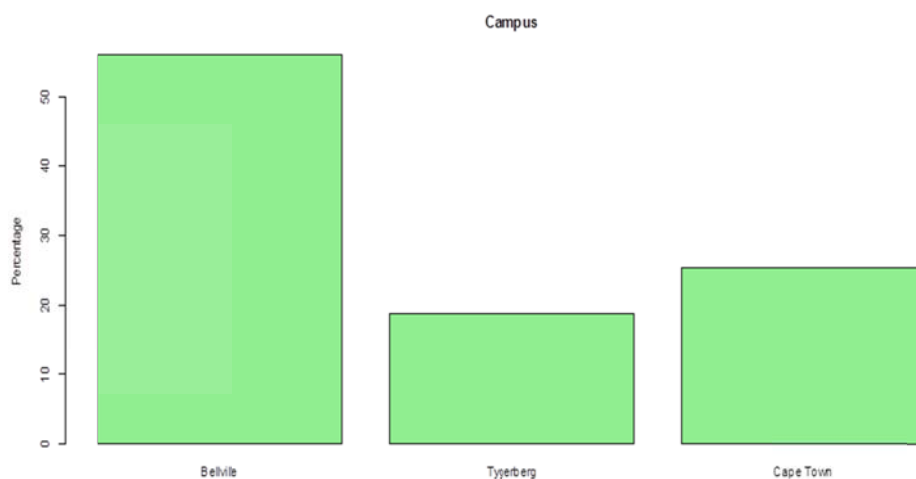
Figure 5.1 Distribution of respondents according to campus

The first set of questions was aimed at establishing the campus allocation of participants. The respondents were asked to choose from the list provided, the relevant campus in which they were located. Table 5.1 and Figure 5.1 provide the frequency distribution of campus allocation from the three researched campuses, and it compared the campus allocation of the respondents.

Table 5.1 and Figure 5.1 show that the Bellville campus had more respondents than the Cape Town and Tygerberg campus. The frequency distribution of the Bellville campus is 42, with 56%. The reason for the Bellville campus having the highest number is that the Writing Centre on the Bellville campus is bigger than the ones on the Cape Town and Tygerberg campuses. Furthermore, the Writing Centre on the Bellville campus is situated in the IT building which is the students' hub, the building is open 24 hours a day for students, and it is possibly easiest for students to access the Writing Centre on the Bellville campus as it is centrally located. Cape Town campus had a frequency distribution of 19 (25%). The reason for Cape Town campus to be represented by a lower number than the Bellville campus might be that the Cape Town Writing Centre is not on the main campus. It is situated across the road from the main campus. The other reason might be that the Writing Centre on the Cape Town campus is not as easily accessible as the Bellville campus.

Tygerberg campus is represented with a lower figure of 14 in the frequency distribution, with 19%. This could be because the Writing Centre on the Tygerberg campus is situated in a small side-lined campus that is designed for the small group of students who are from the Faculty of Health and Wellness Sciences, which itself has a small population. The Writing Centre on the Tygerberg campus is situated in the library, and is smaller than the Bellville and Cape Town campuses.

(b) Respondents' home languages

Table 5.2 Respondents' home languages

Languages	Frequency distribution	Percentage distribution
IsiXhosa	34	45%
English	13	18%
Afrikaans	10	13%
Sepedi	4	5%
Sesotho	2	3%
Setswana	2	3%
Shona	1	1%
Siswati	1	1%
IsiZulu	5	7%
French	3	4%
TOTAL	**75**	**100%**
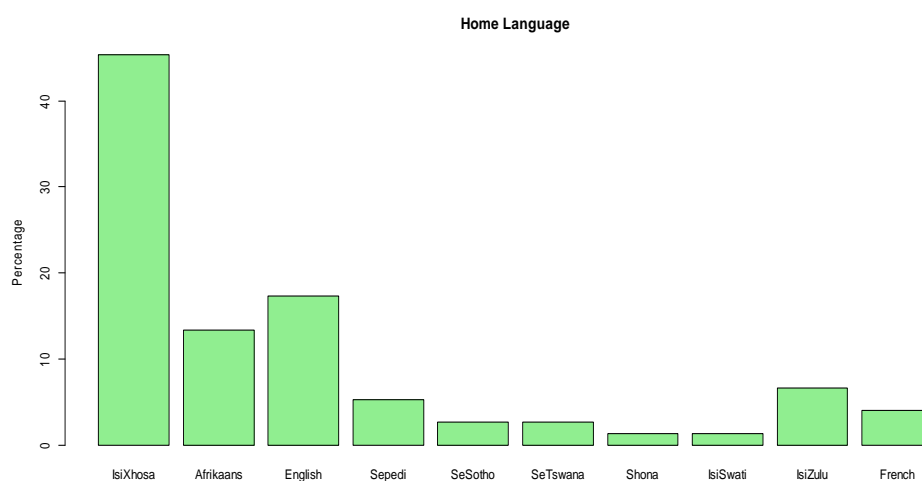
Figure 5.2 Respondents' home languages

The statistical analysis reflected in Table 5.2 and Figure 5.2 reveals that isiXhosa was the most common home language of the respondents with the highest frequency distribution of 34, and 45%. English, on the other hand, had a frequency distribution of 13 (17%) in the clustering of home language frequencies. Afrikaans had a frequency distribution of 10 (13%). IsiZulu had a frequency distribution of 5 (6%), while Sepedi ha a frequency distribution of 4 (5%) in the classification of home language. Interestingly, French had a frequency distribution of 3 (4%) in the sorting of home language frequency. There was no significant difference between Sesotho and Setswana, both languages had the same frequency distribution of 2 (3%) in the category of home language. There was also no observed difference in numbers between Shona and Siswati, they both had a frequency distribution of 1 (1% in the category of home language frequency.

It is apparent from the analysis above that most participants who were using the services of the Writing Centre were IsiXhosa home language users. The most striking observation from this data is that one foreign language, namely French, was represented. The reason for this is that the respondent is an international student; all other languages that are captured in the data are South African languages.

(c)   *Respondents according to faculty*

The next question concerned the faculty to which respondents belonged. Table 5.3 and Figure 5.3 below show the distribution of respondents according to faculty.

Table 5.3 Respondents according to faculty

Faculty	Frequency distribution	Percentage distribution per faculty
Business and Management Sciences	18	23%
Health and Wellness Sciences	26	35%
Engineering	26	35%
Applied Science	5	7%
Total for all faculties	**75**	**100%**
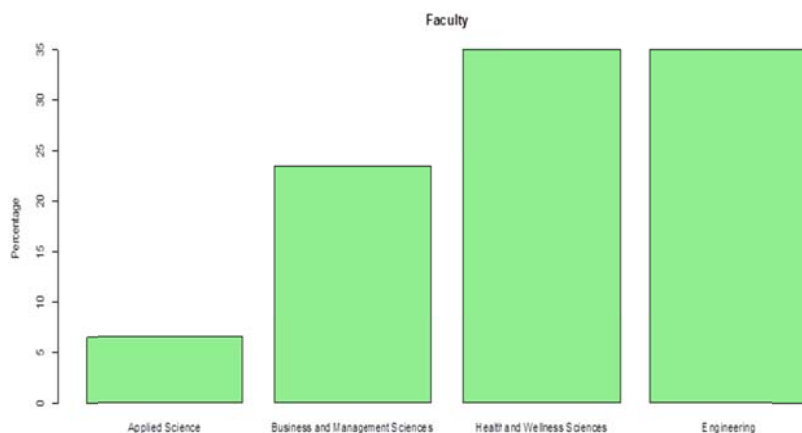
Figure 5.3 Respondents according to faculty

Graph 5.3 above compares the results obtained from the faculty representation. Table 5.3 and the bar graph in Figure 5.3 above reveal that the Faculties of Engineering, Health and Wellness Sciences both had the highest frequency distribution, namely 26 (35%). Furthermore, the statistical analysis showed that 23% of the students were from the Faculty of Business and Management Sciences with a frequency distribution of 18 (23%). Only 6% of the participants were from the Faculty of Applied Sciences, with a frequency distribution of 5 (7%).

(d)   Respondents according to the level of study

Table 5.4 and the bar graph in Figure 5.4 below present the level of study of the respondents who participated in the study.

Table 5.4 Respondents according to the level of study

Year of study	Frequency distribution	Percentage distribution in the level of study
1st\Extended Curriculum Programme (ECP)	20	27%
2nd	18	24%
3rd	17	22%
4th	20	27%
Total for all levels of study	**75**	**100%**

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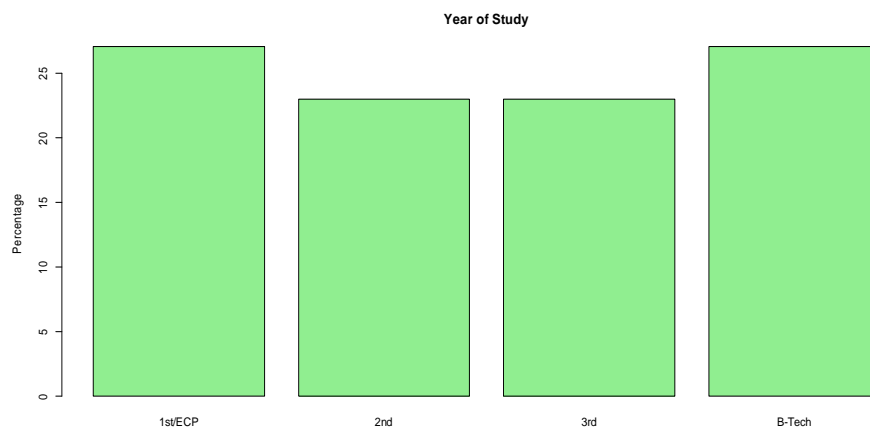
Figure 5.4 Respondents according to the level of study

The following question determined the level of study of the respondents. The respondents were asked to indicate the level of study for which they had registered. The first-year students and the extended curriculum students, as well as the fourth-year students, are highly represented in the study. The first-year and fourth-year students both had a frequency distribution of 20, with 27% in the four faculties involved in the study. The second-year students had a frequency distribution of 18 (24%), while the third-year students had a frequency distribution of 17 (22%).

5.2.2 Referral information

Table 5.5 and Figure 5.5 represent the participants' responses to the question asking how they got to know about the services of the Writing Centre.

Table 5.5 Writing Centre referral

Source of information	Frequency distribution	Percentage distribution
Lecturer	53	72%
Friend	9	12%
Orientation	12	15%
CPUT website	1	1%
Other	0	0
Total	**75**	**100%**

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Where did you hear about the services provided by the Writing Centre?
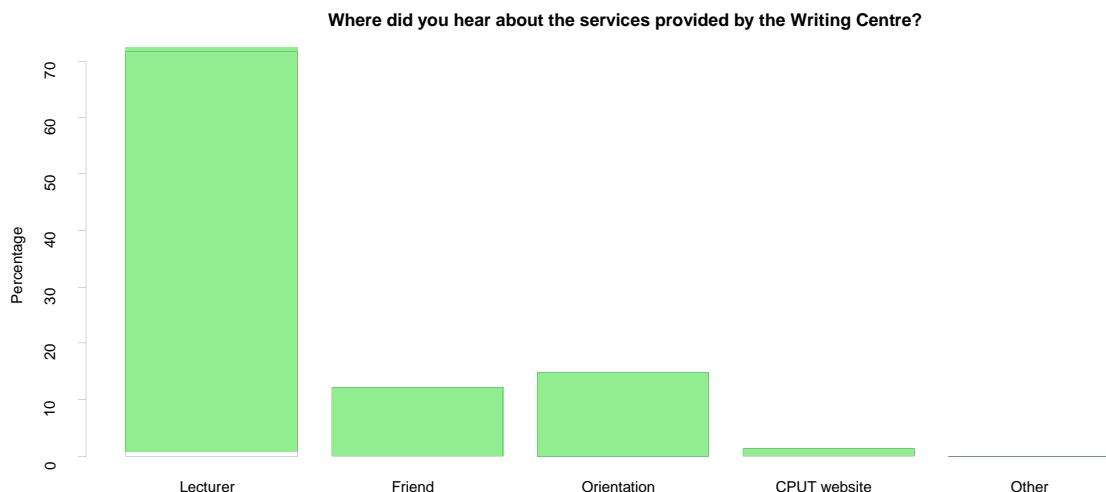
Figure 5.5

Writing Centre referral

The statistical analysis reflected in Table 5.5 and Figure 5.5 above shows that lecturers have the highest frequency distribution of 53 (71%) in terms of referring the students to the Writing Centre. Lecturers appear to value the work that is done in the Writing Centre, and they encourage their students to make use of the services offered by the Writing Centre.

The first-year orientation also contributes in providing first-year students with information about the Writing Centre. The Writing Centre facilitates orientation workshops to all first-year students who are registered for the first time at the university. It is clear that the orientation workshops also promote the Writing Centre, because this option has the second highest scoring of 12 (15%) in the frequency distribution. Friends are also a useful source of information with a frequency distribution of 9 (12%). The university website did not seem to be the preferred source of information for Writing Centre services, as it obtained only 1 (1%) in the frequency distribution. This seems to point to the need for the Writing Centre to market its services more prominently on the university website in future.

5.2.3   Use of the Writing Centre

(a)   *Writing Centre visits*

Table 5.6 and Figure 5.6 represent the number of Writing Centre visits by the respondents.

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Table 5.6 Number of Writing Centre visits

Number of Writing Centre visits	Frequency distribution	Percentage distribution
Once	17	21%
Twice	17	21%
Thrice	9	13%
Four times	32	45%
Total	**75**	**100%**
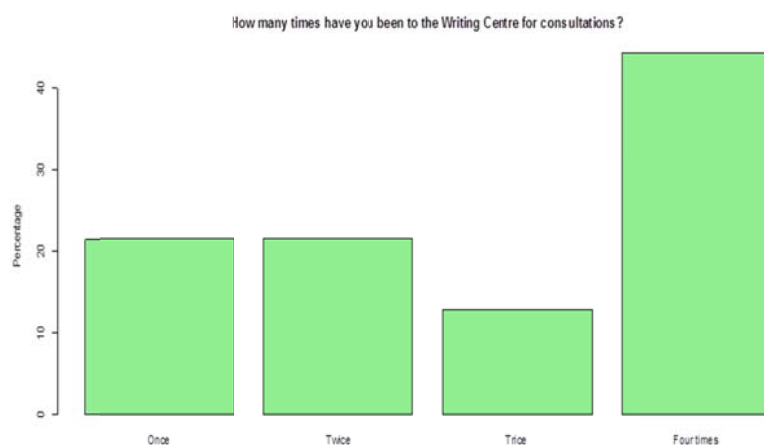
Figure 5.6 Number of Writing Centre visits

The next question dealt with the number of visits to the Writing Centre. From the data presented in Table 5.6 and Figure 5.6 above, it can be seen that the frequency distribution of students who visited the Writing Centre once and twice for their writing consultation is 17 (21%). The frequency distribution of students who visited the Writing Centre three times for writing consultation is 9 (12%). As can be seen from Table 5.6 above, in the category of four or more times, there is a frequency distribution of 32 (45%). This provides strong evidence that when students become aware of the Writing Centre services, they do make use of it on several occasions. The repeated visits to the Writing Centre are found on all the three campuses.

(b) Access to the Writing Centre

Tables 5.7.1, 5.7.2 and 5.7.3 and Figure 5.7 represent the respondents' perspectives on the convenience of accessing the Writing Centre on the three campuses. The students were asked if it is easy for them to go to the Writing Centre on their respective campuses.

5.2 *Table 5.7.1 Access to the Writing Centre Bellville*

Access to the Writing Centre Bellville	Frequency distribution	Percentage distribution
Definitely yes	13	15%
Yes	26	34%
No	2	4%
Definitely no	0	0%
Total	**41**	**53%**

Table 5.7.2 Access to the Writing Centre Tygerberg

Access to the Writing Centre Tygerberg	Frequency distribution	Percentage distribution
Definitely yes	11	13%
Yes	3	4%
No	1	1%
Definitely no	1	2%
Total	**16**	**20%**

Table 5.7.3 Access to the Writing Centre Cape Town

Access to the Writing Centre Cape Town	Frequency distribution	Percentage distribution
Definitely yes	15	20%
Yes	1	3%
No	2	4%
Definitely no	0	0%
Total	**18**	**27%**
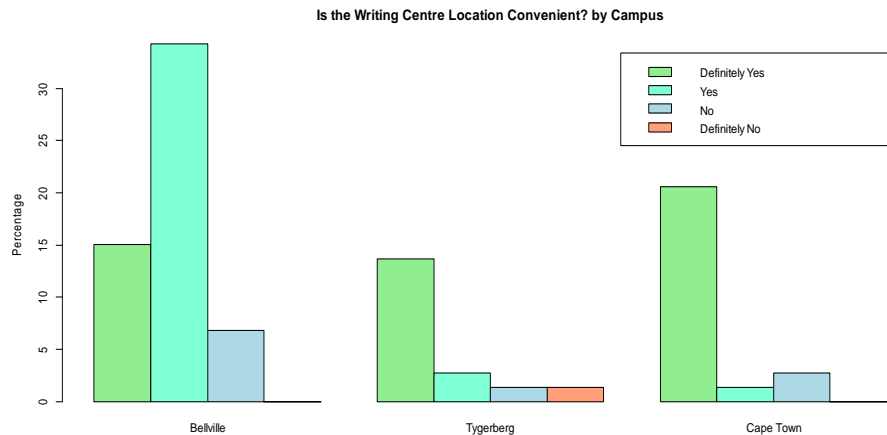
Figure 5.7 Access to the Writing Centre by campus

The statistical analysis of the convenience of access to the Writing Centre by campus (Tables 5.7.1, 5.7.2 and 5.7.3 and Figure 5.7) reveals that the Writing Centre on Cape Town campus is more convenient than at the Bellville and Tygerberg campuses. Table 5.7.3 above shows 15 as the highest frequency for the Cape Town campus, with 20% of students agreeing to the convenience of the Writing Centre in the category of 'Definitely yes'. In contrast to that, the Bellville campus as portrayed in Table 5.7.1 has the highest number of responses in the category of 'Yes' (26 = 34%).

5.2.4   Appointment scheduling

Tables 5.8.1, 5.8.2 and 5.8.3 and Figure 5.8 below illustrate the responses to the question whether it is easy for them to make consultation appointments in the Writing Centre on their respective campuses.

Table 5.8.1 Appointment scheduling Bellville

Appointment scheduling Bellville	Frequency distribution	Percentage distribution
Definitely yes	11	13%
Yes	20	27%
No	11	14%
Definitely no	1	1%
Total	**43**	**55%**

Table 5.8.2 Appointment scheduling Tygerberg

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Appointment scheduling Tygerberg	Frequency distribution	Percentage distribution
Definitely yes	6	8%
Yes	3	4%
No	2	3%
Definitely no	3	5%
Total	**14**	**20%**

Table 5.8.3 Appointment Scheduling Cape Town

Appointment scheduling Cape Town	Frequency distribution	Percentage distribution
Definitely yes	12	16%
Yes	5	6%
No	1	3%
Definitely no	0	0%
Total	**18**	**25%**
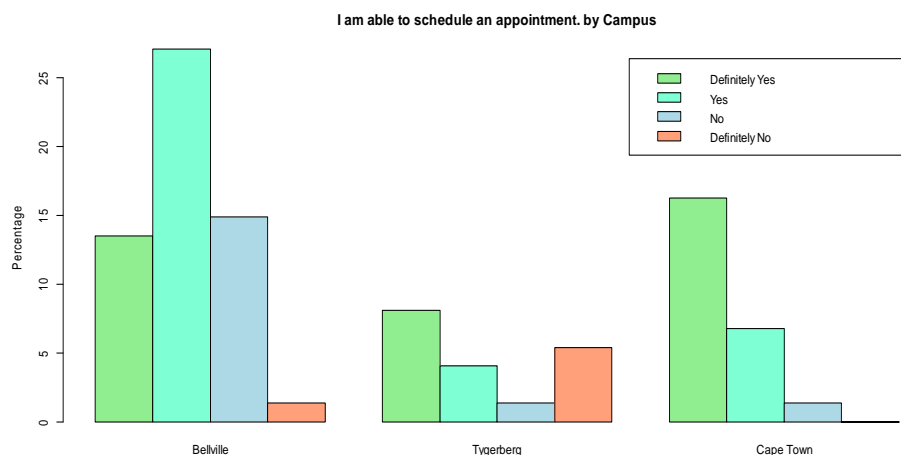
Figure 5.8 Appointment scheduling by campuses

The respondents were next asked to answer whether it is easy for them or not to schedule the appointment in the Writing Centre in their respective campuses. The respondents from the Cape Town campus responded with the highest positive response in the category of 'Definitely yes', with a frequency distribution of 12 (16%). The Bellville campus followed with a frequency distribution of 11 (13%). Respondents from the Tygerberg campus indicated

the lowest level of satisfaction with a frequency distribution of 6 (8%) in the category of 'Definitely yes'.

As can be seen from Table 5.8 above, the Bellville campus had more responses than Cape Town and Tygerberg campus in the 'Yes' category. The Bellville campus has a frequency distribution of 20, followed by the Cape Town campus with a frequency distribution of 5 and the Tygerberg campus with a frequency distribution of 3. The results, as shown in Table 5.8 and the bar graph in Figure 5.8 indicate that the majority of students do not have a problem with the booking system of the Writing Centre in any of the three CPUT campuses.

Another important finding is that 25% of the respondents did not find scheduling of the appointments easy. This implies that there is a definite need for the Writing Centre to align and systematise its booking system in all the campuses where it is located.

5.2.5 Consultation visits by campus

Tables 5.9.1, 5.9.2 and 5.9.3 and Figure 5.9 below represent students' responses to the question about the consultation visits in their campuses.

Table 5.9.1 Consultation visits Bellville

Consultation visits Bellville	Frequency distribution	Percentage distribution
Once	7	9%
Twice	9	13%
Thrice	13	15%
Four times	11	13%
Total	**40**	**50%**

Table 5.9.2 Consultation visits Tygerberg

Consultation visits Tygerberg	Frequency distribution	Percentage distribution
Once	2	4%
Twice	3	5%
Thrice	0	0%
Four times	10	13%
Total	**15**	**22%**

Table 5.9.3 Consultation visits Cape Town

Consultation visits Cape Town	Frequency distribution	Percentage distribution
Once	3	6%
Twice	1	3%
Thrice	3	4%
Four times	13	15%
Total	**20**	**28%**
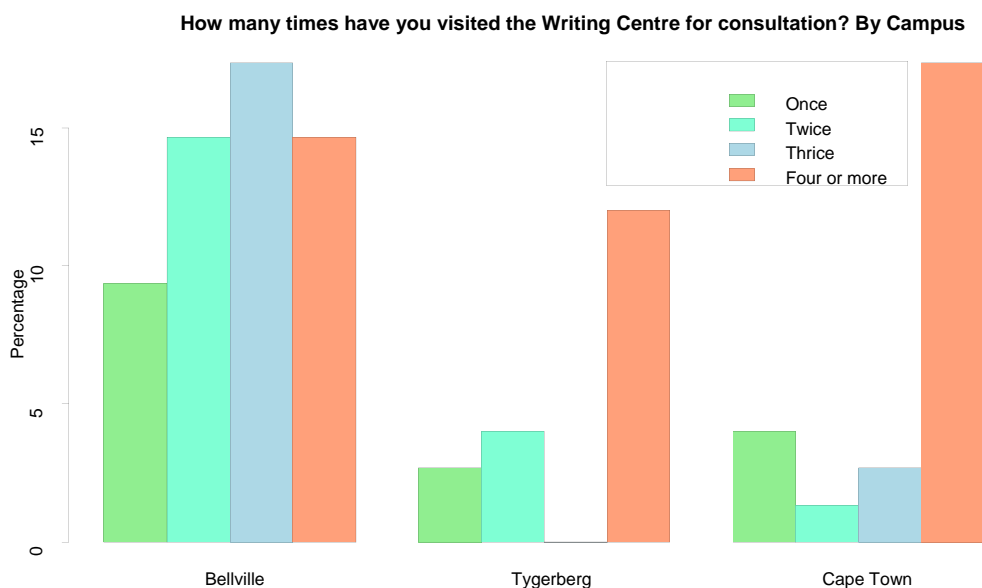
Figure 5.9 Consultation visits by campus

Tables 5.9.1, 5.9.2, 5.9.3 and the bar graph in Figure 5.9 above present and compare the Writing Centre visits by campuses. Tables 5.9.1, 5.9.2 and 5.9.3 and Figure 5.9 indicate that the Cape Town campus had the highest response rate of the respondents who visited the Writing Centre four times and more. In the category of four times, the Cape Town campus has a frequency distribution of 13, with 15%. The Bellville campus followed with a frequency distribution of 11 in the category 'Four times, with 13%, and the Tygerberg campus was close with a frequency distribution of 10 and 13%. In the category 'Thrice' the Bellville campus has the highest frequency distribution of 13 and 15%. It is interesting to see that there were no ratings in the three categories: Tygerberg has a frequency distribution of 0 and a percentage distribution of 0%, meaning that there were no students from the Tygerberg

campus who visited the Writing Centre three times. One can say that students visited the Writing Centre more than once.

5.2.6 Effectiveness of the booking system

Table 5.10 and Figure 5.10 below show the frequency and the percentage distribution of students in responding to the question of the booking system in the Writing Centre.

Table 5.10 Effectiveness of the 24-hour booking system

24-hour booking system	Frequency distribution	Percentage distribution
No	11	15%
Yes	48	64%
Don't know	16	21%
Total for all	**75**	**100%**
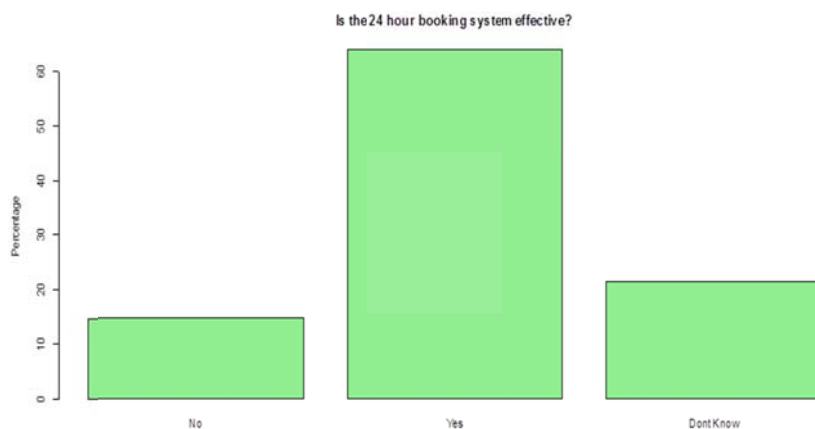
Figure 5.10 Writing Centre booking system

Responses to the question relating to the Writing Centre booking system show that students do not have problems with the 24-hour booking system of the Writing Centre. The majority of the respondents (48) responded in the 'Yes' category when asked whether the 24-hour booking system was effective (64%). A small number (11 = 14%) were not satisfied with the current booking system. What is concerning is that 16 respondents (21%) gave a 'Don't know' response to the question. These respondents can be regarded as the respondents who are not familiar with the booking system of the Writing Centre.

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In referring to the subject of making bookings in the Writing Centre, two of the participants commented as follows:

"The reception is helpful and easy to make an appointment."

"The scheduling and making of appointments are really difficult, there is never space."

5.2.7 Services requested

Table 5.11 reflects the participants' responses to the question that was asked about the services requested by the students in the Writing Centre.

Table 5.11 Services requested from the Writing Centre

Type of service requested	Rankings
Editing and proofreading	52
Referencing	48
Essay structure	41
Presentation skills	35
Topic analysis	27
Study skills	22
Time management goal setting	12
Online social networking	6
Using computers to browse the internet	4

The following question asked the respondents about the nature of the services they requested in the Writing Centre. The respondents rated the services in the order of their choice in terms of their importance. From Table 5.11 above, it can be seen that the service most required by the respondents is editing and proof-reading, with the highest ranking (52), followed by referencing (48), essay structure (41), presentation skills (35), topic analysis (27), study skills (22), time management (12), online social network (6) and using computers to browse the internet in the Writing Centre (4) as the lowest.

The statistical analysis provided above revealed that students use the Writing Centre for different purposes, according to their needs. The students request the service of editing and proofreading more than the other services, followed by referencing, with the essay structure as the third highest. These are features of academic writing for which they need services most. The participants do not seem to primarily use the writing centre for social networking. That is demonstrated by its lower ranking of 6. It seems as if a tiny minority of students do in fact use the writing centre for social networking. Maybe occasionally use the writing centre for social networking which is followed by using computers to browse the internet with the lowest ranking of 4. The participants' rankings are aligned with the aim of the Writing Centre. The participants use the Writing Centre with the purpose of enhancing their writing skills. They do not use it for social networking or other purposes.

5.2.8 Writing centre as a learning space

Tables 5.12.1, 5.12.2 and 5.12.3 and the graph in Figure 5.12 below present the responses to the question whether the respondents regarded the Writing Centre as a learning space on the three campuses or not.

Table 5.12.1 Writing Centre as a learning space Bellville

Writing Centre as a learning space Bellville	Frequency distribution	Percentage distribution
No	3	4%
Yes	39	51%
Total	**42**	**55%**

Table 5.12.2 Writing Centre as a learning space Tygerberg

Writing Centre as a learning space Tygerberg	Frequency distribution	Percentage distribution
No	2	3%
Yes	12	16%
Total	**14**	**19%**

Table 5.12.3 Writing Centre as a learning space Cape Town

Writing Centre as a	Frequency distribution	Percentage distribution

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learning space Cape Town		
No	1	2%
Yes	18	24%
Total	**19**	**26%**
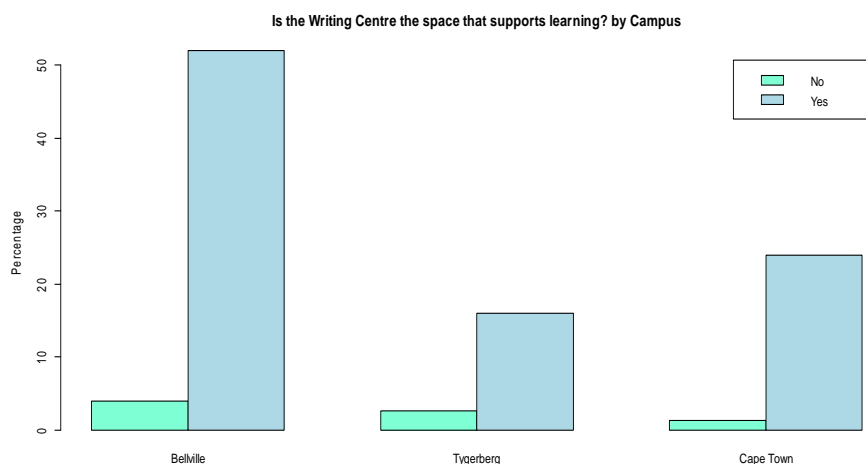
Figure 5.12 Writing Centre as a space that supports learning

The statistical analysis from Tables 5.12.1, 5.12.2 and 5.12.3 above shows the participants from the Bellville campus responded with 51% in the 'Yes' category when they were asked whether the Writing Centre provides space for learning. Similarly the majority of participants on the Tygerberg and Cape Town campuses responded in the affirmative. About 69% of respondents regard the Writing Centre as a space that supports learning. Only 6% of the respondents do not regard the Writing Centre as a space that supports learning, as can be seen from the frequency distribution of 3 in the 'No' category from the Bellville campus, 2 for Cape Town campus and only 1 for the Tygerberg campus.

5.2.9 Writing centre as a distraction-free learning environment

Tables 5.13.1, 5.13.2 and 5.13.3 and Figure 5.13 reflect the respondents' views on the question whether the Writing Centre provides a distraction-free environment for learning.

Table 5.13.1 Distraction-free environment, Bellville

Writing Centre provides distraction-	Frequency distribution	Percentage distribution

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free environment Bellville		
No	12	18%
Yes	33	45%
Total	**45**	**63%**

Table 5.13.2 Distraction-free environment, Tygerberg

Writing Centre provides distraction-free environment Tygerberg	Frequency distribution	Percentage distribution
No	2	3%
Yes	15	17%
Total	**17**	**20%**

Table 5.13.3 Distraction free environment, Cape Town

Writing Centre provides distraction-free environment Cape Town	Frequency distribution	Percentage distribution
No	1	3%
Yes	12	14 %
Total	**13**	**17%**

Does the Writing Centre provide a distraction free environment for learning? By
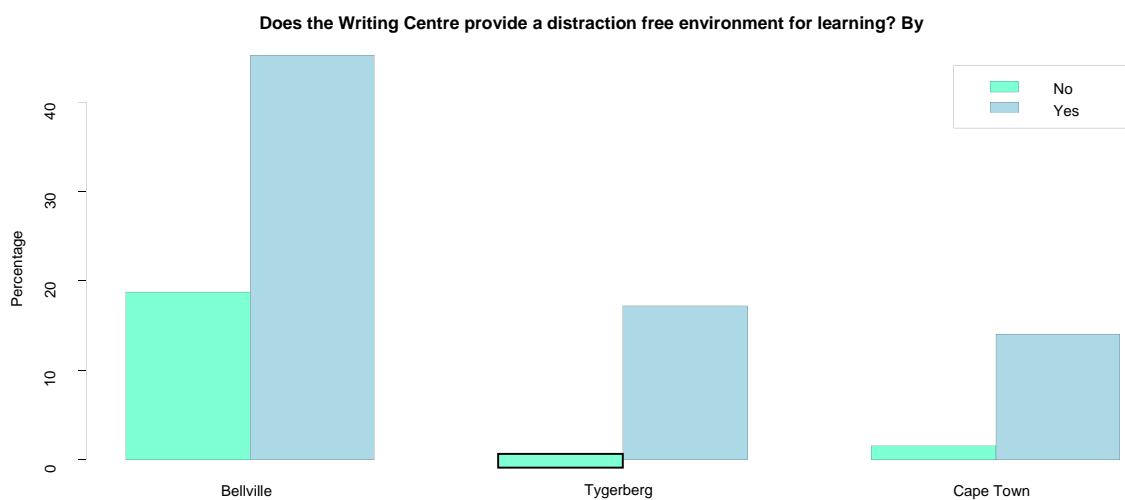
Figure 5.13 Writing Centre provides a distraction-free environment for learning

Tables 5.13.1, 5.13.2 and 5.13.3 and the bar graph in Figure 5.13 above indicate that the majority of respondents in the three campuses agree that the Writing Centre does provide a distraction-free environment for students to learn. This is evidenced by the high frequency distributions of 'Yes' responses. The Bellville campus has a frequency distribution of 33 (45%) in agreement as compared to 12 respondents who disagreed. Tygerberg campus has a frequency distribution of 15 (17%) in agreement and 2 in disagreement, while the Cape Town campus has a high frequency distribution of 12 (14%) in agreement with the Writing Centre as a space that provides a distraction-free environment for learning and only 1 response in disagreement.

From the above figures it is clear that the overall response to the question is very positive with 60% of the respondents agreeing that the Writing Centre provides a distraction-free environment that is conducive to studying. This is substantiated by the respondents' comments such as:

"It is helping students, not distracting."

"None (distractions), and that are good because it gives a student a chance to concentrate."

"The Writing Centre is a quite (quiet) area where studying and learning is encouraged."

Only a small number from those who responded to the question indicated the contrary, as illustrated by the following comment:

"It becomes noisy at time. Too many students are around."

This comment is further illustrated by the responses to the next item below.

5.2.10 Managing noise at the writing centre

Tables 5.14.1, 5.14.2 and 5.14.3 and Figure 5.14 below illustrate the respondents' responses to the question of whether noise is effectively managed in the Writing Centre or not.

Table 5.14.1 Managing noise in the Writing Centre Bellville

Managing noise in the Writing Centre Bellville	Frequency distribution	Percentage distribution
No	8	12%
Yes	34	51%
Total	**42**	**63%**

Table 5.14.2 Managing noise in the Writing Centre Tygerberg

Managing noise in the Writing Centre Tygerberg	Frequency distribution	Percentage distribution
No	3	4%
Yes	9	14%
Total	**12**	**18%**

Table 5.14.3 Managing Noise in the Writing Centre Cape Town

Managing noise in the Writing Centre Cape Town	Frequency distribution	Percentage distribution
No	11	13%
Yes	10	16%
Total	**21**	**19%**

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Is the noise level at the Writing Centre managed well enough? by Campus
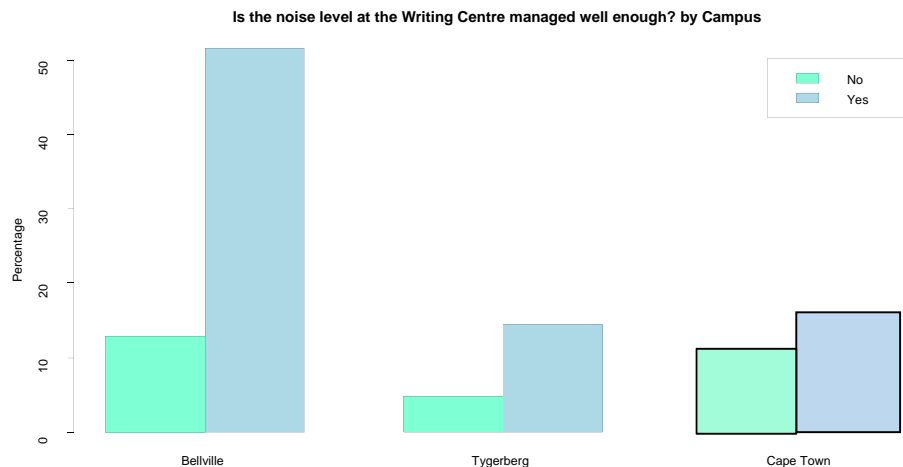
Figure 5.14 Managing noise in the Writing Centre

Tables 5.14.1, 5.14.2 and 5.14.3 and the graph in Figure 5.14 above illustrate the participants' opinions on whether the Writing Centre is able to control the noise. The results obtained from the statistical analysis from the Bellville campus in Table 5.14.1 indicate that the student respondents' responded with the high frequency distribution of 34 in agreement to the question whether the Writing Centre manages noise, and with the frequency distribution of 51%. The Cape Town campus followed with a frequency distribution of 10 in the 'Yes' category, and with a frequency distribution of 16%. The high number of 'no' responses in relation to the Cape Town campus could be attributed to a number of factors. Some of these could be related to the fact that, the Writing Centre at the Cape Town campus does not compare with both the Bellville and Tygerberg campuses. The reason for this is that, while the Tygerberg campus services students mainly from one faculty i.e., Health and Wellness, the Writing Centre at Bellville and Cape Town campuses offer services to a number of students and from various faculties. However, the Writing Centre at the Cape Town campus can further be distinguished from the Writing Centre at the Bellville campus based on the structure, environment and spaciousness of the space within which both centres operate. For example, the Writing Centre at the Bellville campus can accommodate more students because of the space and ease of access to the computer laboratories. Whilst the same is possible for the Cape Town campus, the physical space is limited, impacting on the number of students that can have access to the Writing Centre including the number of computers available for

use by students is also limited. Therefore, the ease of access and accessibility of the Writing Centre in both campuses might be a contributing factor. I believe that the 'no' responses cannot be attributed to the standard of services offered by the Writing Centre at the Cape Town campus as all services offered by the Writing Centre's such as individual consultations, academic writing workshops, etc., are standardised, and in most cases, are conducted by the same Writing Centre personnel from all these three campuses.

Lastly, the Tygerberg campus showed a frequency distribution of between 9 and 14%, indicating that the Writing Centre does control the noise levels, and thus the majority of student respondents, 81%, believe that the Writing Centre is capable of controlling the noise.

5.2.11 Academic services

Table 5.15 and Figure 5.15 below illustrate the participants' responses to the question whether the Writing Centre is helping students academically. As can be noted, the results of table 5.15 and figure 5.15 are not presented according to campuses because academic services, as offered to students, are the same across all campuses. Further that, the majority of student respondents' across all campuses that participated in the study, believe that the Writing Centre does help students' academically.

Table 5.15 Writing Centre is helping students academically

Helping students academically	Frequency distribution	Percentage distribution
No	11	15%
Yes	46	61%
Don't know	18	24%
Total for all	**75**	**100%**

Is the Writing Centre doing enough to help students to develop academically?
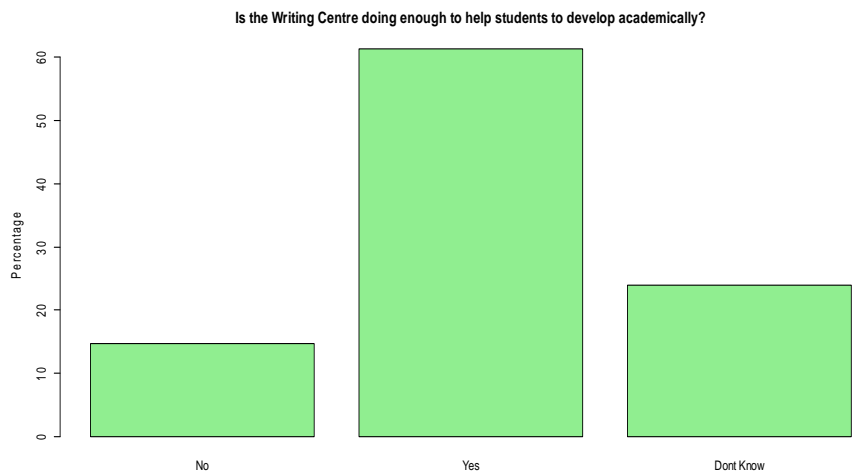
Figure 5.15 Writing Centre in helping students academically

The results obtained from the statistical analysis shown in Table 5.15 and Figure 5.15 above reveal that the respondents do believe that the Writing Centre is helping students academically. Table 5.15 and the bar graph in Figure 5.15 show the breakdown of the respondents' responses according to the three categories. The respondents responded with a positive response rate in the 'Yes' category with a frequency distribution of 46 (61%). Only 11 (15%) of the frequency distribution of the respondents replied in the 'No' category. The other unusual observation that emerged from the data is the high response rate of students who did not know whether the Writing Centre is helping students or not. The frequency distribution in the 'Don't know' category is 18 (24%), which is slightly higher than the responses in the 'No' category. In addition to what was statistically analysed in response to the question, a common view of 61% among the respondents was the following:

"The Centre is opened to every student on campus and makes their most to ensure they help one, it's a pity many students are not aware of it."

"When students go to the Writing Centre, their essay will be re-marked, and the students will be able to see their mistakes."

"The Centre helps students with academic writing, which is not easy when you come to university."

"Students are able to notice his or her mistakes when dealing with tasks, after he or she have consulted the Writing Centre."

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" An assistant at the Writing Centre always make sure that you don't leave without being satisfied with what you visited for."

However, 11% of the respondents held the following negative views regarding the Writing Centre:

"They delay in responding."

"There is not much advertising."

"And times when the explanation are not clear and I can see little improvement for my essay."

5.2.12   Students' satisfaction

Table 5.16 and the bar graph in Figure 5.16 illustrate the respondents' responses to the question whether they would return to the Writing Centre after their consultation.

Table 5.16 Students' satisfaction

Would you return to the Writing Centre?	Frequency distribution	Percentage distribution
Yes	63	84%
No	12	16 %
Total for all	**75**	**100%**

Would you return to the Writing Centre?
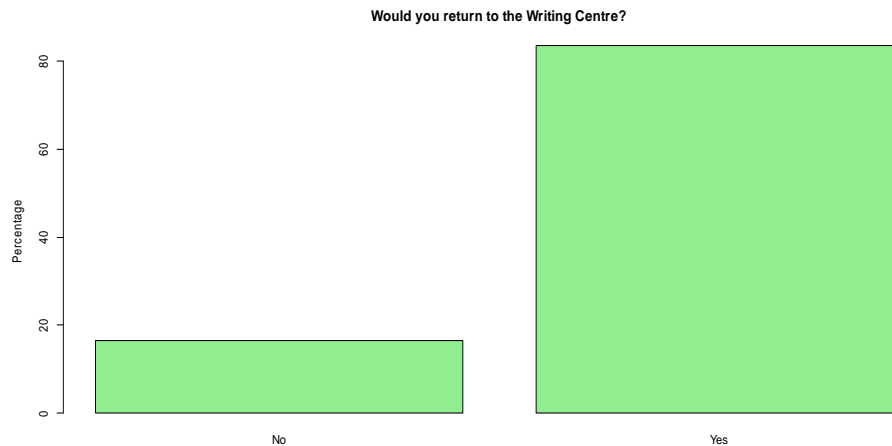
Figure 5.16 Returning to the Writing Centre

Following on the questions above, the respondents were asked if they would return to the Writing Centre. Table 5.16 and the bar graph in Figure 5.16 above show that students are satisfied with the assistance they receive from the Writing Centre. The response rate in the 'Yes' category has a frequency distribution of 61 (84%) distribution. Table 5.16 shows that, there is a significant difference in the response rate of 'Yes' and 'No'. The response rate for the 'No' category is far lower than the 'Yes' rate. It can be deduced that students would definitely return to the Writing Centre for academic help. The participants expressed the belief that the Writing Centre is a place to which they can return in order to ask for academic help. The majority (84%) of those who responded to the question felt positive about returning to the Writing Centre as illustrated in the following comments:

"It is productive you come back there knowing where you went wrong on your essay."

"Because it's the only place I know to help us in writing."

"The Writing Centre can help with developing different writing skills and referencing."

"The staffs are helpful and easy to approach if there are difficulties or questions."

"I am a student so every time I attend the class I always get something new and that might be challenging, but because of the existence of Writing Centre I don't stress much."

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In contrast, a few respondents were not happy with the Writing Centre service:

"Doesn't help."

"Bad service. Appointments are not helping if he doesn't attend."

"Computers are not working properly."

5.2.13 Recommending the writing centre

The next question asked the respondents whether they would recommend the Writing Centre to other students. Table 5.17 and Figure 5.17 below show the statistical analysis of the responses to this question.

Table 5.17 Recommending the Writing Centre

Recommending the Writing Centre	Frequency distribution	Percentage distribution
Yes	59	81%
No	16	19%
Total for all	**75**	**100%**
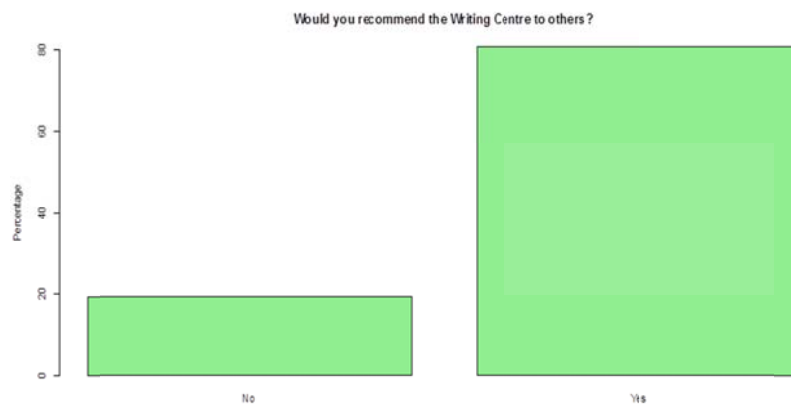
Figure 5.17 Recommending the Writing Centre

In Table 5.17 and the bar graph in Figure 5.17 above the responses from the 'Yes' category and the responses from the 'No' category were compared. The responses demonstrate a high

positive rate with 81% distribution in the 'Yes' category. The 'No' responses made up only 19% of the distribution. It can be deduced that the respondents would recommend the Writing Centre to other students.

This question elicited a range of comments from the respondents, with the minority stating that they would not do so. One of the respondents said the following:

> "Made an appointment … never actually happened. It does not help me!"

However, the majority of respondents indicated that they would recommend the Writing Centre to other students:

> "Yes, because other students may also benefit from the Writing Centre."

> "I got help there with improving my presentation skills so there is help there."

> "Because other students won't be able to help as they would in the Writing Centre since they are able to give you the whole attention."

> "It's useful when writing practicals."

> "Think it is a good tool for any student who needs help to conduct his or her assignment."

> "Easy access to information, and flexibility of working at just about any given time."

5.2.14 Students' perceptions about their own academic writing

With regard to the question about the participants' perceptions of their own individual academic writing capabilities, Tables 5.18 to 5.33 and Figures 5.18 to 5.33 below show the breakdown of the participants' views on how they rate their own academic writing skills.

Table 5.18 and Figure 5.18 below show the participants' responses to the question that asked them to rate their abilities with regard to planning their research work. The participants rated themselves highly with 50% regarding themselves as 'Excellent', and only 15% of the participants rated themselves as poor.

Table 5.18 Planning research work

Planning research	Frequency distribution	Percentage distribution
Excellent	38	50%
Average	26	35%
Poor	11	15%
Total for all	**75**	**100%**
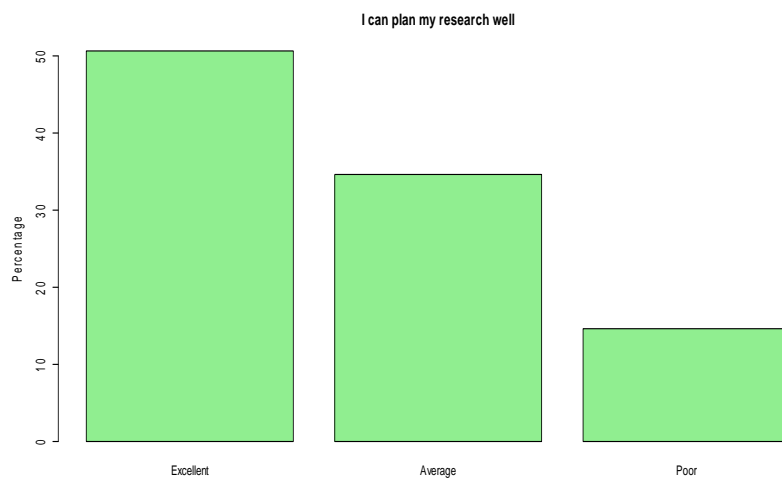
Figure 5.18 Planning research work

Further analysis as reflected in Table 5.19 and Figure 5.19 below demonstrates that the participants believe that they are capable of brainstorming ideas, as shown by 53% in the 'Excellent' category. In addition, 31% of the respondents regarded themselves as 'Average' and only 15% regarded their ability to brainstorm as 'Poor'.

Table 5.19 Brainstorming ideas

Brainstorming ideas	Frequency distribution	Percentage distribution
Excellent	39	53%

Average	23	31%
Poor	13	16%
Total for all	**75**	**100%**

I can brainstorm my ideas before and during the writing task
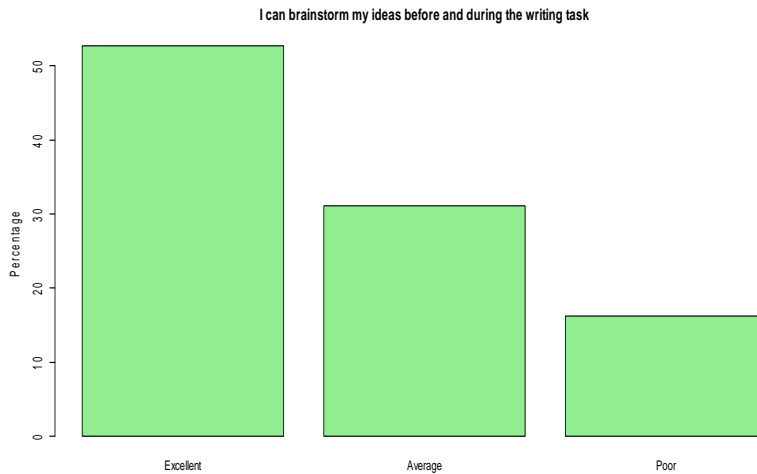
Figure 5.19 Brainstorming ideas

Table 5.20 and Figure 5.20 below illustrate the respondents' responses to the question about their abilities to write introductions. The respondents rated themselves highly in this regard with 54% of the responses in the 'Excellent' category. The 'Average' category followed with 31% and the 'Poor' category with 15%. The respondents appear to regard themselves capable of writing introductions.

Table 5.20 Writing introductions

Writing introductions	Frequency distribution	Percentage distribution
Excellent	40	54%
Average	23	31%
Poor	12	15%

Total for all	75	100%
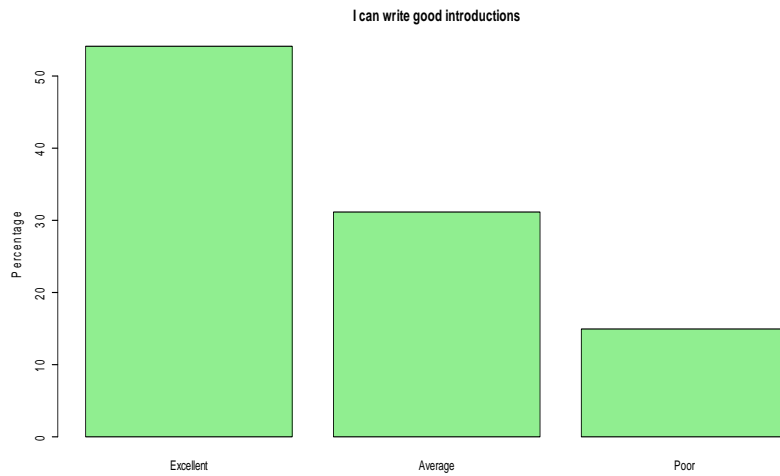
Figure 5.20 Writing introductions

The next question asked the respondents to rate whether they are capable of writing well-structured paragraphs. Table 5.21 and Figure 5.21 show that 50% of the respondents rated themselves high in the category of 'Excellent', while 18% regarded themselves as 'Poor' in this respect.

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Table 5.21 Writing well-structured paragraphs

Writing well-structured paragraphs	Frequency distribution	Percentage distribution
Excellent	38	50%
Average	24	32%
Poor	13	18%
Total for all	**75**	**100%**
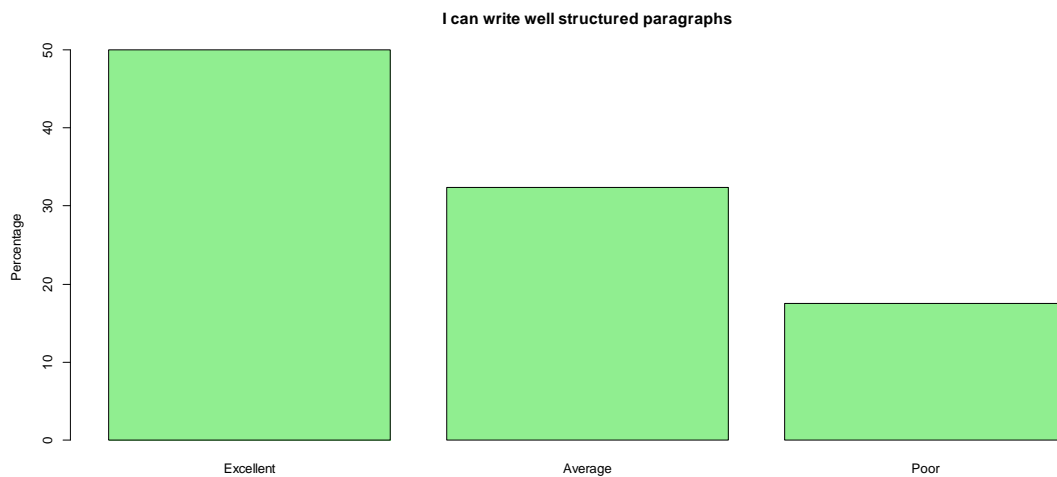
Figure 5.21 Writing structured paragraphs

On the question of organising ideas, the results as shown in Table 5.22 and Figure 5.22 reveal that 54% of the respondents scored themselves in the highest category of 'Excellent', with 22% in the 'Average' and 24% in the 'Poor' categories. It is noticeable that more students regarded themselves as 'Poor' in the regard, than as 'Average'.

Table 5.22 Organising ideas

Logically organising ideas	Frequency distribution	Percentage distribution
Excellent	41	54%
Average	16	22%
Poor	18	24%
Total for all	**75**	**100%**

I can logically organise my ideas when I write paragraphs
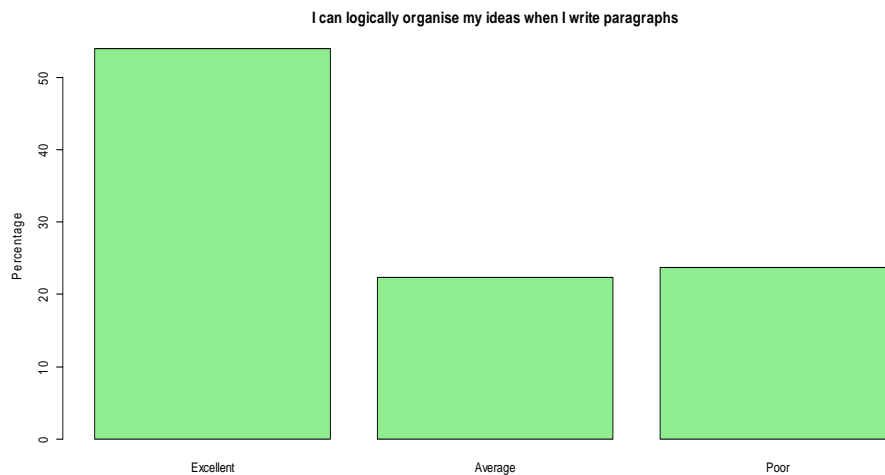
Figure 5.22 Organising ideas

The following question asked the respondents to rate themselves on their use of a variety of sentence structures when writing. Table 5.23 and Figure 5.23 below show that 57% of the respondents scored themselves in the category of 'Excellent', with 33% in the 'Average' division, and 10% in the 'Poor' category. Once more, the statistical analysis presents the participants as persons who regard themselves as capable of using a variety of correct sentence structures when they write their essays or assignments.

Table 5.23 Use a variety of sentence structures

Use of sentence structures	Frequency distribution	Percentage distribution
Excellent	43	57%
Average	25	33%
Poor	7	10%
Total for all	**75**	**100%**
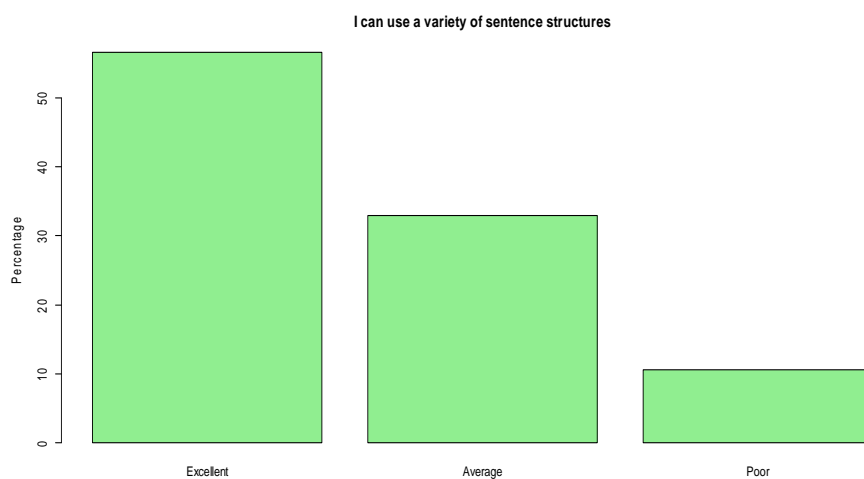
Figure 5.23 Use a variety of sentence structures

Table 5.24 and Figure 5.24 below show that the respondents did not, in the category of in-text referencing, rate themselves as highly as for previous items. Less than half of the respondents (45%) scored themselves in the category of 'Excellent'. Also, more respondents (29%) regarded themselves as 'Poor' as far as in-text referencing is concerned, than as 'Average' (26%). The analysis shows that some of the participants were aware of what they were struggling with; for instance, they were not ashamed to indicate that they have a problem with in-text referencing, as indicated in the table below.

I can logically organise my ideas when I write paragraphs
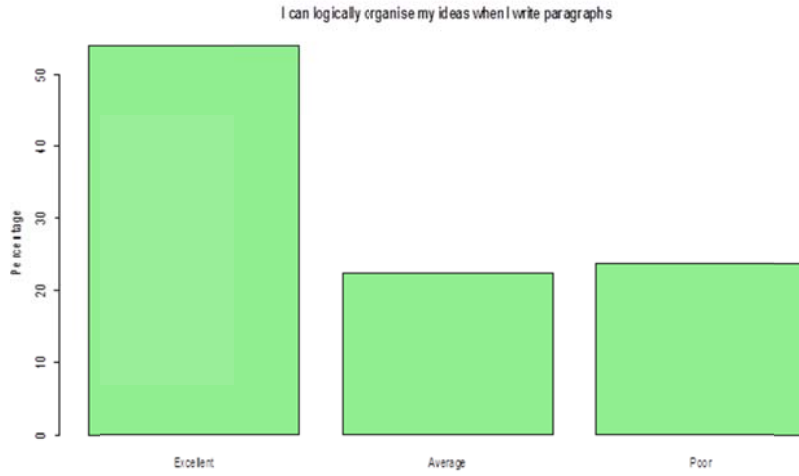
Table 5.24 In-text referencing

Correct in-text referencing	Frequency distribution	Percentage distribution
Excellent	33	45%
Average	20	26%
Poor	22	29%
Total for all	**75**	**100%**

I can write correct in text referencing
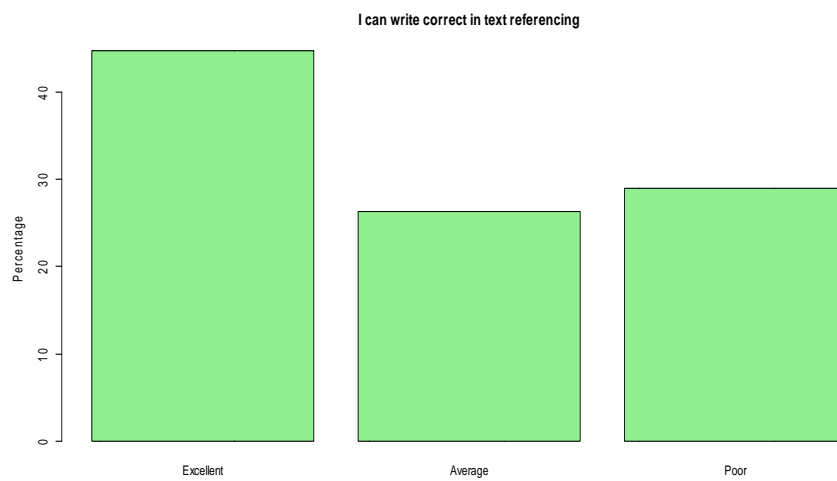
Figure 5.24 In-text referencing

As shown in Table 5.25 and Figure 5.25 below, the respondents also had less confidence in their ability to paraphrase information. Only 46% scored themselves in the category of 'Excellent', with 28% of the respondents regarding their ability in this area as 'Poor'.

Table 5.25 Paraphrasing information

Paraphrasing information	Frequency distribution	Percentage distribution
Excellent	34	46%
Average	20	26%
Poor	21	28%
Total for all	**75**	**100%**
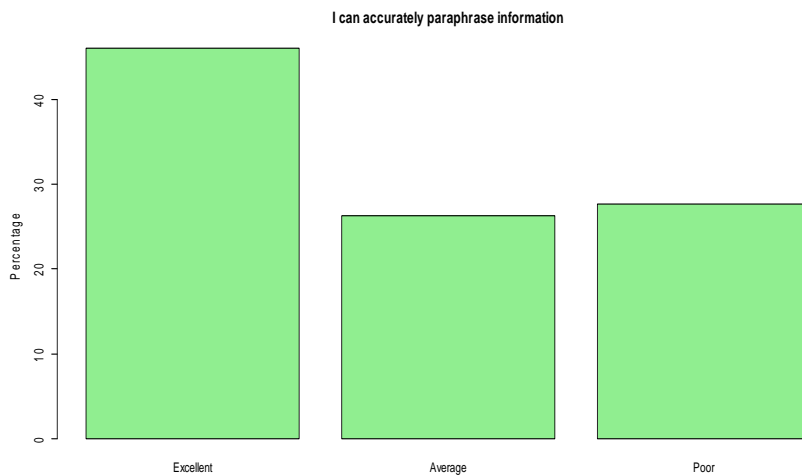
Figure 5.25 Paraphrasing Information

It can be seen from the data in Table 5.26 and Figure 5.26 below that the respondents also were less confident about compiling bibliographies. Only 43% of the respondents graded themselves in the category of 'Excellent', with 29% in the 'Poor' category and 28% in the 'Average' category.

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Table 5.26 Compiling a bibliography

Compile a bibliography	Frequency distribution	Percentage distribution
Excellent	32	43%
Average	21	28%
Poor	22	29%
Total for all	**75**	**100%**
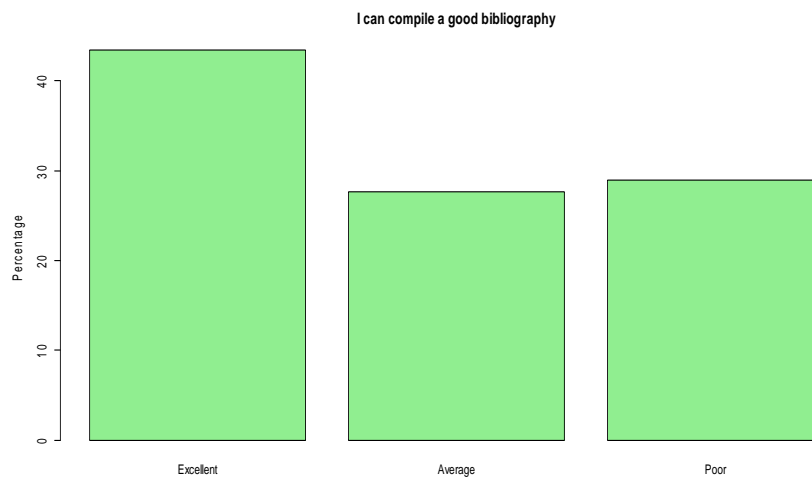
Figure 5.26 Compiling a bibliography

The next skill respondents had to rate was how to write correct academic conclusions. The results of the item are illustrated in Table 5.27 and Figure 5.27 below. Once again, less than half of the participants (46%) rated themselves highly in this regard. The 'Average' category followed with 30%, while 22% of the respondents fell in the category of 'Poor'. The analysis shows that not all the respondents are capable of writing correct academic conclusions.

Table 5.27 Writing conclusions

Write conclusions	Frequency distribution	Percentage distribution
Excellent	36	48%
Average	23	30%
Poor	16	22%
Total for all	**75**	**100%**
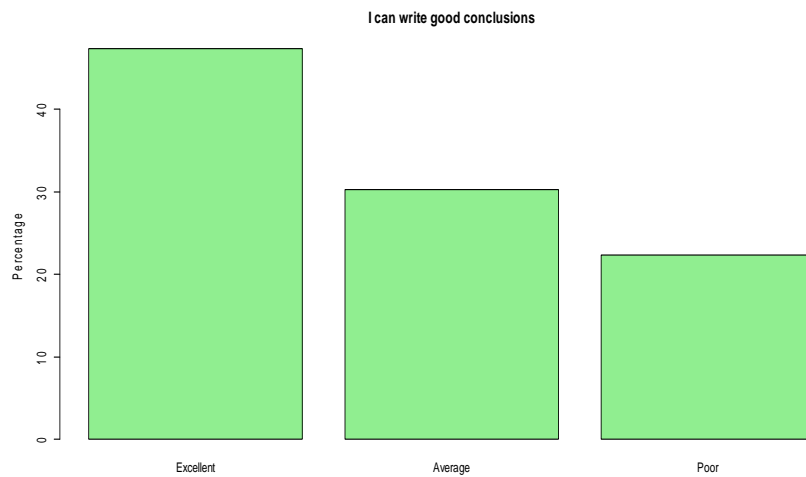
Figure 5.27 Writing conclusions

The next item asked respondents about their ability to effectively revise their own written work. The results, as shown in Table 5.28 and Figure 5.28 below, indicate a lack of confidence with only 45% of the respondents scoring themselves in the category of 'Excellent', with 30% in the 'Average' category and 25% in the 'Poor' category.

Table 5.28 Revising written work

Revise Written Work	Frequency distribution	Percentage distribution
Excellent	34	45%
Average	23	30%
Poor	18	25%
Total for all	**75**	**100%**
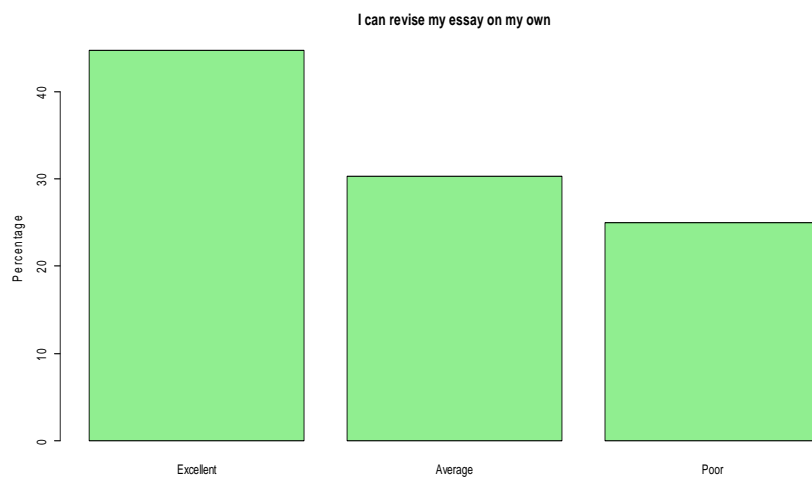
Figure 5.28 Revising written work

The following question asked the respondents to rate themselves in terms of the ability to organise paragraphs. Table 5.29 and Figure 5.29 below indicate that 44% of the respondents graded themselves highly in the category of 'Excellent', with 34% in the 'Average' category, and 22% in the 'Poor' category.

Table 5.29 Organising paragraphs

Organising paragraphs	Frequency distribution	Percentage distribution
Excellent	33	46%
Average	26	34%
Poor	16	22%
Total for all	**75**	**100%**
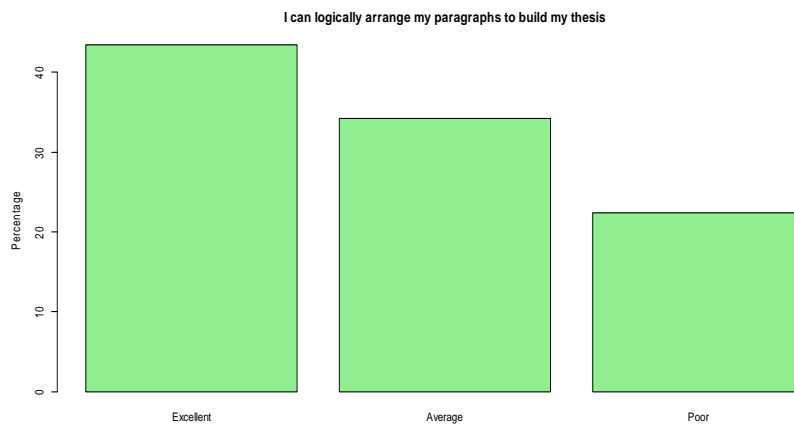
Figure 5.29 Organising paragraphs

Table 5.30 and Figure 5.30 present the breakdown of the results where the respondents were asked to rate improvement in their report writing after making use of the Writing Centre services. More than half of the respondents (52%) rated their improvement in the category of 'Excellent', followed by 25% in the group of 'Average' and 23% as 'Poor'.

Table 5.30 Report writing

Report writing marks improvement	Frequency distribution	Percentage distribution
Excellent	39	52%
Average	16	25%
Poor	17	23%
Total for all	**75**	**100%**
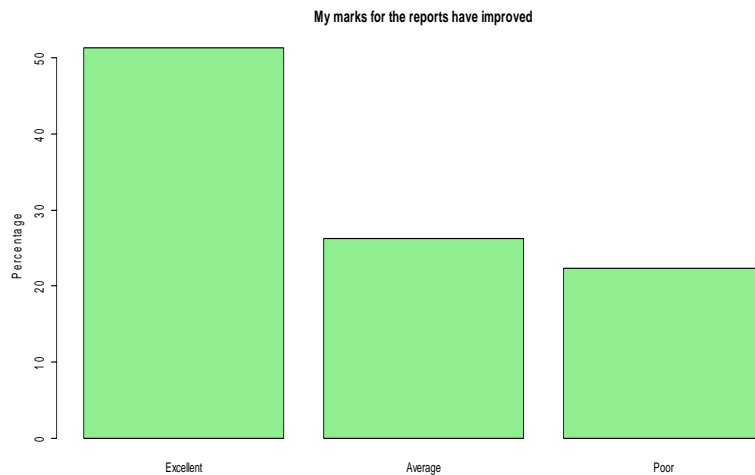
Figure 5.30 Report writing

Table 5.31 and Figure 5.31 below present an overview of the results where the respondents were asked to rate themselves on the question of time management. A relatively low percentage of respondents (43%) graded themselves highly in this regard. Almost the same proportion (41%) rated themselves in the 'Average' category, while the responses in the 'Poor' category represented 16% of the total.

Table 5.31Time management

Time Management	Frequency distribution	Percentage distribution
Excellent	33	43%
Average	31	41%
Poor	11	16%
Total for all	**75**	**100%**
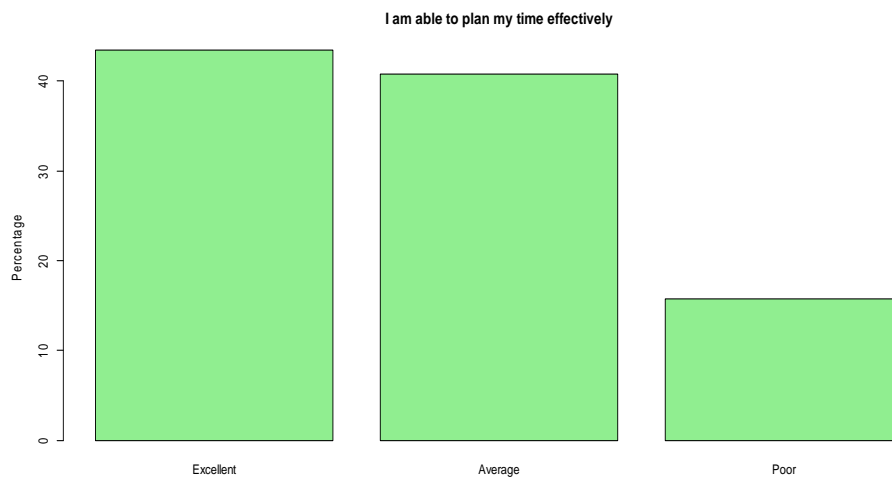
Figure 5.31Time management

Table 5.32 and Figure 5.32 reflect the results obtained from the analysis of the question of whether respondents can use active learning methods. More than half of the responses fell in the 'Excellent' category with 31% in the 'Average' and 17% in the 'Poor' category. As it can be seen in Table 5.32 below, the respondents are evidently persons who use active learning methods.

Table 5.32 Using active learning methods

Use active learning methods	Frequency distribution	Percentage distribution
Excellent	39	52%
Average	24	31%
Poor	12	17%
Total for all	**75**	**100%**
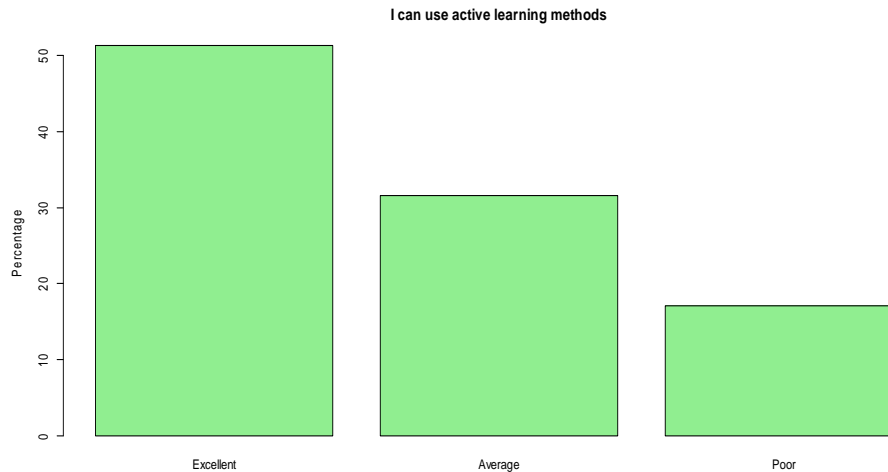
Figure 5.32 Using active learning methods

Lastly, in this section, the participants were asked to grade themselves on whether their marks had improved after making use of the Writing Centre services. From Table 5.33 and Figure 5.33, it can be seen that the respondents graded themselves highly in the 'Excellent' category with 39 in the frequency distribution and 52%, followed by 19 in the 'Average' category with 29%. The lowest in the division of 'Poor' is 17, with the frequency distribution of 23%. The analysis of the results reveals that the respondents thought that their marks had improved after they have been to the Writing Centre for help.

Table 5.33 Essay marks improvement

Essay marks improvement	Frequency distribution	Percentage distribution
Excellent	39	52%
Average	19	25%
Poor	17	23%
Total for all	**75**	**100%**
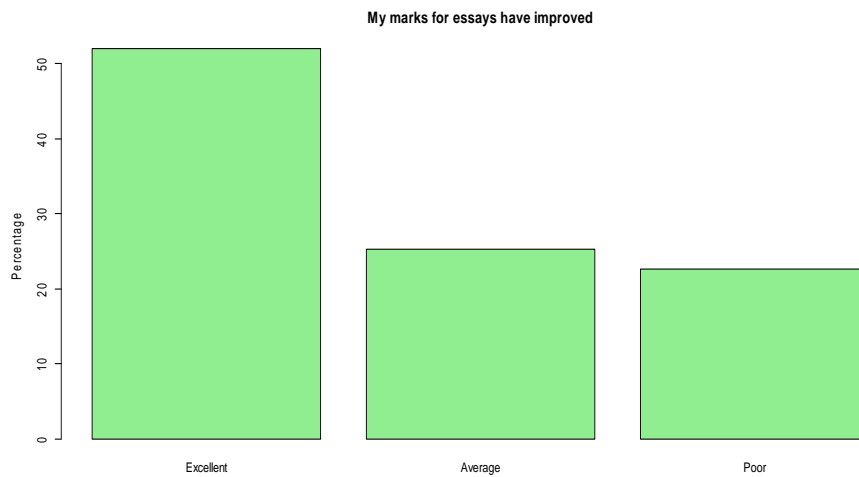
Figure 5.33 Essay marks improvement

5.2.15 Evaluation of the services offered by the Writing Centre

Table 5.34 and the graph in Figure 5.34 below illustrate the statistical analysis of the evaluation of the Writing Centre services by respondents.

Table 5.34 Writing Centre overall service

Rating the overall service of the Writing Centre	Frequency distribution	Percentage distribution
Excellent	32	43%
Good	26	29%
Average	11	18%
Fair	5	8%
Poor	1	2%
Total for all	**75**	**100%**

How do you rate the overall service of the Writing Centre?
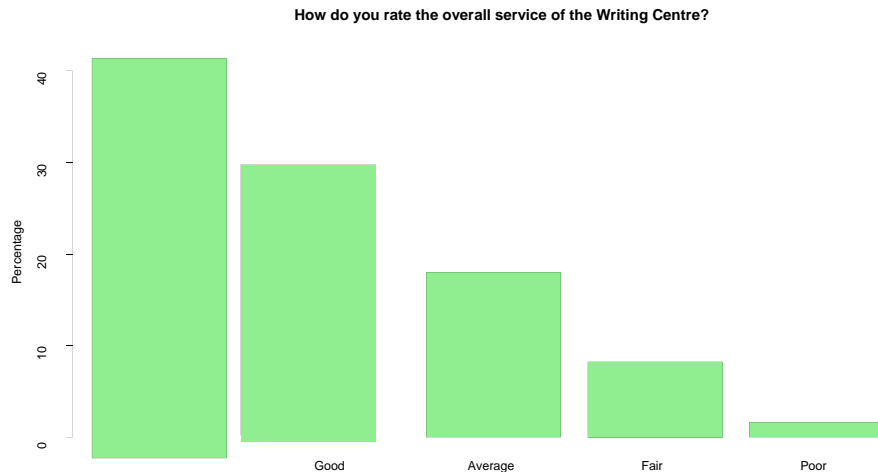
Figure 5.34 Writing Centre overall service

It can be seen from the data in Table 5.34 and Figure 5.34 that the majority of the respondents rated the services of the Writing Centre positively. The 'Excellent' classification has a frequency distribution of 32 and (43%) distribution. The respondents seemed to be happy with the services of the Writing Centre as shown by their high response rate in the "good" category of 26 in the frequency distribution and 29% distribution. Table 5.34 shows the minority of 1 in the frequency distribution with 1% response rate in the 'Poor' category. It can be said that students are generally happy with the services of the Writing Centre. When the participants were asked about the overall services of the Writing Centre, the majority

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(about 90%) commented that the Writing Centre does help students with their academic writing. Other responses to this question were the following:

"Because it's the only place I know to help us in writing."

" "Writing Centre provides foundation for a great and overall final review of article before submission."

"Fairly good informative and guides you accordingly."

"It upgrades the writing skill to meet the required skills the university expects."

" "They know how to help students with their writing. The tutors\lecturers that evaluate the work are helpful with their advice and recommendations."

"From my experience I excel what I can say was there for because they are their best to make sure that you are happy."

"Because I learn something new whenever I attend Writing Centre."

In their account of the services of the Writing Centre, there were some negative comments from the participants about the overall services of the Writing Centre. Some participants argued as follows:

"Depending on who you consult often you get people who don't care of what they are doing and have bad manners."

"Because they delay therefore their service is not much helpful."

"There are still a number of computers that do not work in the Centre, as soon as those are fixed and readily available for sure the service will be excellent."

"Writing Centre hardly available when needed."

"Cards don't work; PCs are slow; nobody takes responsibility."

"Our appointment never goes as planned, the appointment was for 09:00, and he only showed up at 09:30. When the appointment is for 9:00-10:00 he doesn't help you during that time, and he changes it as he feels."

Two participants responded with mixed reactions to the question. One participant commented that:

"sometimes you get good service and sometimes you don't get it at all."

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5.2.16 Functionality of computers in the Writing Centre

Tables 5.35.1, 5.35.2 and 5.35.3 and Figure 5.35 below illustrate the statistical analysis on the question of the functionality of the computers in the Writing Centre.

Table 5.35.1 Functionality of the computers Bellville

Functionality of computers in the Writing Centre Bellville	Frequency distribution	Percentage distribution
No	8	12%
Yes	35	51%
Total	**43**	**63%**

Table 5.35.2 Functionality of the computers Tygerberg

Functionality of computers in the Writing Centre Tygerberg	Frequency distribution	Percentage distribution
No	3	4%
Yes	12	14%
Total	**15**	**18%**

Table 5.35.3 Functionality of the computers Cape Town

Functionality of computers in the Writing Centre Cape Town	Frequency distribution	Percentage distribution
No	2	3%
Yes	15	16%
Total	**17**	**19%**

The next question asked the respondents about the functionality of the computers in the Writing Centre in their respective campuses. The statistical calculations from Table 5.35.1 to 5.35.3 indicate that the majority of respondents on all campuses do not have problems with computers that are not working.

5.2.17 Software installed on the computers

Tables 5.36.1, 5.36.2 and 5.36.3 and the graph in Figure 5.36 below show the statistical representation of the responses to the question on the functionality of the software that was installed on the computers.

Table 5.36.1 Software installed on the computers, Bellville

Software installed on the computers Bellville	Frequency distribution	Percentage distribution
No	3	4%
Yes	39	50%
Total	**42**	**54%**

Table 5.36.2 Software installed on the computers, Tygerberg

Software installed on the computers Tygerberg	Frequency distribution	Percentage distribution
No	8	10%
Yes	6	8%
Total	**14**	**18%**

Table 5.36.3 Software installed on the computers, Cape Town

Software installed on the computers Cape Town	Frequency distribution	Percentage distribution
No	1	2%
Yes	18	26%

Total	19	28%
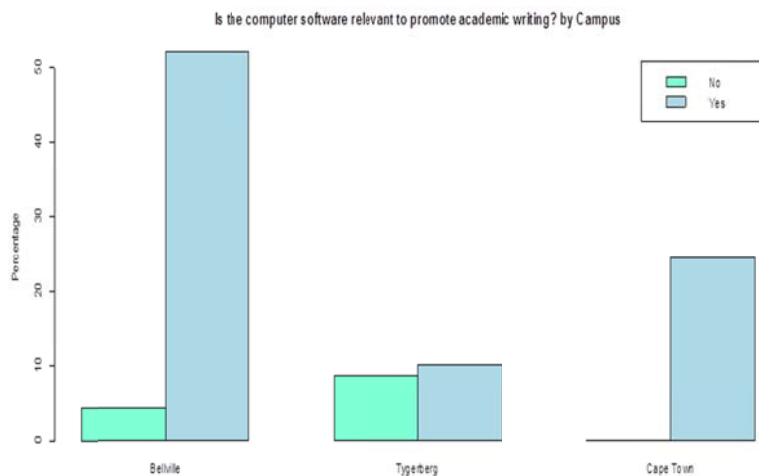
Figure 5.36 Software installed on the computers

Tables 5.36.1, 5.36.2 and 5.36.3 and Figure 5.36 represent the participants' responses to the question about the functionality of the software in the Writing Centre. More than 90% of the respondents commented positively on the functionality of the software in the two campuses. The Bellville campus has the highest positive frequency distribution of 34 (50%), followed by the Cape Town campus with a frequency distribution of 7 (10%). Interestingly, the Tygerberg campus has the highest frequency distribution of 7 (10%) in the 'No' category. The analysis of the tables shows that the respondents from the Tygerberg campus are not satisfied with the software that is installed on the computers, while the respondents from the Bellville and Cape Town campuses are satisfied with the software that is installed on the computers.

5.2.18 Software relevant for academic purposes (reading)

Tables 5.37.1, 5.37.2 and 5.37.2 and Figure 5.37 below explain the software as a mechanism to improve student writing. The responses of the participants on the question related to the software that is installed on the computers in the Writing Centre, and whether it is relevant for academic reading.

Table 5.37.1 Software relevant for academic reading, Bellville

Software installed relevant for academic reading, Bellville	Frequency distribution	Percentage distribution
No	3	4%
Yes	39	52%
Total	**42**	**56%**

Table 5.37.2 Software relevant for academic reading, Tygerberg

Software installed relevant for academic reading, Tygerberg	Frequency distribution	Percentage distribution
No	6	8%
Yes	8	10%
Total	**14**	**18%**

Table: 5.37.3 Software relevant for academic reading, Cape Town

Software installed relevant for academic reading, Cape Town	Frequency distribution	Percentage distribution
No	1	2%
Yes	17	24%
Total	**19**	**26%**

Is the computer software relevant to promote reading? by Campus
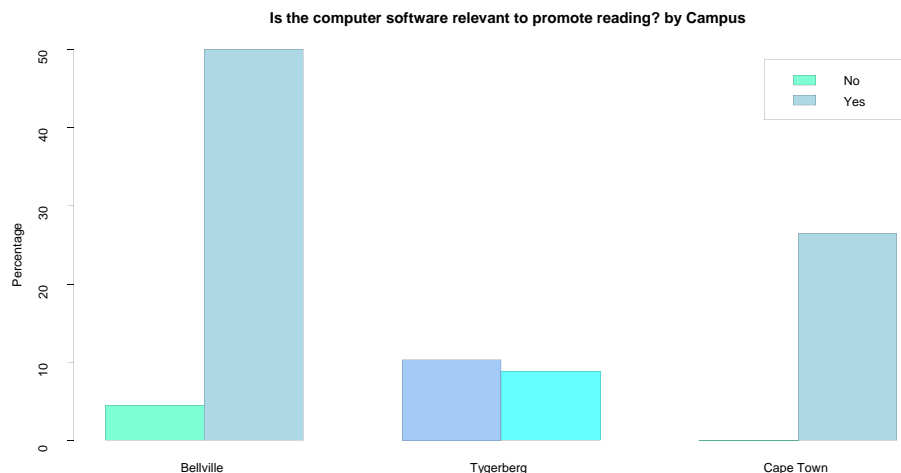
Figure 5.38 Software relevant for academic writing

Tables 5.38.1, 5.38.2 and 5.38.2 and Figure 5.38 above show that most students do not have problems with the software that is installed on the computers to promote academic reading in the Writing Centre. The results shown in Tables 5.38.1, 5.38.2 and 5.38.3 and Figure 5.38 above indicate the lowest percentage distribution of 1% in the 'No' category. The highest frequency distribution of 39, with 52%, is in the 'Yes' category. The respondents from the Cape Town campus do not seem to have problems with the software that is installed on the computers, as shown by the frequency distribution of 1 in the 'No' category, with 2%. As shown by the graph and the tables above, the Tygerberg campus has a frequency distribution of 6 in the 'No' category and 8 in the 'Yes' category. This indicates that on this campus there are some students that are not completely satisfied with the software that is installed on the computers, while the others are more satisfied.

5.2.19 Time allocated for student consultations

Tables 5.39.1, 5.39.2 and 5.39.3 and the graph in Figure 5.39 below summarises the responses of the students regarding the adequacy of the time allocated for writing consultation per campus.

Table 5.39.1 Time allocated for student consultation, Bellville

Time allocated for consultation, Bellville	Frequency distribution	Percentage distribution
No	3	5%
Yes	37	47%
Total	**40**	**52%**

Table 5.39.2 Time allocated for student consultation, Tygerberg

Time allocated for consultation, Tygerberg	Frequency distribution	Percentage distribution
No	2	4%
Yes	15	17%
Total	**17**	**21**

Table 5.39.3 Time allocated for student consultation, Cape Town

Time allocated for consultation, Cape Town	Frequency distribution	Percentage distribution
No	2	4%
Yes	16	23%
Total	**18**	**27%**

Is the time allocated for student consultation enough for you? by Campus
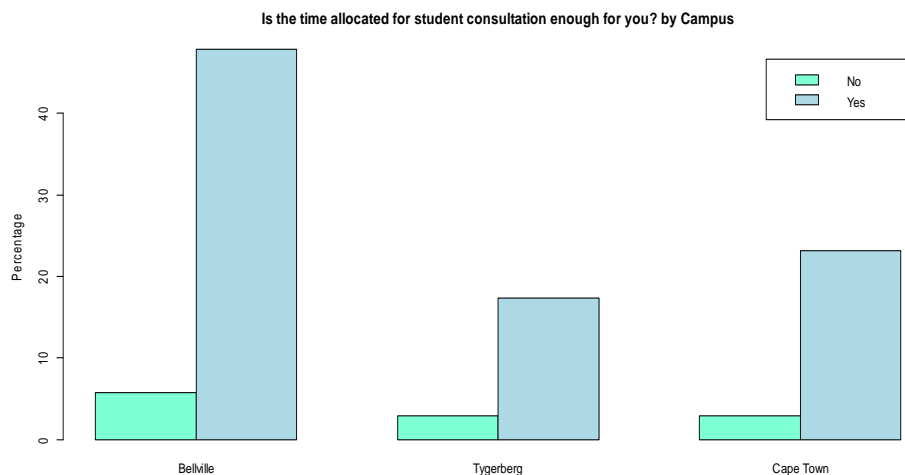
Figure 5.39 Time allocated for student consultation

The calculations from Table 5.39.1, 5.39.2, 5.39.3 and Figure 5.39 above suggest that a large majority of students do not have problems with the time that is allocated for their consultation in the Writing Centre. In total 87% of all respondents indicated their satisfaction with the time that is allocated for the one-on-one writing consultation. There were no major differences between the campuses on this item, although the responses from the Bellville campus demonstrated the highest satisfaction. The high levels of satisfaction are illustrated as follows:

> " "It is enough because you have to think of other people/students who are in need of the computer allocated to you."

> ""Because they are able to get all the information that is required for that particular research or assignment."

> "I would say yes, but it depends on the module, if the module is difficult, then the time seems short."

> " "They help until you are okay or reschedule if you need more help."

> "The tutors read and correct the tasks ahead of time."

A minority of 13% of the participants were dissatisfied and commented as follows:

> "You cannot go through all of your work when consulting."

> "Most of the time you find a consultant having more people that he/she can handle so the person ends up limiting his/her consulting hours."

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"Only Tuesdays and Thursday are not enough, you have to make an appointment which is 30-60 mins and everyone doesn't get the chance to see him."

5.2.20   Improving the Writing Centre service

Finally, the respondents were asked how the Writing Centre can improve its services. Table 5.40 below summarises the respondents' views and suggestions on how the Writing Centre can improve its services to the university community.

Table 5.40 Improving the Writing Centre service

Improving the Writing Centre service	Rankings
Writing workshops	46
Writing consultants	45
Booking flexibility	43
Install writing software	35
IT assistants	35
Install reading software	28
Keep noise down	25

The participants were asked to rank their responses by placing them in order of their preference and importance. The level of their importance helped the researcher to assess what is most important and what needs to be improved in the Writing Centre. Table 5.40 shows that many respondents suggested that the Writing Centre needs to improve in the area of facilitating or providing writing workshops to students, with the highest ranking of 46. Secondly, the need for more writing consultants was highlighted by respondents.

One interesting finding is that the booking system is rated third with the position of 43. This finding can be compared with the finding from the data in Table 5.10, where the respondents were satisfied with the current booking system of the Writing Centre. It has a frequency distribution of 48 and 64% satisfaction, but surprisingly the participants suggested that the Writing Centre needs to improve in the booking system.

There is no significant difference between the suggestions of improving the IT assistants and installing writing software. The above-mentioned categories are ranked the same with a frequency distribution of 35. From this data, it is clear that the suggestions to install reading software and keep the noise level in the Writing Centre have the lowest ratings (see Table 54.2).

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The data from Table 5.32 can be compared to the data from Table 5.1.1 which show that students are aware of the services that are provided by the Writing Centre, and they seem to know what they want from the Centre.

A few of the respondents recommended that the Writing Centre should have a 24-hour service. One respondent went further and commented as follows:

> "The Writing Centre itself must be on its own building where there can be no any others who are there to cause interruptions to other students. Bear in mind that others are there on their own for their final year of studies to achieve their qualifications"

Another participant's comment was:

> "The Writing Centre must help students as much as they can."

Another respondent stated:

> "Get someone who can do a proper job with assisting in our assignments."

5.3   CONCLUSION

From the data that were interpreted in this chapter it can be concluded that the students are quite satisfied with the services that the Writing Centre renders to the CPUT community. Some of the respondents felt that the Writing Centre is the only place on campus which is helping students with academic writing.

Yet, there are some dissenting views and suggestions that the Writing Centre does need to improve its services. Some respondents mentioned that the Writing Centre must be open 24 hours a day and it must be in its own building to avoid disruptions. Furthermore, some respondents felt that the Writing Centre needs to employ persons who are willing to assist students with their academic writing development. Some respondents suggested that the Writing Centre needs to increase its consultation times with students. Generally, it can be concluded that the student respondents' value and appreciate the services offered by the Writing Centre. On the other hand, it became evident from the findings of the empirical study that the Writing Centre needs to market its services better, including on the university website to inform students about the services it offers.

The next chapter, Chapter 6, will present the comparative analysis of students' scripts before and after the Writing Centre intervention.

CHAPTER 6

PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF PHASE 2 RESULTS: ANALYSIS OF STUDENTS' SCRIPTS BEFORE AND AFTER THE WRITING CENTRE INTERVENTION

6.1 INTRODUCTION

Literature on writing centres tends to focus on developing students writing rather than evaluating the impact of the writing centre intervention on students' academic writing, as it is extraordinary difficult to determine if interventions alone are responsible for changes in writing. North (2001:69) notes that the objective of a writing centre is to assist writers in developing good academic writing skills. Barnett and Blummer (2001: 69) further state that the job of the writing centre is to produce better writers, not better writing. In addition to what is mentioned above, Barnett and Blummer (2001; 69) assert that the writing centre would look beyond the particular project through a particular text and see it as the occasion for addressing their primary concern, which is the process by which a product is produced. The objective of this current research was to determine the impact of the CPUT Writing Centre on students' academic writing. This chapter presents the results of analyses of students' scripts collected from first-year to B-Tech students. The chapter begins by evaluating students' first drafts prior to the Writing Centre intervention, and then compares the students' first drafts with the second drafts after the Writing Centre intervention. The idea is to determine qualitative difference in the drafts, as this will assist in establishing the impact of the Writing Centre on students' writing.

6.2 OVERVIEW OF STUDENTS' ACADEMIC ESSAYS AND GRADING CRITERIA

From each year group (1st, 2nd, 3rd and 4th) two students were selected for the content analysis of their scripts. The first (pre-consultation) draft of each student's script was analysed and compared with the second (post-consultation) draft of the same script in order to ascertain whether the intervention at the Writing Centre had effected any improvements, and to what extent. The scripts that were analysed were from the following faculties: Engineering, Health and Wellness and Applied Science. Analysis of scripts was done by means of grading criteria adopted from Bachman's (1990) language and writing grading criteria. The reason for choosing Bachman's grading criteria is that Bachman's grading criteria is designed to assess

general writing ability, and it is designed and developed specifically to provide detailed information about the specific content domains that are covered in a given program

The table of student identification codes is presented in Table 6.1 below. The grading criteria that were used to evaluate essays or written text are presented in Table 6.2 below.

Table 6.1: Table of codes

Level of study	Code	Faculty	Course
1st year	Student A	Health and Wellness	Biomedical Sciences
1$^{st\ year}$	Student B	Health and Wellness	Biomedical Sciences
2nd year	Student C	Engineering	Building and Construction
2nd year	Student D	Engineering	Civil Engineering
3rd year	Student E	Health and Wellness	Biomedical Sciences
3rd year	Student F	Engineering	Civil Engineering
B-Tech	Student H	Engineering	Quantity
B-Tech	Student I	Applied Science	Food Technology

Table 6.2: Grading criteria for written texts

Themes identified in the scripts	Examples of themes identified
The quality and relevance of the ideas presented	Clear and consistent argument was maintained
Academic conventions	Referencing and quotations
Coherence and cohesion	Structure of the introduction and conclusion

Body paragraph contained a clear topic sentence	Whether ideas were developed, supported, and logically grouped in paragraphs
Accurate and appropriate application of grammar	Density of lexico-grammatical irregularities, and communicative effect
Range of sentence structures	Length of sentences structure
Appropriate punctuation.	Correct use of punctuation

Source: Bachman, 1990

The grading criteria are qualitative in nature, and fit perfectly with the discourse analysis performed at the Writing Centre. Analysis of discourse serves as a starting point for the improvement of students' writing. The goal of the Writing Centre is to address general academic writing conventions, values and beliefs as well as writing within the context of a specific discipline. The Writing Centre does not provide marks (quantitative feedback) on students' essays or projects, but it constructively improves upon the quality of student writing as well as the students' capability as lifelong writers.

6.3 ANALYSIS OF THE SCRIPTS: FIRST YEAR (STUDENT A's) WRITING BEFORE THE WRITING CENTRE INTERVENTION

6.3.1 Topic of the essay: "Spina bifida". It is a combined project of two academic subjects: Communication and Physiotherapy, Faculty of Health and Wellness Sciences.

As much as writing is a means of learning, it is also is a product of learning; a student's finished assignment displays his/her own learning and is a tool for learning. Through the process of writing, students can clarify their thoughts and refine their understanding of the module they are studying. At this level of study, first-year students are expected to be able to summarise, paraphrase and write good essays that contain all the features of essay writing for first-year students. Students are expected to be able to make reasoned arguments. This requires that students plan and organise their material before they begin to write, ensure that

their argument is coherent and that it engages directly with the question asked. In Health and Wellness Sciences students are expected to display competence in their writing.

The title of the essay discussed below in Figure 6.1 is "Spina bifida". It is a combined project for two subjects, Communication and Pathophysiology, from the Faculty of Health and Wellness Sciences. The assignment is given to first-year students to develop writing skills in communication as well as to synthesise the information they learnt in the module and to be able to summarise it by writing.

Figure 6.1 below shows how discourse was analysed from the introduction section of Student A's script. It also shows the type of feedback given by a practitioner at the Writing Centre.
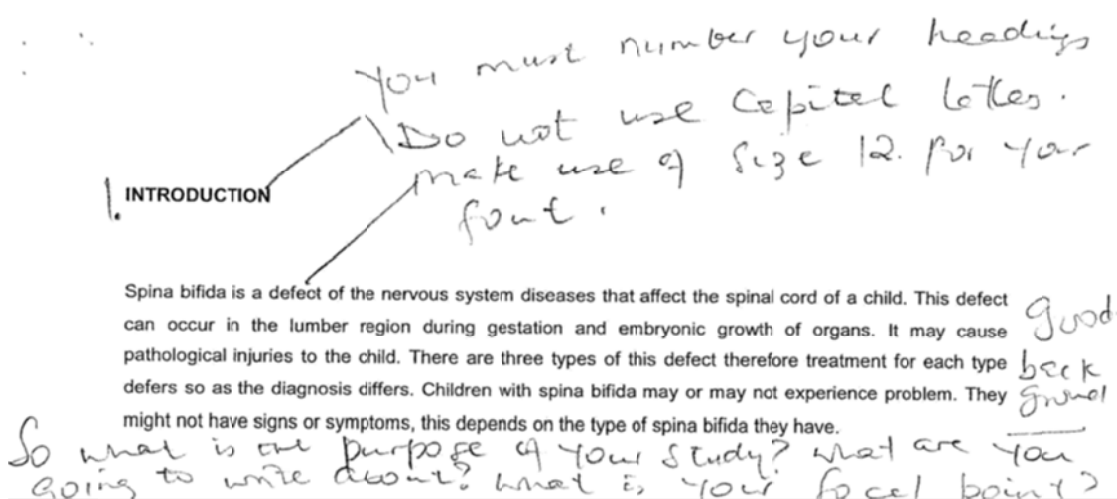
Figure 6.1 Student A's Introduction before Writing Centre feedback

From Student A's script one can see the definition of the main concept, Spina bifida. It goes on to provide a detailed explanation of the concept: "Spina bifida is a defect of the nervous system diseases that affect the spinal cord of a child." This definition would help the reader to understand the subject matter. However, Student A's introduction shows that he/she does not fully comprehend the technical requirements of writing in the Faculty of Health and Wellness Sciences. When writing in Health Sciences, a good introduction is often the key to a good essay. The first thing students are expected to do, is to define any complex or potentially ambiguous terms in the question, and as in any academic field, students need to use credible

sources of information to support what they are stating or claiming (Clark & Fischbach 2008).

The cover page of the first draft of Student A is not neatly typed and presented as a document that can be submitted for marking. It appeared that the student did not know the correct format of the cover page. The university logo was pulled to fit the whole line. Student A did not provide the correct personal details that are supposed to be typed on the cover page. (These cannot be revealed because of the anonymity clause of the research.) The cover page and the contents page of the essay are the most important units of the essay, because it provides information about the name of the author, the title and the due date. The title should be straightforward, and not contain too many words and information.

The introduction of the first draft does not contain a purpose statement. The introduction creates a good first impression about the paper that follows. It is a broad statement of the topic and the argument with a thesis statement, which is the specific claim that students must make in response to the assignment question.

The introduction of Student A's essay starts off with a definition of the main concept. In the absence of references, one does not know whether the definition is legitimate. The practitioner that provided feedback on the draft asked crucial questions, "So, what is the purpose of your study?", "What are you going to write about?" and "What is your focal point?" These questions are instrumental for student engagement and reflection. Furthermore, the introduction provides what the practitioner remarked as a "good background". The reader would be in a position to understand the seriousness of the health condition, the areas in which it occurs in the child's body and the fact that not every child with spina bifida will develop complications.

Figure 6.2 below shows how academic conventions are evaluated in Student A's writing. Student A did not apply academic conventions in the document. The paragraph is written without acknowledging the sources, and quotations are ignored by Student A. The questions from the Writing Centre practitioner in Figure 6.2 ("Said who?" and "Source?") at the end of the paragraph indicate the interaction of the writing consultant and the student in determining the lack of academic convention in the document.
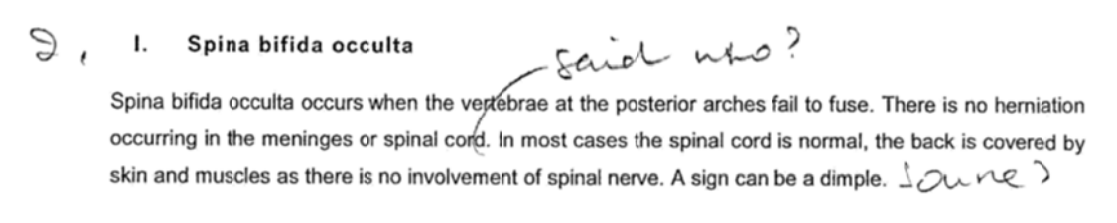
Figure 6.2 Paragraph without referencing

6.4   ANALYSIS OF FIRST YEAR STUDENT (STUDENT A's) WRITING AFTER WRITING CENTRE INTERVENTION

6.4.1   Topic of the essay: "Spina bifida". It is a combined project of two academic subjects: Communication and Physiotherapy, Faculty of Health and Wellness Sciences.

Student A was encouraged to work on the feedback and do the necessary corrections. After doing some revision and corrections on the first draft, the student managed to improve the introduction**.** The cover page of the second draft was of better quality with all the correct information provided. In the second draft, the student typed the personal information in a chronological order as required, and also provided the title of the essay which had not been provided in the first draft. The appearance of the second draft improved as compared to the one of the first draft.

Figure 6.3 below shows Student A's writing after the feedback from the Writing Centre.

Figure 6.3 Student A's introduction after Writing Centre feedback

The improvement in the second draft regarding the inclusion of the statement of purpose and focus area is clear. The introduction for the second draft demonstrated some coherence. It establishes the writer's proposition or intention clearly. The second draft states the purpose authoritatively and builds the argument stylishly. The objective of the study is stated as follows: "The purpose of the study is to evaluate the spina bifida defect and its causes", as it can be seen in Figure 6.3 above. However, nothing is said about its attainment in the conclusion, implied or explicit, thus leaving the reader to deduce, and this is a weakness in the student's academic writing.

In the first draft the headings were not numbered. The headings of the second draft were indented and numbered correctly. The quality and relevance of ideas were not clearly presented in the first and the second paragraph of the first draft. Student A used the same information of the introduction for the first paragraph of the body of the essay in the first draft, but made changes in the first paragraph of the body using the same heading, namely "Overview of the topic".

Academic conventions were not properly used by Student A in the first draft, as referencing and quotations were not used. Most sources were ignored and this touched on plagiarism. With the in-text referencing, the student did not adequately differentiate between author-prominent and information-prominent referencing. In-text referencing at the end of the information does not need an introduction of the author such as "according to author A or B". Some in-text referencing is not mentioned in the reference list and there are some sources which appear in the reference list that do not have in-text referencing. The student tried to make use of in-text referencing, which was still not correctly done. This can be regarded as an effort from the first-year student in the first term of the year.

The paragraph of the second draft had a clear and consistent argument as opposed to the first paragraph of the first draft.

The second paragraph of the second draft improved in terms of academic writing conventions. Student A acknowledged the sources even though the in-text referencing was incorrectly done. Figure 6. 4 shows Student A's writing improvement in the second attempt.

2. AN OVERVIEW OF THE TOPIC

According to Fraizer M.S and Drymkowski J.W (2008), the three types of spina bifida ~~which~~ are spina bifida occulta, meningocele, myelomeningocele. The malformation causes an opening of the spinal cord and a sac may stick out of the body filled with cerebrospinal fluid. This defect causes meninges to produce abnormally and this result in various tube defect occurring. In most cases spina bifida defect is discovered during the newborn's examination.

Figure 6.4 Inclusion of in-text referencing

Student A's first draft before the Writing Centre intervention was not coherent. The second draft was developed much better with the body that contained a clear topic sentence; the headings were developed and supported and they were logically grouped in paragraphs. This can be seen in Figure 6.5 below.

I.   Spina bifida occulta

said who?

Spina bifida occulta occurs when the vertebrae at the posterior arches fail to fuse. There is no herniation occurring in the meninges or spinal cord. In most cases the spinal cord is normal, the back is covered by skin and muscles as there is no involvement of spinal nerve. A sign can be a dimple. *Source?*

II.   Meningocele

In meningocele the failure of posterior portion to fuse in spinal column result in the exposure of the sac as it protrudes through the gap. The infant has no neurological problems as there is no spinal cord or neurologic involvement. The sac is filled with the fluid and may be fragile and rupture, it may cause future problems. *Source? You must acknowledge your sources.*

Figure 6. 5 Paragraphs with topic sentences

All the sentences from Figure 6.5 above are related in some way, and they tell the reader more about the key idea. The two paragraphs are complete. Correct punctuation is applied in the paragraphs above. Clear and consistent argument is maintained throughout the paragraphs.

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In the second draft, Student A seemed to be aware of using the correct academic conventions. All the paragraphs of the second draft contain in-text references. Nevertheless, the student did not correctly cite the sources, but at least an effort was made, as can be seen in Figure 6.6 below.

2.1 Spina bifida occulta

Spina bifida occulta occurs when the vertebrae at the posterior arches fail to fuse. There is no herniation occurring in the meninges or spinal cord. In most cases the spinal cord is normal, the back is covered by skin and muscles as there is no involvement of spinal nerve. A sign can be a dimple shown in the study of Fraizer M.S and Drymkowski J.W (2008).

Figure 6.6 Example of the incorrect use of in-text referencing

Spinal cord is a channel that connects the brain with the rest of the body. It is a part of the central ner system this means it contains neutral pathways which transmit impulses. Spinal cord is made u bundles of fibres. It starts from the end of the skull through a canal which is spine and it consis vertebrae this was investigated by Wyszynski (2005). The vertebrae protects the spinal cord from in and it is also covered by meninges. It can control numerous reflexes as it contains neutral circuit and help the individual to feel vibrations, hot and cold temperatures, sharp and dull sensations or sens arms. It supports weight and allows a person to bend with flexibility. It also allows a person to cc movements and other organs depend on it to function. Actions like reflex action which is a quake acti bring response to the injured area involves spinal cord but not the brain. Wyszynski (2005)

Figure 6. 7 Example of correct use of punctuation

Student A's writing does not seem to have a problem with the appropriate use of punctuation, at can be seen from Figure 6.7 above. Punctuation is about a series of conventions that make it easier for readers to follow the writer's train of thought. Punctuation helps with the organisation, sense and meaning making of the sentences into meaningful paragraphs. The appropriate application of punctuation in the piece of writing in Figure 6.7 is evident.

In the second draft, Student A, after using the suggestions that were provided by the Writing Centre practitioner, tried to make use of the correct and appropriate application of grammar.

The essay is well-structured and fluently written with a clear argument. This is shown in Figure 6. 8 below.

2.3 Myelomeningocele

According to Fletsher J and Brai T (2011) myelomengocele is a type of spina bifida which causes the protrusion of the meninges in the posterior portion of the lumber region in spinal column. Herniation occurs at the spinal cord and spinal nerves are involved. A sac is exposed to the outside environment.

Figure 6. 8 Correct use of grammar

Figure 6.9 below shows Student A's attempt to provide a conclusion that summarised the contents of body of the essay.

8. Conclusion

In conclusion, spina bifida can be a harmless deface or can cause serious injuries and problems in the person affected by the defect. It can cause paralysis and decreases mortality of the infants as most of children with myelomeningocele do not survive long. This is one of the defects that can change a persons life forever. Health of the person with this defect needs to be maintained and taken care off.

Figure 6. 9 Example of the correct paragraph after Writing Centre feedback

From the comparison of the first and the second draft of Student A's writing in relation to Bachman's (1990) grading criteria , it can be concluded that there is an improvement in Student A's writing. Even though the document is not well written and constructed, there are some features of academic writing that the student did follow and use properly, for example, demonstrating an understanding of the conventions of academic writing as can be seen in Figure 6.9 above.

6.5 ANALYSIS OF FIRST YEAR STUDENT (STUDENT B's) WRITING BEFORE THE WRITING CENTRE INTERVENTION

6.5.1 Topic of the essay: Medical laboratory science: Communication

This assignment is from the Faculty of Health and Wellness Sciences. The course is Biomedical Sciences. The lecturer is developing student's writing skills in the field of Biomedical Sciences, to enable students to present written information and not always rely on verbal communication. Students are expected to be able to write detailed essays that are well summarised, as well as to paraphrase texts to makes sense to the reader.

The cover page of Student B's writing is not presented properly. Student B seemed to struggle with the format of the cover page. On the cover page, the student provides an internet URL, the purpose of which is unclear to the reader.

On analysing Student B's document, using Bachman's (1990) grading criteria, it is evident that the introduction is very brief, hence it does not inform the reader what the essay or report is about. The focal point or the purpose of the essay is not known to the reader. Student B typed the title of the essay in the middle of the page, which has a potential to orientate the reader about the essay. The Writing Centre practitioner suggested that Student B remove the title of the essay from the centre of the page and to write the introduction correctly with a purpose statement to provide a focal point for the essay. This is seen from the comments of the Writing Centre practitioner: "What is the purpose of your writing, what are you going to write about?'

The essay did not have an introduction in the first draft. Figure 6.10 below reveals the first draft of Student B's writing where the student struggled with the writing of the introduction.

Handwritten annotations:

Here is your Introduction. This is not needed here

You must Your headings

Overview of cysticercosis

Cysticercosis is a tissue infection caused by the larvae stage, also known as cystericus or cyst, of the pork tape worm *Taenia Solium*. This infection occurs when the eggs or segments of *T. Solium* contaning the eggs are ingested by human or pigs. *T.Solium* invades the intestinal walls and then spreads throughout the rest of the body. This infection is usually termed according to where the tapeworm has localised, common areas are the muscles, eyes, brain and liver. Neurocysticercosis is the term used when cyst has developed in the central nervous system. Cyst may either invade the parenchymal tissue thus affecting the brain or it can invade the extra parenchymal tissue and causing damage to the eyes, spinal cord, subarachnoid space and the cerebrospinal fluid ventricles. When cyst localise in the intestinal walls it is referred to as teaniasis and when the muscles are infected it is known as cysticercosis. Cysticercosis can cause tender lumps in muscles whereas neurocysticercosis is more life threating, triggering epilepsy leading to stroke and eventually fatality.

Make use of its the space available font size 12

What is the focal point of you writing? What are you going to write about? What is the purpose of this essay?

Figure 6.10 Example of incorrect introduction

The first paragraph of the body of the first draft was written without any in-text referencing. Furthermore, the first draft was followed by the figure which was not labelled with the internet referencing next to it (see Figure 6.11).

2. Epidemiology *what about it? interesting referencing*

Humans may be infected with cyst in a various number of ways. Cysticercosis may be a foodborne infection, this happens when humans eat inadequately cooked pork from an infected pig or through consuming food or water contaminated with cyst. Cysticercosis can also be an autoinfection; this happens when a human is a carrier of the T.Solium and infects themselves with the eggs of that tapeworm. Cysticercosis is a world-wide infection but has high prevalence in places where pig cysticercosis is present. Some high risk areas are in West Africa, Latin America, Russia, Mexico, India, Pakistan, South East Asia and North East China. Cysticercosis is most common in rural developing areas with poor sanitation and where pigs live in very close contact with humans. *where is the source of this information*

(http://www.kidsnewtocanada.ca/ conditions/cysticercosis)

What does this picture stand for? what is it representing)

Figure a.
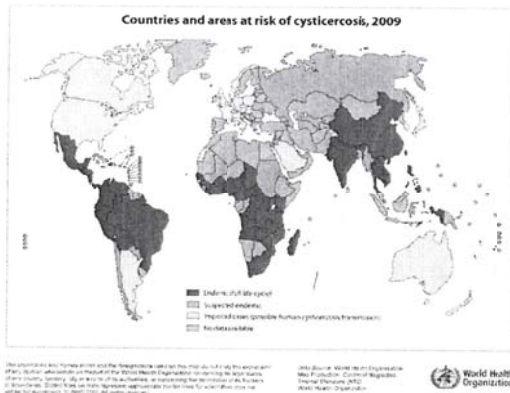
Figure 6.11 Example of incorrect use lof in-text referencing

The correct sentence structure and the jargon of the discipline is used in Figure 6.12, and Student B tried to explain the terminology used for the sake of the reader. The discourse used fits well with the language used in scientific writing of Health and Wellness Sciences. The headings of the first draft were, however, not coherent.

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2. Overview of cysticercosis

Cysticercosis is a tissue infection caused by the larvae stage, also known as cystericus or cyst, of the pork tape worm *Taenia Solium*. This infection occurs when the eggs or segments of *T. Solium* containing the eggs are ingested by human or pigs. *T.Solium* invades the intestinal walls and then spreads throughout the rest of the body. This infection is usually termed according to where the tapeworm has localised, common areas are the muscles, eyes, brain and liver. Neurocysticercosis is the term used when cyst has developed in the central nervous system. Cyst may either invade the parenchymal tissue thus affecting the brain or it can invade the extra parenchymal tissue and causing damage to the eyes, spinal cord, subarachnoid space and the cerebrospinal fluid ventricles.   When cyst localise in the intestinal walls it is referred to as teaniasis and when the muscles are infected it is known as cysticercosis.(Anon 3.2016).   Cysticercosis can cause tender lumps in muscles whereas neurocysticercosis is more life threating, triggering epilepsy leading to stroke and eventually fatality.(Anon 7.2016)

Figure 6.12 Incorrect use of Academic Conventions

In the first draft Student B seemed not to have understood the nature of the task, hence the ideas were not clearly defined. He/she seemed to have struggled with the information analysis of the topic. The main ideas were not expressed in clear topic sentences. The student did not show any understanding of the research in the first draft. From the themes that were identified to analyse the essay, Student B's failure to understand the task and not knowing how to use academic conventions resulted in many of the mistakes that occurred frequently in the document and that made the document difficult to understand. This can be seen in Figure 6.13 below.

2. Epidemiology what about it? interfering references

Humans may be infected with cyst in a various number of ways. Cysticercosis may be a foodborne infection, this happens when humans eat inadequately cooked pork from an infected pig or through consuming food or water contaminated with cyst. Cysticercosis can also be an autoinfection; this happens when a human is a carrier of the T.Solium and infects themselves with the eggs of that tapeworm. Cysticercosis is a world-wide infection but has high prevalence in places where pig cysticercosis is present. Some high risk areas are in West Africa, Latin America, Russia, Mexico, India, Pakistan, South East Asia and North East China. Cysticercosis is most common in rural developing areas with poor sanitation and where pigs live in very close contact with humans. Where is

Countries and areas at risk of cysticercosis, 2009

Figure 6.13 Example of paragraph with heading that does not make sense

The practitioner in the Writing Centre advised Student B to label the figure and explain what the figure represented. The student was also guided to number the heading of the paragraph and to specify the title so that it can make sense.

6.6   THE ANALYSIS OF FIRST YEAR STUDENT (STUDENT B's) WRITING AFTER THE WRITING CENTRE INTERVENTION

6.6.1   The title of the essay: Medical laboratory science: Communication

The assignment analysed below is the second draft of Student B's writing after he/she had been to the Writing Centre for help. The assignment is analysed to check if there are any improvements made by the student from the first draft. The cover page of the second draft improved after the student effected the changes that were suggested by the Writing Centre consultant.

In the second draft Student B made the following changes that were suggested by the writing consultant. The second draft has an introduction which has a title and the heading is numbered. In addition, Student B produced an introduction that has a purpose statement, which was not included in the first draft before the Writing Centre intervention. That can be seen in Figure 6.14 below.

1.   Introduction

Cysticercosis is a disease not commonly known by most, yet it can be life threating leading to blindness and fatality for those infected. This paper will give an overview of the disease and moreover review the epidemiology, pathogenesis, and laboratory test used to diagnose cysticercosis as well as the treatment used.

Figure 6.14 Example of the Introduction written with the purpose statement

In the second draft Student B managed to produce a well-structured essay. "The diagnosis of the diseases" came before the discussion on the treatment, unlike in the first draft where Student B did not mention anything about the diagnosis. This indicates progress in the writing of Student B in the second draft. This can be seen from Figure 6. 15 below. This

resonates with what North (1994) emphasised, namely that the aim of the Writing Centre is to teach writing as a process, not as a once-off product.

2. Overview of cysticercosis

Cysticercosis is a tissue infection caused by the larvae stage, also known as cystericus or cyst, of the pork tape worm *Taenia Solium*. This infection occurs when the eggs or segments of *T. Solium* containing the eggs are ingested by human or pigs. *T.Solium* invades the intestinal walls and then spreads throughout the rest of the body. This infection is usually termed according to where the tapeworm has localised, common areas are the muscles, eyes, brain and liver. Neurocysticercosis is the term used when cyst has developed in the central nervous system. Cyst may either invade the parenchymal tissue thus affecting the brain or it can invade the extra parenchymal tissue and causing damage to the eyes, spinal cord, subarachnoid space and the cerebrospinal fluid ventricles. When cyst localise in the intestinal walls it is referred to as teaniasis and when the muscles are infected it is known as cysticercosis.(Anon 3.2016). Cysticercosis can cause tender lumps in muscles whereas neurocysticercosis is more life threating, triggering epilepsy leading to stroke and eventually fatality.(Anon 7.2016)

Figure 6.15 Example of a correctly written paragraph

Figure 6.15 presents an extract in which Student B managed to make write a proper paragraph.

6. Diagnosis of cysticercosis

There are three ways in which cysticercosis can be diagnosed; radiography imaging, tissue biopsy or serology. Currently radiography imaging is by far the most effective way to diagnose neurocysticercosis. This is done using MRI or CT brain scans. In these scans as well as on tissue biopsy the cyst look like cigars or elongated grains of rice which are usually arranged in the direction of muscle fibres .The MRI scans are more accurate in showing the cysticerci at the base of the brain and cerebrospinal fluid spaces. CT scans are used to determine fewer or singular cysticercus. It however is not effective in finding cysticerci in smaller spaces like in the ventricles(Anon 3.2016). Blood test may also be used to detect infections but if it happens that the infection is light one then it may not be easily detected.(PM R.2016)

Figure 6.16 Use of incorrect in-text referencing

Both the first and the second drafts had no conclusion. In addition, academic conventions were not followed in the first draft. Since there was no purpose statement in the introduction

of the first draft, Student B also did not provide a conclusion to justify the hypothesis. Student B attempted to acknowledge the sources in the second draft, albeit incorrectly. He/she also provided a reference list at the end of the second draft, which he/she did not provide in the first draft of the essay. In the second draft, after the writing centre consultation, Student B used vocabulary that is appropriate, i.e. subject specific. Going back to the first draft, one can conclude that the first draft was flawed with many mistakes and there was no introduction to set the pace. Contrary to that, the second draft had an introduction that was followed by the body, which had coherent headings.

6.7   ANALYSIS OF SECOND YEAR STUDENT (STUDENT C's) WRITING BEFORE THE WRITING CENTRE INTERVENTION

6.7.1   Topic of the essay: The washing method/ method of test for specific gravity of soils, or the determination of the California bearing ratio for untreated soils and gravel soils.

The text that is analysed here is from Civil Engineering. The student is writing a report of an experiment that he/she conducted. In the Engineering field laboratory (lab) reports are the documents most frequently written by students. The lab report is not used only to record the expected and observed results, but to demonstrate the student's understanding of the experiment and his/her ability to interpret what is found in the experiment. The writing that is used in Civil Engineering is scientific and students are expected to write reports or essays that are scientific.

The introduction section in a report is supposed to state the objectives of the experiment and provide the reader with the background to the experiment. In addition, a good introduction also provides the reader with justification for why the work is carried out. The first draft of Student C's report does not include the background to the experiment. In addition, the introduction of the first draft is not properly presented according to the features of writing the introduction of the report as expected in the field of Civil Engineering. Figure 6.17 demonstrates the introduction that is not correctly presented.

2. INTRODUCTION

2.1. SCOPE OF THE REPORT

This lab report discusses the method of determining the Specific Gravity of soil by using a pycnometer.

Figure 6.17 Example of the incorrectly written introduction

The aim of this experiment was (is) to determine the specific gravity of a soil sample using a pycnometer.
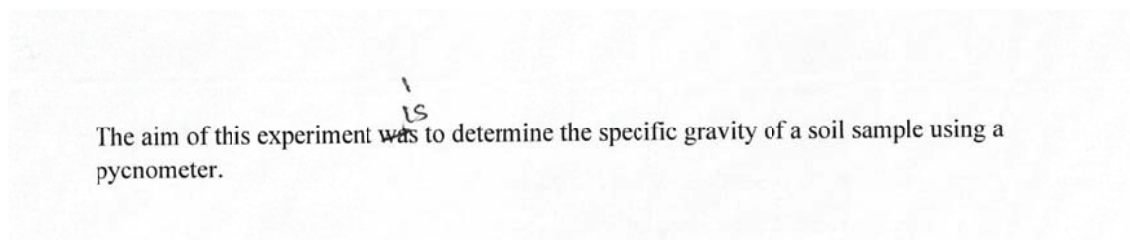
Figure 6.18 Example of the Aims section

Student C's first draft is a flimsy kind of a report with no background or introduction to the subject matter. It does not set any expectations for the reader. It discusses the aims, objectives and methodology before going to the introduction which is also insufficiently presented. Student C seemed to have understood the task, but the presentation of his/her points is not always appropriate.

The quality and relevance of Student C's work in the first draft is problematic. In the first draft Student C did not clearly and consistently argue his/her points in the correct way. Student C's paper had many errors that obscured the meaning. For example, errors with verb tenses made meanings difficult to follow.

The information was randomly selected, and presented with no sense of structure. Student C's writing in the first draft did not show any evidence of an understanding of academic writing conventions. The many errors in the document made it difficult to grasp the meaning. The information was randomly selected, and the main ideas are not expressed in clear topic sentences.

In the method section, the student is expected to explain how he or she has carried out the experiment in chronological order in a paragraph format. The student is meant to use clear paragraph structures that explain all steps in the order of their occurrences. Figure 6.19 below reveals the methods section that was structured with the use of arrows, but not in a full paragraph, which is unusual in academic writing.

Record the weight of the empty clean and dry density bottle/ pycnometer.	→	Place 40g of a dry soil sample obtained from the in the pycnometer.	→	Determine and record the weight of the density bottle with the dry soil.
↓				
Add distilled water to the pycnometer and the soak the sample for 10 minutes.	→	Determine the weight of the pycnometer and its contents.	→	Boil the contents for 10 minutes, to remove the captured air then let the contents cool off and record temperature.
↓				
Determine the weight of the pycnometer and distilled water.	→	Empty the pycnometer and clean it.		

Figure 6.19 Methods section that is incorrectly presented

From the data above, the specific gravity can be determined. Below is the procedure of calculating the specific gravity

The formula for specific gravity:

Where,   A: Mass of empty pycnometer (g)

            B: Mass of pycnometer and soil (g)

            C: Mass of pycnometer, soil and water (g)

            D: Mass of pycnometer filled with water (g)

Figure 6.20 Methods section that is written in point form

The methods section of the laboratory report is written in an imperative (command) form of the verb, and in the present tense as though it was copied directly from the lab manual, as can be seen in Figure 6.20 above. The student did not describe the method that was used to conduct the experiment. Figure 6.21 below shows how Student C wrote the methods section of the report.

5. METHOD

5.1. DETAILED METHOD

i. Weigh about 100 grams of the soil fines of the material which passed the 0.425mm sieve.

ii. Weigh the sample and transfer it to the glass beaker and add about 300 ml of water.

iii. Stir the soil-water mixture well with a glass rod and leave it to stand for at least two hours.

iv. Pour the suspension onto the 0,075 mm sieve and rinse the beaker with water until all the soil is transferred from the beaker to the sieve.

v. Wash the soil on the sieve carefully with water and rub it with the fingers against the side of the sieve until there is no further noticeable fragmentation of soil aggregations.

vi. The material retained on the sieve is washed quantitatively into a suitable dish and dried to constant mass.

vii. The oven-dried material is then sieved through the 0,075 mm sieve and the fraction retained and weighed, to the nearest 0,1gram.

6. RESULTS

6.1. COLLECTED DATA & CALCULATIONS

6.1.1. Washing Method Calculations

The percentage of soil particles passing through a 0.075mm sieve can be determined. Below is the procedure, describing the process.

The formula for percentage passing:

5

Figure 6.21 Methods section incorrectly written

The results section consists of calculations, graphs and tables. In Engineering, when writing the results section of the report the student is expected to use the calculations, graphs and

tables to explain the results from the experiment. Student C failed to present the results section in a proper way as deemed appropriate for report-writing in Engineering.

The student's writing in the first draft illustrates a lack of academic conventions as far as the report format is concerned. Perhaps the student was never guided in the application or transference of skills from task discourse (interpretation or analysis of assignment) to execution discourse (writing stage). The student did not provide any sources in the text, but provided a reference list at the end of the report. The misconception could be that the student did not know that he/she needed to consult other material when writing the report. Maybe the student thought the manual was the only material that he/she was supposed to use when doing the experiment, hence the lack of referencing materials. As can be seen from Figure 6.21 above, Student C used the manual provided to them in their department. One cannot blame the student for not using other material since he/she was reporting on what he/she had done him/herself. Figure 6.22 below shows the lack of reference material used by the student.

10. REFERENCES

○ *Neal, P. & Proctor, A. 2010. Advanced Geotechnical Engineering. Cape Town: CPUT.*

Figure 6.22 Example of one reference used

It can be concluded that Student C did not understand the academic conventions of report writing in the Engineering discipline. In the conclusion nothing is mentioned about the importance or the rationale of the practical for broader generalisability or application. This can be seen from Figure 6.23 below.

8. CONLUSIONS

In conclusion, the total percentage of the fine material passing through the 0.075mm sieve is 4.06% and can be G1, G2 or G3 on the TRH14 design table.

Figure 6.23 Example of inadequate conclusion

6.8   ANALYSIS OF SECOND YEAR STUDENT (STUDENT C's) WRITING AFTER THE CENTRE INTERVENTION

6.8.1   Topic of the essay: The washing method/ method of test for specific gravity of soils, or the determination of the California bearing ratio for untreated soils and gravel soils

In the second draft after visiting the Writing Centre, Student C tried to group the ideas in a logical way and the report was developed in different paragraphs. The headings of the paragraphs were identified with clear titles. Student C tried to break down the sentences into shorter, simple sentences that could make sense to the reader. The student made use of vocabulary that is appropriate for the task and that is specific to the subject. This means that Student C demonstrated knowledge of the vocabulary of the course he/she wrote about. The breakdown of the report into different segments is an indication of the student's understanding of the subject matter. This is particularly noticeable in the methodology. Student C learnt from his/her mistakes from the first draft. It is clear that there were some improvements in the writing of the second draft when compared to the first draft.

2. INTRODUCTION

2.1. SCOPE OF THE REPORT

This lab report discusses the method of determining the Specific Gravity of soil by using a pycnometer.

2.2. DEFINITIONS OF TERMS

Specific Gravity: The ratio of the mass of unit volume of soil at a stated temperature to the mass of the same volume of gas-free distilled water at a stated temperature.

Figure 6.24 Example of the improved introduction

6.9 ANALYSIS OF SECOND YEAR STUDENT (STUDENT D's) WRITING BEFORE THE WRITING CENTRE INTERVENTION

6.9.1 Topic of the essay: Civil and Surveying-Geotechnical Engineering. (Washing), Geotechnical Engineering. (CBR.), Geotechnical Engineering (Hydrometer). Geotechnical Engineering (DCP)

Figure 6.25 below presents an example of an introduction of an Engineering report which is incomplete. The report is based on an experiment on the washing of soil.
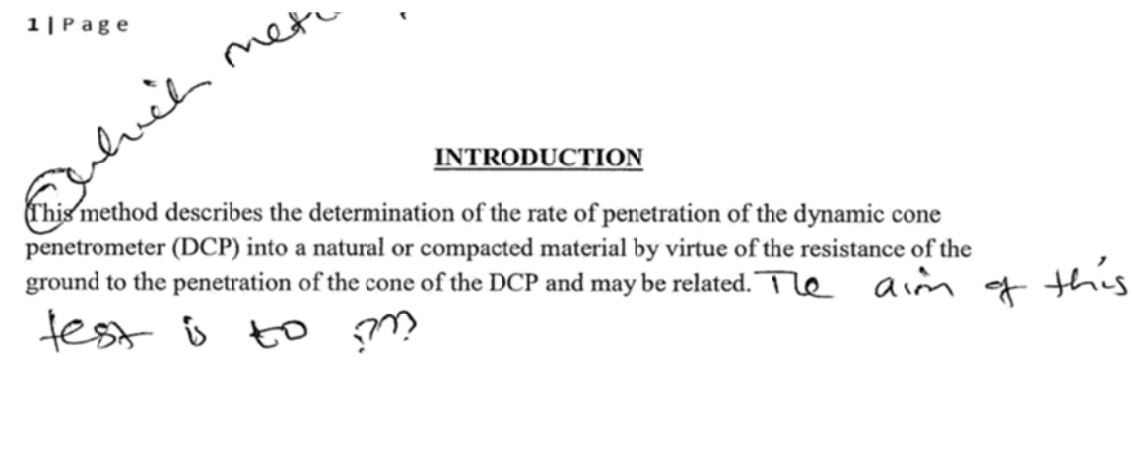
Figure 6.25 Example of the introduction without the purpose statement

Figure 6.25 above shows the introduction of a report that is not presented correctly, as it comes without a purpose statement. In the first draft Student D did not provide the purpose statement in the introduction. The student failed to provide the background information of the report. The report was very scanty.

Although the introduction does indicate the method used to determine the penetration rate of the dynamic core, it does not explain certain scientific terminology properly. It is also too short for an introduction of academic work, and it is unclear. The absence of discussion of methodology detracts from the substance of the introduction. The use of pronouns like "this" and "you" in the place of nouns further complicates matters. The use of "this" at the beginning of the sentence without first naming the subject is against the use of correct of syntatico-grammatical norms of Standard English. The introduction is wrapped up without stating the aims of the investigation.

The conclusion of Student D's paper is vague. It does not explain where the results come from. This is revealed in Figure 6.26 below. The student deviated from the norm of summarising the findings from the results, and he/she did not compare the aim of the experiment to form the conclusion. Student D compiled the conclusion from what he/she had seen happening in the experiment. Figure 6.26 shows the vague conclusion.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion the DCP provides essential information on the thickness and strength of the pavement layers using data collected during DCP tests. Its capability for dividing the road into smaller section of uniform characteristics greatly simplifies the task of interpreting DCP test data. Which could also be concluded that the results shows that the practical done is suitable for construction of pavements.

Figure 6.26 Example of the conclusion that is not well written

The report does not situate the practical within the context of the broader topic of writing reports in Engineering at a second-year level of studying. The introduction centres on 'the load required to'. The question is the load of what? The use of 'whereby' to start a sentence is at odds with the norms of grammar. It should be within a sentence and not at the beginning. Figure 6. 27 represents the introduction that explains the aim of the practical.

1 | P a g e

Determination of the relative density of soils

INTRODCTION ~ spelling

The aim of this practical determines the relative density of given course gained material. Relative density or density index is the ratio of the difference between the void ratios of a cohesion less soil in its loosest state and existing natural state to the difference between its void ratio in the loosest and densest states.

Figure 6.27 Example of the introduction that states the aim of the practical.

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Student D did not present the discussion part properly. The discussion part is usually considered the most important part of the lab report. In this section, students are required to show an understanding of the experiment. This part of the lab report focuses on the question of understanding. Students can use flow charts in figures as guidelines to write the discussion section in their lab report, but Student D failed to present it appropriately, as can be seen in Figure 6.28 below.

7. ANALYSIS/DISCUSSION

From the calculations and the results above, the Specific Gravity was computed and found to be 2.96 at a temperature of about 21 degrees Celsius. The above formula, as shown was used to calculate the value of the specific gravity.

Figure 6.28 Example of the discussion section that is not well written

The document is not properly presented. The headings of the first draft are centred and underlined with no numbering of the headings, as shown in Figure 6.28 above. Lab reports, like other kinds of writing, have an organised format. The format of the report depends on how the report will be used and what headings the readers expect to find in a well-structured report. Numbering of the headings in the report are important as they help to structure the report. Student D struggled with the formatting of the document. For instance, the headings of the document are typed on new pages of the document irrespective of the length of the heading. The introduction has three lines and the heading of the equipment has two bulleted points, but they are typed on different pages.

The report lacks the background motivation to set the pace for any arguments, even though there are none. No in-text referencing of any kind is evident. No reference list is available. This is illustrated in Figure 6.29 below.

- Figure 2 demonstrate ~~the material is~~ then compacted into the three moulds in succession, taking care that the moisture content remains as constant as possible. After the first and second moulds are compacted, samples are taken for moisture content determination, and the average of the two values is taken as the moulding moisture content for all three moulds.
- After compaction, the detachable collar is removed from the mould, the excess material finished off, and the moulds weighted. From this the dry density can be calculated, using the moulding moisture content.
- The moulds are now placed in the soaking bath for a few days. For this purpose each mould is inverted on a perforated base plate, and screwed down tightly. A surcharge weight are then applied to the exposed surface. With the aid of a swell gauge the swell is check every day.
- After the few days of soaking, the specimens are removed and allowed to drain for a few minutes. The mould is the placed in the CBR press, and a surcharge weight placed on top. The penetration piston is seated on the soil surface, gauges are zeroed and the load applied at a constant rate of strain.

Figure 6.29 Paragraph that is not referenced in text

In the conclusion Student D admits that "only one succeeded to" penetrate the surface of the compacted material. In the conclusion, Student D did not verify that the results are correct, nor did he/she provide the reasons why the conclusion was arrived at. No explanation was given of what went wrong. This can be seen in Figure 6.30 below.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion the results which were obtained from the practical, of determining the load required to allow a standard piston to penetrate the surface of a compacted material. Among the ones we did only one succeeded among the others which mean it is suitable to be used even further.

Figure 6.30 Example of the conclusion that is not completely summarised

6.10   ANALYSIS OF THE SECOND YEAR (STUDENT D's) WRITING AFTER THE CENTRE INTERVENTION

6.10.1 Topic of the essay: Civil and Surveying - Geotechnical Engineering. (Washing), Geotechnical Engineering. (CBR.), Geotechnical Engineering (Hydrometer). Geotechnical Engineering (DCP)

The analysis focused on the coherence and cohesion of the report as stipulated by Bachman's (1990) approach. It will focus on the report writing structure of the report.

The introduction of the second draft is preceded by a sub-heading which set the tone for the reader to understand the purpose of the document. It laid the foundation for the experiment. The conclusion, however, does not tie in with the introduction. The conclusion is confusing; one cannot make meaning out of it. The introduction of the report contains the aim of the practical.

1 | P a g e

Determination of the relative density of soils

INTRODCTION

The aim of this practical determines the relative density of given course gained material. Relative density or density index is the ratio of the difference between the void ratios of a cohesion less soil in its loosest state and existing natural state to the difference between its void ratio in the loosest and densest states.

Figure 6.31 Example of the improved introduction after Writing Centre feedback

In both the first and the second draft student D did not make use of academic conventions. The student did not acknowledge any of the sources. The grammar is incorrect (Figure 6.32).

The textural class of a soil is determined by its particle size distribution; namely sand, silt, and clay content. Texture represents a rather stable soil characteristic and exerts an influence on many soil physical and chemical activities. This influence is directly related to the amount of surface activity presented by the mineral particles. Surface activity is a function of both particle size, which determines total specific surface area; and clay type, which determines relative surface reactivity. Particle size distribution analysis quantifies particles size categories, but does not determine clay type. Particle size distribution provides the information necessary for determining soil class on the textural triangle, an important standard for categorizing soil physical and chemical behavior on the basis of surface activity.

Figure 6.32 Example of a paragraph with no in-text referencing

In analysing results of an experiment the student is expected to present them as they arise from the experiment. Student D did not provide the reader with an interpretation of what the

results indicate, what is found from the results and what conclusions could be drawn from the results. Student D presented the table as shown in Figure 6.33 below. Student D did not summarise the data from the experiment. Figure 6.33 shows the results section that is not interpreted by the student. Student D failed to provide the summary of the interpreted results. This can be seen in Figure 6.33 below. The conclusion is not readable.

RESULTS & ANALYSIS

Table1: shows the mass of the pan and the sample

Mould	Wet on the pan (g)	Dry sample (g)	Empty pan (g)
F8	500	473.4	251
F3	500	476	251
D4	500	477	251

OMC= 4, 8%

$$Water = \frac{4.8}{100} \times 7000$$

$$= 336ml$$

Figure 6.33 Example of the analysis in a table with no interpretation

It can be concluded that Student D did not produce better writing after he/she had been to the Writing Centre. This means that the Writing Centre did not assist him/her in developing or improving his/her writing. It is possible that Student D neglected the comments that were provided by the Writing Centre in the first draft, hence there is no improvement in his/her writing.

6.11 ANALYSIS OF THIRD YEAR STUDENT (STUDENT E's) WRITING BEFORE THE WRITING CENTRE INTERVENTION

6.11.1 Topic of the essay: Krabbe Disease - An inherited disease of the nervous system

The assignment that is analysed below is about the disease known as Krabbe Disease. The student wrote for Health and Wellness Sciences in the Department of Biomedical Sciences. Student E's first draft is written in a high school composition format, e.g. the title of the essay

was put in the middle of the page. Student E did not provide the purpose statement of the essay; instead he/she provided the abstract and the introduction. This is shown in Figure 6.34 below.

This heading is not needed here.

Krabbe disease: an inherited disease of the nervous system.

Abstract

that results

You must have the thesis statement that will provide the reader with the directions of your writing

Krabbe is a rare hereditary disease resulting from the deficiency of the enzyme galactocerebroside ß-galactosidase. This deficiency results in the degradation of the sheath-myelin that surrounds nerve fibres. It plays an integral role in carrying electrical impulses along axons. The gene for Krabbe diseases is found on chromosome 14.The nerve fibre are exposed when loss of myelin occurs and results in delayed electrical communications. There are 2 stages of the disease, infantile and late infantile form. There is no cure for krabbe disease. Treatment is available if the disease is diagnosed before symptoms appear in the form of stem and transplantation. Only supportive treatment is available for late infantile form. Blood gentic and scanning tests are available to confirm the diagnosis prognosis. *What is the Purpose of this essay? what are you going to write about? what is the focal point of this essay?*

I can not find the direction of this, paragraph.The difficulty here is is the lack of a clear Central point.

The history of Krabbe disease dates back to 1918, when a Danish physician,Knud Krabbe , described clinical and pathological findings in five infants from two families who died of an "acute infant familial diffuse brain sclerosis"(Krabbe, 1916).This condition , is also known as globoid leukodystrophy ,is an autosomal recessive fatal disorder of infancy. Krabbe disease results from the deficiency of the enzymatic activity ofgalactocerebroside ß galactoside (GALC) and the white matter accumulation of galactoceramide, this is normally exclusively found in the myelin sheath. *what is the heading of this paragraph?*

You 2nd Paragraph does not have the heading.

Figure 6.34 Example of the abstract that was incorrectly presented before Writing Centre intervention

Student E managed to provide the background information about the disease, which is the main concept in the essay, and the evolution of the disease. The information is provided in the introduction section of the essay, where Student E did not guide the reader about the purpose of his/her writing. Figure 6.35 below shows the introduction section that was not presented correctly.

Introduction

The history of Krabbe disease dates back to 1916, when a Danish physician, Knud Krabbe, described clinical and pathological findings in five infants from two families who died of an "acute infantile familial diffuse brain sclerosis" (Krabbe,1916) This condition, is also known as globoid cell leukodystrophy, is an autosomal recessive fatal disorder of infancy. Krabbe disease results from the deficiency of the enzymatic activity of galactocerebroside β-galactosidase (GALC) and the white matter accumulation of galactosylceramide; this is normally exclusively found in the myelin sheath.

Figure 6.35 Example of the introduction that was incorrectly presented before the Writing Centre intervention

The headings of the first draft were not numbered, while the headings of the second draft were numbered. Student E appears to be struggling, and not knowing the referencing format of his/her discipline. The student did not provide in-text referencing in the body of the essay. Figure 6.36 shows an extract from Student E's writing with no in-text referencing.

Overview of Krabbe disease:

Source?

Krabbe disease is a disorder that results in server loss of the protective coating (myelin) that surrounds nerve cells of the brain and nervous system along with the presence of globoid bodies in the white matter. It is a rare neurodegenerative disorder of the nervous system. Myelination normally starts in the 3rd trimester of pregnancy resulting in a rapid increase of galactocerebroside β-galactosidase enzyme activity in the brain. Galactocerebroside cannot be metabolised during the normal turnover of myelin in patients with Krabbe disease due to the deficiency of galactocerebroside β-galactosidase enzyme. *Source? You must acknowledge your Sources. In-Text referencing.*

Figure 6.36 Example of a paragraph with no referencing

The heading of the paragraph "Epidemiological information" (see below Figure 6.37) is not clearly stated. It is not clear to the reader what the "Epidemiological information" the writer is referring to. It was clearly stated correctly on the second draft of the essay.

Epidemiological information *of what?*

European incidences of Krabbe disease is 1 case per 100 000 population, with a higher rate in Sweden of 1.9 per 100 000 population. The Druze community in Israel has the highest rate with 6 cases per 1000 live births. The incidence rate in South Africa has not been well established, *where did you get this information from? (source)*

Figure 6.37 Example of an unsatisfactory heading

In Figure 6.37 above, the student did not summarise or paraphrase the information from his/her sources. The information was copied verbatim from the sources. The voice of the student in the extract is not heard. Student E neglected the use of academic conventions as stipulated by Bachman's (1990) grading criteria. The lack of referencing affected the student's writing (see Figure 6.37 above). Figure 6.36 shows a paragraph that does not have any referencing or quotations. The comments from the Writing Centre practitioner direct the student to make use of referencing and to restructure the title of the paragraph (Figure 6.37).

In the first draft of the essay, the abstract and introduction carry some explanation about the disease to provided background, but no line of the argument was introduced to indicate the purpose or objective of the essay.

Introduction

The history of Krabbe disease dates back to 1916, when a Danish physician, Knud Krabbe, described clinical and pathological findings in five infants from two families who died of an "acute infantile familial diffuse brain sclerosis" (Krabbe,1916) This condition, is also known as globoid cell leukodystrophy, is an autosomal recessive fatal disorder of infancy. Krabbe disease results from the deficiency of the enzymatic activity of galactocerebroside β-galactosidase (GALC) and the white matter accumulation of galactosylceramide; this is normally exclusively found in the myelin sheath.

Figure 6.38 Example of the paragraph without supporting claims

The essay contained many narratives without any support for claims made. The only link between the introduction and the conclusion is that there is agreement on the early diagnosis of Krabbe Disease for early treatment. The narration by Student E is shown in Figure 6.39.

Normal function of myelin:

The myelin sheath plays an integral role in the speed of electrical communication between axons. The sheath is a fatty substance that wraps around the fibres and acts as an insulator for nerve fibres. The sheath is made by oligodendrocytes cells in the nervous system. The myelin sheath covering the fibres is gapped at regular intervals along the axon. The charged particles- ions, can only cross the axons at these myelin gaps. When the myelin is damaged or suffers destruction like in Krabbe disease, the speed of electrical communication is affected. The signal may either slow down or not reach the end of the axon at all. Without the presence of myelin sheath, the nerve fibres are exposed and nerve cell damage observed. Once damaged the ability of nerve cells of brain and spinal cord to communicate with each other and with the muscles of the body are severely compromised. *where is your source(?) where is your in-text referencing?*

Figure 6.39 Example of narrative paragraph lacking support for claims

6.12 ANALYSIS OF THIRD YEAR STUDENT (STUDENT E's) WRITING AFTER THE WRITING CENTRE INTERVENTION

6.12.1 Topic of the essay: Krabbe Disease- An inherited disease of the nervous system

The second draft of Student E's essay showed improvement. There is more cohesion in the development of the paragraphs. The focus is on the subject. The paper is readable with a few minor grammatical errors. The major problems identified with the essay of Student E are the technical issues, such as the use of academic conventions. The ideas used by Student E are still not properly developed, supported, and logically grouped in paragraphs, as they were supposed to be.

The student tried to acknowledge the sources in her second draft. Figure 6.40 below reveals the effort made by Student E in terms of applying the correct academic conventions such as referencing. The student revised the first draft that he/she submitted to the Writing Centre. One can see slight improvements in the second draft where the student fixed the inaccuracies of the first draft. The title of the heading of the second draft was correctly presented as compared to the first draft, as can be seen in Figure 6.40 below.

4. **Epidemiological information of Krabbe disease:**

This information pertains to the number of recorded incident cases around the world. This information can be found on emedicine.medscape.com. Incidences of Krabbe disease is 1 case per 100 000 population, with a higher rate in Sweden of 1.9 per 100 000 population. The Druze community in Israel has the highest rate with 6 cases per 1000 live births. ⎯ *Source*

Figure 6.40 Example of the paragraph that is correctly titled and numbered

5. **Normal function of myelin:**

This is to provide an outline on the importance of the normal functioning of the myelin sheath. The myelin sheath plays an integral role in the speed of electrical communication between axons. Myelin is a fatty substance that wraps around nerve fibres and serves to increase the speed of electrical communication between neurons (brainfacts.org 2015). The sheath is made by oligodendrocytes cells in the nervous system. The myelin sheath covering the fibres is gapped at regular intervals along the axon. The charged particles-ions, can only cross the axons at these myelin gaps. When the myelin is damaged or suffers destruction like in Krabbe disease, the speed of electrical communication is affected. The signal may either slow down or not reach the end of the axon at all. Without the presence of myelin sheath, the nerve fibres are exposed and nerve cell damage observed. Once damaged, the ability of nerve cells in the brain and spinal cord to communicate with each other and with muscles is compromised (brainfacts.org 2015).

Figure 6.41 Example of the paragraph that has in-text referencing but incorrectly cited

Having mentioned the improvement's in the second draft of Student E's document, it needs to be acknowledged that the student still struggled with in-text referencing in his/her second draft. This can be seen in Figure 6.41 above, where Student E failed to present the in-text references correctly. Yet, an effort was made to acknowledge the sources. The student provided the list of references at the end of the essay even though not all the sources were acknowledged in the body of the essay. The ideas were presented in a correct and acceptable way. It can be concluded that Student E still needs to improve his/her writing. The improvements made from the corrections that were suggested by the Writing Centre does not mean the student can produce a written text of a high standard.

6.13 ANALYSIS OF THIRD YEAR STUDENT (STUDENT F's) WRITING

BEFORE THE WRITING CENTRE INTERVENTION

6.13.1 Title: Pre-treatment methods for reducing pollution load in the Mosselbank River

The essay report below is written by a third-year Civil Engineering student whose task was to conduct research to provide solutions to the water treatment in one of the rivers in the Western Cape Province. The lecturer expected the student to produce a well-written document at this level of study.

Student F's work starts with an abstract which is divided into three paragraphs; this is unusual for academic writing. The first paragraph of the abstract is about the contamination of storm water which impacts on the environment and on people's health. The second paragraph is about the aim of the study and how the study area is divided, and the third paragraph is about the results of the study. The paragraphs are properly constituted according to Bachman's (1990) grading criteria. A clear and consistent argument is maintained with topic sentences opening the paragraphs. This is seen in Figure 6.42 below.

Abstract

Stormwater contaminated by urban development activities and wastewater discharge ends up in the main tributaries like the Mosselbank River and others. This results in major health and environmental impacts. Despite the poor water quality in the river, farmers continue to use the water for irrigation purposes. The state of the rivers in the South African metropolitan cities has deteriorated due to these high pollution levels in recent years.

The study investigated.

~~The aim of this study was to investigate~~ low cost and effective treatment methods to reduce or alleviate the pollution load in the Mosselbank River. The study area was divided into three sections namely; the upstream section, mid-point and downstream section. Three pollution interventions were introduced after which samples were collected to measure the quality of pre-treated water. A comparative study was conducted using the standard APHA test methods to determine the performance of the three treatment technologies in terms of their treated effluent quality against the national standards.

Contamination levels varied between dry and rainy seasons. The data showed that the total bacterial count, especially *E.coli* was far above the national standards in the rainy season as compared with the dry season. After interventions, solar disinfection alone did not significantly reduce contamination levels but showed some signs of improvement when combined with membrane filtration. It was further concluded that chloride levels were consistently high throughout the dry and rainy seasons and the cause for these high levels could not be accounted for and requires further investigations.

Figure 6.42 Example of abstract in three paragraphs

The spacing of the paragraph in the abstract does not conform to the norms of academic writing. The abstract is supposed to be one paragraph, not divided into three paragraphs as Student F has done. The font size of the complete work is exaggerated. The report is a readable piece in terms of grammar, chapter and sub-chapter arrangements and the analysis of research findings.

In the first draft the student provided the background first paragraph and the research design but he did not mention how it was done. The information was not correctly presented according to academic conventions. Student F tried to make use of academic conventions, but the sources were not acknowledged properly.

Student F seem to have struggled to present the results section properly. The results section of a research report is expected to summarise the data from the experiments without discussing their implications. The data should be organised into tables, figures, graphs, photographs and/or other graphical material. Student F did not present the results as expected, as shown in Figure 6.43 below. The results section is presented in point form. Clear and consistent arguments are not clearly maintained as required by Bachman's (1990) grading criteria.

This chapter focuses on presenting the findings of this study to answer what are some of the cost effective pre-treatment methods of dealing with the pollution load in the Mosselbank River.

4.1   Quality of raw water

The quality of raw water from the Mosselbank River was tested at three source point:

- Source point 1 – **Inlet point**
- Source point 2 – **Mid point**
- Source point 3 – **Outlet point**

Figure 6.43 Results section that is incorrectly presented

6.14 ANALYSIS OF THIRD YEAR STUDENT (STUDENT F's) WRITING AFTER THE WRITING CENTRE INTERVENTION

6.14.1 Topic of the essay: Pre-treatment methods for reducing pollution load in the Mosselbank River

In the second revised draft, after the Student F had been to the Writing Centre, his/her grammar showed improvement. Student F managed to present the results section correctly according to the structure required for writing reports in Engineering. The results section is presented with the graphs and tables that are explained from the research. The graphs are clearly labelled. The paragraph has motivations that support the thesis. The results section is divided into different paragraphs unlike in the first draft where it was presented in bullet form with no paragraphs. Proper sentences have been used to elucidate the themes. This is shown in Figure 6.44 below.

4.1.1   Quality of raw water at inlet point

The first table indicates the quality of river water at inlet source point looking at the levels of BOD, COD and Chloride, it also displays amounts of *E.coli* and coliforms present in the dry and rainy seasons. The pH values were both basic for the dry and rainy season with the rainy season value almost neutral. COD levels were measured at 148 mg/L for the dry season while rainy season had readings as high as 642 mg/L. BOD levels were absent where samples contained DO. DO levels were near saturation at 7,2 mg/L. Chloride levels remained high with the dry seaon reading being the highest at 275 mg/L. The total bacterial load for the dry and rainy seasons were recorded at 15 000 cfu/mL and 1 million cfu/mL respectively. E.coli for the dry season was not detected fot the method employed while the rainy season recordings were greater than 1600 org/100mL.

Table 4.1   Dry and rainy season raw water inlet data

Figure 6.44 Example of the improved results section after Writing Centre feedback

In the second revised draft Student F's grammar was much better. In the results section, Student F struggled with the interpretation of data or tables and he/she experienced difficulty with the organisation of the headings of the paragraphs in the document. In the second draft after Student F had been to the Writing Centre, he/she attempted to present the section in properly constructed paragraphs. Figure 6.45 below shows the full paragraphs of the results section with sub-headings of the chapter. Figure 6.46 below shows an example of the results section that is correctly presented and Figure 6.47 is the illustration of the recommendation section that is accepted.

This chapter focuses on presenting the findings of this study to answer what are some of the cost effective pre-treatment methods of dealing with the pollution load in the Mosselbank River.

The first set of results indicate the quality of raw water from three source points within the river looking at *E.coli*, Coliforms, BOD, COD and chloride. The second set of results gives the quality of pre-treated river water using three treatment methods. The last set of results compares the efficiency of these treatment technologies during the dry and wet season. The following data is a representative data of results obtained from the analysis.

Figure 6.45 Example of the improved results section with subheadings

RESULTS & ANALYSIS

Table1: shows the mass of the pan and the sample

Mould	Wet on the pan (g)	Dry sample (g)	Empty pan (g)
F8	500	473.4	251
F3	500	476	251
D4	500	477	251

OMC= 4, 8%

$$\text{Water} = \frac{4.8}{100} \times 7000$$

$$= 336\text{ml}$$

The following table shows the results of the mould density and the volume:

Mould name	Compacted soil (g)	Mass of the mould (g)	Bulk density (kg/m3)	Dry density (kg/m3)	(%)
D4	5352		2277.87	2173.54	10.18
F8	5475.5		2350	2242.37	11.96
F3	4978		2145.69	2047	10.67

Table2: sample information

Figure 6.46 Example of the subheading of the Results section

6.2   Recommendations

More cost effective treatment methods should be investigated to enable small scale farmers and commercial farmers to treat onsite and make use of irrigation water with acceptable quality levels.

The effluents into the Mosselbank River should be monitored closely through the monitoring stations and all offenders must take immediate steps to remedy any pollution into the river. Any wastewater blockages and malfunctioning of the sewer and stormwater systems should be reported to the local authorities immediately to minimize the contamination downstream of the river.

The point source of the high levels of chloride in the Mosselbank River should be investigated further as the scope of this study did not identify the point source of pollution in the river.

Figure 6.47 Example of the Recommendations

6.15 ANALYSIS OF B-TECH (STUDENT G's) WRITING BEFORE THE WRITING CENTRE INTERVENTION

6.15.1 Topic of the essay: The influence absenteeism has on productivity in terms of repairs and maintenance at a repair company in Cape Town

The assignment that is analysed was written by a B-Tech student from the Engineering Faculty. The report is about absenteeism in a repairs company in the Western Cape. B-Tech students are expected to produce competent and well-written documents for their assessments. The cover page of the first draft is neatly presented; it is apparent that the work is presented by a senior student.

Although Student G is a senior student, he/she did not make use of academic conventions in the document. In the first subdivision, Student G failed to make use of the correct academic conventions such as in-text referencing. The student was supposed to acknowledge the sources and reference them in the text. There are no references in the paragraph, which shows negligence on the part of the student (see Figure 6. 48).

Absenteeism is an employee's intentional absence from work, in other words failure to report for duty when expected. While employers expect workers to be absent a certain number of days each year, excessive absences equate to decreased productivity and have a major effect on the company's strategies, finances, morale and other factors. The main aim of this research project is to take a wider view of the influence staff absenteeism has on production within a repair company in Cape Town and to describe various aspects of its assessment and management. Absenteeism does not only hurt productivity, it also costs the company financially. High staff absenteeism may lead the company having to close its doors in the near future due to loss in profit. Workshop staff is highly skilled trade tested artisans which in the meanwhile has a critical skill needed in the market, therefore having these employees out for more than a day already has a negative impact on the overall productivity. Due to high absenteeism, the workshop was forced to outsource most of their work orders which led them to loose loyalty from their customers to their competitors.

Figure 6.48 Example of lack of application of academic conventions (in-text referencing)

The literature review is poorly presented in the first draft of the document.

Bermingham (2013) cited Ejere (2010:115) in his thesis saying employee that does not show up for work is a human capital risk because the absent employee cannot contribute to the achievement of organizational objectives which results in profit loss.
Workplace absenteeism could both be linked to work life factors due to working conditions and private life factors and both need to be taken into account when assessing the issue of absenteeism at work.

Figure 6.49 Example of secondary citation

Figure 6. 49 above shows examples of developed sentence construction. Jargon, concepts and claims are explained. There is an example of a secondary citation. Both primary and secondary referencing are properly used.

Student G opted to present the literature review in bullet form which is not acceptable at postgraduate level writing. The student attempted to provide the information on ethics but failed to explain how the ethical clearance was obtained for the study. The process of obtaining the ethical clearance was not presented in the first draft.

The title of the paragraph of the first draft was not correctly presented. Student G presented the title of the paragraph as the background. Student G failed to provide the title of the paragraph as it is supposed to be "Background of the study".

The author failed to make use of the correct academic conventions in his/her first draft. Employee absence is defined, but the source is not acknowledged. Academic writing conventions were not adhered to. The author presented the information in a paragraph with the heading "Mitigating sick leave absences through the consideration of ergonomic standards". The information is presented without being properly referenced as shown in Figure 6.50 below.

Mitigating sick leave absences through the consideration of ergonomic standards
Studies concluded that people are taking time off every week due to musculoskeletal disorders like back pain and neck pain. Thus it is evident that good ergonomic practices and using the right ergonomic equipment like proper lifting of heavy loads, keyboards, mice and foot stools can help alleviate the symptoms. The key to reducing absenteeism and sick leave consumption within the workshop is through ergonomics considerations. Ergonomics is the technique that looks at the employees and aims to adapt the environment, job design and furniture and equipment that will enable employees to optimise movement while reducing stress and the risk of musculoskeletal disorders.

Figure 6.50 Example of paragraph that is written without references

In Chapter 3 of the literature review of Student's G writing, he/she provided no headings to the paragraphs. Figure 6.51 below reveals the literature review written in sentence form, not in full paragraphs.

Graham and Bennett (1995) Believe that the factors contributing to non-attendance include the nature of the job, personal characteristics of the worker and motivating incentives.

Steers and Rhodes (1984) argue that absence behaviour needs to take into account variations in the personal characteristics, attitudes, value and backgrounds of individuals and the fact that people do become genuinely ill and have domestic difficulties from time to time.

Nicholson (1977) in his model of attendance motivation believes that attendance is normal behaviour, and that to search for a cause of absence for the factors that disturb the regularity of attendance. Whether people will attend given a particular set of circumstance depends on a number of variables such as age, sex, gender, work conditions, group cohesion etc.

Figure 6.51 Example of poorly presented literature review

The body of the report contained clear topic sentence, and the ideas were developed and logically grouped in paragraphs, but the paragraphs had no headings. This can be seen in Figure 6.52 below.

Dr Sivakami is on the opinion that absenteeism not only causes production loss but also causes reduction of gross national income, when the gross income of workmen reduces, naturally his buying capacity also reduces if he could not manage the primary and secondary needs of timely and properly. He further allude that absenteeism not only indicates the physical presence it starts with the mental absence of an individual so the firm has to take this as an important issue before initiating any remedial actions through that and along with the participative management.

Figure 6.52 Example of a paragraph without headings

Only one paragraph from the literature review has a heading: "Relevance on the repair company in Cape Town" (see Figure 6.53 below).

Relevancy on the repair company in Cape Town

Review of the literature has shown that the repair company in Cape Town is no different than the majority of companies. They continue to look for solutions to their absenteeism problems before they have identified the causes. The Nation does however have a tribal policy that addresses unscheduled absences. One problem with this policy is that it is so broad that departmental standard operating procedures need to be created. These are not only absenteeism problems that the workshop supervisor and managers encounter in their various departments. Some of these legitimate illnesses and disabilities, but their causes could be prevented. The literature suggested several different ways of combating these causes. The repair company in Cape Town already does a lot in this area. They have recently implemented in the past 4 years Employee assistance, day care sites, paid leave banks (sick or personal), four hours of child time for school functions, flex hours and exercise facility (lower cost to employees). Even with all these programs and policies in place, the repair company in Cape Town is still experiencing an extremely high number of unscheduled absences highly in the form of sick leaves. Until the causes are identified, these problems will persist. Harrison and Martoccchio (1998) are on the opinion that the best predictor of this year's absenteeism is last year's. The literature review shows that absenteeism has different origins for different people, time and contexts.

Figure 6.53 Example of a paragraph with a heading

All the issues raised in the paragraphs above could have been convincingly presented in two or more paragraphs. But the student decided to make use of one point per paragraph.

Student G typed the heading of the paragraph on data analysis only on page 23, but failed to provide the correct and sufficient information on the method that would be used to analyse the data of the research. The student did not mention the instrument that was used for analysis.

Data Analysis   Double Line spacing

Data will be analyzed with the aim to fully understand what is causing high staff absenteeism in the repair company in Cape Town. Mean score and standard deviations will be calculated for each item on the survey. Items are analyzed to identify significances between items receiving high scores and the ones that receives lower scores. From the quality tools, histogram and and bar charts, and pie charts will be used to portray the graphical re presentation of data. Cross tabulations will be done between questions and also gathering information if the following areas age, number of years working in the affected department, race, to see if these are having an effort on the environment the individual employee is spending time in.

Figure 6.54 Example of the data analysis that is not properly presented

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Grammatical rules were not properly applied. Student G wrote long, unintelligible sentences that affected the structure of the argument. This is seen in Figure 6. 55 below.

Then the indicators will be clear that the workshop management will not accept unreasonable absence of work and would be well within law and the policies of the workshop to take necessary steps against defaulters concurrently the consequences of absenteeism would need to clearly spell out so much so that when unreasonable failure to report to work is observed then the necessary disciplinary actions as prescribed under the workshop code may be applied. Before the implementation of this policy it is also recommend...

Figure 6.55 Example of a paragraph with grammatical irregularities

6.16   ANALYSIS OF B-TECH STUDENT (STUDENT G's) WRITING AFTER THE WRITING CENTRE INTERVENTION

6.16.1 Topic of the essay: The influence absenteeism has on productivity in terms of repairs and maintenance at a repair company in Cape Town

The title of the essay is the influence that absenteeism has on productivity in terms of repairs and maintenance at a repair company in Cape Town. The second draft of the report showed slight improvement as compared to the first draft. The introduction of the second draft is engaging and it prepares the reader for what is to come. It lays the groundwork through the background to the research question, research area and research environment. Figure 6.56 represents the improved introduction from the second draft.

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1.1 Introduction and Motivation

The repair come in Cape flats of Cape Town in Khayelistsha provides repairs and the maintenance services for fleet and plant equipment. The majority of the work that they do, come from the municipal fleet and equipment from different service department. The management of the company realised that the rate of absenteeism at work is high. They realised that t, on daily basis, they were operating with insufficient staff members. This is caused by regular sick leave consumption from the shop floor staff. This research investigated the factors that influence high absenteeism in a repair company. It, also explored the ergonomic considerations to mitigate the loss in the production. Lastly it focused on the negative impact of absenteeism at work in the repair company

Figure 6.56 Example of the improved introduction after Writing Centre intervention

In the first subsection of the report the author blames the employers for not making efforts to find out why there is a high rate of absenteeism. The employers resorted to dismissal, but nothing else. The author does not mention the contradictions that are apparent in the company. The consequences of staff shortage are not adequately highlighted in the document. The author did not sufficiently present the problem in the company.

The writing above reflect some of the constructs of Bachman's (1990) framework. The recommendations in Figure 6.57 below led to the conclusion that arose directly from the findings of the research to answer the research questions. The recommendations could be used to mitigate the pandemic behavioural patterns of morality, absenteeism, low productivity and profitability of the company.

21 Chapter 6

Recommendations

Because absenteeism statistics indicates that at least three out of four are not due to illness. This makes it evident that there is more to absenteeism than falling sick and not reporting to work. It is highly recommended that the repair company in Cape Town introduce to the workshop a robust time and attendance policy.it is one of the most effective tools to reduce sick leave and absenteeism. The policy will be implemented as part of the service contract making it compulsory for every employee to put in the contractual number of hours of work per year. When implementing this policy consequently the attendance of employee's record must be strictly monitored closely and repeated communication channels have to be opened. Then the indicators will be clear that the workshop management will not accept unreasonable absence of work and would be well within law and the policies of the workshop to take necessary steps against defaulters concurrently the consequences of absenteeism would need to clearly spell out so much so that when unreasonable failure to report to work is observed then the necessary disciplinary actions as prescribed under the workshop code may be applied. Before the implementation of this policy it is also recommended that the workshop management implement a visual safe ergonomic workplace for its employees. Ergonomic standards will positively impact the workshop presentism which in turn will increase the company productivity with reduced operating costs.

Figure 6.57 Example of the recommendations paragraph

The cohesiveness of paragraph development stems from theme development. As the themes were linked to one another so are the paragraphs because the themes were developed in paragraphs. The paragraphs were linked in such a way that removing one will distort the smooth flow and understanding of thoughts. The cohesion in paragraph development is linked to the end of the document as indicated in Figure 6.57 above.

The grammar and lexical density are very enriching. There are some minor grammatical lapses, but the overall performance is good. The choice of words (absenteeism, hypothesis,

artisans, sick leave, and ergonomic) is appropriate.

> The increasing rate of absenteeism led the repair company to management having to dismiss most of its employee's hoping to get away with this pandemic behaviour, unfortunately it still went up. The failed attempts of dismissing employee's led to the workshop having to loose skilled experienced resources which were not easily replaced, and the new appointees after few months started taking sick leaves. An Industrial Engineering problem solving tool better known as the 5 Why's was used to get to the root cause behind the absenteeism behaviour pattern.

Figure 6.58 Example of a paragraph with themes

The sustainability of the argument is rooted in the research questions. The research questions set the pace for the argument. Questions are: "To what extent is absenteeism the main cause of low productivity and low profitability?", "What are the causes of absenteeism?" These questions and many more were used by the student to sustain their argument from start to finish, and he/she concluded that absenteeism does greatly impede productivity generally and particularly with regard to the repairs and maintenance of the company.

The themes are brought out clearly and are well developed to fit the purpose. Absenteeism is the main theme and is well developed to umbrella the sub-themes. It was used to explain how industries and businesses suffer at the hands of employees because of their absence at a given location and time without due permission, or on fake excuses of sickness and/or family issues.

The main theme covers other sub-themes like productivity and financial cost to the company. Another sub-theme is work environment which is also directly or indirectly linked to absenteeism. The sub-themes are neatly linked to the main theme.

6.17   ANALYSIS OF B-TECH STUDENT (STUDENT H's) WRITING BEFORE THE WRITING CENTRE INTERVENTION

6.17.1   Topic of the essay: Development of red velvet milkshake syrup

The student is writing a report on the product (milkshake) that he/she has developed as part of the final practical. The writing is from the Faculty of Applied Sciences in the Department of Food Technology. In the Faculty of Applied Sciences B-Tech students are expected to write competent and meaningful reports on the products they have developed from their experiential learning experience.

In the first draft of the report, there is no logical link between the introduction and the conclusion of the study. The work lacks a formal introduction, and therefore coherency is not established. The abstract, which ought to be a single paragraph outlining the objective, methodology and the result of the study, contains three lengthy paragraphs and does not fit the requirements of good academic writing. The overall development of the thesis is not coherent; it has some contradictions. The document does not posit appropriate reasons to support the thesis statement.

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this project is to obtain approval from a representative of Slo-Jo for the development of the Red Velvet milkshake syrup in addition to their milkshake range.

A recipe was formulated to make the milkshake syrup. The base components of milkshake syrups were of minor changes. The colour and flavour of the product is what made the product unique. The determination of brix, acid and pH was done to meet and compare the results to specifications of similar products. The cost per kilogram of each ingredient was included and the amount to produce the product was taken into account between companies involved. The product should be sold at R16 per liter including VAT. The packaging and labeling style remained the same as those of the existing Slo-Jo milkshake syrup brand products. Only of which, product name, nutritional information and how to use the product differed. The final Red Velvet milkshake product was diluted as stated on its package. It was presented with extra toppings and served to the tasting panel and the client.

The tasting panel and the client were able to give subjective feedback on their first impressions of the Red Velvet milkshake. Most of which both was accepted and no adjustments were made. However, the results of the product didn't meet the specifications of existing products. The brix was low and the acid was high. The objective evaluation, such as the scientific experimental facts contradicted the subjective evaluation, such as the sensory evaluation. Therefore, because it's a new recipe, a new specification was made taking both objective and subjective results into consideration.

The ability to produce a new product was achieved. The client felt that the costs of having to produce the product in bulk became expensive. It was possible to decrease the amount of colour added to the recipe, which will decrease the expense. It was also suggested that a cheaper type of packaging material should be investigated to check its suitability to the products of Slo-Jo.

Figure 6.59 Example of an unsuccessful abstract

The report does not follow the academic conventions for thesis writing. It is muddled and confusing. The use of contractions is not appropriate. Figure 6.60 below illustrates the problem statement that is not presented correctly.

Statement of the problem

This is an objective and not a Problem -

The purpose of this project is to obtain approval from the NPD manager from Slo-Jo for the development of this Red Velvet milkshake syrup, up until a Business Case stage can be concluded.

Figure 6.60 Example of the problem statement that is not correctly presented

Student H confuses the objective with the problem. Paragraph development skills are not used appropriately in agreement with the topic sentence. The author is not consistent in his/her writing of themes in paragraphs. Moreover, the use of short forms (contractions) is not acceptable in academic writing (e.g. 'It's' or 'I'm') as this type of writing is considered informal.

There is little cohesion in terms of paragraph development. The paragraphs are not introduced with a topic sentence and the previous paragraph is not linked to the next. The document is developed in fragments. Consequently, the fragmentation of thoughts negatively affects the development of themes. The themes are developed in isolation and this impinges on the writer's voice which is conspicuously absent in the essay. This absence of the student's voice could imply that excessive copying and pasting from other documents has taken place. This is illustrated in Figure 6.61 below.

LITERATURE REVIEW

A.   Composition of a Milkshake syrup.

Milkshake syrups are ideal accompaniments concentrate to be enjoyed with soft serve ice cream and come in various flavours and colours. Flavoured and colourful syrups are the key ingredient in the recipe for a milkshake that will delight your consumer's taste buds. (Snowserve 1969).

Sugar

Besides the contribution to sweeteners, viscosity, and body, sugar enhances flavor, appearance and texture of many foods. The sugar and water solution varies in concentration depending on the use.

Guar Gum

Guar gum is a complex polymer which can be used in conjunction with other gums to improves stability. It's soluble in cold water, has excellent pH stability and is compatible with gelling agents.

Figure 6.61 Example of paragraphs with no linkages

Lexical density and correct grammar may render the work readable, especially when considering people in the same field of study. The scientific terminologies enrich the study, depending on whether they have been properly explained. In the paragraphs provided above (Figure 6.61), the author explained the scientific terminology.

Another shortcoming is that the paragraphs have no appropriate topic sentences, which cause some misinterpretations that might prevent the reader from comprehending what the author intended. This is shown in Figure 6.62 below.

C. Packaging Material and Design

The syrup will should be stored at ambient temperatures. The packaging material of such should also be of advantage when distributing the syrup and have a shelf life of 8 – 12 months. The syrup will not include preservatives and must therefore be filled when hot and not undergo product cooling.

The product is regarded as an aseptic product regarding filling machines. Pure-Pak Elopak cartons will be used (Fig 1). The cartons are made from approximately 80-90 % paperboard inside barriers that protect against light and oxygen. It has a very good seal quality for effective distribution and is coated with polyethylene plastic for maximum protection, protection the product from the external environment. The product integrity is guaranteed for up to 12 – 14 months shelf life

Figure 6.62 Example of paragraph without topic sentences

The reference list was not arranged alphabetically. It is not acceptable for senior students to submit their document with an incomplete and incorrect reference list. The student did not describe and explain the diagrams in their range and he/she also did not interpret the results from the table to form a sound, meaningful paragraph. This is shown in Figure 6.63 below.

Table 1 The brix, acid, and pH of the Red Velvet Milkshake syrup will be compared to existing specifications of Slo-Jo's milkshake range.

Flavour	Brix	Acid	pH
Milk Tart	30.4 – 30.8	5.9 – 6.3	2.5 ≤ 4.2
Toffee	31.8 – 32.2	5.7 – 6.1	2.5 ≤ 4.2
Cherry	30.4 – 30.8	6.1 – 6.5	2.5 ≤ 4.2

Figure 6.63 Example of the results section that was not properly interpreted

6.18   ANALYSIS OF B-TECH STUDENT (STUDENT H's) WRITING AFTER THE WRITING CENTRE INTERVENTION

6.18.1 Topic of the essay: Development of red velvet milkshake syrup

In the second draft, Student H made changes regarding the lexical density, and grammatical irregularities were corrected (see Figure 6. 64 below).

D.   Labelling and Design

Package labels are essential for the identification of the products in the marketplace. The appearance of the label is enhanced for promoting the product. The significance of a label is to provide information to the customer about the product and to spread awareness among the customers about the food they are consuming. You can also mention the amount of each ingredient added in the preparation of the product. This is done in a clearly presented table format. Another main purpose is the need to grab the attention of a viewer to purchase the product. A label should be able to beautify a product to add to its visual appeal. By labeling, products communicate information of how to handle a product, how to use the product or how to dispose it.

Figure 6.64 Example of improved paragraph after the Writing Centre feedback

The second draft has a proper introduction, it is aligned with the proposal discourse, and the body of the report provides more than one reason to support the thesis. The quality and relevance of ideas is obvious. There is a link between the introduction and the conclusion of the study. The document has a formal introduction and coherency has been established. This is shown in Figure 6. 65 below.

1. Introduction

There are two important steps that needs to be followed when creating the dairy product. The first step is the testing and the development of the product in the laboratory. The second step is the actual product of testing the product with the client. The most determining factor is the actual product and the testing with the client. The appearance, packaging and the labelling of the product are very important, in order to market and sell the product to the consumers. The milkshake is the blended mixture of the ingredients that are mixed together   until they are smooth and they are poured into prepared milkshake containers. The purpose of this research report is to develop the Red velvet milkshake syrup that will be added to the milkshake range.

Figure 6.65 Example of the improved introduction with changes made

After the author had effected the changes suggested by the Writing Centre, the research project adhered to the conventions of academic writing. Student H also attempted to correct the referencing.

In the second draft document there is cohesion in the paragraph development. The paragraphs are introduced with topic sentences and each paragraph is linked to the next. As such there is flow of thoughts throughout the document. It is evident that the student managed to make changes that were suggested by the Writing Centre in her second draft, even though the document is not perfectly well written for the level of a B-Tech student as a postgraduate in a University of Technology.

From the analysis presented above, it is clear that student has not yet fully mastered the conventions of academic writing and there is still much to learn. As mentioned earlier, the aim is to develop good academic writers, not to produce good products.

6.19   SUMMARY

This chapter presented the analysis of students' writing before the Writing Centre intervention (first draft) and thereafter (second draft). From the analysis of the scripts, it can

be established that, despite minor improvements made by students in their second drafts after they had been to the Writing Centre, they are still grappling with the structural and organisational aspects of essays and report writing. Students have difficulties in making clear how they intend to address the research question. They appear to find it difficult to explain the process logically when they have to organise and group the related information in coherent paragraphs. Their most prevalent problem seems to be how to use the connecting words and phrases to establish cohesion throughout.

When writing introductions students generally still do not set the scene. They also struggle to define or explain the key terms used in the document. They do not succeed in providing a brief outline of the issues under study, and they struggle to articulate how they went about the investigation. Students had difficulties with paragraph development, summarising the themes and writing general conclusions. The above-mentioned issues require the focused attention of the Writing Centre practitioners.

A table that represents a summary of all the errors made by students in writing is available in Appendix E .

The next chapter will discuss the implications of the results in terms of the literature about academic writing development and the impact of writing centre services on student writing development in higher education.

CHAPTER 7

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

7.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter deals with and interprets findings from the empirical part of the study presented in Chapters 5 and 6. The approach I have adopted will first provide a brief overview of the context of the study, and then a synopsis of the findings from the empirical research data generated, followed by the potential implications of the study, recommendations and conclusion.

7.2 BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

In Chapter 1 (paragraph 1.4) and Chapter 4 (paragraph 4.2), the purpose of this study was articulated as being designed to determine the role of a writing centre in enhancing the quality of students' academic writing at a university of technology. The related objectives were, among others, to evaluate the writing centre's contribution to the development and enhancement of students' academic writing, determine the perceptions and attitudes of students about the writing centre, and to further explore how strategic interventions can be put in place to enhance the quality and effectiveness of the services offered by the writing centre.

7.2.1 Background to the study

This study focused on a university of technology as an institutional type that among others characterises the South African higher education landscape. This type of institution is distinguishable from its more established traditional and comprehensive counterparts, because universities of technology offer mainly vocational or career-focused undergraduate diplomas and B-Tech degrees which serve as a capping for diploma graduates, and they also offer a limited number of masters and doctoral degrees. Thus, these institutions have an approved programme and qualification mix that limits the type of qualifications they may offer, and type of academic fields in which they operate, as detailed in Chapter 3 of this study.

The locus of this study was the Writing Centre at the Cape Peninsula University of Technology. As indicated in Chapter 1, the interest of the study remained the Writing Centre

at CPUT as one intervention programme amongst many that are designed to help new academic entrants at universities acquire epistemological access through academic literacy.

Chapter 3 deals with the origins, nature and purpose of the existence of the writing centres internationally and nationally, and, in particular, at CPUT. The Writing Centre at CPUT was established post the institutional merger period, in January 2005 (even though its existence can be traced to the mid-1990s at the former Peninsula Technikon), in order to, among others, provide students in various academic programmes and faculties with a variety of services and academic support. Its operational presence is currently limited to three CPUT campuses: Bellville, Cape Town and Tygerberg campuses geographically spread across various parts of the greater Cape Town area. Organisationally it is currently based in the Student Learning Unit, at the Fundani Centre for Higher Education and Development (CHED).

The purpose of the Writing Centre is to, among others, assist students to improve their academic writing abilities relating, in particular, to academic challenges concerning the conceptualisation of and understanding of the academic task at hand, argumentation and rhetorical or stylistic writing, the use of formal language vocabulary, paragraph formation and application of scientific principles of writing, reasonable presentation of thoughts with appropriate structure, effective structuring of academic tasks (introduction and conclusion), and the careful treatment of sources. Other forms of academic assistance include, among others, time management, note taking and study skills. It does not, however, provide proof-reading services, nor does it offer formal academic modules to students.

The distinguishing characteristics of the Writing Centre lie in its pedagogy and method. According to Archer and Parker (2016) writing centre pedagogy centre around the development of critical 'beings' which is achieved through discussion and arguments. It is further characterised as a learning space. With regard to the latter, the Writing Centre serves as a walk-in centre for students, but also provides for a flexible 24-hour booking system for appointments with a consultant or academic literacy lecturer. Students visit the Writing Centre as a result of a referral by content lecturers, friends, Student Counselling or the Disability Unit. The literature review in Chapter 2 and 3 of this study asserts and confirms that writing centres are learning spaces that are based on the paradigm that language and knowledge are created socially through conversation and/or dialogue with people and texts (Archer & Parker, 2016; Nichols, 1998). Further, they offer a place where people can walk in,

think through, revise and then get on with their writing, for which the one-to-one consultation is a simple and obvious method that works best (Nichols, 1998).

Chapter 2 of this study outlined the international, national and institutional context in which the Writing Centre operates. In brief, the Writing Centre functions within an academic literacy contextual theory that was born out of the recognition of the limitations of much of the official discourse and literature on language and literacy in a constantly changing higher education landscape.

Many of these changes have been attributed to, among others, globalisation, with the concomitant internationalisation of higher education and increasing staff and student exchange, widening of access to higher education, changes in the role of the university, a changing student body that includes larger numbers of non-native speakers of English from a range of cultural and educational backgrounds, and the so-called 'non-traditional' students (Tomic, 2006). Other factors include the developments in information and communication technology and the digitisation of knowledge, and the shift in the comparative evaluation of disciplines resulting in preferential treatment being accorded to disciplines such as science, engineering and mathematics at the expense of the humanities (Barnett & Bengsten, 2017).

Nationally, in addition to issues stemming from globalisation, the higher education context has been characterised by the critical challenges outlined in National Plan for Higher Education (2001), which include, among others, to redress past inequalities and to transform the higher education system to serve a new social order, meet pressing national needs, and to respond to new realities and opportunities.

Student writing in higher education takes place in an environment that is not only influenced by the above factors but is also characterised by students who come from a wide range of educational, cultural and linguistic backgrounds (as stated above), and who study in a number of diverse educational contexts which no longer reflect traditional academic boundaries with related values and norms. A majority of those who are admitted to higher education institutions are not native speakers of the English language which in most institutions is also a medium of instruction in a multi-lingual environment (and one of South Africa's eleven official languages). As these institutions moved away from being highly exclusive and racially divided as a result of massification and the widening of access, a new challenge presented itself. Because of their educational, linguistic, social and cultural backgrounds the beneficiaries and new academic entrants to higher education were viewed not only as

unsuitable for admission, but were also blamed for the perceived drop or deterioration in academic standards, with students' written and spoken 'English' language used as evidence in arguments for the falling standards.

This, in turn, propelled 'language' and 'literacy' to be seen by many academic institutions as a problem that required some form of remedial support. Thus, the deficit or study skills model was born, which held that language and literacy constitute a set of atomised skills which students have to learn, and which are also transferable to other contexts (Lea & Street, 2000). Closely related to the study skills model, is the academic socialisation model which views the primary role of the teacher as being to inculcate a new culture, that of the academy, into students. This approach focuses on student orientation to learning and interpretation of tasks through conceptualisation of, for example, 'deep', 'surface' and 'strategic' approaches to learning, and zooms in on the textual conventions or genres of academic disciplines, and is generally considered to be more effective than the study skills model (Van Rensburg & Lamberti, 2009).

What is of interest for the purposes of this study, is the academic literacies model, within New Literacy Studies, that also forms the basis of the Writing Centre's work at CPUT. This model sees literacies as social practices that approach student writing and learning as issues at the level of epistemology and identities rather than skill or association (Lea & Street, 2000). What separates the academic literacy approach or model from the ones stated above, is the level to which practice is privileged over text, as opposed to text being privileged by the other two approaches; this is generally referred to as a socially oriented approach to writing (Lillis & Scott, 2007). The problems caused by the pre-identification of an issue related to student writing as textual, is that it leads to pedagogy and research which takes text as the object of study, and which in turn, leads to policy and pedagogical 'solutions' which are overwhelmingly textual in nature. Academic literacies research has challenged this textual bias by shifting the emphasis away from texts towards practices. The focus is on acknowledging the socio-culturally embedded nature of literacy practices and associated power differentials in any literacy related activity (Lillis & Scott, 2007). The full contextual elaboration on these models and differences between them is contained in Chapter 2 of this study.

As indicated in Chapter 3 of this study, the Writing Centre at CPUT is not the only one or unique to CPUT; the American origins and development of writing centres in traditional,

comprehensive and universities of technology in South Africa are elaborated upon in Chapter 3. This section concludes by recapturing once more, the purpose of this research study through the research questions and why the researcher settled on the chosen data collection instruments for the study.

7.2.2 Purpose of the study

The primary purpose of this study was to evaluate the effectiveness of the services offered by the Writing Centre in enhancing the quality of students' academic writing, from the students' perspective, at a university of technology, using CPUT as a location for the study. As indicated in Chapter 1 and 4 (paragraphs 1.3 and 4.2), the main research question was divided into sub-questions in order to make the study more manageable, and these were: How does a writing centre support the development of academic writing at a university of technology, in particular, at CPUT? To what extent is the writing centre a valuable resource for the development of students' academic writing? What are the students' perceptions of the quality of services offered by the writing centre? How can the writing centre services be improved to enhance students' academic writing?

One of the criticisms levelled against writing centres in academic literature is that they do not sufficiently engage in the evaluation of their own services or usefulness thereof (Horn, 2009; Butler, 2013). Similarly, the need to engage in regular and continuous self-monitoring and evaluation to facilitate growth and development has been highlighted (Nichols, 1998; Skead & Twalo, 2011).

Notwithstanding the need for and importance of self-evaluation of writing centres emphasised above, literature indicates that such evaluations are common cause in many higher education institutions albeit not in the scientific manner and controlled form this research study has undertaken. The prevalent approach has been, according to Archer (2008), to ask students to fill in forms or write a brief feedback indicating what they liked and did not like about their visit or consultation at the writing centre. This approach has been particularly criticised for a number of reasons, chief of which are that sometimes these student reviews relate only to one aspect of the writing centre i.e. the consultation as opposed to their writing, and students' perception of improvement may not necessarily translate into demonstrably improved writing.

In this study, the researcher sought to answer the research question and sub-questions utilising two instruments: a survey in the form of a self-generated quantitative questionnaire and the analysis of students' essays. The questionnaire was distributed to 100 student respondents who were registered students at CPUT, and chosen on the basis that they were doing their 1st, 2nd, 3rd or 4th year level of study in various courses and faculties at CPUT. Another overriding criterion used for the selection of students was that they had to have been exposed to or utilised the services offered by the Writing Centre on the three campuses where the Writing Centre is operational: Bellville, Cape Town and Tygerberg. This quantitative data, presented in Chapter 5, was analysed using the SPSS software programme which enabled the researcher to produce descriptive statistics.

For the purposes of triangulating students' perceptions of the Writing Centre, the researcher selected 20 student essays for the purposes of comparison, before and post Writing Centre consultation. The student essays were chosen based on the criteria outlined above, and their selection was distributed as follows: five student essays were selected from each level of study (i.e. from 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th year level of study).

As indicated in Chapter 6, the essays were analysed using the Bachman model (1990) and criteria for content analysis of the students' written essays. The criteria and themes, detailed in Chapter 4, focused on, among others: quality and relevance of ideas presented (whether a clear and consistent argument was maintained); academic conventions (referencing and quotations); coherence and cohesion (focused on the structure of the introduction, body and conclusion of the essay); body paragraph containing a clear topic sentence (whether ideas were developed, supported, and logically grouped in paragraphs); accurate and appropriate application of grammar (looking at the density of lexico-grammatical irregularities and communicative effect); range of sentence structures (focused on the length of sentence structures), and appropriate punctuation (correct use of punctuation).

This was essentially a mixed methods study, utilising both a quantitative questionnaire and qualitative content analysis.

The findings of the research study are presented in the next section under themes formulated to represent the research question, and each of the sub-questions or a combination of thereof.

7.3 EMPIRICAL FINDINGS

This section outlines the empirical findings emanating from this study. It focuses on, among others: demographic and administrative data; student respondents' views on the Writing Centre as a learning space and a distraction free-environment; findings on student respondents' views on their satisfaction with the services offered by the Writing Centre, and whether, based on their experience, they would recommend the Writing Centre to other students; findings on student respondents' perceptions about their own writing; student respondents' perceptions on the suitability of the IT system and software utilised by the Writing Centre; student respondents' perceptions of the Writing Centre's consultation times and allocation, and findings on student respondents' views and proposal for improvement on the services offered by the Writing Centre.

7.3.1   Findings of demographic and administrative data

As indicated in Chapter 5, and above, the findings contained herein represent responses of student respondents who participated in this research study. The sample size of the survey which produced the quantitative data comprised of 100 research questionnaires which were distributed of which a total (n) of 75 responses were received from respondents who returned the questionnaire for a response rate of 75%. Student respondents were drawn from the Bellville, Cape Town and Tygerberg campuses. The data confirmed the frequency distribution of campus allocation in respect of the three campuses as stated in Table 5.1 and Figure 5.1, respectively, in Chapter 5. The variance in frequency distribution and sample sizes mirrors the existing student patterns, location and accessibility of the Writing Centre in these three campuses. The demographic representation of student respondents as shown in Table 5.2 and Figure 5.2, respectively, indicate that most student respondents were isiXhosa home language speakers with a frequency distribution of 34 (45%), with English home language speakers occupying a distant second place with a frequency distribution of 13 (17%), followed by Afrikaans home language speakers constituting a similarly distant third from isiXhosa home language speakers, but close to English home language speakers. The frequency distribution for Afrikaans home language speakers was 10 (13%). The rest of the total percentage of the frequency distribution for home languages was as follows: isiZulu 5 (7%); Sepedi 4 (5%), and French 3 (4%). No significant difference was revealed between the frequency distribution of Sesotho 2 (3%) and Setswana 2 (3%), respectively, and also

between Shona 1 (1%) and Siswati 1 (1%), respectively. The study has, therefore, revealed that most respondents who were using the services of the Writing Centre were from isiXhosa home language background.

As indicated in Chapter 5, Table 5.3 and Figure 5.3, respectively, student respondents were drawn from various academic faculties as indicated by the frequency distribution from the aforementioned table and figure. These faculties were: Business and Management Sciences 18 (23%); Health and Wellness 26 (35%); Engineering 26 (35%), and Applied Sciences 5 (7%). In the period of the study, the majority of students who visited the Writing Centre were from the Faculties of Health and Wellness and Engineering, respectively.

The study revealed that the majority of students who participated in the study were doing their first-year and fourth-year levels of study with students doing their third-year level of study being the least represented as indicated in Chapter 5 of this study.

Statistical data analysis in Chapter 5 also revealed that the majority of students (71%) who visited the Writing Centre in the period of the study had done so at the behest of their content lecturers. This bodes well for the esteem with which the work, services and role of the Writing Centre in student academic writing is viewed by lecturers. Other notable referrals were those that emanated from the orientation workshops (12%) and referral by friends (12%). Student respondents did not consider the university website to be a useful source of information concerning the services offered by the Writing Centre (1%).

As far as the number of times that student respondents had visited the Writing Centre in the period of the study is concerned, it was established that the majority of students visited the Writing Centre four times (45%), followed by students who visited the Writing Centre once (21%), twice (21%), and three times (13%). These figures and percentages are significant, particularly that the majority of student respondents visited the Writing Centre four times, considering the fact that it is sometimes difficult to ascertain the extent to which the Writing Centre had impacted students' academic writing within a broader context of academic study, and competing demands on students from various academic courses they participate in (Archer, 2008). The second reason, and related to the above, recognises that Writing Centre practices are sometimes ad hoc, with students coming for a once-off consultations whereas others maintain a relationship with the Writing Centre throughout their studies (Archer, 2008).

The other findings under this section relate to ease of access to the Writing Centre and appointment booking or scheduling for consultation and/or related services. With regard to access to the Writing Centre, the findings from this study revealed that the majority of respondents indicated that it was easy and convenient to access the Writing Centre, especially at the Bellville campus (34%). As far as the booking of appointments is concerned, the majority of respondents (64%) in the study indicated that they do not have a problem with the 24-hour booking system, whilst a small number of student respondents (14%), were not satisfied with the current arrangement. A further 21% of student respondents were undecided.

This study also found that when students visited the Writing Centre for academic assistance, they did so based on specific interests and needs related to academic writing. Ranked in order of priority, the study revealed that editing and proof reading (52%); referencing (48%); essay structure (41%); presentation skills (35%); topic analysis (27%); study skills (22%); time management and goal setting (12%); online social networking (6%), and using computers to browse the internet (4), constitute the foremost reasons for students to visit the Writing Centre.

The next section looks at the findings on student perceptions of the Writing Centre as a learning space and distraction free environment.

7.3.2 Student respondents' views on Writing Centre as a learning space and a distraction-free environment

The findings emanating from this research study showed that the majority of student respondents, 69%, consider the Writing Centre to be a learning space.

If the Writing Centre was considered as a learning space, does it also mean that students considered it as providing a distraction free environment? The findings from the study confirmed that the majority of respondents (60%) agreed that the Writing Centre constitutes a distraction free environment conducive to learning.

Related to the above was a question that asked respondents' views on whether the Writing Centre was helping students academically. The findings from the study revealed that 61% of respondents believed that the Writing Centre was helping students academically. Most interestingly, however, was the 11% of the respondents who believed that the Writing Centre

was not helping students, and more than 24% of the respondents were undecided ('Don't know').

7.3.3 Student respondents' satisfaction and recommending the Writing Centre to others

Students were asked whether they would return to the Writing Centre if they were satisfied with the assistance they received. Over 81% of the respondents indicated overwhelmingly that they would return to the Writing Centre to seek academic assistance. If student respondents were satisfied with the academic support they received from the Writing Centre, would they recommend the Writing Centre to their peers or counterparts? The findings revealed that a majority of student respondents (81%) would have no issue with recommending the Writing Centre services to their fellow students or peers. However, 19% of the students responded with a definite 'No' to the question. The analysis of the data in this regard revealed that student responses to this question were largely based on personal experience with the Writing Centre's booking system, among others, and the scheduling of an appointment for consultation with a consultant or academic literacy lecturer. These issues require urgent attention by the Writing Centre staff as they may affect students' access, not only to the Writing Centre, but also broader academic access to the disciplinary knowledge. In Chapter 1 of this study (1.1), the significance and importance of student writing and its purpose in higher education was highlighted. The significance of academic writing is underscored by its use as one of the means of assessment. Therefore, the academic support that the Writing Centre provides to students, may assist the students to improve their academic performance, and may also determine students' persistence, or the student dropping out as a result of an inability to succeed in his or her studies. When a student therefore fails to obtain the required and necessary academic assistance from the Writing Centre, not as a result of his or her own fault, but that of the Writing Centre, such a student may be denied access to knowledge because the Writing Centre's primary purpose is to help students acquire epistemological access through academic literacy practices, or as a result of assistance in academic writing.

7.3.4 Student respondents' perceptions of own academic writing

In Chapter 3 of this study, it was indicated that one of the functions of the Writing Centre consultations is to broadly point out the obvious when it comes to students' general grammatical and syntactic errors in writing. This is done through also looking at students'

general understanding of the task at hand (as per instruction), conceptualisation of students' written responses, argumentation and rhetorical or stylistic writing, paragraph formation (including issues concerned with validation, referencing and possibilities of plagiarism, features of introduction and conclusion).

The findings emanating from this study revealed, generally, that students rated their abilities highly in a range of related questions. Student respondents were asked to indicate their capabilities in, among others: their writing in relation to planning their academic tasks (research work); brainstorming ideas; writing introductory paragraphs; writing well-structured paragraphs in relation to content; organisation of ideas; use of sentence structures and use of a variety of sentence structures; in-text referencing; paraphrasing information; compiling a bibliography; writing conclusions; revising their own work; organising paragraphs; report writing; time management; using active learning methods and essay marks improvement.

The findings emanating from this study revealed, from the students' own perceptions, that they valued and ranked their capabilities highly. In almost all the categories of questions, students were asked to rank their capabilities from excellent (being the highest), to average or poor. In others, an additional option of 'fair' was included.

As indicated in Chapter 5 of this study, the majority of students ranked their capabilities to be 'excellent'. Writing abilities in relation to planning their academic tasks (research work) were viewed to be excellent by the majority of students (50%), while 35% of students believed themselves to be average, and 15% of student respondents considered themselves to be poor. On whether students are able to brainstorm their ideas before writing, the study revealed that 53% of students viewed themselves as being excellent or more than capable, while 31% of students thought they were average, and 15% students categorised themselves as being unable or poor.

On writing introductory paragraphs, 50% of student respondents rated themselves as excellent or more than able, and 32% viewed themselves as average, while 18% of students felt they were unable or were poor. With regard to writing well-structured paragraphs in relation to content, 50% of students rated their capabilities as excellent, while 32% of students viewed themselves as average, and 18% considered themselves as poor.

On the organisation of ideas, 54% of students rated themselves as more than capable or excellent, while 22% of students saw themselves as average, and 24% of students believed

they were unable or were poor. As far as the use of sentence structures is concerned, the majority of students, 51%, believed they were more than capable, with 33% of students categorising themselves as average, and 10% of students believing they were not able, or were poor.

With regard to in-text referencing, the majority of students fell into the category of 'excellent' with 45%, followed by 29% of students who rated themselves as poor, and 26% of students viewed themselves as average.

As far as paraphrasing of information is concerned: the majority of students, 46% rated their capabilities highly, 26% viewed themselves as average, and 28% viewed themselves as 'poor'.

Findings from the study on compiling a bibliography revealed that 43% of student respondents believed they were more than capable, while 29% of students considered themselves to be average, and 28% poor. Similarly, in writing conclusions, 46% of student respondents considered themselves more than capable, while 30% of students viewed themselves as average, followed by 22% of students falling in the category of poor. With regard to revising their own written academic work the majority of student respondents chose the category of excellent (45%), followed by 30% of students who considered themselves average, and 25% of students categorised as poor. In organising paragraphs, 44% of students believed they were capable, while 34% considered themselves average followed by 22% in the poor category.

Student respondents, as revealed by the findings with regard to report writing, and after Writing Centre consultation reported as follows: 52% believed they are more than capable in executing the task, while 25% considered themselves to be average, and 23% poor. On whether students are able to manage their time effectively (time management), the results revealed that 43% of students answered in the affirmative, 41% of students categorised themselves as average, and 16% of students viewed themselves as poor.

Similarly, with regard to the use of active learning methods, the majority of students, namely 52% responded positively, followed by 31% of students who considered themselves average, and 17% of students believed they were not able to use active learning methods.

Lastly, on the findings of the quantitative component of the study relating to students' academic writing, student respondents were asked to grade themselves on whether their

marks had improved after making use of the Writing Centre services. A majority of students, 52%, responded positively, while 29% categorised their performance as average (meaning little or no discernible improvement or change), and 23% of students saw no improvement.

Student respondents' perceptions about their own capabilities as revealed by the study, indicates high levels of positive subjective self-perceptional assessment by the majority of student respondents. Equally, a reasonable number of student respondents, viewed themselves as average, while an equally significant number considered themselves as poor. The latter two categories of student respondents' perceptions of own academic writing capabilities are to be expected because they fit the profile and characterisation usually associated with the study skills approach to academic writing and academic literacy. To re–state once more, this view of academic literacy believes that students need to be inculcated into the academy through a set of atomised skills that they have to learn, and which are also transferable. This could lead to feelings of inadequacy, low self-esteem, and as indicated by the literature review in Chapter 2, the belief that they have nothing worth to say.

On the other hand, were it not for the use of a mixed methods research study, the quantitative findings would have created a false sense of security about the effectiveness of the Writing Centre in enhancing the quality of students' academic writing. In answering the research question, I believe, and I support my argument below, that the majority of the participants were generally happy about the services of the Writing Centre. The confidence shown by the majority of student respondents about their own academic writing capabilities is to be welcomed, and strangely as it may sound, to be appreciated because it signals the formation of better writers and creates a foundation for lifelong learning. The confidence in their own academic writing capability, in this case, by a majority of student respondents, indicates a desire among the respondents to attain the status of being better academic writers rather than an indictment on the deficiencies of the Writing Centre.

The findings from the quantitative analysis of data and findings discussed in Chapter 5 were, in the true nature of a mixed methods research study, triangulated against the results and findings from the qualitative component of the study in order to obtain a holistic picture. The qualitative results were drawn from the content analysis of students' essay scripts discussed in Chapter 6.

As indicated in Chapter 6, and by way of comparative data analysis, student perceptions of their own academic writing capabilities were contextualised with the findings from students'

actual writing practices. An independent, critical comparison of the data from the essay scripts was done using a set of criteria detailed in Chapter 4, and explained in paragraph 7.2 of this chapter.

The findings from the analysis of students' scripts were interpreted according to three broad categories: organisation, students' voice and register, and language use. Organisation in student academic writing refers to the focus and structure of writing, including paragraphing, coherence and cohesion, and most importantly, argument, which is the basic tenet of academic writing. Notwithstanding the fact that the majority of students had indicated that they possessed these critical components of academic writing, the findings in Chapter 6 of the study revealed that students' essay scripts lacked these basic tenets of writing. Student essay scripts revealed that students failed to plan and structure their arguments in a neat, coherent and cohesive manner in the way they were shown during their consultations at the Writing Centre. Even though students' written essay scripts did not reveal many grammatical errors and inaccuracies, they did, however, show serious problems with the technical presentation of their work.

The second critical analytical component in students' written essay scripts related to voice and register, in particular, the need for the student writer to establish a presence in text in relation to the subject matter, source and audience. This also refers to the integration of secondary sources and issues of plagiarism. In this study, the findings from an analysis of student written essays showed that students struggled to integrate written demonstrations from the relevant sources into their written academic essays. The findings also revealed that students had difficulties in presenting their essays in a manner that established a relationship between the writer, the text and the audience. As a result, the researcher found it difficult at times to follow the argument presented in students' academic essays. Although some students showed an understanding of what they were required to do in terms of their academic tasks, or assignment questions, there were many instances observed where students failed to acknowledge their sources, reference properly and avoid plagiarism. While there was no evidence of a deliberate intention on the part of student respondents to plagiarise, such practices were found to be common in most of the written essays. Literature observes that, while some students make use of plagiarism not by design, they still plagiarise as a result of the fact that they are either not aware, or do not know how to avoid it, and they also do not know how to apply the discourse of that specific or particular discipline (Ange'lil Carter, 2000). In this study, students failed to exert their voice in their written academic essays

because they tried to resemble the sources they were using which is typical of inexperienced academic writers.

The third, and last category of analysis of student scripts outlined in Chapter 6 of this study, concerned language use. This refers to the mechanics of text, namely vocabulary, punctuation, sentence construction, use of correct tenses, etc. As indicated in Chapter 6, although student respondents demonstrated a good understanding of what good academic writing entails, they still failed to apply these principles to their written academic essays. The findings further revealed that student respondents' writing displaced challenges and problems in formulating and structuring correct sentence structures, or making use of word order, punctuation and sentence construction. In their discussion of language errors made by first-year Analytical Chemistry students, Katiya, Mtonjeni and Sefalane-Nkohla (2015) found that these errors showed how students' academic language proficiency reflected the challenges and progress students have made in learning university subjects through the medium of a second language.

I agree with the conclusion reached by the above authors in so far as they relate to the findings in this study. It has been found out that the students make grammatical errors due to two main reasons: interlingual (i.e. interference of other languages such as the mother tongue) and intralingual (lack of competence in the language of teaching and learning, i.e. English) factors. It can thus be concluded that students still have a long way to go in writing satisfactory essays in English. The way they composed their essays clearly shows their weak grasp of the basic tenets of English grammar.

I further contend that the findings from this study confirm similar conclusions reached by Pineteh (2013) which, in his view, reflected weaknesses in student academic writing such as a failure to grasp academic conventions, analysis of writing topics, ability to research and apply knowledge in different contexts, and poor sentence skills. I maintain that the findings from this study must be seen within the institutional and higher education contexts in which the student respondents study and learn. This context is explained by Steyn et al. (2014), who correctly point out that, despite the fact that English is the mother–tongue of less than 10 percent of the South African population, it remains the language of instruction at many higher education institutions in South Africa. The problem with this, which I discussed in Chapter 2, is that the majority of students have little opportunity to develop language proficiency outside of the formal classroom, and this lack of English language skills results in major academic

challenges, as found in this study. For students this challenge affects their ability to reason, organise and plan their academic tasks because they cannot understand what they are being taught (Steyn et al., 2014).

However, and not withstanding these challenges, I believe that the Writing Centre is effective in its role in enhancing students' academic writing at a university of technology. There are many factors, apart from the ones indicated above, that affect students' academic writing, and the work and effectiveness of the Writing Centre. For example, in my own experiences from consultation with students on, for example, time management, students often cite difficult and painful challenges that they have to overcome to be able to study, particularly those who reside off–campus, who reside in informal settlements or shacks erected on curbs and pavements, who are unable to study for their assessments at home especially if they have missed the opportunity to do so while on campus. Some, as a result of a lack of judgement on their part, find themselves tangled up in unimaginable circumstances such as physical and emotional abuse, financial and economic pressures imposed on them to finish their studies in order to lift other members of their families out of poverty, etc. This picture and context outlined above supports the view advanced by Archer (2008) that there are two difficulties that affect the measurement of the effectiveness of the writing centre. She argues that the first of these is that, the one-on-one consultation approach utilised by the writing centre is unique in a tertiary context, and is therefore difficult to measure. The second point put forward by Archer (2008), is that there are many factors affecting student academic writing other than visits to the writing centre.

I conclude this section by re-iterating some of what the literature indicates in Chapter 2 of this study, and argue that the findings of highly positive own reflections by the majority of student respondents in this study, and the findings of the outcomes from the content analysis of student respondents' academic essays, even though they appear to be contradictory, represent what a writing centre is all about. The high level of self-confidence of the majority of student respondents is to be welcomed, because it offers the Writing Centre practitioners an opportunity to devise means and strategies to make such students part of the Writing Centre activities in a sustainable manner, beyond the existing ad hoc Writing Centre visitations. Similarly, the reasonable percentages of student respondents who either indicated their capabilities as average or poor are equally what the Writing Centre exists for, to make better writers out of them for lifelong learning.

The next section discusses the findings of the study on the respondents' views of the services offered by the Writing Centre

7.3.5   Student respondents' views on the services offered by the Writing Centre

As stated in Chapter 5, the findings of this study revealed, broadly, that student respondents' perceptions indicated that they were generally satisfied with the work performed by the Writing Centre. The majority of students, namely 43%, rated the overall services of the Writing Centre as excellent, followed closely by 29% of student respondents who rated the overall services offered by the Writing Centre as good, and were, therefore, generally happy with the full complement of the services offered by the Writing Centre.

However, 29% of student respondents were undecided or not sure, and as a result rated the services of the Writing Centre as average or mediocre, while 8% of the student respondents felt that the overall services offered by the Writing Centre were fair. A minority of student respondents, 2%, thought that the services of the Writing Centre were poor. It appeared from the findings in Chapter 5 that this category of students was deeply concerned with the general treatment they had encountered at the Writing Centre, in particular, the delays by consultants in attending to students on set or agreed times as per scheduled appointments, and the perceived unavailability of these services when most required. Further, discontent and frustration were also registered about student access cards that made it difficult to access the Writing Centre and about the functionality of the computers installed in the Writing Centre.

Notwithstanding these critical concerns raised by the study, by far the majority of students, (90%) indicated their general satisfaction with the overall services offered by the Writing Centre.

7.3.6   Student respondents' perceptions on the suitability of the IT system and software utilised by the Writing Centre

Student respondents were asked about the functionality of computers and academic writing software installed in the Writing Centre in the three researched campuses. With regard to the former, functionality of computers, this study found that, generally, there were no major problems concerning the functionality of the computers. The majority of student respondents indicated their satisfaction with the functionality of the computers.

With regard to computer software in the Writing Centre, more than 90% of students commented positively about the functionality of the software installed at both Bellville and Cape Town campuses. The majority of students also believed that the software installed promoted academic reading.

7.3.7 Students respondents' perceptions of Writing Centre consultation and time allocation

The findings from the study indicated that the majority of students were satisfied with the time allocated for consultation in all three campuses where the Writing Centre operates. About 87% of student respondents indicated their satisfaction on the time and consultations carried out by the Writing Centre. However, 13% of student respondents were dissatisfied with the time allocated for consultations. These students believed that the time allocated was insufficient, and the manner in which consultations were carried out at times by Writing Centre consultants was frustrating. Some of the students believed that the days allocated for consultations with students i.e. Tuesdays and Thursdays, were insufficient to meet the need and demands of students. A further concern was raised relating to the requirement by the Writing Centre for students who make an appointment booking to hand in their written work a week prior to such consultations. Students believed that the time could have been fruitfully utilised for more work on the students' written draft document.

Student respondents' proposals for improvement of the services offered by the Writing Centre

As indicated in Chapter 5, students were asked to make suggestions and to indicate areas where they would like to see improvements on the services offered by the Writing Centre. Students were further asked to rank these areas identified for improvement in their preferred order.

The findings from the study indicated that more academic writing workshops offered by the Writing Centre was highest on the list of priorities of student respondents (46% ranking). Following closely behind the request for academic writing workshops, was the issue of consultations (with a 45% ranking). Notwithstanding the findings on consultations stated in

sub-paragraph 7.3.7 above, a majority of students indicated a need for improvements to be made in this area.

The third finding emanating from this study concerned the Writing Centre's booking system (with 43% ranking). The researcher found this to be interesting as, just like consultation above, earlier findings on this issue found that, generally, student respondents were satisfied with the booking system managed by the Writing Centre. Nevertheless, student respondents felt strongly that it is an area that also required attention.

Similarly, student respondents raised the issue of the computer software (with a 35% ranking), IT assistants (similarly with a 35% ranking) and installation of reading software (28% ranking), as other critical areas that deserved attention and improvement. The last area identified by student respondents for improvement was the need to keep the noise levels down at the Writing Centre.

7.4   LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

This study focused on determining the perceptions of students on the role of the writing centre in enhancing students' academic writing at a university of technology, in particular, at CPUT. The study was, therefore, confined to students who had visited and utilised the services of the Writing Centre at CPUT's three campuses where the Writing Centre is operational. The first limitation of this study is that it did not include students who fell beyond the scope i.e. who had no exposure to the services of the Writing Centre within the three campuses where the Writing Centre is operational, and also in campuses where the Writing Centre is not operational. This means that the study did not involve a comparative analysis of students' academic writing between those who had visited the Writing Centre and those who have never visited or utilised the services offered by the Writing Centre.

A further limitation for the study is the number of students who participated in the empirical component of the study. The empirical component of the study was undertaken during the #Fees Must Fall Campaign which might have affected the number of students available to take part in the study. As indicated in Chapter 1, second-year and B-Tech students from the faculty of Informatics and Design had very enthusiastically approached me to participate in the study but they fell beyond the scope because of the limitations on the target group of participants for the study. The study was further limited by the availability and busy nature of

potential participants due to their academic obligations. Perceptions or views of the academics could have further enriched the study.

Notwithstanding the limitations, the data generated by the study highlighted critical issues that emanated from student perceptions about the services of the Writing Centre, issues of concern relating to consultation and areas for improvement that may require attention in the future.

7.5   RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations emanate from the findings of this research study and are underpinned by the research question, research objectives and the empirical data. The following recommendations are proposed:

- The context of this study was located within a university of technology and the results thereof are generalisable within this institutional type, taking into consideration the context within which each institution operates, and acknowledging the fact that each writing centre is created and operates in a unique manner.

- In Chapter 3 of this study, it was pointed out that the Writing Centre at CPUT, does not offer proofreading and editing services. However, based on the findings emanating from this research study, it is clear that an overwhelming majority of student respondents considered this service as crucial to the Writing Centre. This service may be offered on a limited scale. The purpose of the writing centre is to create better academic writers and to further ensure lifelong learning. This purpose, however, may not be achieved if proofreading and editing services were to be offered on a large scale, because students would not be motivated to arrange bookings for one-on-one consultations, and this may therefore defeat the purpose.

- Further, a need for additional support staff in the form of academic writing consultants also became apparent from the findings of this study. In order for writing centres to be able to function fully, they require institutional support and that includes more staff to be employed and trained.

- Notwithstanding its obvious limitations, there is a need for management to consider the expansion of the services of the Writing Centre to other satellite campuses where it is currently not operational.

- The demands for academic writing workshops for students found sufficient motivation in the findings of this study.

- The seamless and efficient administrative management of the Writing Centre booking system, consultation times and staff, requires urgent consideration.

- In order to enhance the role played by the Writing Centre at CPUT in the inculcation of academic literacy practices within the institution, and in particular, in disciplinary discourses, the roll-out of programmes such as the First-Year Experience (FYE), an initiative housed at the Fundani CHED, should be aligned with the theory, practices and ideology of the Writing Centre for mutual academic benefit and development.

- One of the findings from the study revealed that the majority of student respondents (71%), visited the Writing Centre as a result of a referral by their content/subject lecturers. This bodes well for the relationship of the Writing Centre with various faculties within the institution. However, more collaborative work is still required in this area, and there still remains a need to strengthen relations with individual lecturers, faculties and students for mutual benefit.

- One of the distinguishing characteristics between the institutional types in South African higher education (i.e. traditional, comprehensive and universities of technology), is the ability of and the advantage, or at least what I perceive to be, of traditional and comprehensive universities to have established English Departments from which many academic development programmes were conceived and created. Unfortunately, this is not the case for universities of technology. Traditional and comprehensive universities also have an added advantage of being able to produce postgraduate students who are able to study, and undertake research on various academic fields, but in particular, the field of academic literacies. On the other hand, universities of technology rely, and in fact, are dependent on these two institutional types, and postgraduate students from these two institutional types for their academic writing consultants, and in some cases, academic literacy lecturers. Whilst this is welcomed and of mutual benefit between the students from these institutional types and universities of technologies, it lacks a formal institutional arrangement that could better serve the writing centres at universities of technology. Universities of technology rely and are dependent on postgraduate students from these institutions, and it therefore makes sense that some effort is made to create an arrangement that may mutually benefit both institutional types.

- The booking system and the scheduling of appointments is one of the areas identified from the findings of this study as causing a lot of frustrations to students. I would like to recommend that writing centres have a presence on university websites so that an interactive application can be created that would allow students to effortlessly make bookings and schedule appointment slots with ease.

- The above recommendation will require enhancement of the administration of the writing centre in order to create an efficient administrative system that would support the work of the writing centre. The management, administration and the resourcing of the writing centre remain areas that are often neglected or overlooked. Further research on the ideal management, administrative and funding model for a writing centre at a university of technology is required.

- In this study, the findings revealed that the majority of student respondents come from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds. Within the context of a multilingual and diverse higher education landscape, there is a need to further research the possibility for writing centres to accommodate this diversity in practice, and through consultations with students in a manner that resembles the use of English and Afrikaans at by the Stellenbosch Writing Lab.

7.6   CONCLUSION

It is widely recognised in literature on academic literacies that writing centre interventions can be an effective tool in helping students with their academic writing irrespective of the institutional type. As a learning space, writing centres as one form of intervention, amongst many, provide students with not only a purposeful learning environment, but also provide a non-discriminatory space that is democratic and transformative. They also, significantly, provide academic access to ways of knowing that sustain higher education institutions. This is especially critical considering that at the centre of transformation in higher education is the pressing and continuous need to provide a system of higher education that builds democracy, human dignity, equality and social justice. As issues of academic access and success continue to occupy the spotlight, so does student academic writing. The former is inextricably linked to the latter. As observed in the preceding chapters of this study, writing continues to constitute one of the main means of assessment, and support in academic writing may

determine, in some instances, whether a student proceeds to another level of academic study including graduation, or joins the many whose dreams of higher education were not fulfilled.

This study has revealed that students value and appreciate the services and academic support that the Writing Centre provides. They have indicated, unequivocally, that the Writing Centre remains the only place on campus that is able to assist them with challenges relating to their academic writing. The students have gone further to make proposals relating to, among others, the need for the Writing Centre to offer a 24-hour service, increased time for consultation, more visible marketing and publicity initiatives relating, in particular, to the university website, and the employment of additional staff in the form of consultants.

These critical issues and findings are essential in ensuring that the Writing Centre continues to fulfil its mandate. This mandate, as it has been shown in this study, is not one originally intended i.e. that of remediation and acculturation of students into academic discourse, or to serve as a fix-it workshop. The mandate of the Writing Centre is to produce better writers within the context of an academic literacies approach.

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ADDENDA

Addendum A: Participant consent

Addendum B: Participant questionnaire

Addendum C: Humanities REC letter

Addendum D: CPUT ethics certificate

Addendum E: Summary of errors found in students' scripts

STELLENBOSCH UNIVERSITY
CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

The role of a Writing Centre in enhancing the quality of students' academic writing at a University of Technology.

You are requested to participate in a research study conducted by Puleng SefalaneNkohla from the Student Learning Writing Centre at Cape Peninsula University of Technology. The results of this study will contribute toward the completion of her Masters Degree. You were selected as a possible participant in this study because you are making use of the services of the Writing Centre.

1. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The study is designed to evaluate the Writing Centre's contribution to the development of students' academic writing at CPUT, and to determine the perceptions and attitudes of students about the Writing Centre.

2. PROCEDURES

Should you wish to participate in this study, we would ask you to do the following:
- Be willing to submit two versions of your script – before and after your consultation at the Writing Centre
- Complete a questionnaire at the Writing Centre
- Whereas the questionnaire will be completed by all students, a smaller number of scripts shall be selected for analysis.

Your cooperation regarding the above is highly valued.

3. POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS

There are no known risks associated with this research.

4. POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO SUBJECTS AND/OR TO SOCIETY

This research may help us to understand how the Writing Centre can be more effective in assisting you to improve your writing skills.

5. PAYMENT FOR PARTICIPATION

There is no payment for participating in this research.

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. Information will be stored electronically and only the researcher and the supervisor will have access to the information. Recorded data will be stored safely and will be kept for a period of five years. Findings and conclusions will be published in the form of a dissertation, and names of research participants will not be made public.

7. PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL

You do not have to take part in this research if you do not wish to do so, and refusing to participate will not affect your service in the Writing Centre in any way. You will still have all the benefits that you would otherwise have in the Writing Centre. 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 some questions and still remain in the study.

8. IDENTIFICATION OF INVESTIGATORS

If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please feel free to contact me, Puleng Sefalane-Nkohla, (0219596724/sefalanep@cput.ac.za), or my supervisor, Prof. M. Fourie-Malherbe at Stellenbosch University (021 808 3908/ mfourie@sun.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 Ms Maléne Fouché [mfouche@sun.ac.za; 021 808 4622] at the Division for Research Development, Stellenbosch University.

CONSENT OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANT

The information above was described to [*me/the subject/the participant]* by [*name of relevant person].…………………………………* in [*English/Xhosa/other*] and [*I am/the subject is/the participant is]* ………………………………* in command of this language or it was satisfactorily translated to [*me/him/her*].

[*I/the participant/the subject*] …………………………………………………was given the opportunity to ask questions and these questions were answered to *[my/his/her]* satisfaction.

I hereby consent voluntarily to participate in this study. I have been given a copy of this form.

_____

Name of Participant

_____   _____

Signature of Participant   **Date**

SIGNATURE OF INVESTIGATOR

I declare that I explained the information given in this document to _____ [*name of the participant*]. *[H*e/she] was encouraged and given ample time to ask me any questions. This conversation was conducted in [*English/Xhosa/other]* and no translator was used. The participant is in command of this language or it was satisfactorily translated to *[him/her*]. [*The participant/*] was given the opportunity to ask questions and these questions were answered to *[his/her]* satisfaction.

Signature of Investigator 17 September 2014

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WRITING CENTER EVALUATION

Your participation in this study is highly appreciated. The aim of this evaluation is to help the Writing Centre to improve its service to the students at CPUT. Your responses will remain anonymous, and the findings will be used
for research purposes only.

CAMPUS   Code [   ]

On which one of the following campuses are you located? Mark the appropriate campus with an X.

Bellville Campus	Tygerberg Campus	Cape Town Campus

Date completed………………………

DEMOGRAPHIC DETAILS

Q 01. Please provide the relevant information in the corresponding blocks, and mark with an X where necessary.

Q 01.1	Home language									
Q 01.2	Faculty									
Q 01.3	Department									
Q.01.4	Course									
Q 01.3	Year of study	ECP		1st year		2nd year		3rd year		B-tech

REFERRAL INFORMATION

Q 02. How many times, during your course of study, have you been to the Writing Centre for consultations? Circle the relevant number.

Q 02	1	2	3	4	more

Q 03. What course did you consult the Writing Centre for?

_____
__ Q 04. Where did you hear about the services provided by the Writing Centre?

Q 04	Lecturer	1	Friend	2	Orientation	3	CPUT website	4	Other (specify)	5

Q 05. Who referred you to the Writing Center? (Tick as many as are appropriate)

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Q 05.1	Lecturer	
Q 05.2	Student Counseling	
Q 05.3	Disability Unit	
Q 05.4	Residence Manager	
Q 05.5	Tutor	
Q 05.6	Mentor	
Q 05.7	Senior student	
Q 05.8	Friend	
Q 05.9	Own initiative (self)	
Q05.10	Other (please specify)	

ACCESSING THE WRITING CENTRE

Q 06. The location of the Writing Centre is convenient. Please use the following scale:

1 = Definitely Yes, 2 = Yes, 3 = No, 4 = Definitely No

Q 06	1	2	3	4

Q 07. I am able to schedule an appointment with ease. Please use the following scale:

1 = Definitely Yes, 2 = Yes, 3 = No, 4 = Definitely No

Q 07	1	2	3	4

Q 08. Have you been to the Writing Center for writing consultation visits? If yes, how many times?

Q 08.	Yes	No	Please indicate how many times	Once	Twice	Thrice	Four or more
			By indicating on the columns on the right				

EVALUATION OF SERVICE

Q09. What kind of service do you normally request from the Writing Centre? (Tick as many as are appropriate)

Q 09.01	Editing and Proofreading	
Q 09.02	Essay Structure	
Q 09.03	Referencing	

Q 09.04	Topic Analysis / Getting clarity on assignment instructions	
Q 09.05	Presentation Skills	
Q 09.06	Report Writing	
Q 09.07	Study Skills	
Q 09.08	Time Management and Goal Setting	
Q 09.09	Using computers to browse the Internet	
Q 09.10	Online social networking	
Q 09.11	Other (please specify)	

Q 10. Is the 24 hour booking system used by the Writing Centre effective?

Q 10	Yes	No	Don't know

Q 11. Is the Writing Centre doing enough to help students to develop academically?

Q 11	Yes	No	Don't know

Q 11.1 Please motivate your answer:

_____
_____
_____
_____

Q 12. How do you rate the overall service of the Writing Centre?

Please use the following scale: 1= Excellent, 2=Good, 3=Average, 4= Fair 5=Poor

Q 12	1	2	3	4	5

Please motivate your answer:

_____
_____
_____
_____

Q 13. Would you return to the Writing Centre?

Yes	No

Please motivate your answer:

_____
_____
_____
_____

Q 14. Would you recommend the Writing Centre to other students?

Yes	No

Please motivate your answer:

_____
_____
_____
_____

Q 15 How would you rate your performance in terms of the following?

Please use the following scale: 1= Excellent, 2=Good, 3=Average, 4= Fair 5=Poor

Q15.01	I can plan my research well	1	2	3	4	5
Q15.02	I can brainstorm my ideas before and during the writing task	1	2	3	4	5
Q15.03	I can write good introductions	1	2	3	4	5
Q15.04	I can write well-structured paragraphs	1	2	3	4	5
Q15.05	I can logically organize my ideas when I write paragraphs	1	2	3	4	5
Q15.06	I can use a variety of sentence structures	1	2	3	4	5
Q15.07	I can write correct in text referencing	1	2	3	4	5
Q15.08	I can accurately paraphrase information	1	2	3	4	5
Q15.09	I can write good conclusions	1	2	3	4	5
Q15.10	I can compile a bibliography	1	2	3	4	5
Q15.11	I can revise on my own to improve the development and organization of my essay	1	2	3	4	5
Q15.12	I can logically arrange my paragraphs to support and develop my thesis	1	2	3	4	5
Q15.13	My marks for essays have improved	1	2	3	4	5
Q15.14	My marks for the reports have improved.	1	2	3	4	5
Q15.15	I am able to plan my time effectively	1	2	3	4	5
Q15.16	I can use active learning methods to improve my understanding of the various subjects/ courses I am studying	1	2	3	4	5

WRITING CENTRE AS A LEARNING SPACE

Q 16. Is the Writing Centre a space that supports learning?

Q16.	Yes	No

Please motivate your answer:

_____
_____
_____
_____

Q 17. Does the Writing Centre provide a distraction-free environment for learning?

Q17	Yes	No

Please motivate your answer:

_____
_____
_____
_____

Q 18. Is the noise level at the Writing Centre managed well enough to allow students to do their work effectively?

Q 18	Yes	No

Q 19. How often are the computers in the Writing Center functioning well?

Q 19.01	Always	
Q 19.02	Sometimes	
Q 19.03	Seldom	

Q 20. Is the software installed on the computers relevant to promote reading?

Q 20.	Yes	No

Q 21. Is the software installed on the computers relevant to promote academic writing?

Q 21.	Yes	No

Q 22. Is the time allocated for student consultation enough for you?

Q 22.1	Yes	No

Please motivate your answer.

_____

_____

_____

_____

IMPROVING THE WRITING CENTRE SERVICE

Q 23. What do you think the Writing Centre can do to improve students' academic writing? (Tick as many as are appropriate)

Q 23.1	Install reading software	
Q 23.2	Install writing software	
Q 23.3	Present academic writing workshops	
Q 23.4	Appoint more writing consultants	
Q 23.5	Improve flexibility in terms of bookings	
Q 23.6	Keep noise levels down	
Q 23.7	Improve the availability of IT assistants must be available to assist the students with computer problems	
Q 23.8	Other (please specify)	

Q 24. Any additional comments?

_____

_____

_____

THANK YOU FOR TAKING TIME TO COMPLETE THE SURVEY.

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jou kennisvennoot · your knowledge partner

Approval Notice
Stipulated documents/requirements

28-Jul-2015
Sefalane-nkohla, Puleng PG

Proposal #: DESC/Nkola/Apr2015/6

Title: **The role of a Writing Centre in enhancing the quality of students' academic writing at a University of Technology**

Dear Mrs Puleng Sefalane-nkohla,

 Your **Stipulated documents/requirements** received on **03-Jun-2015**, was reviewed
Sincerely,

Clarissa Graham
REC Coordinator
Research Ethics Committee: Human Research (Humanities)

Investigator Responsibilities

Protection of Human Research Participants

Some of the general responsibilities investigators have when conducting research involving human participants are listed below:

1.<u>Conducting the Research.</u> You are responsible for making sure that the research is conducted according to the REC approved research protocol. You are also responsible for the actions of all your co-investigators and research staff involved with this research. You must also ensure that the research is conducted within the standards of your field of research.

2.<u>Participant Enrollment.</u> You may not recruit or enroll participants prior to the REC approval date or after the expiration date of REC approval. All recruitment materials for any form of media must be approved by the REC prior to their use. If you need to recruit more participants than was noted in your REC approval letter, you must submit an amendment requesting an increase in the number of participants.

3.<u>Informed Consent.</u> You are responsible for obtaining and documenting effective informed consent using **only** the REC-approved consent documents, and for ensuring that no human participants are involved in research prior to obtaining their informed consent. Please give all participants copies of the signed informed consent documents. Keep the originals in your secured research files for at least five (5) years.

4.<u>Continuing Review.</u> The REC must review and approve all REC-approved research proposals at intervals appropriate to the degree of risk but not less than once per year. There is **no grace period.** Prior to the date on which the REC approval of the research expires, **it is your responsibility to submit the continuing review report in a timely fashion to ensure a lapse in REC approval does not occur.** If REC approval of your research lapses, you must stop new participant enrollment, and contact the REC office immediately.

5.<u>Amendments and Changes.</u> If you wish to amend or change any aspect of your research (such as research design, interventions or procedures, number of participants, participant population, informed consent document, instruments, surveys or recruiting material), you must submit the amendment to the REC for review using the current Amendment Form. You **may not initiate** any amendments or changes to your research without first obtaining written REC review and approval. The **only exception** is when it is necessary to eliminate apparent immediate hazards to participants and the REC should be immediately informed of this necessity.

6.<u>Adverse or Unanticipated Events.</u> Any serious adverse events, participant complaints, and all unanticipated problems that involve risks to participants or others, as well as any research related injuries, occurring at this institution or at other performance sites must be reported to Malene Fouch within **five**

(5) days of discovery of the incident. You must also report any instances of serious or continuing problems, or non-compliance with the RECs requirements for protecting human research participants. The only exception to this policy is that the death of a research participant must be reported in accordance with the Stellenbosch Universtiy Research Ethics Committee Standard Operating Procedures. All reportable events should be submitted to the REC using the Serious Adverse Event Report Form.

7.<u>Research Record Keeping.</u> You must keep the following research related records, at a minimum, in a secure location for a minimum of five years: the REC approved research proposal and all amendments; all informed consent documents; recruiting materials; continuing review reports; adverse or unanticipated events; and all correspondence from the REC

8.<u>Provision of Counselling or emergency support.</u> When a dedicated counsellor or psychologist provides support to a participant without prior REC review and approval, to the extent permitted by law, such activities will not be recognised as research nor the data used in support of research. Such cases should be indicated in the progress report or final report.

9.<u>Final reports.</u> When you have completed (no further participant enrollment, interactions, interventions or data analysis) or stopped work on your research, you must submit a Final Report to the REC.

10.<u>On-Site Evaluations, Inspections, or Audits.</u> If you are notified that your research will be reviewed or audited by the sponsor or any other external

Cape Peninsula University of Technology

P.O. Box 652 • Cape Town • 8000 South Africa •Tel: +27 21 460 3922 • Fax +27 21 460 3711
Secretary: +27 21 460 3711, Fundani CHED, Cape Town Campus

OFFICE OF CHAIR: FUNDANI RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

17 September 2014
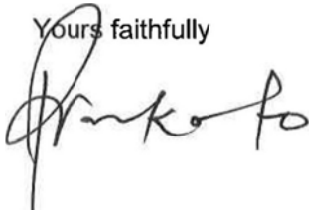
Ethics approval: Ms Puleng Sefalane

Dear Puleng,

Ethics approval

Thank you for your research proposal. The Fundani Research Ethics Committee hereby gives you ethics permission to conduct your research as stated in your proposal that was approved by the Stellenbosch University research and research ethics committees.

We wish you well in your studies and look forward to the results.

Yours faithfully

B NOSISANA MKONTO
CHAIR: FUNDANI RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

e-mail: mkonton@cput.ac.za
Website: http://www.cput.ac.za

Summary of errors found in students' scripts

Level of study	Errors in student's writing
First-year Student A	Absence of referencing, academic conventions No coherence No topic sentence
First-year Student B	No introduction No thesis statement Poor layout, cover page Coherence and cohesion Failure of the task
Second-year Student C	No introduction No background information provided to the experiment Quality of the relevance of the work problematic Failure to argue and convince the reader about the writer's position Information randomly selected with no sense of structure Grammatical errors that made it difficult for the reader to grasp the meaning of what was written Main ideas not expressed in clear topic sentences Some information with structure, but illogically presented
Second-year Student D	Very short, incomplete introduction Incorrect presentation of the report No purpose statement No indication in the introduction of the method that was used Absence of the discussion of the methodology section Use of pronouns like 'you', 'this' complicates understanding Use of 'this' and 'that' does not adhere to syntactic-grammatical norms of Standard English Conclusion is vague No explanation of the results Failure to summarise findings from the results

	Failure to compare the aim of the experiment from the conclusion, to determine if the aims of the experiment were achieved or not
Third-year Student E	Writing in high school format sentence structure; no paragraphs Academic conventions not followed No purpose statement in the introduction of the essay Incorrect presentation of the abstract and the introduction Headings not numbered Inappropriate referencing No in-text referencing
Third-year Student F	Unusual presentation of the abstract that is divided into two paragraphs Incorrect line spacing of the abstract Use of sources that are not acknowledged Incorrect presentation of the results
B-Tech Student G	No in-text referencing No application of academic conventions Poor quality and the literature review poorly presented Use of sophisticated syntax, jargon, concepts and claims not explained Use of complicated secondary citation/referencing Incorrect presentation of the references
B-Tech Student H	No formal introduction No introduction and coherence from the introduction to the conclusion Poor coherence Presentation of lengthy abstract with three paragraphs Some contradictions Document with no appropriate reasons to support thesis statement Academic conventions insufficiently followed/applied

	Confusing objectives and problem statement
	No proper paragraph development
	No flow of thoughts throughout the report
	Document developed in fragments
	Isolated development of themes
	Writer's voice absent in the report
	Absence of student's voice points to copying and pasting from other documents or sources used
	No proper topic sentence
	Question misunderstood, making it difficult for the reader to comprehend what the author intended to say