

**INVESTIGATION OF A MODEL OF
CONTEXTUAL CAREER EDUCATION IN
A TERTIARY SETTING**

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THE AUTHOR HEREBY DECLARES THAT THIS THESIS
UNLESS SPECIFICALLY INDICATED TO THE CONTRARY, IS A
PRODUCT OF HER OWN WORK.



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Abstract

This study investigated a career education programme which was run with students enrolled in the Science Foundation Programme (SFP). The SFP is a one year bridging course at the University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg, for black students with insufficient matric points to enter directly into the science faculty. The class comprised of 135 students who were divided into 16 groups with about eight students in each. These career groups met monthly over a three month period. The approach to career education was based on group discussion and exploration. This made it possible for the students to deal with material that was relevant to their being in a vocationally orientated programme. The career groups were aimed at assisting the students with increasing their self knowledge in relation to their career decision making, expanding their knowledge of work and careers, exploring issues of career planning, and developing social and group skills.

Research on the above process was undertaken by means of questionnaires, genograms and written paragraphs completed by the students over the duration of the programme. The students' evaluation of the programme was also investigated. The nature of the data meant that there were some responses which could be coded numerically, however much of the data was of a qualitative nature. Thematic analysis was thus undertaken.

The programme dealt primarily with the issue of contextualism, focussing on the students macro-and micro-contexts and the role that these play in shaping the students' careers. The developmental-contextual approach of Vondracek, Lerner, and Schulenberg (1986) was used to organise and make sense of the contextual data. Findings demonstrated that career information given in isolation is not sufficient. It needs to be located in the participants' context. Participation in the career education groups seemed to diminish the chances of students foreclosing on career decisions prematurely, and increased their self awareness and knowledge about the world of work. Research findings also highlighted the value of discussion as an important adjunct to other careers education techniques. The group discussion provided opportunities for gaining information and also encouraged individuals to take a more active role in their career development and career decision making. The career education groups provided a powerful tool for a collaborative learning experience with the students. This study also highlighted the limitations of a Western, individualistic approach, particularly when one is working cross culturally.

Chapter one

General Overview

1.1 Outline of topic

This study explored the viability of a group career education programme (CEP) for black students at a tertiary level. The programme purposefully moved away from assessment instruments, focussing instead on a more participatory process of focussed discussions. This dissertation will describe the development and implementation of the CEP. It will also focus on the findings and results of the programme. The CEP was undertaken with 135 students who were all enrolled in a one year Science Foundation Programme (SFP). The CEP extended over a three month period, March, April and May of 1998. Students were divided into small groups of about eight. Groups met once a month for a 45 minute session of career education (three sessions per group).

The SFP was originally set up in recognition of the “need for technically and scientifically trained black students in South Africa” (Grayson & Inglis, 1990, p. 1). The course was designed “to enable students of high academic potential who would not normally qualify for admission to the university to gain both university entrance and a solid science background prior to embarking on a degree in a science related field” (Grayson & Inglis, 1990, p. 2). The SFP commenced in 1991 with 31 sponsored students. It has grown in number yearly. In 1999, 144 students were accepted. Sponsorship is no longer provided for the students. Five academic subjects are included in the course as well as a counselling component. The SFP is unique in that counselling has been an integral part of the programme since its inception. The counselling component was originally established to include four areas of focus: career development, personal growth, community development and individual counselling. The counselling section of the SFP has proved to be a vital ingredient to the success of the programme and has accordingly expanded over the years. In 1999 a further counsellor was employed to share the workload with the current counsellor.

1.2 Background to the study

I worked at the SFP as an intern psychologist for four months, in 1998, as a temporary leave replacement for the full-time counselling psychologist. Given that there were 135 students and faced with the task of getting to know them and their needs over a short space of time, I decided to set up

focus groups (Morgan, 1997). Since it is a bridging course with students who come from disadvantaged academic backgrounds where career counselling is notoriously poor, it seemed important to use these groups to focus on issues relating to the students' career development.

I was informed in my planning of the groups by the guiding question *who are the SFP students?* I wanted to get an idea of the students' unique context, and their needs arising from this. I set about finding answers through a largely open ended approach in which I strived to suspend my own beliefs and biases. I believed that in the process of discussion around career issues, the students would educate one another. I would mostly facilitate discussion, and summarize and reflect emerging themes.

The groups provided the students with an opportunity to:

- Think about and discuss their career plans before committing to them.
- Expand their knowledge of the variety of careers available.
- Increase their knowledge of the world of work.
- Develop their self knowledge
- Develop of social and group skills

1.3 Rationale for implementing a career education programme at a tertiary institution

A review of the literature suggests that there has been little career education in South Africa, particularly for black students. Career counselling has been neglected particularly in black schools over the past few decades. Killeen (1996) observes that "the writing about careers, and hence guidance, is increasingly dominated by images of disorder and unpredictability" (p. 3). It seems necessary to prepare students, particularly at tertiary institutions, with knowledge and skills to deal with the "disorder and unpredictability" that Killeen speaks about. Watson, Foxcroft, Horn and Stead (1997) suggest that students face "the formidable task of choosing an occupation from an increasingly diverse labour market with little formalized career guidance" (p. 628). Informed and carefully considered career planning can therefore reduce personal disillusionment as well as unnecessary expenditure. Watson, Stead and De Jager (1995) suggest that there has been very little research about the career education of black teenagers. For this reason it seems important to write up my experience of the career education process that I embarked on with the SFP students, so that others in the field may be made aware of interventions that are happening.

Historically, since the SFP began, the students have all been black. In 1998, all but three of the students were black. These three were Indian. Watts (1980) comments that many black people attach great importance to the group, be it the tribe, the family or the community. It seemed appropriate that the CEP take a collaborative group format, as a vehicle for the exploration of careers.

There has been little consideration in career counselling to date about the ways in which various cultures construe their sense of self. Historically, theories of career development have tended to focus on the individual from a western perspective. Mkhize, Sithole, Xaba and Mngadi (1998) argue that this can be problematic when one is working cross-culturally as many Western theories lose their validity when applied to a collectivist group of people, as is the case with most African groupings.

Bearing in mind that few career theories take a collectivist view of the individual, it was decided to focus on the different contexts that had shaped the students views of themselves and their world and that continued to impact on them with regard to their career plans. Killeen (1996) notes that “it is difficult to think of an element of the social context which does not have implications for, or is unconnected from, working life and careers” (p. 3).

According to Midgette and Meggert (1991, cited in Stead, 1996, p. 274) counselling is often viewed by culturally diverse populations as not being sensitive to their needs. For this reason it was felt that if the students played a role in shaping the groups they would be more relevant and useful to the students. Two models, the developmental-contextual framework of career development (Vondracek, Lerner and Schulenberg, 1986) and the socio-psychological model recommended by Naicker (1994) guided the development of this programme. Both locate the individual in a broader context, and provide a richer understanding of the participants. These models will be explored further in chapter two.

1.3.1 Authorship

As this is a largely qualitative assessment, where the researcher was a participant observer, it feels more congruent to acknowledge this close involvement by using the first person ‘I’ as opposed to the common academic practice of using the passive voice. Finchilescu (1995) supports this use of the first person mode in writing saying “researchers are encouraged to take more responsibility for what they say and explicitly stating their value position” (p. 136).

1.4 Definition of terms and abbreviations

This study has particularly focussed on ‘career education’ as opposed to ‘career guidance.’ The term ‘career education’ is preferable because it incorporates a greater breadth of activities. ‘Career guidance’ tends to focus more heavily on individual career decision making (Akhurst & Mkhize, 1999). The CEP emphasized the development of life skills and independent learning. It was not directive or advice giving.

The term ‘black’ has been used in this thesis to refer to people of African ethnic origin. Segregation under the previous government in South Africa was along strict lines of black, mixed-race (so-called ‘coloured’); Indian and white. I have chosen to use terms of race in this manner as the rights which people enjoyed were determined strictly for many decades purely by their racial categorization. This thesis looks in part at the impact that this segregation has had on the career development of black students. While in other contexts black refers to people who are not white, here I have chosen to use it to describe the group of people who were most systematically disenfranchised by the political system of apartheid.

A few words appear repeatedly in this text and have been abbreviated to facilitate ease of reading. They are:

- SFP - Science Foundation Programme
- CEP - Career education programme
- KZN - KwaZulu - Natal

1.5 Orientation to the study

Initially the CEP was established as a way of finding out more about the SFP students in conjunction with providing them with useful career information. Only as the richness of the data began to emerge was a decision made to write up this study. The research evolved as the programme unfolded. Therefore, unlike most studies, the research design did not precede the implementation of the programme, to then be followed up by a write up. Instead these processes seemed to evolve simultaneously, each shaping the other. The literature review emerged as data presented by the students in the groups gave pointers as to what issues were important. A methodology needed to be sought that would complement the material that was being revealed in the process of group discussion.

The task of organising the material into an accessible and meaningful piece of research was made more complicated by not being able to do statistical analysis common to quantitative assessment. I felt that my experiences and interpretations as a participant-observer were important even if more subjective than objective in nature.

Finally, this study is not just a comment on the CEP. Rather, it is an ongoing commentary on the usefulness of considering the context of each individual, and organising the vast amount of rich information that emerged into an accessible and easily readable piece of work. With this in mind, it is likely that the chapter containing the results might seem inconclusive. However I do not believe that this need detract from the importance of having written up this research in an attempt to give pointers to a direction for an indigenous and relevant model of career education for use in South Africa, particularly with black students from disadvantaged educational backgrounds who have lived through a particularly significant period of transition.

Chapter two provides a review of recent career counselling literature, models and theories in South Africa relevant to this study. Chapter three considers the development of the CEP, the reasons for deciding to run it, and the principles which guided the programme design. Also included here will be a look at the structure and content of the CEP, the aims and objectives of the programme and the actual implementation of it. Chapter four deals with the methodology of this study. The research design and research questions will be explored, and the data collection and analysis will be discussed. The results of this study will be described in chapter five. The contextual and situational variables impacting on the students, the career development and career decision making of the students and a thematic analysis of students' evaluation of the programme will be considered. A discussion of the study will follow in chapter six. This will include consideration of the background to the career education programme and career development theory in the light of the findings. Contextual issues emerging from the groups will be explored using the developmental-contextual model (Vondracek, et al., 1986) as a guiding framework. Also included here will be a summative and formative evaluation of the group content and process. This will focus on the strengths of the programme and also on its weaknesses and limitations. Reflections on the research will be included and recommendations for future research will be made. A conclusion to this study follows at the end of chapter six.

Chapter Two

Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

Career education in South Africa has traditionally been described as a ‘career guidance’ activity. However, Akhurst and Mkhize (1999) note that although ‘career guidance’ and ‘career education’ are often used interchangeably, ‘education’ suggests a broader scope of activities than ‘guidance’. Career education is focussed on providing people with life skills and helping them to function as independent learners, whereas guidance tends to focus on individual career decision-making (Akhurst & Mkhize, 1999). Stead and Watson (1998) have observed an increased movement from guidance towards education. The CEP career education programme under review in this dissertation focussed primarily on providing the students with life skills. Students were also encouraged to seek out the information they required, or to obtain it from fellow group members, rather than it being provided for them. The focus was not on career decision making, as might be the case with career guidance. Watson, Stead and De Jager (1995) state that there has been little research around the career education of black adolescents. This dissertation explores a CEP implemented with black students, both adolescents and people in their early twenties.

Much of the research in South Africa has stressed the urgent need for young people to receive career education (Akhurst & Mkhize, 1999; Euvrard, 1996; Mtolo, 1996; Ntshangase, 1995; Skuy, Hoar, Oakley-Smith & Westaway, 1985). Students are facing a competitive labour market with few available jobs. They need an opportunity to learn about themselves, current market trends and requirements for tertiary study. Chuenyane (1983) found that about 90% of black students in secondary school experienced great difficulty planning their careers.

Career education and guidance has been almost nonexistent in many South African schools, particularly for black students. Guidance was only introduced into the black schools in 1981 (Naicker, 1994). Such guidance has mostly been inadequate as schools have frequently had poorly trained guidance teachers and too few guidance classes (Mathabe & Temane, 1993; Naicker, 1994). Teachers were, and still often are, under-prepared, and not trained for this job. As teachers are inadequately trained, these classes often become free periods (Stead, 1996). Mtolo (1996) comments on the fact

that guidance periods are frequently used for academic subjects. She adds that career education did not feature in many schools. In those that it did, it was not uncommon to find the following:

- Guidance periods making way for examinable subjects.
- Under-qualified teachers presenting incomplete career information.
- Teachers giving the guidance period to the class as either a free period or an opportunity to catch up with other school work (p. 30).

Mtolo (1996) speaks of the problems associated with teachers having a limited knowledge of the world of careers and of there being a lack of trained career guidance teachers. This results in black matriculants tending to have a minimal knowledge and understanding of careers (Hickson & White, 1989).

Career decisions have far reaching and long-lasting implications. With high levels of unemployment, coupled with high costs of borrowing money to fund tertiary studies, decisions to study cannot be made lightly. Without adequate career education, a student may emerge from tertiary education with a qualification. However, employment may not be readily forthcoming and the student may face an added stress of having to repay loans to various institutions. For these reasons informed and carefully considered career planning can reduce personal disillusionment and unwarranted expenditure.

Research into career guidance in South Africa has been restricted in scope. According to De Bruin and Nel (1996), little emphasis has been placed on the process of counselling. Instead, the focus has tended to be more diagnostic. This emphasis in the research has been a result of the use of assessment instruments rather than investigation into the development of relevant programmes.

A review of career education programme research in South Africa reveals that it has mostly been undertaken in secondary schools. Chuenyane (1983) explored the career guidance needs of black South African secondary school students. He also looked at the degree to which these needs were being met by the available guidance services in schools. His results showed that students' felt that their needs were not being met by existing guidance programmes. The majority (93%) felt that they required more assistance with finding jobs and choosing careers. Various studies have considered different influences on career maturity. Van der Merwe (1993) studied career maturity in black high school students before and after a career education programme. Career maturity was found to improve as a result of career education. He also explored the effect of a number of variables, such as family

structure (intactness) and socioeconomic status on career maturity. Family structure was found to have a significant relationship with career maturity, whereas socioeconomic status did not appear to have a significant effect on career maturity.

Freeman (1995) considered the impact of social identity and variables such as sex, age and socioeconomic status on the career maturity of a group of coloured matriculants. She found that higher career aspirations as well as a positive social identity were associated with increased career maturity. She also found a correlation between the students' beliefs in their chances of attaining their career goals, and their career maturity. Mtolo (1996) surveyed tertiary students' opinions of the career education they had received at secondary school level. She found that the students believed they had received insufficient career assistance and guidance at school.

A limited number of research projects have focussed on the possible application of a particular theory or model for use with secondary level students. Delpont (1986) conducted an investigation into the effectiveness of the Natal Education Department careers education programme in promoting career maturity in white high school pupils. Significant positive results were only found at the Std 8 level. He suggests that the lack of success with the other standards was because career education was not perceived by the students "to be meeting personal needs" (p. 115). Mamabolo (1990) focussed on a suggested model of career education for secondary schools in Bophuthatswana. The proposed model was aimed at assisting teachers, parents and students to bridge the gap between education and employment" (p. 249). The model advocated exposing students to as many different work opportunities, in industries and institutions, as possible. Benjamin (1995) studied the effectiveness of a career education programme designed to meet the career needs of disadvantaged high school students. She paid particular attention to the students' level of career maturity. In her research she aimed to produce a more appropriate programme that might be included into the existing school curriculum.

A review of the literature suggests that very little work has been done on career development programmes in tertiary institutions. DeJager (1992) and Swart (cited in an interview with Dryden, 1990), both draw attention to the importance of recognising socio-political influences impinging on students. Swart (ibid.) notes the visible impact of trauma from South African society on the students. He speaks of the role of the counsellor as being to assist students in exploring and making sense of the social and political forces to which he/she has been exposed. He suggests that a challenge to

counsellors is not just to work cross-culturally, but also to work in “socio-politically sensitive and aware ways” (p. 318).

Watson, Benjamin and Stead (1995) have noted a movement towards career education programmes that are more contextually aware, shorter and less prescriptive. These programmes require fewer resources and are more responsive to the needs of the learners. The CEP run with the SFP students (see section 3.4 for the structure and content of the programme), which is the focus of this study, was particularly brief, including only three 45-minute sessions with the students over a three month period. Since it was as open ended as possible so as to be shaped by the students needs, it was less prescriptive than a preplanned programme might have been.

2.2 A review of recent career counselling models and theories used in South Africa

A review of the literature suggests a fair amount of discontent and disillusionment around the present status of career counselling and the applicability of available models to the South African context. Schonegeval, Watson, and Stead (1998) suggest that: “Faced with individuals in need of career counselling, counsellors are often disappointed in the lack of relevance of psychological theory” (p. 284). In support of this, Osipow (1983) states that two options face counsellors at this point. They may either resort to their own intuition, or they may persevere with trying to “force the hexagonal peg of theory into the round or square hole of their client’s experience” (cited in Schonegeval et al., 1998, p. 284).

Stead and Watson (1998) observe that, in the past, Western career theories have been applied to all population groups in South Africa. They suggest that this was based on the belief that “imported theory, constructs, and instruments had similar meaning and relevance for different ethnic groups” (p. 290). Naicker (1994) says that “career counsellors can no longer afford to rely.... on Western models of counselling which overemphasize the importance of individual values. These models need to be modified by taking structural factors, group values, and collective achievement into account” (p. 33). Akhurst and Mkhize (1999) have noted that South African career education and research have relied particularly on trait-factor theories as well as Holland’s and Super’s career theories. Initially these methods were implemented with White samples and later with Black samples. Little research has been conducted into the appropriateness of these theories in a South African context (Stead & Watson, *ibid.*).

A brief account of the above three theories follows (since there will be reference to these with regard to the programme to be described in this dissertation).

- **The trait factor approach** (Sharf, 1997) involves matching a person to an occupation. Akhurst and Mkhize (1999) caution that this form of career education places great emphasis on testing so as to determine the individual's personal and job characteristics. Tests typical of this type of theory would measure aptitude, achievement, interests, values and personality (Sharf, *ibid.*). Naicker (1994) has drawn attention to the fact that the early developmental and trait factor theories tend to ignore contextual variables that impact on making decisions about careers. The trait factor approach may have utility where opportunities abound and people have options to choose from. In South Africa, though, knowing your traits and the best career path to follow may not be helpful if no matching opportunity is available.

- **Holland's typology** is in some senses similar to a trait factor approach. Schonegeval et al. (1998) describe Holland's theory as one where "career choice represents an extension of one's personality and an attempt to implement one's personality style in the context of one's life work" (p. 284). The theory focuses on the goodness of fit between the person's personal characteristics, like personality, and those required for their work. Savickas and Lent (1994) describe this as a person-environment fit model. Holland categorises people into six types: realistic; investigative; artistic; social; enterprising and conventional; and looks at how they might choose to work in a matching environment or career (Sharf, 1997).

Again, as with the trait-factor approach, this type of career education, where the person is matched to an occupation, relies heavily on testing. An instrument commonly used to categorise the individual according to the Holland codes is the Self Directed Search (1990). This test measures self perceived competencies and interests, which are seen to be an assessment of an individual's personality (Sharf, 1997).

There have been various criticisms regarding the utility of Holland's theory. Recent research into Holland's hexagonal model in South Africa with black adolescents demonstrates that the structure of their interests cannot fit into the hexagonal shape (which represents the relationship between personality styles and occupational interests), and that the order of students' interests is incorrect (Wheeler, 1992, cited in Stead & Watson, 1998). Krumboltz (1994) notes that Holland has not

provided a detailed description of the way in which people come to develop different interests which are said to be typical of their particular orientation or type. He adds that although there is “a relationship between the orientations of individuals and the occupations that they choose” (p. 23) these relationships are “far from perfect”(p. 23).

Kidd (1996) observes that Holland’s theory has been criticised “for its static view of individuals and their environments” (p. 193). She adds that this approach along with the trait factor approach does not take into account the actual counselling process. Emphasis has been placed on the information disseminated but not on how the learner makes sense of it. This is an important consideration when working cross-culturally in South Africa, where many of the terms and concepts used in Holland’s theory may be alien to English second language students, and a lot of time would need to be spent on helping learners to understand and consolidate these ideas in terms of their own frames of reference.

■ **Super’s life-span theory** highlights the importance of incorporating developmental tasks and stages (Sharf, 1997). This emphasis has made it possible for career education to be more flexible and for programmes to focus more on the student’s needs. In addition, Super does acknowledge the influence of family, peer group, school, community and the economy and labour market (Dawis, 1994). This developmental perspective embraces the notion of ‘self-concept’ and ‘career maturity’ (Sharf, 1997). Self-concept is said to inform one’s career choice, at the time that the decision is being made (Krumblotz, 1994). Fitzgerald and Betz (1994) argue that some people choose careers, not to implement their self concept but to preserve their family and their culture. In other words not all individuals are free to act in the interests of their self concept, but are constrained by important contextual determinants. With regard to career maturity, Savickas and Lent (1994) note that this is a value laden concept and one that is not necessarily embraced by all cultures and by people of all socioeconomic levels. Some people are not in a position to decide whether they are ready for work or not. Career maturity or readiness for work is measured by a number of tests such as the Career Development Questionnaire (Langley, 1990).

Some of the criticisms of Super’s theory have focussed on the applicability of his theory for use with black South Africans (Stead & Watson, 1998). Sharf (1997) expresses concern about Super’s focus on the “readiness of individuals to make good choices” (p. 186). This presumes that choices are an option as opposed to a luxury as might be the case in an under-resourced, rural setting. Mathabe and Tamane (1983) argue that “the concept of career choice was indeed a farce for indigenous South

Africans” (p. 26). Stead and Watson (1998) express their concern about a “prescriptive decision making strategy in an environment in which information is seldom stable, manageable, or available”(p. 291).

■ **Assessment instruments** have been used as an important element in much career education. The trait factor approach and Holland’s theory are reliant on testing to determine the individual’s attributes. The use of Super’s theory would also require some assessment of career maturity and decision making. The fact that many Western theories have placed considerable emphasis on the development and use of psychological tests as aids in the process of career education is of concern in a South African setting. Hickson and White (1989) caution against the use of assessment instruments that may be biased towards first world values.

Pencil and paper tests are largely unable to tap detail specific to the individual and to anticipate changes in emphasis as different realities or issues emerge, or to be responsive to the occupational context. Murray (1987, cited in Euvrard, 1996) cautions that assessment instruments ought to “reflect unique students needs and settings”(p. 115). Another concern regarding quantitative assessments is that many of them were developed in past years and may now be outdated. Since the profile of occupations has changed dramatically in recent years, these tests may reveal inaccurate or unrealistic results.

It is therefore important to critically examine the current assumptions of theories and assessment instruments to determine if they are appropriate and relevant to the South African context (Mkhize et al., 1998; Naicker, 1994; Stead & Watson, 1998).

■ **The Indigenous psychological approach** has been supported as an option to be considered by those developing career programmes in South Africa (Akhurst & Mkhize, 1999; Naicker, 1994; Stead & Watson, 1998). Matsumoto (1993) notes that “in many Western cultures there is a strong belief in separateness among distinct individuals”(p. 20). The career theories developed in the industrialised world are inclined to conceptualise the individual as being autonomous and largely independent of family and community.

In contrast to this, Matsumoto (1993) points out that a number of non-Western indigenous cultures “neither assume nor value this overt separateness” (p. 20). Rather they emphasize “the overt

connection of human beings” (p. 20). People are socialised to exist as a group or a collective. According to Ikuenobe (1998, cited in Mkhize et al., 1998, p. 9) black students in collectivist cultures aim to serve their communities with their careers, as this reflects their connection to the community, which is seen as the core of selfhood. A high premium is placed on cooperation and sharing. Zulu speakers have a saying, ‘umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu’ (one is a person on account of other people) and Sotho speakers have a similar saying ‘motho kemotho kabatho babang’ (it is through others that one attains being) that encapsulates this attitude of connectedness to others.

It is important for career education programmes to take into consideration how members of the target group view themselves. In this way career education programmes will be sensitive to the individuals and their understanding of themselves and to the broader context in which each individual exists.

The literature therefore supports a realistic and contextually sensitive approach to career education with black learners (Akhurst & Mkhize, 1999; Naicker, 1994; Stead, 1996; Vondracek, Lerner & Schulenberg, 1983). This is particularly crucial in South Africa, where the majority of people have been denied many opportunities and status and have experienced difficulties that may obstruct or influence their career path.

In the light of the inadequacy of the above theories, Stead (1996) recommends the use of the developmental-contextual approach of Vondracek et al. (1986) in career research. He suggests that this model provides a more holistic perspective and stresses the necessity of considering and highlighting factors external to the individual. He sees it as being particularly useful in explaining and understanding black adolescents’ career development both during and after the apartheid years. Sharf (1997) suggests that the value of the theoretical work of Vondracek and his colleagues is that it “focuses not only on individual development, but also on development within the context of the individual’s historical and social situation” (p.199).

The importance of career counselling, in particular for promoting the psycho-social development of learners, is being increasingly acknowledged (Kelly, 1989). Naicker (1994) takes cognisance of both sociological and psychological variables impacting on a person’s career development. He advocates a socio-psychological model of career counselling. This model focuses on “the interaction of psychological variables (personal characteristics) and sociological variables (social forces) which shape and influence career choices” (ibid., p. 28). He maintains that external social influences and the

cultural environment in which the person exists are crucial considerations when one is looking at career education.

2.3 Career theories relevant to this study

The last two theories introduced above - the socio-psychological model, recommended by Naicker (1994) and the developmental-contextual model of career development (Vondracek et al., 1986) - have most strongly informed the career education programme to be. They were selected because they seemed most able to accommodate the uniqueness of individuals' needs and contexts. Both of these approaches emphasize the fact that individuals do not live in a vacuum. Both lend themselves to an indigenous approach in that each individual's reality is given space to emerge.

2.3.1 The socio-psychological model

Mathabe and Tamane (1993) consider it crucial to take into consideration the socio-political context of a country when planning career education interventions. They emphasize the role and impact that apartheid has had on South African students.

Mtolo (1996) advocates the use of sociological approaches, saying: "It is the social context that influences one's self-image" (p. 15). She suggests that this approach takes into consideration a number of factors such as attitude systems, race, sex, social class, cultural expectations, family beliefs, parental influences and environmental influences that may impact on career development (ibid.). However, some researchers feel that a sociological approach alone is insufficient (Hargreaves 1985; Naicker, 1994). Hargreaves has criticised the sociological approach for being too deterministic and not considering the reciprocal interactive nature of the person-environment. Brown (1984) adds support to this view saying that sociological perspectives need to take account of the psychological aspect present in the career development process. These theorists state that future theories must integrate psychological variables into sociological thinking in order to account for the diverse phenomena related to career development.

The socio-psychological model as described by Naicker (1994) goes beyond the sociological approach to include psychological variables. It aims to "facilitate individual awareness and decision making to permit choice within well-defined but continually changing occupational structures and demands" (p. 28). He suggests that the person is shaped by the interaction between social and psychological variables. Naicker discusses expectations about work that emerge out of the psycho-social factors

acting on the individual. These expectations are shaped by a number of influences such as the family of origin and the school system. With this in mind practitioners need to pay attention to the social, political and economic influences impacting on the learners' understanding of themselves.

External forces influence the individual's career choices. Once the individual has a greater understanding of these forces, he/she will be better equipped to make more informed and realistic decisions. Naicker (1994) stresses that learners "should have information on occupational roles, availability of jobs, and realities of the world of work" (p. 28).

2.3.2 Vondracek, Lerner and Schulenberg's (1986) developmental-contextual framework of career development

Vondracek et al. (1983) state that one of the major problems in the career literature is the "absence of theoretical formulations which deal with development in more than a superficial manner" (p. 179). Vondracek et al. (1986) recommend a developmental and multidisciplinary approach to career interventions which "recognises the changing character of the individual's social, physical, and cultural milieus" (p. 5). They suggest that rather than presenting a theory or a model, they are putting forward a developmental-contextual framework (adapted from the work of R. M. Lerner).

Vondracek et al. (1986) suggest that this framework may be used to understand the development of individual's career perceptions in a changing environment. It provides for the examination of the process of life-span development with particular emphasis on the emergence of careers.

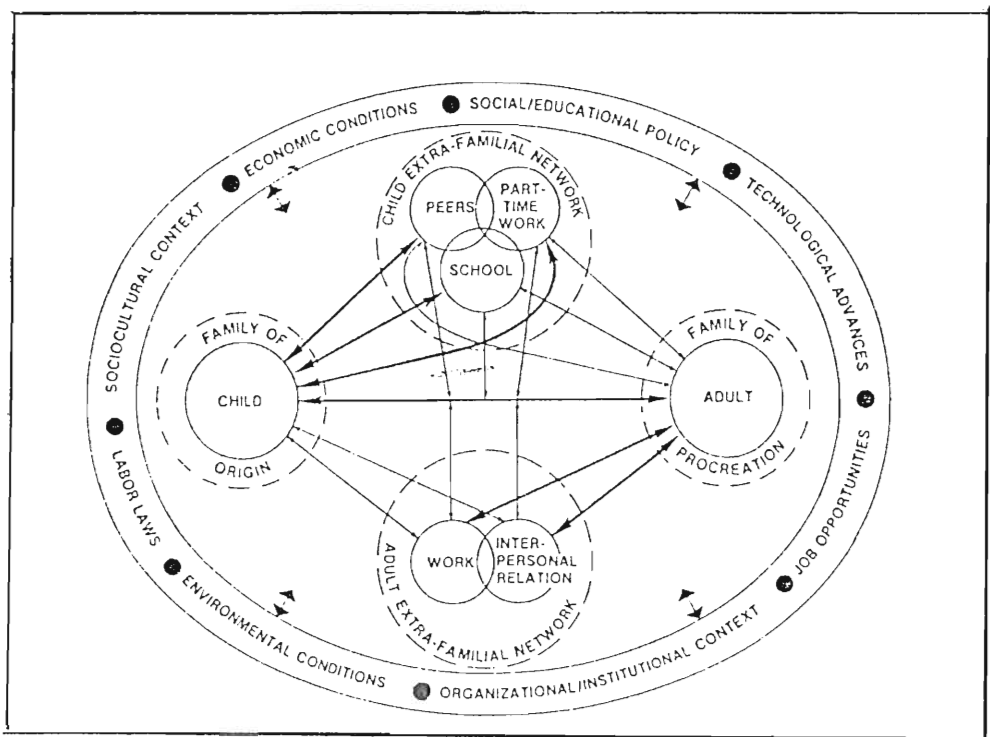
These authors stress the impact of multiple contexts and environments impinging on the individual. People are seen as both influencing, and being influenced by their context. This interaction between the two is depicted in the framework by the bidirectional arrows.

When exploring career issues with individuals Vondracek et al. (1986) state that one needs to take cognisance of "historically changing cultural, economic, and technological features of the context (p. 37). However, they argue that recognising these various contexts is insufficient. The crucial element is their dynamic interaction with the individual. Because of this interaction, Lerner and Busch-Rossnagel (1981, cited in Vondracek et al., 1986) suggest that people are not passive recipients of contextual concerns, but are able to play an active part in their development.

The developmental-contextual, life-span view put forward by Vondracek et al. (1986) implies that as people interact with their dynamic and ever-changing contexts, they provide a foundation for their own development. They acknowledge that at different times of a person's life different features of their context will impinge with varying strengths.

The developmental-contextual framework (Vondracek et al., 1986) is thus dynamic and responsive to changes over time. It is most useful in that it does not prescribe or impose. It allows for each person's individual world view to emerge.

Figure 2.1 Developmental-contextual framework of career development. (Vondracek, Lerner & Schulenberg, 1986)



A closer look at the different focuses of Vondracek, et al's. (1986) developmental -contextual framework (adapted from Lerner, 1984) follows:

The model consists of four inner circles or microsystems. The bidirectional arrows between these four microsystems suggest a two-way interaction between them. These inner circles are also seen as interacting with the eight macrosystems included in the outer circle.

Section 2.3.2.1. will focus on the four inner circles. Section 2.3.2.2. will look more closely at the eight contexts of the outer circle.

2.3.2.1 Microsystems

The microsystems include the child's family of origin; the child extra-familial network; the family of procreation-adult and the adult extra-familial network. These four contexts or microsystems are located within eight macrosystems. These include social/educational policy; technological advances; job opportunities; organisational/institutional contexts; environmental conditions; labour laws; economic conditions and the sociocultural context. Vondracek et al. (1986) suggest that: "The primary contexts in which the child develops, or the microsystems, need to be examined to discern differences in such factors as interpersonal relations, role models, opportunities, and resources that may co-vary with social class" (p. 46). They emphasise the family of procreation most strongly, but add that one would also need to consider the school, the peer group and the part-time work microsystems.

2.3.2.1.1 The child's family of origin

The way a child interacts with his/her parents is likely to have an important influence on his/her career development (Roe, 1956; Vondracek et al., 1986). Vondracek et al. (1986) suggest that: "The family context is a complex web of several powerful forces that influence the career development of children" (p. 49). Parents play a significant role in the child's "occupational socialization process" (ibid., p. 51). Different child rearing practices, which emphasise different values, might impact on an individual's career development differently. For example, different emphasis might be placed on achievement, independence, educational and/or occupational aspirations. Parental support, financial or emotional, is also thought to impact significantly on an individual's career interests and development (ibid.).

Roe (1956) looked at the psycho dynamic influences of the child's early attachment to his/her parents. She linked family influences to career choice. Her theory is commonly referred to as a needs-theory approach to career choice (Zunker, 1998). She said that the psychological needs arising out of early interactions with the family of origin impact on the individual's career choice as an adult.

Roe looked at career choice in the light of object relations theory, paying attention to the ways in which the individual relates to other people. She referred to personality theory as a foundation for her theory of career choice, believing that the expression of personality in career could be explained

developmentally in the light of early family experiences (Vondracek et al., 1986; Killeen 1996). Roe felt that frustrations and satisfactions experienced in early childhood would impact on career choice.

Van der Merwe (1993) discovered, in a study of career maturity in black high school students, that there was a correlation between the level of career maturity of these scholars and their experiences of their family with regard to such issues such as family intactness, bereavement and divorce.

2.3.2.1.2 Child extra-familial network

2.3.2.1.2.1 Peers

Vondracek et al. (1986) see peer groups as possibly the most fluid and changing and also as the least clearly defined microsystem. Through interacting with peers, individuals become involved in a variety of activities and are exposed to different experiences and ideas. Peer group members may introduce the child or adolescent to different beliefs about the world of work that may be different from or similar to those of their parents.

Mtolo (1996) in a study of learners from disadvantaged backgrounds, found that older peers exert a strong influence on students selecting a career. Peers provide the individual with the opportunity to engage interpersonally. They may provide support and introduce the individual to new ideas and experiences. Youth who do not experience the support of peers may feel isolated and depressed, and this could also impact on career development.

2.3.2.1.2.2 School

Vondracek et al. (1986) see the school context as the next most important microsystem after the family because it strongly influences the career development of learners. They say: "The activities, ... the interpersonal relations with teachers, other students, and guidance counsellors, the various roles and role expectations, and the physical, structural, and material features of the school context, all combine to make the school a salient microsystem" (p. 49). Depending on the resources of the school, and the interpersonal relations experienced at school, the learner will develop different expectations about the world at large. Schooling impacts significantly on the development of self efficacy and confidence. It introduces the child to learning experiences such as social interactions, relationship issues and academic pressure which he/she will encounter in the working world and which may shape the child's career development. As students move through various transitions in the school system,

they are provided with the opportunity to gain mastery over what might be considered to be periods of stress. This serves as practice again for future transitions, such as from school to work (Vondracek et al., 1986).

In the South African context, the curriculum in black schools emerged from past Bantu education with its aim of developing a labour force. As a result, a huge discrepancy developed between schools in affluent areas and the larger number of schools in poorer and more rural areas. According to Akhurst and Mkhize (1999), “schools in rural areas were the least resourced of all, their teachers the most underqualified, and their learners the most in need of expansion of the knowledge of the world of work”(p. 7). With regard to the underlying philosophy in many schools today, Chisholm (1999) argues that “matric generates bad forms of teaching and learning: memorization and regurgitation of facts. It does not promote problem-solving skills... we need” (p. 19).

In addition to the difficulties raised above, political violence over the past two decades has had a significant impact on learners and their families. Students have been forced to change schools, move to safer towns, and families have been separated. Many young people have had to cope with observing and at times being involved in traumatic events, and probably have had to deal with much greater disruption to their schooling than their counterparts in many other parts of the world.

2.3.2.1.2.3 Part-time work

Vondracek et al. (1986) note that part-time work settings, that the child might encounter quite early, such as feeding the neighbour’s pet or looking after an extended family member’s children, are important influences on career development. The experience of part-time work assists people in developing a basic understanding of the world of work and introduces them to broader world views.

Jobs may teach people a number of valuable life skills. Through a part-time job, individuals are exposed to many more interpersonal interactions, such as bosses, the public at large, colleagues as well as with people in a variety of professions. People employed formally in part-time work might deal with money, either through payment received or in the job itself, for example, as a cashier, which may assist them in developing a more realistic sense of economy. This all assists students in formulating rudimentary career ideas.

Students who live in rural areas frequently do not have an opportunity to work in part-time formal employment. Their work tends to be of an informal and unpaid nature. These are also frequently the people with fewer role models in different jobs. In addition, rural areas sometimes lack water and electricity, which further limits work opportunities.

2.3.2.1.3 Family of procreation-adult

Choosing a career is no longer viewed as a one-off event in one's life. It is increasingly unlikely that one will retire from the career initially embarked upon in one's early working life. Other variables, such as increasing age, changing life circumstances and changing interests all need to be taken into account. Starting a family also influences one's career. Sometimes a job may entail being away from home a lot, or the hours required for a job may clash with one's desires to be more involved with parenting. In South Africa, the migrant labour system resulted in men being away from home for extended periods of time, and the Pass Laws (influx control act) also had an influence on where partners and/or parents lived during the working week. This impacted on families in that, for much of the time, they were split up. Children frequently grew up seeing little of their fathers, while mothers were less supported by their partners physical absence in their role of parenting. Having contact with one's family was costly as mines were often situated far from the miner's home.

In South Africa there is a high rate of teenage pregnancy, which in turn impacts on career opportunities. Becoming a parent and being responsible for offspring puts certain pressures on any breadwinner. Those with a limited budget and little support from a partner generally experience a significant decrease in opportunities open to them, such as further education. Children require a financial input as well as a great deal of time. For young people having children, this may mean the end to many career prospects. Alternately, career development might be far slower, perhaps with study through distance education. In the case of extended family networks, it is not uncommon for the paternal or maternal grandparent to play a primary parenting role. This may free the younger parent from a number of responsibilities but financial constraints are still likely to impinge.

2.3.2.1.4 Adult extra-familial network

2.3.2.1.4.1 Work

People increasingly see their identity as closely tied to the work they do. As Vondracek et al. (1986) note, people view "their work - their careers - as something that is part of them; their careers can

grow, change, and develop with them throughout their lives” (p. ix). Work thus has a wider impact than merely earning an income or being occupied during the day. Havighurst (1982) notes that “the job...orients and controls the behaviour of those persons who participate in it...Its influences extend even beyond the actual work life of the individual....the job in our society exerts an influence which pervades the whole of the adult life span” (p. 780).

Over the past few decades a number of changes have taken place in the work force. There is now less of a physical emphasis on work, due to mechanisation, and working conditions are safer. The work place has become more efficient and streamlined, for example in the manufacturing industry. Another important change relates to the increase in women becoming employed. This has had an impact on their identity, which for many no longer is equated with being a wife and a mother alone.

A dominant part of the changing face of work in the late twentieth century is a high rate of unemployment. One of the results of this is the increase in the number of entrepreneurial activities in which people engage to create a job for themselves. According to Hoyt (1975), work needs to be conceived of far more broadly than “paid employment” (p. 306).

People who are employed are exposed to a wider variety of life experiences. This could be from merely travelling to work in their own transport or on public transport or from interacting with others through their work. This can open up more opportunities for people and allow them to feel more competent in the world.

It is beyond the scope of this study to discuss issues of unemployment, but the high rates in South Africa have a widespread impact on people’s career development, identity and mental health. For school leavers and young adults employment may play a large role in their career development as they develop more realistic ideas about work through experience, meet different people, and receive an income.

2.3.2.1.4.2 Interpersonal Relationships

Vondracek et al. (1986) note that we do not exist in a vacuum, but are relating to others constantly. They suggest that different people in an individual’s world have different expectations concerning how they ought to behave in different situations. People therefore assume different roles depending with whom they are interacting. Vondracek et al. (1986) suggest that “an examination of roles and

role expectations that exist in a given setting may be particularly salient to understanding the context of career development” (p. 48).

2.3.2.2 Macrosystems

While the inner circle in the developmental-contextual framework reflects more immediate contexts impinging on the individual, the outer circle deals with more remote and distant social and environmental influences.

2.3.2.2.1 Social/educational Policy

Vondracek et al. (1986) suggest that social policies impact on other macrosystems. They are seen as exerting a powerful influence on career development across the life-span. They include “labour laws, minimum wage laws, government training and sponsorship programs” (p. 65). Vondracek et al. (1986) consider it important for a student entering tertiary education to know what the government’s policy is towards providing academic loans and grants. A brief consideration of past and present South African social and educational policies will follow.

Nicholas (1994) notes that in April 1991 the South African government agreed to a single education system which would not be based on race. Stead and Watson (1998) suggest that although a new government and a new constitution have been in place since 1994, South Africa “is still struggling to overcome problems associated with its apartheid past”(p. 289).

Previously, black people occupied an inferior status enforced by government laws. Available jobs were poorly paid, making progress and satisfactory education near impossible for a number of people to achieve. Many hoped that with a new government, the education system would change rapidly. However transformation in education has been a slow process and there is still a great deal to be done. Jansen argues that “matric results merely mirror the unmitigated failure of education policies since 1994” (Chisholm, 1999, p. 19).

Although policy changes catered for the provision of career guidance in schools, Euvrard, (1996) citing the National Educational Policy Investigation of 1992, argues that despite this, “severe economic constraints have led to the marginalisation of guidance and the demoralisation of its practitioners” (p. 113). Lombo (1993) observes that guidance has tended to be seen by teachers as unimportant. Black students have tended to perceive guidance with suspicion since it was introduced

when the government was resorting to any means in an attempt to suppress political unrest in the townships (Dovey & Mason, 1984).

Stead (1996) says that: “A major cause for concern is whether many black adolescents can develop a stable vocational identity and initiate career exploration activities, given the negative effects of apartheid, high unemployment rates, and continuing violence” (p.272). Dovey and Mason (1984) suggest that as a result of the education policies from the apartheid era “blacks came to be viewed primarily as labour units for the White-dominated economy” (p. 17). This illustrates the urgency for intervention where possible with students planning their careers.

The policy of Bantu education that was in place for many tertiary level learners’ parents has meant that many parents have little idea of the careers offered at tertiary institutions and, as a result, are less able to guide their children accordingly. Euvrard (1992) argues that educators will need to prepare learners “to cope with the projected demands and challenges of the years ahead”(p. 216).

Considering the broader social context “racism...permeates the fabric of South African society” (Olivier, 1992, cited in Nicholas, 1994, p. 120). With this in mind it is necessary to try and navigate a path towards greater integration in social and educational policy. Institutions such as historically advantaged universities, although changing to be more inclusive and open to all, are still by and large run by predominantly white academics. Nicholas urges “universities with homogenous staffing complements to encourage greater diversity in their employment policies for all sectors of employment” (p. 124). The racial profile of students is changing to be more inclusive. Some universities have put access programmes in place to redress the previous educational imbalances. These offer a place to students whose school marks do not meet university requirements and they are able to enroll in a bridging course to assist in getting them up to a first year standard. Loans and bursaries are made available to assist disadvantaged students through the university, government and other organisations. In the wider community, various organisations are at different stages of transformation, but it is likely to be a number of years before the society becomes inclusive.

2.3.2.2.2 Technological Advances

Vondracek et al. (1986) note that, with increasing technology and automation, many people have lost jobs and had to redefine their careers. Killeen (1996) draws attention to the impact of industrialisation and globalization on employment. Much production is now automated. Computers are programmed

to perform tasks previously done manually. According to Hopson and Scally (1989), “to become more productive, industry has to become more automated, and this means fewer jobs” (p. 2).

However, new jobs have been created in some sectors, such as those related to the computer industry. Most jobs now require some degree of computer literacy. This has raised education requirements for people seeking work. Technological advances have accelerated the development of international competition, and increased trade has also affected jobs in various sectors. Money now flows more readily and trade barriers are increasingly being removed. This has resulted in a more integrated flow of capital and goods.

Career counselling needs to take into account the impact of these rapid changes and equip individuals to deal with uncertainty and rapid change in the world around them.

2.3.2.2.3 Job Opportunities

The restriction of job opportunities in any sector makes it a much less viable area for one to pursue a career. Career education needs to take into consideration jobs for which there is a shortage of skilled people as this will encourage more people to pursue that line of work because of the premium that will be paid for those skills. Career counsellors need also be aware of encouraging people not to pursue careers for which there is little market demand. Killeen (1996) says that: “The new career realities... are uncertainty, unpredictability, insecurity, reduced likelihood of promotions, increased likelihood of mobility out of one’s initial occupational field, non-standard employment contracts, and other non-standard working” (p. 15).

Career choices and job opportunities for the majority of black people during the apartheid years were limited as a result of low academic achievement, poor self-concept and because many jobs were reserved for the white minority. This was perpetuated by the school system that was in place (Hickson & White, 1989). Nowadays affirmative action ensures greater employment opportunities for black people. However in the light of the notable skills shortage in the country at the moment, this does not always translate into employment for the majority of people.

With regard to women and work, Vondracek et al. (1986) note that after World War II many more jobs became available for women. They add too that the working world of women has often been a difficult path to tread because of factors such as discrimination and restrictions due to family

commitments. In South Africa people often live far away from their place of work. In many instances it is necessary to awake early and spend hours commuting on public transport. For mothers in particular who are trying to look after their children and prepare them for school, these roles may come into conflict and be a source of stress.

Haffajee (1999) says that “statistics show that, at most, only two in 10 of this year’s matriculants will find jobs next year and most quality universities have entrance requirements far higher than the official matriculation exemption standard” (p. 2). She quotes leading economist Tony Twine as saying that “it will take between 12 and 17 years to begin churning out the quality and quantity of graduates the economy needs” (p. 2). Considering the current skills shortage, it is important to focus on developing skills in learners.

Increased emigration from South Africa is opening up the job market to a limited extent. However, owing to the education formerly available to the majority of South African, many people are not able to fill the available jobs. Globally there are shifts as government and corporate jobs shrink and there is a growth in the informal market. The result is greater emphasis on entrepreneurial skills, risk taking, finding a niche and filling it. In South Africa this can be seen in a steep increase in recent years of the informal sector, including transport and trading among people often lacking a formal qualification and an increase in small businesses, with small, independent companies mushrooming.

2.3.2.2.4 Organisational/institutional context

Vondracek et al. (1986) recognise that the organisational and institutional context in which an individual finds him/herself will impact in many ways on his/her work satisfaction and aspirations. Many black students have grown up with poverty and come from disadvantaged educational backgrounds. The opportunity to attend a university serves to dramatically broaden a student’s view of life. Here they have exposure to many different people and a variety of careers. Technikons, which are less costly than universities, also present an alternative to tertiary education for many learners. Certain organizations have their own training programmes to develop the skills of new recruits.

Generally, educational organisations and institutions are marked by a competitive atmosphere, with limited places and funds. Performance is necessary to guarantee continued participation in these contexts. This places learners entering these fields under tremendous pressure to succeed.

Many students are accommodated in residences away from home, and struggle with less immediate family support in a more alien environment.

2.3.2.2.5 Environmental Conditions

Vondracek et al. (1986) draw attention to environmental conditions. They highlight the impact of natural events, such as floods, droughts as well as the availability of physical resources, such as water and electricity, on career development. The environment in which one lives will impact on one's development in that a comfortable and well equipped environment will free a person to pursue higher ideals. However, a harsher environment will require that the individual puts more time into meeting their basic needs. Vondracek et al. (ibid.) observe that "one of the most powerful and consistent environmental predictors of one's occupational aspirations and attainments is the socioeconomic status (however it may be defined) of his or her family of orientation" (p. 46). A family that has available funds will be more able to support their offspring and to encourage them in fulfilling their career aspirations. However, families from a lower socioeconomic background will be less able to provide their children with financial assistance to enable them to attain their career goals.

2.3.2.2.6 Labour Laws

Labour laws will determine various opportunities or obstacles to individuals. In South Africa they have been changing in recent years largely to protect people who were disadvantaged by the previous government. Recent labour legislation which was passed by parliament lays down minimum conditions of employment, minimum wages and minimum working hours per week, which employers argued during the drafting of the bill would encourage lower productivity in a country where productivity levels are already reported as problematic.

The South African Government states in the the Employment Equity Bill (1998) that if a company has a turnover of more than three million yearly, it needs to ensure it meets certain racial quotas in the organisation. This legislation rules that a certain number of posts must be filled by previously disadvantaged people. The Employment Equity Bill thus serves to institutionalise affirmative action.

2.3.2.2.7 Sociocultural context

Since 1994, segregation is no longer enforced in South Africa. Opportunities are opening up for many South Africans. Dreams of becoming educated are now more attainable. With greater integration, some people are facing a state of cultural transition. Many who grew up in rural areas following a

traditional life style are now encountering more Western concepts and life styles. For some of these people, this transition may be stressful. Although there are greater opportunities for people, unemployment is also high and there is still little available money for a large percentage of the population.

2.3.2.2.8 Economic Conditions

Economic conditions in South Africa for the second half of the nineties have been displaying a downward trend. Stals, writing in The Reserve Bank Quarterly Bulletin for March 1999 says that the “...unemployment rate ...was 37,6% in 1997.” Growth in the gross domestic product (GDP), a measure of the total production and output of South Africa, is expected to be close to zero for 1999, pushing the country closer to an economic recession.

Since the mid 1990's, real (inflation-adjusted) GDP growth has been below that of population growth. Population growth is also exceeding growth in new jobs. Furthermore, developments in the global economy have also adversely affected the South African economy, limiting the job market further.

2.4 Concluding comments

Stead and Watson (1998) suggest that “the multicultural and economic contexts of South Africa are important factors in understanding career development. Yet they have received insufficient attention in South African career literature” (p. 290). From the developmental-contextual framework (Vondracek et al., 1986), it can be seen how the South African economy, society and political landscape all produce a variety of contexts and different situations which highlight the varied economic contexts of the students. Through looking at the microsystems and mesosystems that impinge on the individual immediately, such as the family and school, and then looking more broadly at the environmental and sociocultural contexts, one is able to get an idea of the uniqueness of each individual who is attempting to define for him or herself some sense of a career direction.

The chapter which follows will describe the rationale for and evolution of the CEP described in this study, which was based on the theoretical foundations described in this chapter.

Chapter Three

Programme Development

3.1 Theoretical position

Euvrard (1992) notes that there is a “glaring void” in the development of career education programmes that needs to be addressed urgently (p. 215). He further observes that a “counselling programme must reflect the uniqueness of the population it serves” (p. 215). By doing this, he suggests that no two programmes will be alike. A contextually sensitive programme will be one that will be able to shape itself to the varying needs of different audiences. Euvrard (1996) suggests that learners “must be allowed to describe their needs from their own perspective”(p. 115). With these ideas in mind I set about devising a career education programme that would take individual issues and characteristics into account. The social-psychological model suggested by Naicker (1994) and the contextual-developmental framework by Vondracek et al. (1986) formed the foundation for the approach to career education adopted in this project. Through highlighting the many different contexts and variables impacting on the students and taking into account their different values and beliefs, these two approaches allowed for people to be considered as unique individuals.

3.2 The reasons for deciding to run the career education programme

Given the need for a skilled workforce and the lack of adequate career guidance in schools (Mamabolo, 1990; Mathabe and Temane, 1993; Mtolo, 1996; Naicker, 1994; Stead, 1996), many students entering tertiary education are in need of career education programmes. Since the SFP is a bridging programme for access into science degrees, it is important to provide the students with career education and an opportunity to discuss issues pertaining to their careers in the hope that as many as possible find a direction for themselves in the fields of science and allied disciplines. There appear to have been no studies conducted with tertiary level students which are similar to the present CEP under review. It seemed timeous that such a study be undertaken and an exploratory approach is appropriate in the absence of prior investigation of this nature.

Chuenyane (1983) suggests that the key to career education lies in self-understanding. With self-understanding it is felt that a student will be better equipped to make more informed career choices. De Haas, Van der Merwe and Basson (1995) report that at a university it is not uncommon to come

across first year students who have gained admission but have little information about various careers and faculties. They argue that this can impact on an individual's coping strategies, their sense of self and even their mental health. In addition, Hartman (1988) points out that black students have tended to make decisions by experimenting with different options, as they have not been given the skills to combine their knowledge of occupations with their self knowledge. Shertzer and Stone (1981) identify the aim of career counselling as being to assist students in becoming more self directed by providing them with a forum in which they can gain self knowledge through exploration. The career education groups aimed to provide such a forum.

3.3 Principles which guided the programme design

3.3.1 Decision not to use assessment instruments (see section 2.2 on assessment instruments)

The CEP purposefully avoided the implementation of western theories of career decision-making, and the use of quantitative assessment devices. By design, a contextually sensitive and collaborative approach was embraced. It was felt that an approach based on group discussion would be an effective way for the students to extend their knowledge about themselves and about careers in general. It would also more easily facilitate changes in emphasis as different realities or issues emerged. Euvrard (1996) notes that talking and interacting, instead of resorting to paper and pencil techniques might ensure "an easier flow of information especially amongst township black pupils who come from a strong oral tradition"(p. 126).

The discussion groups were designed to focus on both emotional and academic issues. This seemed to set the CEP apart from most quantitative career assessments and other models of career education where the focus is more didactic.

3.3.2 Understanding the students in context

Hawks and Muha (1991) emphasize the importance of recognizing the students' culture. The CEP under review was primarily concerned with understanding the students in their context. Dovey (1980) supports the need to provide a forum in which participants in the programme "can reflect upon themselves and the culture of which they are part" (p. 96). He stresses the importance of this discussion forum environment being perceived as "non-threatening" (p. 96).

I felt that running career education groups with these students was important since many are experiencing significant social, cultural, political and economic transitions. It is at such times that they might easily call into question their own identity and values. It seemed that the most useful way to try to understand the learners “and the world in which they live” (Wrenn, 1973, p. 3) would be to find out more about students through engaging in dialogue and discussion. In this way the meaning they attributed to various issues pertaining to their worlds and particularly to the world of work could be discovered. With this in mind, I set out to explore one central question: “*Who are the Science Foundation Programme students?*” I felt that this could be achieved through a dynamic and flexible group process where students would be given the opportunity to elaborate on their specific contexts in the group.

3.3.3 Rationale for using small groups

A central part of the design of the CEP was the use of focus groups (Morgan, 1997). As Brown and Brooks (1991) note, “...groups give rise synergistically to insights and solutions that would not come about without them” (p. 40). Group work seemed appropriate as the students could pool their collective knowledge, instead of relying on the group facilitator/s to provide it. Hopson and Scally (1989) stress “emphasizing student-generated versus counselor-or-teacher-transmitted knowledge” (p. 255). In line with this, Hawks and Muha (1991) recommend “increasing student-generated knowledge and incorporating the students’ sharing their culture’s influence on their vocational behavior with one another” (p. 255). Students could draw on each other as resources and share their career development issues, thereby normalizing this development process. The group process paved the way for more collaborative learning with people sharing the responsibility for the groups and for what they gained from them.

Chuenyane (1983) points out that “it is also conceivable that the degree to which individual students need guidance should vary” (p. 272). For this reason, groups were valuable as they could accommodate people who required differing amounts of career information. In addition Dovey (1982) recommends that learners be encouraged to think through ideas and in so doing develop “a personal attitude towards them” (p. 18). These groups served to generate discussion among the students. In this way the participants were given an opportunity to voice their thoughts and opinions.

Hopson and Scally (1989), say “learning occurs from talking and listening to others in *small* groups” (p. 112). This was achieved through introducing each group with an initial focus, a topic from which

they could depart with material that they were experiencing as more relevant. Hopson and Scally add that “whatever the task or purpose of a group, there will be a bonus of learning simply from having to act and interact with one another” (p. 112). Learning to be effective at communicating in a group is a life-skill which the students will be able to use in many settings in the future.

3.3.4 Genograms

Okiishi (1987) notes that the family of origin is “a primary variable in the development of attitudes toward ourselves and the way that we perceive ourselves fitting into the world, including occupational structure”(p. 127). He suggests that by providing the students with an opportunity to examine their relationships with members of their family, it is possible to assist them in developing a deeper understanding of the way in which they perceive themselves and occupations. Group members were asked to draw genograms (see Appendix A for an example) representing at least three generations of their families. These were used as a means for exploring family beliefs, attitudes, and influences and to assist the students in seeing themselves in a broader context than simply as university students. The people’s ages, occupations and marital status were noted on these diagrams, as were deceased members and the cause of their death. Okiishi suggests that the strength of the genogram lies in its ability to reveal the uniqueness of each individual as the person is seen in the context of their family. However, as each person’s context becomes clearer, it may precipitate the recall of some unpleasant memories. Brown and Brooks (1991) therefore stress the importance that the group facilitator have the “ability to help clients deal with emotions that may be generated by the considerations of family interactions”(p. 137).

3.3.5 Life skills base

Hopson and Scally (1989) have identified the need for the inclusion of life skills into career education programmes to equip learners with a variety of life long skills for getting along in the real world. They recommend that programmes place less emphasis on content and more on life skills. This CEP aimed to engender more explicit career planning and career decision making on the part of students rather than to follow the more traditional approaches to career education, which attempt to match the person to a career. The CEP was intended to provide the students with important career information and also to develop such life skills as speaking in a group, dealing with conflict, developing confidence in their own opinions and, when necessary, giving and receiving personal feedback from group members. It was hoped that through gaining life skills, the students would acquire tools that they could use during the lifelong process of career development.

3.4 The structure and content of the career education programme

I facilitated 16 groups each month with about eight students in each. The only criteria used in forming the groups was that they were of mixed gender. These students preference for mixed gender groups had been established earlier on the SFP course when they had each stated their choice on a piece of paper. Career education groups were run on a monthly basis over a three month period. In total students had the opportunity of attending three sessions. Each session ran for 45 minutes.

While it is acknowledged that three contact sessions is a limited time, due to the constraints of a very full academic programme this was the only time available. It was decided that small groups would be preferable to facilitate maximum individual participation and exploration. In addition to three discussion groups that comprised the programme, students completed two questionnaires in their own time.

I facilitated the groups, with the assistance of two co-facilitators who were present at some of the groups to offer their assistance. Both were studying towards their postgraduate diploma in Applied Psychology. In addition one of the facilitators was an ex-SFP student, which increased her ability to relate to the issues that many of the students raised in groups.

Each month the groups focussed on a new theme. To begin with, the groups looked at careers and individual career plans very generally. In the second month the focus shifted to a closer look at the individuals and their family and background contexts. Students considered the impact of their families and their communities on their career development. In the third month the foci from the first and second sessions were combined. Here students looked at how their understanding of the world of work and of themselves influenced their career choice.

3.4.1 A more detailed outline of the groups

- During the first session students introduced themselves to one another. They spoke about where they came from and about the kind of jobs they would like. They discussed their career plans, asking advice and clarifying certain issues with each other, such as the differences between chemical engineering and a BSc chemistry. After the group, students were given a questionnaire (see Appendix B) to complete in their own time. This was to find out more about their educational histories, families and future career plans.

- In the second session students drew genograms, representing the different generations of people in their families with squares for women and circles for men. The relationship between their families, the attitudes, beliefs and feelings of the people in their world, and their career interests were explored. During this group, students also wrote a half-page paragraph about the attitude of their families and communities to their study plans.
- For the third and final career education group, students reflected on their experience of exploration in the previous two career education sessions. We looked at how their ideas about different careers had changed, how sharing information with each other helped to sort out some career issues, and to highlight areas needing more research. Again students were given a questionnaire (see Appendix C) to determine if their career interests had shifted and possible reasons for this. Also included in this questionnaire was an opportunity for the students to evaluate the three career discussion sessions they had just completed and the programme as a whole.

3.5 Aims and objectives of the career education programme

The approach followed was central to the programme. The following points outline key features of this approach:

- I aimed to facilitate a collaborative process that was ‘client-centered’ and ‘client-driven’ so as to be relevant and responsible to the learners needs. I used a bottom-up rather than top-down approach. This freed me from needing to be the expert or the educator, and to be a facilitator and participant instead. It also leveled the hierarchical structure between students and facilitator/s.
- The programme was designed to enable people of varying career maturity to move at their own pace, rather than assuming the same level of career awareness for the group.
- I hoped that the students would replace their idealism (dreams of becoming mostly doctors and engineers) with greater realism. It seemed important that I not deflate the students’ enthusiasm, but instead group members, by providing useful and accurate information as well as new options on a plethora of careers, could moderate one another’s career dreams and introduce a greater degree of realism to career choice.

- Through the programme I strived to increase students' awareness and knowledge about career opportunities and their suitability to various fields of study. It seemed important that students become aware of the different faculties of study as many appeared to have elevated the science faculty and tended to look down on some of the other faculties. However, for some, persevering with science was unlikely either because of their aptitude or because they were not sufficiently strong in mathematics.
- I hoped to communicate an understanding of work as being an integral part of one's identity, suggesting that the more one knows oneself, the better able one is to make an informed career choice, as opposed to seeing one's career choice in isolation.
- As far as possible, an empowering approach was adopted. I strived to impart skills, either personally or through feedback from group members that would enable the learners to become more aware of their own control of their career education both now and in the future. Akhurst and Mkhize (1999) suggest that a programme "which encourages the learner to take responsibility for his/her career development" (p. 18), is likely to be more relevant and useful to the learners. Group members were encouraged to find out specific information arising out of discussions to share with the group at the next meeting.
- It seemed important that the students develop an awareness that career decision making is not a one-off event but rather a process that takes place throughout one's life (Ginzburg, Ginsburg, Axelrod & Herma, 1951; Super, 1988).
- I aimed to let everyone have an opportunity to participate and be heard.

3.6 Programme implementation

Euvsard (1996) suggests that if programmes "are to meet the pupils needs and to be experienced by the pupils as being relevant to their lives, then they must address the express needs of the pupils" (p. 113). To do so, I planned topics for forthcoming group sessions only once I had a sense of where I felt the students wanted to go.

Groups of students met once a month in the same venue, a small room containing nine chairs. At the outset of each the sessions, I introduced the topics for discussion, and reminded the class of what had

been covered in the preceding group meetings. I spoke of my plans to write the CEP up as a study that would be available to the students in the library. However, I stressed that at all times personal information would be kept confidential. At the final group, I gave feedback of my experience of the programme and of our collaborative work together. Students were thanked for their participation, and for the extent to which they had taken personal risks by making themselves vulnerable in the groups.

Each group was advised that if they had concerns they wished to discuss in private, they could make a half hour appointment. There was a steep increase in individual counselling requested subsequent to the start of these groups. It seemed as though the groups had initiated a process of self-reflection.

At the end of each of the three sessions, I would draw the group to a close reflecting on the dominant themes of conversation that emerged, remind learners of the need for confidentiality and of the tasks they had agreed to follow up on prior to the next meeting

Extending the groups over a three month period gave the students time to consolidate skills and ideas gained in the previous session. As they attended more lectures in different subjects, their interests rapidly expanded.

The following chapter will describe the methodology used in this dissertation to analyse the students data resulting from the students' responses to the programme.

Chapter Four

Methodology

4.1 Introduction

This study is essentially exploratory, descriptive, and interpretive in nature. There was no obviously appropriate methodology given that the context in which the work was conducted, was constantly evolving. Strumpfer (1993) argues that context should be a central focus of methodologies. Bateson (1978) notes that “without context there is no meaning”(in Patton, 1987, p. 13). With this in mind, and because of the exploratory nature of the study, I attempted to shape the methodology as it emerged from the context of the programme. A qualitative design was thus best suited this work.

Less emphasis was placed on the product of these groups, increased career information. More emphasis was placed on the process of the student’s increasing their self and career awareness, as this was seen in itself to be a lifelong tasks. The process of the programme began slowly to unfold, basing itself largely on the unique and complex issues of the group of students who took part. As Patton (1987) notes “involving people in the.... process is an end in itself, the process *is* the point rather than the means of arriving at some other point” (p. 95). The CEP focussed on *how* the students had developed ideas about careers in the past and also over the duration of the programme. Emphasis was placed on students’ feelings about being part of the CEP, and on their experience of speaking openly about personal information to their class mates. The resulting data was not easily analysed according to traditional methodologies and is as a result, not easy to package neatly.

4.2 Research Design

The research question that guided the unfolding of the career education groups, concerned the information that I wanted to understand about the students: that is ‘what is the most useful way to assist t these students from disadvantaged backgrounds, who are entering the university environment, to make appropriate career decisions?’; the method of data collection, the analysis of the data, and the review of relevant literature developed concurrently. Each shaped the development of the other. Two questionnaires were constructed for the students to complete in an attempt to survey the students’ needs, which could provide some answers to the research question. Many of the questions in these two questionnaires (see appendixes B and C) were open ended to allow the students to

express themselves more freely. Mtolo (1996) suggests that “open-ended responses frequently go beyond factual material into the area of hidden motivations that lie behind attitudes, interests, preferences and decisions” (p. 45). In addition, Borg and Gall (1983) caution against the use of too many closed-ended questions for their inability to tap the views of the individual.

4.2.1 Interpretive research within a qualitative paradigm

Initially, I had no hypotheses or predetermined methodology. A research methodology was therefore sought, that would allow the greatest amount of flexibility, bring to light issues of importance to the students, with special reference to those reflecting their context. A qualitative research design was chosen as this suited the needs of the area of interest and the aims intrinsic to it. Halcolm’s Evaluation Laws (cited in Patton, 1987, p. 7) sum up the advantage of this approach saying “there is no burden of proof. There is only the world to experience and understand.” Patton (1987) suggests that qualitative research aims to understand the world from the learners point of view, to find meaning in an individual’s experiences and to reveal their unique perspective prior to scientific explanations. He adds that the advantage of a qualitative design, is that it “remains emergent even after data collection begins”(p. 196). Stead and Watson (1998) suggest that since African cultures value the oral tradition, qualitative research may be used effectively in situations which include discussion and talking.

Mouton and Marais (1988) speak of qualitative designs as having less strictly formalised approaches than quantitative designs, and having a less defined scope and embracing a more philosophical approach to the work at hand. They add that concepts in qualitative research are generally likely to be richer as opposed to quantitative studies, in which concepts are likely to be more specific. This research occurred in a less structured manner, and tended to result in a significantly higher level of ambiguity and, at times, confusion for the myself as the researcher. Unlike quantitative researchers, who may be more inclined to impose a system upon their subject matter, Mouton and Marais argue that qualitative researchers believe that the phenomena should “speak for themselves” (ibid., p. 163). The qualitative approach to career investigation was also recommended by Euvrard (1996), who describes a process in which he “...analysed in a qualitative manner and a number of categories and themes emerged” (p. 13).

The aim of collecting and using qualitative data was to capture the students’ personal perspectives and experiences. The data was analysed inductively. According to Bogdan and Biklen (1992) “this means that the data does not search out evidence to prove hypotheses the researcher holds before

entering the study. Rather, the abstractions are built as the particulars that have been gathered together. Theory developed this way emerges from bottom up rather than from top down” (p.30).

This particular piece of qualitative research may be compared to an interpretive inquiry (Addison, 1989). Addison suggests that quantitative research often lacks the ability to capture the meaning of social phenomena for individuals. In addition it is unable to highlight contextual conditions impinging on the phenomena under investigation. Addison maintains that, in the light of these inadequacies, interpretive research approaches have emerged. The interpretive research approach involves the interface between the researcher immersing him/herself in the study, understanding what is being revealed by the participants and the process and, finally, interpreting his/her understandings.

There may sometimes be debate around the validity and confidence in findings when using qualitative research. This is partly because the researcher in some instances, as with this CEP, is a subjective “participant observer” rather than an objective researcher. Smith argues that “the very idea of assessing qualitative research is antithetical to the nature of this research and the world it attempts to study” (1984, cited in Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, p. 480). Ideas about validity relate to a positivist world view which assumes an objective “truth” to be discovered. In qualitative research, the researcher is rather striving to uncover a variety of meanings which are evolving (ibid.). However, every attempt has been made to report as accurately as possible the students experiences, and to illustrate material where possible with the students’ quotations.

Addison (1989) suggests that emphasis be placed on the forestructures of interpretation. These, he explains, are one’s biases, prejudices or simply the pre-understandings one has on entering a field of study. We are inclined by our nature to notice and emphasise certain themes and ideas while perhaps ignoring others. Being aware of one’s forestructure is important as it makes one less likely to observe in a detached and uninvolved manner. Addison suggests that “meaning is always in a particular context and based upon a background of shared cultural practices” (p. 52). Meaning must therefore be negotiated in our interactions with others. The intersubjective nature of meaning has impacted directly on the research at hand. It was therefore necessary, as group facilitator for me to examine my own forestructures. To become more aware of my prejudices and understandings of the CEP subjects, and the emerging material. Striving to be aware of my own beliefs helped me to remain as open as possible to the many factors which impacted on the creation of meaning for this study.

Addison (1989) stresses that, while one is aware of the forestructure of interpretation, one also needs to consider the larger background context. For instance, in this study I needed to consider how career decision making might be embedded in a greater context, rather than merely as an ahistorical and asocial decision about which career to follow. Looking at the students' career plans without reference to their family and economic background, would have painted an incomplete picture. In the process of working in an interpretive manner, Addison (1989) suggests that possibilities will be opened up for subjects. As a combination of understanding my own forestructure and the students' background, a more detailed and accurate picture of the students could be revealed. This resulting understanding on my part and the learners is likely to have facilitated ongoing questioning and exploration.

This dissertation is more than a report on the progress of the career education groups. It is also my subjective interpretation as a fellow member of the groups. Addison (1989) says that in quantitative research, "the researcher assumes he or she is developing an account that corresponds to a 'reality' that is 'out there'... In interpretive research, truth is seen as an ongoing and unfolding process" (p. 56). The purpose of this research was to explore approaches to career education and to open up possibilities for the learners, as well as for practitioners in the field.

4.2.2 Participant-as-observer

Gold (1969) suggests that being a "participant-as-observer" involves being known to the participants as a researcher and participating in the ongoing activities (cited in Dane, 1990, p. 328). My role in the groups was as facilitator and participant. It involved initiating and being involved in the discussions. I strived to be aware of my biases and prejudices. For example, I wanted on occasion to take a more active stance with regard to the gender roles of women as understood by some of the male students. In these instances attempts were made by myself to remain neutral and to allow different voices from the group to be heard. Being a white woman immediately cast me in a particular light in the eyes of the group members. Some students suggested that it was not common for them to open up to the extent they did in the groups, with a woman and with someone from another culture. Others felt that it was because I was from another culture that they were able to talk more freely. Cohen and Manion (1980) suggest that one of the advantages of being a participant-observer is that when involved in programmes that take place over a period of time (three months in this instance) the researcher is able to relate more intimately and informally to group members.

Bleicher (1982, cited in Addison, 1989) captures this role saying that:

Participant-observation requires constant self-reflection and learning. It's dialogical in that subject and object remain in communicative contact in the course of which a fusion of horizons may occur: the sociologist has to become socialised in the particular form of life of his object while being able to widen the 'horizon' of the latter though offering a differing account of a given situation. (p. 55)

Being in dialogue with the students allowed me to gain a more insightful view of their context, the difficulties impinging on them as individuals specifically and with regard to careers generally, and ways of providing them with information that might be constructive and contribute to expanding their understanding of both themselves and the world of work.

4.2.3 Evaluation

Only as the richness of the data began to emerge was a decision made to write up this study. The research evolved as the programme unfolded. Besides studying the process of the groups as they unfolded over the three-month period, the programme has also been critically evaluated. Both a summative and a formative evaluation have been considered (see section 6.4). The summative evaluation has focussed on the overall effectiveness, continuation, expansion, and/or possible replication of this model in other sites. It includes recommendations for the programme, and for future programmes (see section 6.6). The purpose of the formative evaluation was to look at the strengths and weaknesses of the CEP and at ways of improving, it in the event of the programme or parts of it being replicated elsewhere. This programme, or parts of it might be seen as a pilot study. Little work seems to have been done thus far with cross-cultural career education at a tertiary level.

4.3 Research Question

The core question driving the data collection and analysis was: "What is the most useful way to assist these students from disadvantaged backgrounds, who are entering the university environment, to make appropriate career decisions?"

4.3.1 Aims of the research

Emerging from this question, there were a number of aims. My primary aim was to provide an appropriate forum in which the students could develop their understanding and awareness about career opportunities. To achieve this more information about the SFP students needed to be gathered,

with particular reference to issues influencing their career development. In order to do this it soon became clear that a fuller understanding of the contexts from which they came was necessary. This included gaining information about their career plans, about their families, where they had grown up, their schooling, and socio-political issues that may have impacted on them. This programme also needed to be evaluated for future reference.

Secondary aims of this research were:

- To review current models and trends in career education with emphasis on their relevance for use with a South African population.
- To gain a greater understanding of the issues facing black students in tertiary education.
- To explore the students' views of future employment opportunities in the field of science.

4.3.2 Procedures

The participants were initially introduced to the career education groups, while still in their larger classes of roughly 35 people. It was explained to them that they would meet with me and sometimes a co-facilitator, on a monthly basis for 45 minutes, over three months, in groups of eight or nine to discuss issues relating to their career plans that were of concern or interest to them. Feedback from this first meeting with the students suggested that they were supportive and enthusiastic about this opportunity. Since the programme unfolded as the students needs became clearer, informed consent could only be obtained for the programme as a whole and not for specific details which were yet to emerge. This is noted as a possibly problematic area in this dissertation, however this is part of the nature of research undertaken in tandem with the unfolding group process.

At our first meeting, it was explained that as the groups were aimed at meeting the participants' needs, the programme had not been planned in advance. It was noted that attendance was not compulsory, but that should they choose not to attend, they would need to excuse themselves. Issues of confidentiality were emphasized. I mentioned to the students that research based on the work done in these groups would form my thesis, and that ideas that they expressed might appear in the text, but that individual identities would be disguised. It was also noted that although participants were encouraged to contribute to group proceedings, they were free to remain silent if they choose. Students were offered individual counselling in the event of the groups provoking unsettling issues for them, or if they felt they needed more individual career information on an individual basis. Prior

to the second group where students drew genograms, it was explained that some of the information generated might be upsetting. For that reason participants were not required to speak about their genograms to group members. The exercise was undertaken to encourage increased self-knowledge related to career decisions, and this was explained to participants. Research was cited where genograms had been used in career counselling and an article by Okiishi (1987) was made available for the students to read.

4.4 Data collection

In-depth, open-ended focus groups was the primary method used for data collection. This data included:

- Direct quotations from students about their experiences, opinions, feelings, and knowledge.
- Process notes written by myself, including records of the activities of the students, their behaviour and interactions during the group meetings.
- Quotations from the two co-facilitators.
- My field notes and diary.
- A general questionnaire (Appendix B) devised by myself to explore the extent of the students' knowledge of careers and some biographical information. Students completed this after the first career group.
- Genograms (see example in Appendix A) drawn by the students.
- Paragraphs written by the students about the attitudes and expectations of their families and communities regarding their career plans.
- A second evaluative questionnaire (Appendix C) completed at the end of the CEP. Included in this questionnaire were some questions about the students current career interests to assess whether they had changed their career aspirations and plans over the previous three months, as well as questions requesting the students to evaluate each of the three career education sessions and to comment on the programme as a whole.

4.5 Data Analysis

A number of different sources of data have been collected for analysis. The research question and aims were kept in mind throughout. The direct quotations from students made during groups, comments from the two co-facilitators, and my field notes and diary will be referred to in the discussion in Chapter six.

The following data has been quantitatively analysed using tables and graphs (see section 5.1):

- Information generated from the genograms;
- Responses to the close-ended questions in the two questionnaires.

The following data has been qualitatively analysed (see section 5.3):

- The paragraphs written by the students about the expectations and attitudes of people in their worlds to their career plans;
- The open-ended questions containing the evaluative responses of the students to each of the career education groups and to the programme as a whole.

The qualitative data has been thematically analysed, to determine common themes and patterns in the responses. The following steps were taken:

I began by reading and rereading the material to become familiar with it. Broad categories and themes that appeared to be recurring were noted. Through this process categories that described major elements of what was being communicated by the students were identified. These represented units of meaning. Broad categories were divided into subsections. In so doing all similar responses to an issue could be grouped together. Quotations that illustrated the identified category were used to keep as closely as possible to the students words and ideas. Ely (1991) suggests that these quotations “serve also to counter the danger of over abstracting by anchoring the findings firmly in the field that gave rise to them” (p. 155).

In some instances a percentage of the students who shared a similar response to each category has been included to convey an idea of how strongly a view might have been expressed. However as these were responses to open-ended questions, students wrote varying amounts of information. Sometimes this information could be grouped into only a single category and other times into a number of categories. Therefore the percentages are rather a broad gauge of support for an opinion as opposed to statistically accurate averages. In the process of representing the data in a condensed and more accessible form, it is unavoidable that some of the meaning will have been lost.

4.6 Summary

The purpose of this dissertation was to explore the effectiveness of a CEP run with students from disadvantaged educational backgrounds, attending a bridging programme in the Science Faculty. The study looked at the relationship between the individual and his/her context in the light of career decision making. The results of this study will be presented in the following chapter.

Chapter Five

Results

The results of the study of the CEP will now be presented. Section 5.1 focusses on the various contextual and situational variables that have impacted on the students. Home and family backgrounds will be explored here. Also included in this section is information about where the students come from, people who have influenced their career decision making, and information on their family of origin including parents occupations and experiences of bereavements. Section 5.2 considers the students' career development and changes in their career choices over the course of the CEP and over the course of their SFP year. Section 5.3 deals with the qualitative data that has been analysed thematically. This includes the paragraphs the students' wrote detailing the attitudes of significant others to both their studies and their career plans as well as the students' evaluation of the programme. Section 5.4 is a brief summary of the results of this chapter.

5.1 Contextual and situational variables impacting on the students

These influences are important in gaining a better understanding of this group of students, particularly when considering the developmental-contextual framework (Vondracek et al., 1986) which emphasizes the role of contextual variables in our development.

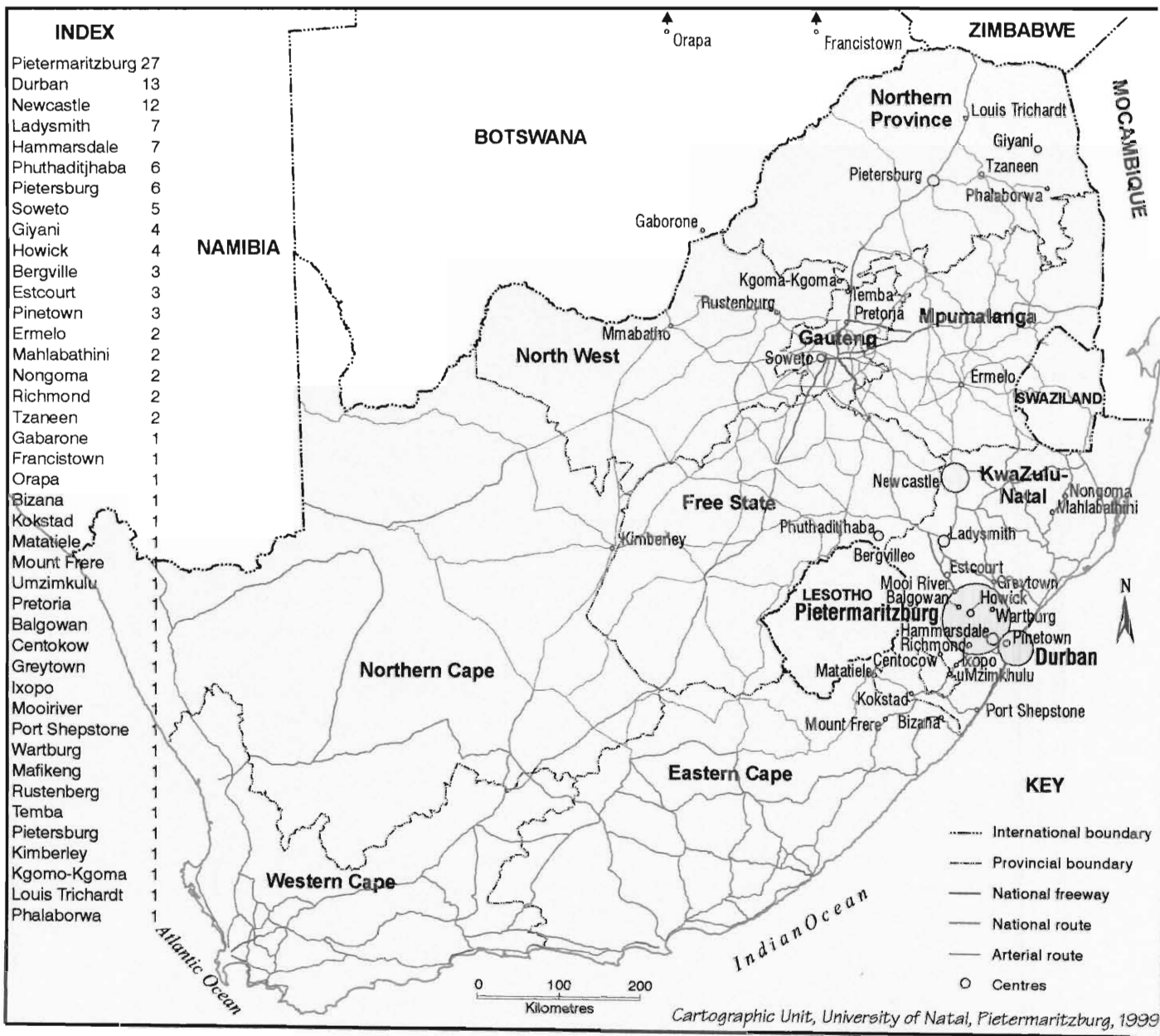
5.1.1 Participants

The participants in this study were the 135 students enrolled for the one year SFP course at the University of Natal Pietermaritzburg in 1998. Three of the 135 students were Indian and the remaining 132 were black.

5.1.2 Place of origin

Students were asked to write down their hometown on the first questionnaire. Most of the students wrote down a place where they came from, although many said that they lived with a variety of family members in a number of different areas, at times for a variety of reasons. For example, one student mentioned that she had gone to live with her aunt to help her to look after the goats. Some students also left the question blank.

Figure 5.1 Map of Southern Africa showing the geographical regions where the students live.



The map, illustrated in Figure 5.1, shows that most of the students came from the eastern part of South Africa. One can see a band (circles) that runs from KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) up to the Northern Province. The majority of students came from KZN. Most of the areas were too far from the university for daily commuting, so the majority of students were living in residence.

5.1.3 Age

The mean age for the group was 20 years. The mean age for the women was 18,6 years and for men it was 21,3 years. The women's ages ranged between 17 and 24 years. The men's ages ranged between 16 and 26 years.

The majority of the students wrote their matriculation examinations in 1997. Some had received full exemption and others were awaiting exemption from the university senate. A few of the students had completed their matric a few years earlier and some of those had spent time at home, mostly unemployed, while others had attempted post graduate studies at technikons.

5.1.4 Services and amenities available at the students' homes

Many of the students came from disadvantaged backgrounds both educationally and in terms of available resources. Students were asked on the first questionnaire about whether or not there was tap water, electricity or a television set at their homes. The reason for these questions was to ascertain what basic services and amenities the students had access to as these may have impacted directly and indirectly on their education (for example, having to collect water, or having to study only during daylight hours) and the development of their career interests.

Table 5.1 Home services and amenities

Services and amenities	Yes	No	No response
Electricity (n=122)	73%	17%	10%
Water (n=127)	75%	19%	6%
Television (n=112)	58%	25%	17%

Note:- Some of the students chose to leave parts of this question blank or wrote N/A. These responses are calculated in the 'no response' column. Some said that they felt that this information was personal and others said that the answer varied according to which of their homes they were thinking about.

Table 5.1 shows the percentages of students who had services at their homes. The majority of the students had access to electricity, water and television. Many students commented that they received water and electricity in recent years, particularly since 1994, when the Government of National Unity came into power. Just over half of the students reported having access to television at their homes.

Although some of these students had not yet received electricity, they had access to a communal television set that was powered by a generator.

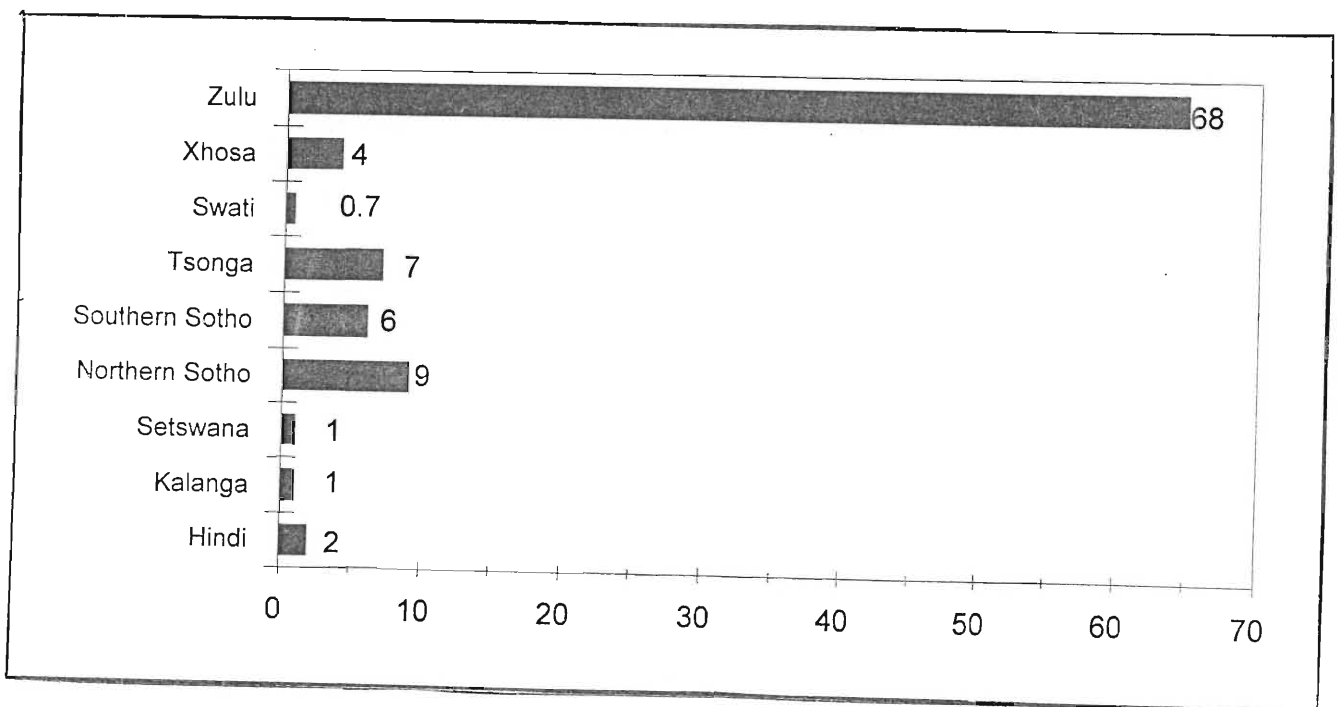
5.1.5 Gender

Nearly two thirds (66%) of the sample comprised males (n=89). Roughly a third (34%) was female (n=46). Generally the policy adopted by the SFP when selecting students is to aim for equal numbers of men and women. However this is often not possible since insufficient women applicants apply, or meet the entry requirements. Traditionally, science has been viewed as a male dominated area of interest both in families and in schools. Parents may also have different expectations of their male and female offspring. It is possible that women may see themselves as less able to follow a career in science and perceive more barriers to their career development than their male counterparts.

5.1.6 Home languages spoken by the students

Students came from many different areas and as a result spoke as many as nine different home languages. Figure 5.2 demonstrates the number of students who spoke each language.

Figure 5.2 Percentages of students who spoke various home languages (n=135)

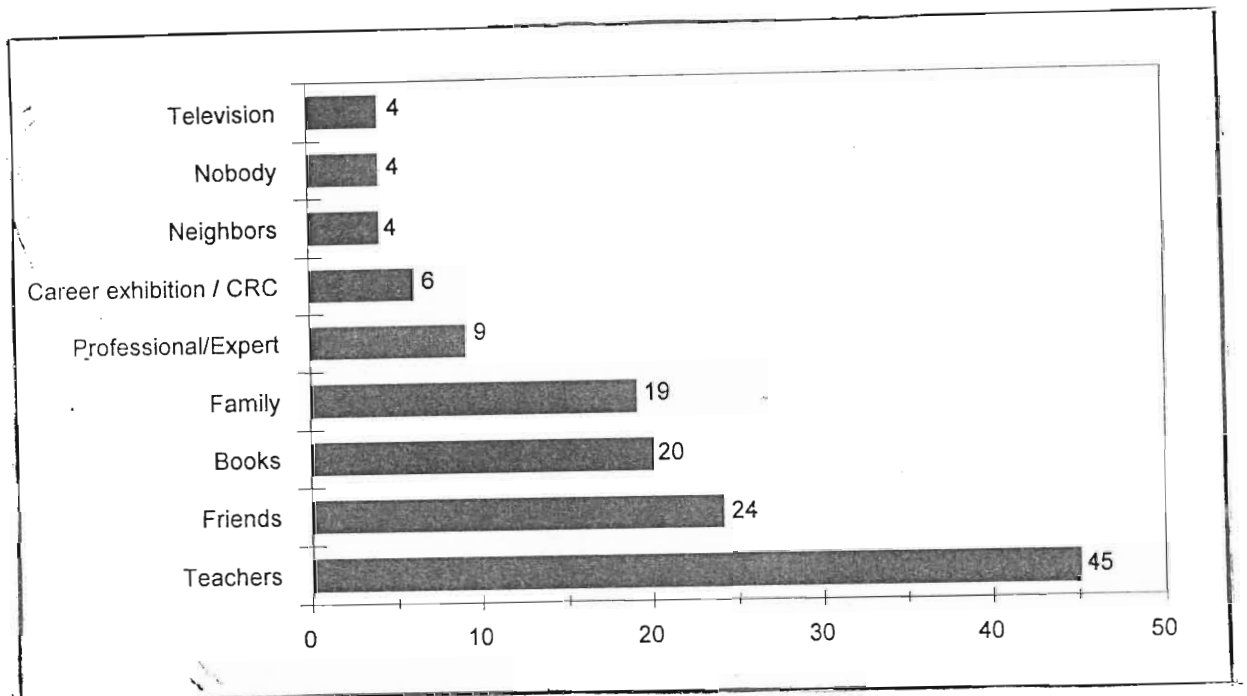


The majority of students (68%) spoke Zulu. Very few students spoke Kalanga (1%) or Setswana (1%), while only one person spoke Swati (0,7%).

5.1.7 Students' perceptions of factors influencing their career decisions

In the first questionnaire, students were asked where, or from whom they had heard about their prospective career. Different theorists have suggested that teachers, peers or parents may be the most significant influencing factor in career decision making. Figure 5.3 shows the numbers of people in various categories who most strongly influenced the students' career development.

Figure 5.3 Factors influencing the students' career decision making process (n=135)



Note:-The abbreviation CRC in Figure 5.3 refers to career resource centres. Teachers were reported as playing a significant role in guiding some of the students in their career choice. As many as 45 of students noted that their teachers had played a role in their career plans. Two thirds of the teachers who had influenced students in their thinking about careers were subject teachers, whilst a third of the teachers who played a part in the students developing a career interest were guidance teachers.

Friends were considered to play the next most important role in the students' career development. The significant influence of teachers and friends contrasts strongly with the smaller group of students who identified their family as having had a significant influence on their career choice. Although

19 students referred to the impact that their family members had had on their career plans, this included a number of different relatives. Table 5.2 shows the breakdown of the category of family.

Table 5.2 Family members who have influenced the students' career choice (n=19)

Family members	n=19
Parents	4
Siblings	7
Grandparents	2
Aunts and uncles	3
Cousins	3

Only four of the students suggested that their parents were influential in their career decisions. A greater number identified siblings as having been part of the process of their deciding on a career.

5.1.8 Marital status of the students' parents

Students referred to the marital status of their parents when they completed their genograms. Many came from families where their parents had divorced, separated or had never married. As a result students were sometimes part of very large extended families, in some instances having 17 or 18 siblings and /or half-siblings. My reasons for including this information relates to the influence of family on economic resources, and also to illustrate the differences in family structure from the Western idea of a nuclear family.

Table 5.3 Marital status of parents

Marital status	n=130
Parents who were currently married	60
Parents who were married and whose partner had died	23
Parents who had divorced	12
Parents who had separated	13
Parents who were never married and never lived together	18
Fathers who had more than one partner	22
Mothers who had more than one partner	0

Table 5.3 shows that:

- Many of the students parents were not living together as a couple. Some had divorced or separated while others had never lived together. None of the students reported having parents who lived together out of wedlock. Many of the parents had been widowed through the death of a spouse. Some of the fathers were reported as having more than one wife or girlfriend. None of the mothers were reported as having more than one partner.

5.1.9 Bereavements and losses of students' family members

As shown in the genograms, a high number of students have experienced bereavements of immediate family members. This information has been extracted because, in scanning the genograms I was struck by the number of bereavements shown and believe these may have an impact on students' well-being.

Table 5.4 Bereavements and losses

Deaths and losses	<u>n</u>=130
Students whose fathers had died	31
Students whose mothers had died	14
Students whose fathers had left the families	17
Students whose mothers had left the families	1
Total number of parents who had died or left the family	63
Students who had experienced the death of sibling/s	19

- Nearly half of the students (49%) had experienced the bereavement or loss of a parent.
- All of the students reported having lost either a parent, sibling or grandparent.
- A larger number of students had experienced the death or departure of their father than their mother.
- Many of the students reported having had one or more siblings die.

The results which have been described in section 5.1 will be discussed with regard to career development in section 6.3.

5.1.10 Parents' occupations

Students were requested to record their parents' occupations, as these serve to indicate the in the first questionnaire level of the students and their families.

Table 5.5 Occupations of the students' parents

Occupations	Mothers (n=134)	Fathers (n=134)
Deceased	8%	23%
Career unknown, or students uncertain	4%	16%
Unemployed	21%	12%
Pensioner	2%	8%
Housewife	14%	0%
Blue collar/trade/labourer	28%	25%
White collar/clerical/sales	22%	12%
Self employed/business	2%	4%
Professional/university qualification	1%	1%

Note: Although this classification system is perhaps a bit dated, it tends to be the one that is commonly used. Alternate classification systems are also possible.

Table 5.5 shows that few families could afford to send their children to university. More students had information about their mothers than their fathers as a greater number of fathers had either disappeared or had died prior to the students' birth or during the students' life.

- The majority of students reported that their parents were blue-collar workers, traders or labourers. (This would include people working in factories, gardeners, shop cleaners, taxi drivers, domestic workers, cashiers, electricians, dress makers, messengers.)
- White collar, clerical and sales jobs were filled by 22% of the mothers, and 12% of the fathers. (This would include people working in department stores, organisations, nurses, union officials, teachers.)
- Students more frequently lacked information about their fathers' professions than about their mothers'.

- Almost a quarter of the fathers were reported as being deceased, while less than 10% of the mothers had died.
- Just below 1,5% of the mothers were described as being self employed. This would include work such as hawkers or pavement sellers.
- Very few of the students' parents had professional qualifications.

5.2 Career development and career decision making

5.2.1 Monthly career changes

Many of the students changed their minds about their career plans during their SFP year. The students were requested by the SFP staff to document their most recent career plans at the start of the year (February) and again at the end of the year (October). In addition to these two records, the students were asked to write down their current career plans at the end of each of the three sessions of career education. Table 5.6 shows the trends of the students career changes during the year. Career changes have been compared across months, as follows:

- A February (beginning of the SFP course) - March (end of the first career group)
- B March (end of first career group) - April (end of second career group)
- C April (end of second career group) - May (end of third career group)
- D February (beginning of the SFP course) - October (end of the SFP course)

Although there were five sets of data taken from five different months, there are only four columns, A, B, C and D showing the changes in career plans. This is because career change has been looked at *between* the months. Students who changed their minds about their prospective careers, have been divided into eight different categories of change. Each of these categories refers to a slightly different pattern of change.

The categories identified for career change include:

- 1 Students who did not change their career plans over the identified months.
- 2 Career changes within the science faculty. For example, changing from pharmacy to genetics.
- 3 Students who refined their career choice from a general BSc or engineering degree to a more specific option such as computer science or electrical engineering, within the field of science.
- 4 Students who changed their career choice from science to another faculty.
- 5 Students who increased their career choices from one to more than one option.
- 6 Students who decreased their career choices, moving from more than one interest to a single career choice.
- 7 Students who moved from being unsure of what career to pursue, to having chosen a career.
- 8 Students who moved from having been sure of their career choice, to being uncertain of what career to pursue.

Table 5.6 Percentages of change in students' career choice during the SFP year

Categories	A (Feb-March)	B(March-April)	C (April-May)	D (Feb-Oct)
	n=105	n=124	n=117	n=107
1	44%	59%	56%	32%
2	24%	19%	26%	43%
3	25%	--	--	19%
4	1%	--	--	7%
5	4%	14%	2%	--
6	--	2%	14%	--
7	--	3%	1%	--
8	3%	2%	1%	--

Note:- The number of students' responses for groups A, B, C and D on Table 5.6 varies. Although the total number of students was 135, measures of the students career interests were taken at five different times. During these times students were sometimes absent, and in some instances may not have returned the required information. In order to make a comparison between two different groups

of career information, the sample consisted of only those students who had reported their career plans at both of those two times. Therefore the number of missing students was greater than it would have been, had just single months been considered. Percentages were used to facilitate comparison between the four groups.

Consideration of Table 5.6 reveals the following:

- The majority of students had changed their career plans between February and October. Although the table suggests that 32% of the students had the same career plan in February as in October, some of these may have changed their plans during the year, and returned to their original plan again at the end of the year. Many students, 56%, changed their career plans after the first group of career education. The remaining 44%, did not change their plans.
- Most of the students who decided to change their career to one in another faculty, such as Social Science, did so at the end of the year.
- More students increased their career choices after the second group of career education than at any other time in the year.
- More students decreased their career options from more than one to just one after the third group of career education.
- The greatest uncertainty around which career to pursue was expressed after the second group of career education.

It is not possible however, to attribute the changes in career planning to the career group experience. Other experiences of the SFP course would also have been influential, however the career group possibly enabled the expression of changing ideas.

5.2.2 Monthly view of students' career choices

Table 5.7 on the following pages, reflects the students' choice of careers during the CEP, as well as at the start and end of the year. It differs from Table 5.6 in that it does not compare changes in career plans between times, but rather takes a more static look at the students' career choices at five different times of the year. These include: the first month of the SFP course (February), the first, second and third career groups and the last month of the SFP course (October). The table shows clearly the months where career interests expanded (after the first, second and third career group) and where they contracted or where there was less variation (at the start and end of the year).

One can also see the months where there was an increase in the number of students who began considering two and even three career alternatives.

Note: See Appendix D for the same table with gender included. The effect of gender on the students' career development has not been a focus of this study.

Table 5.7 Students' career choices during the career education groups, and at the start and end of the year.

February	F-Tt	Group 1	1-Tt	Group 2	2-Tt	Group 3	3-Tt	October	O-Tt
1 choice	*	1 choice	*	1 choice	*	1 choice	*	1 choice	*
agriculture	4	agriculture	3	agric extnsns officer	1	agric extns officer	1	agriculture	11
apld chem	2	architecture	1	agriculture	1	agriculture	3	B Sc	6
B Sc	47	B Sc	13	architecture	2	architecture	1	biochem	1
botany	0	botany	1	B Sc	18	B Sc	8	chem analyst	1
comp sc	2	chem analyst	1	chemical analyst	3	biochemistry	3	chemistry	25
conservation	1	commerce	1	computer science	7	chemical analyst	1	commerce	1
dentistry	1	comp science	4	conservation	1	commerce	1	comp sc	6
dietetics	4	conservation	1	construction mgmt	1	computer science	4	dentistry	1
eng agric	1	constrctn mgmt	1	dentistry	1	conservation	1	dietetics	10
eng chem	7	dentistry	2	dietetics	2	constrctn mgmt	1	eng agric	2
eng civil	3	dietetics	3	eng agric	3	dentistry	2	eng chem	5
eng elec	5	eng agric	2	eng chem	4	dietetics	2	eng civil	1
eng mech	7	eng chem	7	eng civil	8	eng agric	3	eng elec	10
engineering	12	eng civil	8	eng elec	12	eng chem	5	eng mech	4
medicine	13	eng elec	17	eng mech	3	eng civil	10	engineering	1
microbiology	2	eng mech	9	engineering	3	eng elec	18	geography	1
missing info	22	engineering	5	environmental health	1	eng mech	3	geology	1
not sure	1	env health	1	geology	1	eng mining	5	hydrology	4
quant. surv	1	env mgmt	1	land surveying	1	engineering	3	law	1
		land surveying	1	medicine	25	geology	1	medicine	24
		medicine	25	microbiology	1	land surveying	1	missing info	8
		microbiology	1	missing info	7	medicine	26	nursing	1
		missing info	7	not sure	3	microbiology	3	physics	3
		not sure	4	pharmacy	3	missing info	14	psychology	1
		pharmacy	3	physiotherapy	1	not sure	2	Soc sc	3
		physiotherapy	1	quantity surveying	2	pharmacy	2	Soc Sc RRM	1
		psychiatry	1	veterinary science	1	physiotherapy	2	statistics	2
		quant. surveying	2			psychology	1		
		radiography	1			quant. surveying	3		
		veterinary sc	1			radiography	1		
						Soc Sc R R Mgmt	1		
						veterinary science	1		
		2 choices	*	2 choices	*	2 choices	*		
		eng ch; microb	1	agricltr; chemistry	1	change daily; eng	1		
		eng chem/civ	1	chem; chem analyst	1	radiog; dietetics	1		
		eng; comp sc	1	biochem; microbiol	1				
		eng mech; chem	1	chemistry; dietetics	1				
		eng; teaching	1	eng; constr mgmt	1				
		physio; comp sc	1	eng elec/civil	1				
				eng m; biometry	1				
				land surv; eng	1				
				mech eng; chem	1				
				med; eng civil	2				
				psychiatry; comp sc	1				
				radiog; medicine	1				
				B Sc; not sure	1				
		3 choices	*	3 choices	*	3 choices	*		
		med; eng; B Sc	1	chem; police; cop	1				
				B Sc; Soc Sc; med	1				
				diet; med; B Com	1				
				eng; civil; Soc Sc	1				
				pharm.; med; actor	1				
	135		135		135		135		135

A summary of the monthly view of students' career choices taken from Table 5.7 is shown represented on Table 5.8.

Table 5.8 Monthly view of students' career choices (n=135)

Career developments	Feb.	1	2	3	Oct.
Total number of careers mentioned	17	29	30	30	25
Number of new careers named	--	12	6	3	5
Number interested in studying engineering	35	53	40	47	23
Number interested in studying medicine	13	26	30	26	24

Note:- Columns 1, 2, and 3 in Table 5.8 refer to the first, second and third career groups.

- Of all the five months under review, February and October are the months with the least variety in career choices. An increase in diversity of career interest can be seen after the first, second and third career groups.
- The most students at any one time who planned on studying engineering was 53 after the first career group, while the fewest number of students planning on studying it was at the end of the year in October.
- Support for medicine increased after the first month of the SFP and thereafter remained more constant than engineering, decreasing slightly at the year end to 24. Careers introduced by the students after the first careers group included: architecture, chemical analysis, commerce, conservation, construction management, environmental health, environmental management, land surveying, pharmacy, physiotherapy, psychiatry, radiography, teaching and veterinary science.
- Careers introduced after the second careers group included: acting, agricultural extensions officer, drama, geology, policeman and traffic cop.
- New careers introduced after the third careers group included: biochemistry, rural resource management and psychology. Careers mentioned for the first time in October included geography, hydrology, law, nursing and statistics.

5.3 Thematic analysis of students' evaluation of the programme and of their paragraphs documenting the attitudes of significant others to their studies.

Thematic analysis includes the analysis of:

- 5.3.1 The paragraphs students wrote about the attitudes of people in their families and communities to their studies.
- 5.3.2 The students' evaluation of session one of the career education programme.
- 5.3.3. The students' evaluation of session two of the career education programme.
- 5.3.4 The students' evaluation of session three of the career education programme.
- 5.3.5 The students' comments about the programme as a whole.

Students did not provide feedback about each of the three career education sessions directly after the group. Instead, all the feedback for the three sessions and comments on the programme as a whole have been taken from the second questionnaire administered at the end of the programme. Paragraphs about the attitudes of people in their families and communities to their studies, were written during the second career group, along with the students genograms.

Since the data for each of following five sections was obtained at different times, the sample size varies. At the beginning of each section the number of respondents has been recorded. In each of these sections the percentage has been calculated for that particular sample size. Comments on some of the students responses and links to earlier chapters will be made in the discussion in chapter six.

The aim throughout this research has been to locate the students in their unique context. This has been achieved in part through allowing the students their own voice in the form of their quotations. Since it was not possible to use all the quotations, I have attempted to select a rich variety with subtle variations. This thematically analysed work therefore represents a filtered version of the empirical data. In the process, inevitably some of the responses have been omitted. Hull (1984) refers to this subjective process as the “interviewer’s own ‘black market’ of understandings” (cited in Powney & Watts, 1987, p. 192). He calls it a ‘black market’ because of the lack of access to the material for the reader. He suggests that the researcher will interpret the data in the light of her “accumulated knowledge of the participants’ meaning system” (ibid.). This meaning has been built up over the course of the programme and through the processing of the students’ written data. Finally, the

responsibility lies with the researcher to use her integrity in communicating the students' views as accurately as possible.

5.3.1 Analysis of the paragraphs students wrote about the attitudes of people in their families and communities to their studies.

This section deals with the thematic analysis of the paragraphs written by students about their own attitudes and those of their family and community members to their being at university and their career plans. (n=118)

- The students' reports of family members' attitudes to their studies.

A large majority (88%) of the students reported that their family members were supportive of their studies. Parents were pleased that their children were benefiting from educational opportunities not available to them. A few family and community members were reported as expressing support in the hope of benefiting in the future from the students' qualification with respect to the lucrative work opportunities which might arise:

"My father is very pleased to know that his son is going to be something unlike other family members."

"My mother thinks it is better to educate girls because they are the ones who mostly look after their mothers than boys."

"Family members are supportive because they say they will benefit from my qualification one day."

Some family members (32%) were reported as being unsupportive. (Note: Since different family members in the same family sometimes had different attitudes to the students studies, the percentages of supportive (88%) and unsupportive (32%) adds up to more than 100%). The reasons included feelings of jealousy, lack of knowledge about students' line of study, concern about the financial commitment and the length of time studying takes:

"..... they are uneducated and do not understand what that I am studying."

"My family members did not have the opportunity to study."

"My brother is jealous as he is not as intelligent as me."

"My family members do not even encourages me and I believe they want to see me struggling with life until death."

"My father says I am not bright enough for university and he was a lot brighter me."

Some students (11%) recorded what they thought might be the opinions of deceased family members to their studies:

“My father wanted us to be educated.”

“My mother was positive about my studies before she was killed.”

■ The students reports of attitudes of other community members to their studies.

Some students (10%) referred to the attitudes of their past teachers to their being at university. Mostly these comments were favourable. Teachers were referred to in their capacity as providing informal career guidance.

“My teachers encourage me to study as Doctors in there is a shortage of qualified people in our area.”

“An ex teacher keeps pushing me to leave Sciences and do a BA.”

Students included comments from their friends regarding their being at university. Comments were both positive (10%) and negative (4%). Positive comments expressed encouragement and admiration of the students' studies. Unsupportive comments mostly referred to envy:

“My friends think I am so unique because no one from my place thought of taking the career I am intending to take (medicine).”

“One of my friends are jealous.”

Responses from the broader community varied greatly from being supportive and encouraging to being discouraging and unsupportive. Two thirds of the students (67%) recorded comments from community members regarding their studies. This high response suggests the important role that the community plays in the life of community members. Some of the comments from members of the community were supportive of the student's endeavours (37%):

“My community are proud because I am one of the guys who has a direction, logic and working hard to have a better future.”

Fewer of the comments (17%) from community members were unsupportive of the students' endeavours. These comments referred to issues of jealousy, competition and rivalry as well as the effects of poverty. Some of the perceived lack of support from community members seemed to stem from concern for the students' welfare.

Unsupportive comments also seemed to stem from a lack of knowledge about careers:

“People in my community always want to see no improvement from me.”

“Most of the children in my community are not going to school. They are drunks and smokers.”

“Educated people in my community say why I didn’t go to the technician because it’s cheaper than varsity.”

“My community worry that I won’t get jobs.”

“Community members are uneducated and do not understand what I am studying.”

“My community complain about the years I will take to complete my degree.”

A few of the community members (6%) were also reported as being discouraging with regard to the students’ career choices. Some worried that the students’ career plans were too ambitious and unattainable. Others could not see the relevance of the choice of a particular course of study:

“My community discourage me as they say that it is no work for a women (agricultural manager).”

“My community only know about the careers of doctors and teachers.”

“My community think that an ordinary person like me will never make it in the Science faculty.”

“People in my community wonder what I want with something like dietetics.”

A number of students (8%) reported fearing threats of witchcraft from community members as a result of pursuing their career:

“Sometimes I become the victim of witchcraft because I have terrible dreams sometimes and strange things happen to me. To solve that I pray.”

“The community that I lived at have a number of witchcraft, they are able to attack with strokes, madness and even to commit suicide.”

“Jealous is so intense that I don’t visit community members and I don’t eat their food.”

“Last year I was sick and we got that from Inyanganga (Zulu doctor) that there are people who don’t want me to carry on with my studies.”

■ Students’ reflections on their own studies and futures.

A few of the students (8%) wrote about their own plans and wishes regarding their studies and their futures. Some suggested that their motivation for studying was to help family and community

members once they had qualified, and not to merely pursue their own happiness. Others said that their choice of career motivated them to commit themselves more diligently to their studies. Students referred to a growing sense of confidence from having gained entry to a tertiary institution:

“I don’t want a job that will satisfy my needs only while others are suffering.”

“I am looking forward to paying for my brothers tertiary studies.”

“I wanted to be a teacher because I wanted to beat school children as the teachers was doing to me, that was the only reason.”

“I want to be a doctor because doctors are respected by the community.”

“I choose to be a doctor because the people with great status.”

“I know that I have the potential and that I can achieve whatever I set my mind to doing.”

Students sometimes reported feeling greater confusion around their career choice since coming to university:

“Being at university has exposed me to too many courses.”

“I am no longer sure about what to study.”

■ Partners’ attitudes to students’ studies.

Comments were made by some students about their partners’ attitudes to their studies (7%). These varied for some partners who felt that they might be left once the student educated. Others looked forward to an easier life once their partner qualified.

“My boyfriend says that it is important that we are both educated.”

“My girlfriend expects marriage and better life after completing my studies.”

“My girlfriend is scared that maybe I’m going to left her, maybe I’m going to start seeing girls that are in a higher standard than her.”

The previous section highlights the richness and diversity of ideas and attitudes related to the students’ studies and more broadly to their career paths.

5.3.2 The students' evaluation of session one of the career education programme

This section considers the students' evaluation of the first of the CEP sessions. (n=124).

5.3.2.1 Thematic analysis of responses to the first question in the evaluation:

What was it like for you to introduce yourself to your group?

■ Positive responses.

Students reported feeling positive about the experience of having spoken about themselves and their career plans to the other members of their group. For many it was their first time to speak in a group. Some spoke of the benefits of hearing each others career plans, of becoming part of a group, meeting people with similar interests, of the opportunity to talk about themselves, and difficulties of overcoming their anxiety. As many as 95% of the students indicated that the experience of introducing themselves to the group was positive.

"It was nice for others to know where I came from."

"It was good for me to let other people know my direction."

"I never talked to a group before."

"It was kind of easy because it wasn't a large group."

"I was so pleased because I communicated with other people."

Many people mentioned their experience of joining their group.

"Getting used to unfamiliar surroundings would not be as difficult as I had thought before."

"Everyone was very warm and welcoming."

"I found some career mates who I will share ideas with."

"I felt comfortable knowing they would be my group for the rest of the semester."

"I felt relieved to let my mates know something about me."

Students commented on feeling comforted by having made friends after introducing themselves to the group.

"It was interesting to meet new people from different places with different names."

"We could become big friends."

Some students said that they felt reassured by the realisation that others also have problems

“I realised that we share common problems.”

“I have seen that I am not the only one with a problem of not having parents.”

Many students reported feeling relieved at having overcome their anxiety and having coped with speaking in a group.

“At first I was shy but then I felt relieved and at home.”

“It was just me out there in front of strangers, but, surprisingly, I fitted in well.”

“It was very frightening but I’ve realised that frightening is uncalled for.”

“It wasn’t difficult because you know that everywhere you go you must start introducing yourself before socialising.”

■ Difficulties with the process of the groups.

These responses reflected difficulties students had experienced as a result of talking in their second language, of talking to strangers, and of feeling tense. About 19% of the students suggested that the experience of introducing themselves to group members had been distressing for them in some way:

“It was as though someone was searching for secret from me.”

“I was speaking about me in front of people I’m not used to or even familiar with.”

“It was unfair as it is impossible to introduce yourself to unknown people.”

“It was my first time to speak in English in front of people.”

“It was difficult as English is not my mother tongue.”

“I was not used to talking to strange people.”

“I was worried that others would laugh at me.”

■ Difficult at the time but realised the benefits later.

Some students (11%) suggested that although they found the groups difficult or frightening, they also had a sense that it was a valuable experience for them.

“It was a horrible thing but it made me to be clear.”

“I did not like to reveal my plans but I realise it was helpful afterwards”

Consideration of the above would thus seem to indicate a widespread response to the first group experience.

5.3.2.2 Thematic analysis of responses to the second question in the evaluation:

What was it like for you to talk about your career plans?

- A useful and a constructive experience.

Many students (58%) found talking about their career plans interesting and stimulating. Students commented on the fact that they found having to articulate their career plans to the group to be a useful experience, one that helped them to clarify their options:

“It was challenging because we do not know what the future holds.”

“I felt as if I am starting to fulfil my dream.”

“I realise that you choose a career but you must have a reason.”

“It was really impressing to know and to be able to talk and realise how much you know about your career.”

“It was good for me to let other people know my direction.”

Students reported being more interested in other possibilities and career options:

“I met other students who wanted to do different careers.”

“It was very interesting and opened my brain.”

“It made me think more critically about my career.”

Students said they felt more certain about their career plans after speaking about them. Many were more open now to other ideas and suggestions with regard to their careers:

“I found it helpful as I came to know how much I know about my chosen career.”

“Afterwards I felt more sure of my career choice.”

“I felt proud because I knew all the time what I wanted to do.”

“I was able to imagine being a Doctor and dealing with the sick.”

Some students became more aware of their own and other students uncertainty regarding their careers. Others expanded their knowledge of other career options.

“I met other students which did not know what to do.”

“I became less clear.”

“Through sharing we learned about careers we did not previously know about.”

- Anxiety.

Some students (45%) expressed feelings of shyness and anxiety when talking about their career plans.

Many felt this way as they feared that their own plans were in a comparatively less advanced state:

"I felt a bit nervous because of the uncertainties."

"I had that thought in my mind 'say more about your choice'."

"I thought I was the only person who came to University without career plans."

The students attributed the cause of their feelings to a variety of sources such as being unfamiliar with talking about their plans, concern about people's evaluation, concern about their ability to succeed and concerns arising from a lack of information:

"I did not know whether my choice would sound crazy or brave to these people."

"I knew there was possibilities of being unsuccessful about my career choice."

"I was a bit scared because at that time I did not have enough information about my career."

"If you are ashamed of what you want to do, you are not serious."

"It was not comfortable because I might not be that and people talk."

■ Feelings about being part of a group.

All of the students had something positive to say about their experience of being in a group.

Many said they found being it helpful, useful, enjoyable, exciting and challenging:

"I felt better about my future and my career choice."

"It put me in a position to be guided."

"Everybody was talking free."

"It meant I would get more clarity and understanding about the chances I had of getting there."

"It was reassuring as one does not always know what one would like to do in life."

"Being questioned about my career was useful."

"It was helpful to hear other opinions about ones career."

A few of the students found acquiring information and receiving feedback from the group useful:

"I got information from educated brains"

"It was useful getting feedback and advise from others."

"Important information I didn't know I found out from some students."

"I got some ideas that I never had or knew of before."

Being assisted by group members to plan their careers was found to be helpful:

“I got information from group members about how to plan my career.”

“I learned that I need a high pass mark to qualify for engineering.”

Some students were motivated to seek out more information about their field of interest as a result of the questions posed to them by other group members:

“It influenced my to go and search for more information about my career.”

“I had to look for knowledge I lacked when I was asked questions.”

“It made me search for more information about careers.”

■ Unhelpful.

A few of the students (3%) said that they found the experience of talking about their career plans to the group to be unhelpful.

“I did not feel free at all as people will sometimes judge you by your performance.”

“Some people were discouraging.”

The above section highlights the cross-section of responses to participating in and speaking in the group and the need for facilitators to be aware of the diverse responses which such a group experience might evoke.

5.3.3 The students’ evaluation of session two of the career education programme

This section deals with the students’ responses to drawing their family genograms - pictorial representations of family members over three generations (see section 3.3.4 for information on genograms). See Appendix C for an example of a genogram.

Note: Since it was thought that students might prefer to keep information about their families private, they were not requested to share this information with the group. Therefore, the group involved little, if any, talking. Instead students focussed on the exercise of drawing their genogram. However, the evaluation of this group was completed after the third and final session of the career education programme. In the third session students were given the opportunity to reflect on the previous two groups. Some of the students chose at this time to talk about their genograms and issues relating to their families. (n=124)

5.3.3.1 Thematic analysis of responses to the first question in the evaluation:

What did you learn from drawing your family genogram?

The majority of the students (78%) reported learning more about their families and their role in their families. These comments are listed below.

■ Insights.

Many students (32%) referred to insights having been gained in the process of drawing their genograms. Some students commented on a developing sense of pride and gratitude towards their family:

"I realised how important each member of the family is."

"I love my father and I never want to disappoint him."

"It made me realise how close I am to my family, especially those who support me."

"I learnt that every member of my family contributed to my studies."

Many found memories of their families to be troubling and painful:

"It brought back some sad memories."

"I just felt hate."

"I cannot even think about it."

"I felt pain as it was the first time I realised the importance of genogram."

"It was very difficult for me."

"Genograms can bring secrets out and the things that I am not happy to talk about."

Other people saw their families in a more distant way, and separate from themselves:

"I try not to be like my parents."

"I learnt how important I am, as I was coming with a new way."

"I learned that from my two families, which one care about us the most."

"It made me think deeply about my family."

A few students felt that they had insufficient knowledge about families:

"I learn that I do not know that much about my family."

"I know more about my culture than my family."

■ Greater understanding of family.

Many students (22%) felt that they had developed a greater understanding of their families subsequent to drawing their genograms. People said that they could see better where they fitted into their families. Students commented on how their families had shaped them, and a number saw that they might now be role models in their families.

"Finding out about any career influences within our families."

"I got to know the different interests of other family members."

"I've learnt that I'm not the only dependant, so I became aware of many things and understand my role in my family better."

"I am the one who has to become an example in my family."

"Now I know what role I must play for my younger brothers and sisters."

"I saw myself as a crazy role model of the family."

"I am the first born and I realise that I have to be a good example to my brothers."

Some spoke of a growing sense of responsibility to their families:

"I have to try by all means to uplift my family."

"I saw the responsibilities I have to maintain to my family."

"I realised what I can do for my family."

"There is so much that I have to do to make my family proud."

Students noted that they became more aware of a sense of the impact and influence that their family exerts on them:

"I learnt that I am where I am because of the influence of my family."

"I have learned how family situations can affect one's life."

Some students commented on feeling more anchored in their families:

"I now know about the family I'm from."

"I learnt where I come from and know who I am."

■ Greater awareness of family structure.

A few students (12%) noted that, as a result of drawing their family genogram, they developed a greater awareness of the structure and size of their families:

"I got to know about my family hierarchy."

“It helped me to see where I am according to my family.”

“I’ve learnt how to arrange the chain of life of my family.”

“I learned that there is a link between me and my family.”

“I realised that my family is complicated.”

Some noted that as a result of drawing their family genograms they realised the impact that the size of their families might have on them:

“I see the effect the size of my big family have on me.”

“My family is larger than I thought.”

“My family is so mixed up, I didn’t know who to include or not. It’s just a mystery. I myself don’t understand it.”

■ Comparison with other students.

A number of students (10%) tended to compare themselves and their families with other group members. Some felt that they were more similar to other students after drawing their genograms:

“I have seen that I am not the only one with a problem of not having parents.”

“That many of us have suffered lot of similar pain.”

Other students felt they were more different from other students after drawing their genograms:

“I can now see differences between my family and other families.”

“I have realised how different my life is compared with others.”

■ Financial constraints, unemployment and lack of education.

Comments were made by 7% of the students regarding financial hardship in their family and how this impacted on their plans to study, and the difficulties of having family members who were unemployed.

“I found that my family suffer from money.”

“It showed me that my mother cannot manage to serve us all.”

“My family is poor in education.”

“I learnt that I have a big family where many are unemployed.”

- Career choice and family.

Some students (7%) spoke about the origins of their career plans in their families. For some it was now clearer to them why they had chosen to explore certain fields of interest in the light of family influences:

“I realised why I want to do Agriculture.”

“I really want to be a medical doctor to save the lives of those who are sick or were involved in car accident.”

“I learnt to take it in consideration that your career can sometime affect the family.”

“I learnt how my family influence my career plans.”

“My background contributes in my planning for my career.”

- Family relationships.

A few students (4%) reflected on how they may have been shaped by the relationships in their families, and some referred specifically to the presence and the impact of conflict in their families:

“I realise that my family built my personality.”

“I saw a pattern of my family that I hadn’t realised.”

“Some times my family is not connected as they are quarrelling with one another.”

“There is a lot of quarrelling and witchcraft.”

5.3.3.2 Thematic analysis of responses to the second question in the evaluation:

Did you feel uncomfortable either while drawing your genogram or later on?

- Comfortable.

Around 56% of the students reported feeling comfortable either while drawing their genogram or later. Some students reported feeling relieved at having had the opportunity to share something of their family.

“I hide my problems and nobody will know my problem and problems cannot be solved by concealing them.”

“In order for the group to understand me better it is better I share about my family.”

“It was good because now I see I am free of my family.”

■ Uncomfortable.

Many of the students (44%) reported feeling uncomfortable either while drawing their genogram or later on. Some said it evoked painful memories for them, often related to particular family members:

“My father is a practitioner (doctor) but he doesn’t even care for me. He has another wife. I feel embarrassed.”

“This is still now disturb me, because I am trying to ignore the thought of my late parents, but if there is something that challenge me to talk about it. I think this is very bad according to my feelings.”

“It was revising the past which I hate.”

“When I first started to draw it, I realised the pain it caused me.”

“Almost everyone has a big pretty picture about my family which is wrong.”

Certain students mentioned feeling pain about their genogram after having drawn it:

“Later I felt unhappy and depressed.”

“Later on I felt uncomfortable about drawing my genogram.”

5.3.3.3 Thematic analysis of responses to the third question in the evaluation:

What was the most difficult thing for you about drawing your family?

■ Deceased.

A large number of students (36%) reported that they had the greatest amount of difficulty representing deceased/absent family members on their genograms:

“The most difficult thing was that both my parents are dead.”

“I struggled including members of my family that had passed away.”

“The most difficult thing was when I had to cross out deceased family members (as if they are crossed out of my life).”

Many people (14% of the 36% who referred to deceased/absent family members) reported feeling uncomfortable about not having knowledge about their absent fathers:

“The most difficult thing for me was not knowing about my father.”

“I was worried because I did not know my father.”

Some students (6%) were uncertain about the causes of death of certain family members or reluctant

to reveal the cause of death:

“The most difficult thing was writing the cause of their death.”

“I didn’t know how or why my certain family members passed away. Were they sick?”

■ Remembering.

A few (15%) of the students felt concerned that they were sometimes unable to remember family information:

“The most difficult thing was not remembering and not having information about family members.”

“I don’t know many things about my family.”

For others, it was the ability to remember that was the most difficult thing about drawing the genograms:

“Remembering things, I had forgotten about.”

“They brought back sad memories.”

■ Parents’ occupations.

The most difficult thing reported by some of the students (13%) was reporting their families’ occupations and the lack of education of some of their family members.

“I felt very bad when I was thinking about my father’s job and the way he supports and also when I was thinking about my mother’s job.”

■ Shame and embarrassment.

A few students (10%) expressed shame and embarrassment and were reluctant to share information about their families, particularly with regard to education and poverty. A few of the students found it difficult to draw things in their genogram which they felt were private matters, or to speak about specific issues:

“The most difficult thing was saying that my family members has done silly things.”

“There were some personal things that I did not want to share with the group as a whole.”

“My family is my problem and my counsellor will help.”

“Writing my past which is confidential history of my family with other person I’ve just met next to me was not good.”

“I struggled explaining my pain.”

“My twin brother was very sick at the time.”

“It was difficult the way life is so difficult for me.”

■ Parents’ marital status.

Recording the marital status of parents was said by some students (6%) to be the most difficult thing about drawing the genograms. Students spoke of the impact of divorce or separation on the family as being the most difficult thing about drawing the genograms. Some students said it was difficult for them to record multiple partners of their parents:

“The most difficult thing for me was the marriage of my parents.”

“Drawing the separations in my family was hard.”

“It was hard for me to draw that my mother and father separated and they were unmarried.”

“My parents have separated and I don’t know where I belong.”

“The most difficult thing for me was linking my stepmother with my family.”

“The most difficult thing for me to draw my fathers two wives.”

“The most difficult thing for me to draw who is living with who because my family is split up.”

■ Students as parents.

Some students (less than 3%) mentioned that they were parents. Being reminded of this through drawing the genogram, was difficult for some as it reminded them of the difficulties of being a parent:

“It was difficult for me to draw my own children each with a different mother.”

“My son passed away immediately after being mentioned in the family diagram and that was painful.”

“Women don’t want to be exposed as being parents.”

The above responses to the genograms session demonstrates the need to consider activities very carefully with regard to the sensitive nature of dealing with some information. This illustrates the need for cultural sensitivity in planning activities.

5.3.3.4 Thematic analysis of responses to the fourth question in the evaluation:

Would you have liked to share the information about your family with the group?

As mentioned at the beginning of the thematic analysis of session two, students were not given the opportunity to speak about their genograms at the time of drawing them. Since I was aware that a number of the students had suffered bereavements and other traumatic experiences, for example parents and siblings having been murdered, it seemed appropriate that this exercise be done individually. However, at the third session of the career education groups, students were encouraged to speak about what had been significant about the programme for them with reference to the previous two sessions. It was at this time that a number of students spoke about their genograms and about personal family experiences. Some appeared to be comfortable with this while others seemed anxious.

- The majority of the students, 58%, said that they would rather not have shared information about their families with other group members.
- Fewer students, 42%, said that they would have liked to share information about their families with other group members.

5.3.3.5 Thematic analysis of responses to the fifth question in the evaluation:

Do you understand yourself better after this exercise and if so in what way?

Just more than a third of the students, 35%, reported not understanding themselves better after this exercise. Many of the students, 48%, reported that they did understand themselves better after this exercise. Some of the students, 17%, said that they were unsure about whether or not they now understood themselves better.

Of the 48% of students who reported understanding themselves better subsequent to drawing their genograms, reasons given included that they had gained self knowledge, that they had acquired interpersonal skills, that they now felt more certain about their career choices. They were aware of a greater variety of careers, they knew now where to find help if they needed it and said they felt more inclined to assist their families.

- Self knowledge.

Many of the students (39%) spoke of gaining greater self knowledge. Some said they felt more sure of their strengths and what was expected of them by society. Some students developed a clearer sense of themselves as individuals:

“I learned more about my personality.”

“I know who I am and where I’m from and the way I have to behave.”

“I can now identify myself ie what do I want in life.”

A few students recognised obstacles in their environment standing in the way of their success:

“I saw the possibilities or obstructions.”

Some students reported a greater sense of agency:

“I have realised how important my existence is in this world.”

“Although I’m from a complicated family, I can still make an impact on society.”

“I know now who I am what I want, when I want it and if I’ve got it, how to use it!”

- Assistance and sharing.

A few of the students (5%) commented that they felt more comfortable about where they would seek assistance when they needed it:

“I know now where to look for help.”

- Interpersonal skills.

Some students (2%) made reference to interpersonal skills that they had gained in the process of working with their genograms in a group context:

“I can express myself more freely.”

“I can now communicate with my whole group.”

5.3.4 The student’s evaluation of session three of the career education programme

This section considers the students responses to the third career group. Students were given the opportunity to reflect on the previous two sessions. They linked their career interest and career knowledge, dealt within the first group, to their knowledge of themselves and their families, looked

at in the second group. They also reflected on their experience of the programme as whole. (n=124)

5.3.4.1 Thematic analysis of responses to the question:

How did you find the final career education session where we spoke about what the groups had been like for us, looking at our careers, our families and ourselves, and also at people's unanswered questions?

■ Positive responses.

The majority of students (96%) responded to the final career education session with positive comments. People spoke of feeling relieved as they shared some of their concerns with others. They valued both giving and receiving feedback from class mates and facilitators. People reported having greater clarity about their career choices and the necessary steps they needed to take. Others reported that they felt that they had gained insights as a result of the programme. Students commented that they felt that some of their difficulties had been worked through. Others noted that although the last session was perhaps the most emotional, people were open with one another:

"I was more relaxed and felt like some of the problems have been solved."

"The last session was very emotional but people were more open than the time before."

"At the end everyone knew what he or she have to do."

"We said what we liked and what we did not like."

Many commented on the fact that they enjoyed the sense of closure they experienced at the final session:

"It was nice because I experienced the summary of our first semesters as academic life."

"It was a good conclusion of what we had been doing in groups."

■ Negative responses.

A few of the students (4%) reported feeling in some way unhappy about the programme. Some said that they felt more confused through listening to everyone else's plans. Criticisms about the final session of the career education programme suggested it was too similar to the first of the three groups and that it was boring:

"People had second thoughts about their careers."

"It made me realise that I have a lot of research to do concerning my career."

"I realised that I have no clear idea about B Sc chemistry, then I got help with that."

“It was a little the same as the first one.”

“It was not so important because it was a summary of the things we did since we start.”

5.3.5 The student’s comments on the career education programme as a whole (n=114)

5.3.5.1 Thematic analysis of responses to the question:

Are there any other comments or feedback about the career education programme?

■ Overall benefits.

The majority of the students (98%) said that they found the programme to be beneficial. Some students commented that it helped them to decide on specific careers. Others valued the practical information they gained, such as entrance requirements. Many noted that for people from disadvantaged backgrounds, it was particularly useful. A few students valued the assistance they received from group members in dealing with their problems:

“This programme is very helpful to students, especially first years.”

■ Recommendations and suggestions.

Some of the students (32%) made requests for more information related to careers. Some said that they would have appreciated assistance in particular areas:

“I think there must be some books about useful careers.”

“We need more help with study skills.”

“Students must be provided with application forms for medical school by their counsellor, not that they must apply by their own.”

“It must be real guidance, to talk about job availability.”

“More effort should be put into clarification of students careers.”

Some felt they would have liked more individual input:

“I think it is a good idea to meet individual person, not a group at a time.”

A few students gave suggestions to the facilitators about how their input might be more useful:

“Facilitators should tell them what type of people should take their careers what does it take to be such a type of person.”

“Request greater assistance from facilitators.”

Requests were made for career input from experts in their field:

“We need other people that we must speak to around the campus.”

“Please try by all means to arrange maybe some Professor to explain to us what was happening to that careers-not to assume what is happening.”

Some suggestions of changes or adaptations to the actual career education programme were put forward:

“Students should be asked to contribute topics we want to talk about for the facilitators to present.”

“We need some feedback after written questionnaire or drawing our family.”

Many students noted that they felt that the programme should continue in forthcoming years. Others who enjoyed the programme felt it could be longer:

“If the programme should quit my friends who are still coming will be misled”

“The programme was good, but it was too short.”

Some students felt that the programme should be optional:

“I think people should have an option on whether to participate in the various discussions.”

■ Specific gains.

A number of the students (33%) commented that they had gained in specific ways as a result of participating in the career education programme. Students valued support they felt they received through the programme. This support included support of career plans as well as more personal support. Some suggested that as students from disadvantaged backgrounds, it was particularly useful:

“It is especially beneficial for students coming from disadvantaged backgrounds.”

“It is helpful because the SFP students know less about the procedure of university.”

“It is especially beneficial for students who find it difficult to be at an academic level.”

“It is helpful particularly for students like myself from rural areas.”

“I knew nothing about entrants requirements of my career.”

“We were sharing information, getting to know what I never knew and also giving the information.”

Students reported that they valued receiving career information that they found to be relevant to their interests. They found that the information provided was useful and that they became more aware of career alternatives. Some students noted that it helped them to learn specific skills:

“It is very helpful to everyone who is a SFP student who still needs to decide on his career.”

“It stops you from generalising and saying you want to become a doctor.”

“Lots of relevant career information was given by the group.”

“It helped me to always keep reminded of my dream career than therefore ‘I thank you.’”

“It helped most of us to understand and develop certain skills (talking) mostly in the career fields.”

Some of the students (6%) commented on the value of working in a group and having the chance to share ideas and information with others and also to experience group dynamics and interaction:

“We shared some interesting views.”

“I learned a lot about how other people interact.”

“I was able to compare my career choice with other members of the group.”

“It’s good to know that other people experienced the same problems as you.”

■ Emotional responses to the programme.

The majority of the students (79%) spoke about the career education programme as being beneficial on an emotional level. Students spoke of finding the programme useful to clarify issues; others found it interesting and exciting and others felt more reassured and confident:

“The behaviour the facilitators show really teaches one to have that self esteem.”

“This gave me courage to proceed.”

“Eye-opening.”

“It helps because those who do not understand can ask for clarification.”

Students expressed relief as a result of participating in the career education programme, some because of the fact that they realised others had similar beliefs to their own, and some because of having had the opportunity to open up about personal issues:

“I feel relieved that I’m not alone in my points of my history.”

“I felt too relieved as we were talking about personal experiences and problems.”

Many students spoke of having been able to work through problems they were facing as a result of participating in the career education groups. Considering that for many it is their first time away from their extended families and that some come from isolated areas, this was an opportunity to share problems, to be heard and offered support for their problems:

“I found it challenging and help solving people’s problems.”

“I got to know how to overcome most of my problems and that was a big bonus for me.”

Students sometimes drew comfort from the fact that others shared similar difficulties to their own:

“At least I know I’m not alone with this problem and I know it’s normal.”

“I got that problems that I have were not only my problems but also other people had same or more experiences and that helped me to know some ways to cope with different life experiences.”

“It helped me to realise that I am not the only person to have such a problem. Some people have bigger problems.”

A few of the students spoke about the value of an open-ended opportunity in which they were free to talk about their issues of concern largely with regard to their careers:

“Everyone talked openly.”

“I find varsity life doesn’t give opportunity for people to express themselves freely.”

“I was free to talk to the group.”

“People felt were free to talk to each other and to ask questions.”

“I enjoy talking about myself and my family.”

Students said they valued the interpersonal support they derived through participating in the groups. For many, talking about things that were on their minds was a relief. Hearing about others’ plans was also enlightening to many of the students:

“It helped me knowing some people to count on in the group.”

“I needed someone I could talk to.”

“We found that mostly we understood each other very well.”

“It was useful to share our different whereabouts and our different destinations.”

“Everyone had a chance to share something.”

“It helped me to hear about other students plan.”

■ Criticisms.

A few of the students (5%) found the programme to be unhelpful in some respects. A number of these criticisms were also accompanied by references to gains and benefit. About 2% of the students were solely critical of the programme:

“It didn’t have much input in as far as my career is concerned.”

“It is sometimes boring because they are the people that can give more information.”

Some of the students felt unhappy about the comments made by others and about the issues some students chose to speak about:

“I found that some students are criticising other students career choice.”

“I was not really happy because other people talk about their family matters and students must talk about things that hinders their way to study effective. Not stories about their family.”

5.4 Summary of findings in Chapter five

5.4.1 Contextual and situational variables impacting on the students

The emerging context describing the majority of students was one of having experienced many hardships. Most came from rural areas, where often they lacked services such as electricity and water. Considering their parents’ occupations, it appears that the majority of the students were from lower socioeconomic backgrounds. Most of the students (68%) were Zulu speaking, although a total of nine different home languages were represented by the group. Many of the students had been influenced to follow a particular career by either their teachers or peers. Parents showed little influence in this area. Many of the students (54%) came from homes where their parents had divorced or separated. A high number of students had experienced the death of a parent or sibling. All of these variables suggest that these students would benefit from additional support at university, in the form of counselling or financial assistance.

5.4.2 Career development and career decision making

There was a great deal of flux among the SFP students with regard to their career plans. Many of the students changed their plans after the first group of career education. This could of been as a result of a number of variables such as exposure to many more professions on campus, as well as hearing about fellow classmates career plans in the career groups. After the first, second and third career

groups, many students increased their career options from one to two and even three alternatives. The number of students who were unsure of their career plans also increased, particularly after the second career group. This might be an indication of students having started to let go of plans, and start thinking about alternate ones (see section 6.2 on career development theories). More careers not previously mentioned, appeared after the first group of career education, and decreased steadily towards the end of the year.

5.4.3 Thematic analysis

5.4.3.1 Analysis of the paragraphs students wrote about the attitudes of people in their families and communities to their studies

The majority of family and community members were supportive of the students' studies. The role that the community plays in the students' lives emerged strongly. Sometimes support for students arose out of hopes that the student could fulfil unmet dreams of parents and community members. Other times this support was based on hopes that with the student's qualification, their own individual situations would be improved. Fewer family and community members were reported as being unsupportive of the students studies. Reasons cited here were that of jealousy, lack of understanding about the students studies and concern about the financial implications. Students sometimes expressed anxiety that this lack of support would manifest in witchcraft that would be used against them. Opinions of the deceased were also important to the students. Many suggested that the deceased served as their guides, and as such, were still very much a part of the lives.

5.4.3.2 The students feedback about session one of the career education programme

The majority of students experienced this session as useful. Getting to know classmates and group members better was one of the chief reasons for this. Students felt more supported by one another and less isolated than they had apparently felt before. Students also expressed satisfaction at having succeeded in speaking about their career plans to the group. Talking about their career plans seemed to help consolidate and clarify them. Hearing about other career options was also experienced as useful.

5.4.3.3 The students feedback about session two of the career education programme

Many of the students said that through drawing their genograms, they had gained insights into their families. Some noted that this awareness had struck them sometime after the exercise had been completed. For others, drawing their families was a traumatic experience, particularly in cases where there were bereavements. Some students said that they understood better the reason behind their choice of career subsequent to drawing their genograms. Some students were uncomfortable about the lack of education in their families and about the large numbers of family members. Most of the students said that they felt that the information contained in their genograms was private and that they would prefer not to share it with other group members.

5.4.3.4 The students feedback about session three of the career education programme

The majority of responses to this session were positive. Many students valued the opportunity to reflect on the previous two groups and to give one another feedback. Some students valued the sense of closure and of drawing things together in this session.

5.4.3.5 The students comments about the programme as a whole

Students were almost unanimous (98%) in having found the programme to be beneficial. Mostly students felt more confident about their career choice and about career alternatives. Many said that they felt more supported by one another, and more familiar with the working of the university administration, which to begin with had intimidated them.

Further discussion of these findings will be undertaken in chapter six.

Chapter Six

Discussion

Chapter six considers the results of the CEP in the light of the research aims. Reference is made to the literature on career education and guidance in South Africa and to specific models that were relevant to this study. As the data analysis was primarily investigative and exploratory, no causal explanations are proposed.

This chapter comprises seven sections. Section 6.1 looks at the background to the CEP. Section 6.2 considers the changes in the students' career plans in the light of career development theory. Section 6.3 deals with the contextual issues emerging from the group discussions. Section 6.4 includes an evaluation of group content and process. Section 6.5 contains reflections on the research process. Section 6.6 focuses on recommendations for future research. Section 6.7 will conclude this study.

6.1 Background to developing the career education programme

There has been little useful career education in South African schools (Mathabe & Temane, 1993; Naicker, 1994). As a result of poor career guidance in many schools, black matriculants tend to have little information and understanding of careers (Hickson & White, 1989). With this in mind it is not surprising that about 60% of the students in the first group of the CEP said that they were considering careers in medicine or engineering. Through their limited exposure to a variety of careers, many might have foreclosed (see section 6.2) on their decisions, choosing perhaps the most popular or prestigious careers. The CEP seemed to provide the students with a forum in which to consider alternate careers to which they might be better suited, or which they might need to bear in mind should they not receive a place on one of the more competitive courses.

Since the CEP was guided by the students more than many career programmes are, it was able to be more appropriate to their needs. The programme was formed around topics the students raised for discussion. Group discussions therefore dealt with issues that the students felt were useful.

Watson, Benjamin and Stead (1995) observe that career education programmes are increasingly paying greater attention to contextual issues. They add that programmes are becoming shorter and less prescriptive. One of the significant aspects of the CEP was that it was contextually sensitive and

short, and as a result more financially viable than many career assessments might be. This also makes such a programme adaptable to many situations.

Unlike a number of other approaches to career education, this one was not based on an existing career model that had been developed on a restricted sample. This added weight to its value and utility. As Naicker (1994) points out, it is important to use models that emphasise group rather than individual values. This CEP made use of indigenous methods (see section 2.2) of career education as recommended by a number of theorists (Akhurst & Mkhize, 1999; Mkhize et al., 1998; Naicker, 1994; Stead and Watson, 1998). In line with this approach, group members were viewed holistically, taking into consideration their unique contexts. Some issues that arose from getting a better understanding of these students' specific context are discussed below:

6.2 Career development theory

The greatest amount of career change seemed to take place after the first career education group. After the first, second and third career group, some students started to debate between two and even three career alternatives (see Table 5.7). The students' career changes can be understood by looking at Marcia's (in Downing & Dowd, 1988, p.150) four stages of career identity formation:

- *Identity achievement* refers to people who have experienced a decision-making period and are pursuing self-chosen occupations and ideological goals. Very few of the students came to the SFP with clear career plans that they were still pursuing at the end of the year.
- *Foreclosure* refers to people who are committed to an occupation which has been chosen by others and accepted with little questioning. Many of the SFP students seemed to have foreclosed on their career decisions. They had been advised of their options largely by peers and teachers, usually while in high school. Some of the students had been committed to these careers for many years. When asked how long they had planned on pursuing their chosen career, some said that prior to 1994 they had made up their minds about which career to pursue. Others had even chosen their prospective careers as far back as 1987 and 1988.
- *Identity diffusion* describes those people who have no career goals and do not appear motivated to find any. Some of the SFP students had been unclear about what to study after matriculating. Others had been unable to study their intended careers because of poor matriculation

results and/or insufficient funds. A number of these students reported having spent a year or two at home, unemployed and uncertain about what work they would do, until they had heard about the SFP. Some students said that during this time they had felt demotivated and depressed about their work situation. Many reported having friends and peers in what seemed to be an identity diffusion phase, some of whom had turned to crime.

- The *moratorium* stage describes people who are currently in an identity crisis at the same time as they are going through the decision-making process. This best describes a number of the SFP students who began exploring other careers, as a result of talking about careers in the career education groups and through exposure to the SFP programme and to the university campus. Some students moved from a position of having foreclosed on their career plans - sometimes as a result of having made premature decisions - into a moratorium period, where they were uncertain and unclear about their career choices. A few students expanded their career ideas to two or three alternatives, while others became more confused.

The result of moving from a state of foreclosure, and back into a state of moratorium suggests that a final career decision can come later, and that when it does, the students might make more informed choices rather than potentially reacting to limited knowledge about themselves about available careers.

Despite the fact that students changed their minds about their career plans, few were willing to consider technikon as an alternative. Some believed that having a degree was imperative. Others felt that since they had managed to gain entry into university, they were not prepared to leave. One student explained this reluctance to go to technikon as resulting from the perception that a technical qualification is inferior to a degree.

The changes in students' career plans can also be understood when considering a framework presented by Super (1988), which incorporates five life stages depicting the career development of individuals. Super considers people to be dynamic, with the potential for changes in interests, aptitudes and personality over time, possibly influencing one's career interests. He also suggests that although career development is a highly individualised process, there are ways that it can be seen in broad categories reflective of the average person. The stage of exploration is of particular relevance to his study.

■ *Exploration* occurs when the person begins to try and understand their place in the adult world and in the working world. This stage lasts from about 14-25 years of age. It can however recur at any of the following phases, up until retirement. As an individual begins to explore, Super (1988) suggests that *tentative* career choices are made. These are experimental choices that are experienced in discussion, in fantasy and in work. This would explain many of the choices SFP students made while in high school, and during the earlier stages of their SFP year. A *transition* occurs when the individual enters university or a job, and his/her career plans are put to the test. This stage was demonstrated by the students as their SFP course progressed and their career plans evolved. Some became more committed to plans while others began changing them. A period of *trial* of these roles then follows, as the suitability of a job or course is tried out. Super (1988) refers to this as the *floundering* period, which occurs when the individual begins trying out their plans. This was illustrated by some of the SFP students who, on reaching the end of the year, decided that they were not suited to a science course after all. Others had planned on studying medicine and realised that their marks were not good enough, and changed their plans to nursing. After the trial period Super (1988) suggests that there is either a stabilising and consolidation of interests or, perhaps, frustration and, once again, the individual will move back into a transition.

Super (1988) says that this phase of exploration is marked by a greater sense of realism than the fantasy which characterises the previous stage of growth. However, owing to the majority of the SFP students' lack of exposure to a variety of (part-time) work situations and careers, many still seemed, upon arrival at the SFP, to have fairly unrealistic career plans, such as becoming a psychiatrist while having very little understanding of what this job entails, coupled with poor academic results. Very few of the SFP students had been exposed to part-time work opportunities. Although part-time work may have differed from their planned career, it would have introduced them to the working world. Without this exposure, it is possible that many of the SFP students retained a less developed view of various careers.

Ginzburg et al. (1951) note that the process of choosing a career culminates in a compromise between interests, opportunities, capabilities and values. Therefore the more the SFP student is given the opportunity to explore a variety of careers, and the more self knowledge and understanding he or she gains, the more realistic will be the compromise.

Although 32% of the students had the same career plans in October as they did in February, it is possible that some of them had changed their plans in the interim and reverted back to their original choice. The majority of students (68%) changed their career plans between the start and the end of the year. A few of the students (7%) were focussing on careers in other faculties at the end of the year. In previous months very few students had reported plans to study in other faculties. This move at the end of the year might have been precipitated by students realising during the course of the year that their interests lay elsewhere, and/or that their mathematics results would prevent them from pursuing a degree in science.

6.3 Contextual issues emerging from the group discussions

The developmental-contextual framework (Vondracek et al., 1986) was used as both a guiding principle in the development of the programme and as a tool to structure the discussion about the CEP (see Figure 2.1 for a diagram of this framework). This framework has proved to be useful in highlighting both individuals specifically, as well as individuals as part of a bigger historical and social context adopted in this study.

6.3.1 Microsystems

6.3.1.1 The child's family of origin

Many theorists have identified the family of origin as playing a key role in a child's development (Bettelheim, 1969; Roe, 1956). In the process of group discussion and of drawing family genograms, rich information emerged about the students' families. It became easier to understand the impact on the students of the socio-political climate they had experienced, of poverty and violence, migrant labour, states of emergency, bannings and detentions, many bereavements and of the families no longer intact as members had parted from one another over the years. This information helped to shed light on some of the students' current dreams and aspirations, such as to have the wealth and status that was often lacking in their families.

■ Parents' occupations

Osipow (1983) suggests that the process of career choice is largely located in cultural and economic factors. The majority of the students' parents fell in the lower socioeconomic bracket. They would have been strongly effected by the oppressive Nationalist Government (including the influence of Bantu Education and job reservation). Many students had accordingly been exposed to relatively few careers being performed by their families and family friends. Their knowledge the broad range of jobs

and what they entailed was often very restricted. The groups provided the students with an opportunity to discuss different careers and, for some of the students, to clarify their understanding of a variety of occupations.

Many of the students' reported that their parents had not completed their schooling. In addition to the lack of exposure to a variety of careers, the nature of the work of many of these parents meant there was seldom sufficient funds for university fees and other comparative luxuries, such as driving lessons. Two students reported living in tents and shacks on account of the unemployed status of their parents. McLanhan and Sandefur (1994) argue that a lack of money impacts on one's self esteem, strongly affecting one's well-being. Self esteem is difficult to achieve and maintain when one is dependent on others for basic needs, as was the case with many students.

A common feeling expressed by these students was of shame and humiliation about the economic background of their families and their lack of education. A few students spoke about feeling pressure to perform and of wanting to fulfil their parents' unmet dreams of career and success. During some of the groups, students spoke of the dilemma facing them as to whether to pursue education or crime. Some told of their peers who had turned to crime, often car hijacking, as "*looking like the sons of millionaires.*" For some, crime presented itself as a quicker and easier way of attaining the esteem and material wealth to which they had aspired. Many became more open about their family history once they realised that other students shared this reluctance to talk about the poverty of their backgrounds.

Other consequences of parents' socioeconomic status was that students sometimes experienced poor nutrition, which may have impacted on their ability to concentrate in the classroom and made them more vulnerable to sickness. On occasion, some of the SFP students commented that they were very hungry and had no money for food.

Many of the students came from extended families, unlike the nuclear families of their white counterparts. One could argue that an advantage to the extended family was an exposure to a greater variety of role models in different careers. However, this was seldom the case because high rates of unemployment and lack of skills training impacted on many family members. However, students often referred to the contribution that various relatives had made towards their studies.

■ **Marital status of parents**

Family intactness was not a variable that was initially going to be explored in this study. However, once students had drawn their genograms, it seemed that it was important to look at this area, as many came from families that were no longer intact. Family intactness has been said by a number of theorists (Van der Merwe, 1993; Wallerstein, 1980) to play a role in the well being of offspring. Mostly when career theorists address this issue, they have Western nuclear families in mind. This experience is not necessarily the case for these participants.

Disclosing parents' marital status on genograms or in discussion was, for many students, a difficult task. Some students felt uncomfortable talking about the divorce or separation of parents, particularly when this separation occurred prior to their birth. A few students reported that subsequent to their parents' divorce they moved in with relatives where space and privacy was compromised. For a learner, this can place added strain on one's studies. Some students said it was difficult for them to record the multiple partners of their parents. A few reported feeling embarrassed about including step-parents and half siblings in their genograms. One student reported that her father had three legal wives and one girlfriend. She had 18 siblings. She said that she felt worried as her mother was the last wife and she was the youngest child. Soon after she was born her father left. She commented: "Maybe I'm the reason that he went away." A few of the students reported feeling betrayed by their fathers who had disappeared long ago, or who had ceased to acknowledge them as their offspring.

In many of the instances of divorce of parents, the split was preceded by a certain amount of tension, if not physical violence in the home. Many theorists (Chess and Thomas, 1987; Luepnitz, 1982; Schaffer, 1992) have suggested that parental conflict was generally a more accurate predictor than parents marital status of the children's level of adjustment. Not infrequently, students referred to domestic violence between their parents and sometimes between their siblings and parents.

The absence of a parent often results in decreased economic, parental and community resources, which in turn impact on the child's development. However, the absence of a parent might have been buffered for these students by the tendency towards extended families in many African cultures, where grandparents, aunts and uncles frequently play active roles in the students lives.

■ Bereavements and losses

Van der Merwe (1983) found that career maturity of students varied according to their family structure (intactness). He found that students of divorced/separated families had a similar level of career maturity to those of intact families. However, he found that students whose parent/s had died, scored lowest in career maturity.

The number of bereavements among the students was illustrated in their genograms. In this exercise, some students objected to symbolising the death of a person by putting a cross through the symbol representing the deceased. A few explained this saying that the deceased still existed as their guides and that to cross them out denied their existence. Others felt it was disrespectful. Some said that they felt as though they were rejecting that family member and suggesting that they were no longer a part of their family. One person explained in this way: *“If something is dead, it doesn’t mean that it didn’t exist before.”* Another said: *“The dead are always there with you. They walk with you, they help you out. By crossing them out, you shut them out and something bad might happen to you.”*

Some students found identifying deceased family members on their genograms to be painful as it reminded them of the funeral of that person. However other students said that the act of crossing out certain family members was not in any way problematic to them. Students reporting on the absence or disappearance of their fathers seemed to feel ashamed of this and were reluctant for others to know. Where parents had died, students were generally more comfortable referring to this.

The number of bereavements among the SFP students was noticeably high and probably in part, as a result of poverty and of the political violence. Five of the students had experienced the death of both of their parents. One of these students said: *“I stay with my brother. No one is guiding you. Everything you do you have to do for yourself. For life worries it’s tough. Trying to proceed on my own as long as I am living.”*

For some, losing a parent meant that they had to be emotionally and financially supportive of remaining family members. One student, speaking of the consequences of growing up poor and of his father’s death, said: *“I hate my background. I’m ready to deal with the present and the future. I will have a good life. I’m an ambitious person. I will not allow it to dictate me to a bad future.”*

Another student, speaking of his mother's death in political unrest, commented: "*Even now it's still difficult. Whatever problems I have I cannot tell no one. No one understands.*" The loss of a spouse also meant less support in their parenting role and less financial support.

Many students had experienced the death of one or more siblings. The most common causes of deaths reported were medical conditions such as bronchitis, jaundice, pneumonia and tuberculosis. Another common cause was political violence. Some students also described the cause as 'unknown.' A large number of these siblings had died in the past ten years. One of the possible causes could be the increasing rate of HIV-AIDS, particularly in rural KwaZulu Natal. The possibility that the cause of death might be related to AIDS was never discussed in the groups.

The high incidence of students having lost grandparents is more noteworthy in the African culture, where extended families are common and where grandparents often play the role of parents.

Some of the students whose family members died while they were enrolled in the SFP course said that they found talking about the experience and the support they received for the group to be helpful. Others seemed less willing to talk about these deaths.

The significance of all these bereavements becomes clearer when one considers the potential stresses impinging on these students. Most of them were studying far away from their homes. They were at university for the first time. The financial pressures of university and the pressures attendant with taking out loans to fund one's studies might be more complicated in the absence of parental support.

■ **Family influences as possible barriers to career choice and development**

In the students' paragraphs about the attitudes of significant others to their being at university, some said that their parents were pleased about their child being at university but that they were sometimes less supportive of their actual career choice. A few of the students experienced their families as obstructing their career choices. The most common reason given was that the parents were wanting the student to study medicine. One student noted that her mother felt that it was more appropriate that women should study teaching. In many instances the perceived lack of support around the student's career choice seemed to be related to the fact that the parents had a limited understanding of what the various qualifications might entail.

6.3.1.2 Child extra-familial network

6.3.1.2.1 Peers

Peers play a significant role in the development of most children. Many of the SFP students reported that they acquired their career information from their peers rather than their parents, as their parents were less able to inform them about many work related issues. This supports the findings of Mtolo (1996) that (older) peers exerted a strong influence on students selecting a career. Haffajee (1991), in her study on Indian secondary school pupils' and teachers' perceptions of the school counsellor as helping agent, found that peers were listed as the most preferred helping agent.

Also unique to the SFP group of students, whose average age was 20 years in 1999, was that they were 15 years old 1994, in the middle of their adolescence, when the apartheid era ended. Adolescence is generally considered a time when people turn to peers for affirmation and a sense of belonging (Erikson, 1963). This inclination might be more striking during a time of massive social and political transition. Perhaps for those students who lived through a violent and unstable political era, peers may have contributed to some of the students' resilience.

6.3.1.2.2 School

The majority of the SFP students came from schools that were lacking in resources, opportunities and staff. Career guidance particularly did not feature strongly. SFP students commented that career guidance was either not in existence or that the teachers 'dodged'. Mostly, they said, career guidance classes were free periods and time to do homework. This supports the findings of Mtolo (1996).

Students said that they received a greater amount of career guidance from subject teachers rather than guidance teachers. One might have expected this ratio to be reversed in that guidance teachers are assumed to deal more directly with career issues than subject teachers. However, many of the guidance teachers were reported to lack the necessary qualifications.

Most of the SFP students reported that their teachers were more influential in terms of their career development than their parents. This finding contrasts with that of Skuy et al., (1985) who, in their study of pupils' perceptions of the guidance teachers as a preferred helping agent, found that only 35% viewed the guidance teacher as the preferred helping agent, while 70% preferred their parents with regard to further education and careers information. De Haas (1991) and Haffajee (1991) found that parents were rated as more important than guidance teachers in influencing career decision-

making. While these studies were restricted to middle-class learners, Mtolo (1996) has noted that parents have been found to be less influential when learners are more educated than their parents. Parents may be illiterate, or unskilled in work, thus feeling that they cannot advise their children. In such cases, other people in the community, for example older peers, take an important role (Mtolo, *ibid.*).

Many students changed schools for a variety of reasons. Some missed school at times when either it was too dangerous to attend or when schools were closed because of vandalism or teacher strikes. Many of the male students reported being moved to schools in less troubled areas. One of these students became tearful describing how he changed schools six times. Families split up as children were sent to stay in safer areas. The impact of changing schools was that students tended to lose continuity with peers and with teachers. Living in already unstable times, this may have added to their stress of having to adapt to yet another new and unfamiliar environment. Changing schools may have added to the difficulties in subjects like mathematics and science. Matriculation examinations were also chaotic in previous years. The SFP, by its nature, has addressed this issue by enabling students to write separate entrance tests at the university to gain access onto the programme.

6.3.1.2.3 Part-time work

Opportunities for part-time work, such as working in a restaurant or shop, were less available to a number of SFP students, as many of them grew up in remote areas. The benefits of part-time work such as developing greater economic awareness through earning one's own money and the social interaction that accompanies many jobs will be valuable experiences that many of the students missed out on. Two of the students mentioned that from as young as 12 and 15 years of age, they were driving taxis. However, by far the majority had never been employed on a part-time basis. The few that mentioned having sold peanuts or fruit in the school playground or on the pavement were laughed at by other members of the group.

Lack of exposure to the working world may have contributed to a sense of entitlement demonstrated by some of the students, who felt that they ought to be handed more things, and not have to work so hard for them. For example, some students felt angered by failing class tests and by having to pay fees. Others said that photocopying previous examination papers from the library was a waste of their time and something that should be provided by the staff.

6.3.1.3 Family of procreation-adult

Five of the students reported being parents themselves. Generally, their offspring lived with either the maternal or paternal grandparents. Drawing their genogram was difficult for some of these students as they said that it reminded them of the difficulties of being a parent, such as being far away from their children and needing to be more financially independent.

Other changes facing these students, different to their parents, is that increasingly women are fulfilling professional roles. This proved to be a controversial point in some of the groups, where the sentiment of some of the male students was echoed by one student saying that women could be educated but they must remember that 'first they are Zulu women'. He was implying that first they must fill their role in looking after their partner and then they can pursue their careers.

■ Students attitudes to their studies and futures

Some of the students spoke about their plans for the future and about the reasons behind their being SFP students. Many articulated a wish to assist their families and communities financially once qualified. As one student said: "*Black people are suffering. I think if I can put an effort in that, I can change things.*"

Some students said that they had gained in confidence since having become students. Others said that they were currently feeling confused about the future and what role they would fulfil. Many students became more open to other careers as the year progressed. A student commented: "*You should set a goal in life but you should also have other alternatives.*" Many expressed strong desires to achieve certain qualifications, such as the student who said: "*I will not die before I do medicine, no matter what.*"

■ Partners' attitudes to students studies

Some of the students commented that their partners were excited by their pursuing an academic career. Others said that their partners felt insecure that the student would leave them once they were qualified. A few said their partners looked forward to an easier life once they were qualified.

6.3.1.4 Adult extra-familial network

■ Student's perceptions of people who had influenced their career decisions

The strong influence that teachers and friends were reported to have had on the students career choice

was contrasted by the smaller group of students who identified their family as significant influences on their career choice. The family members who were seen as having been most influential were typically siblings, rather than parents.

Only a few of the students (7%) had decided on a career path subsequent to meeting an expert in the field. Some of the students (15%) referred to the fact that they had sought out the necessary information from books on careers.

■ **Attitudes of community members to the students' university attendance**

Attitudes of community members to the students being at university varied greatly. Some were supportive and encouraging while others were discouraging and unsupportive. Unsupportive comments frequently related to issues of jealousy and competition. Some of the unsupportive comments from community members seemed to result from a lack of knowledge about many careers. An opinion of one student that was echoed by others was enunciated as follows: *“Blacks don't rejoice when you advance in life. They are jealous of your education. They just want to pull you down. As a white person, therefore they think that I (the group facilitator) can't interfere. But if I were a black person they might fear that I would hinder the person from advancing in life.”*

It was feared by some students that unsupportive community members (particularly in rural areas) would resort to witchcraft in a bid to harm them. Witchcraft was seen as a means of punishing unacceptable behaviour. Students suggested that witchcraft might not necessarily take the form of a spell, it could manifest as sickness. A student added that some students kept their study plans a secret for fear of the consequences of speaking out.

A common debate that arose in the groups was the consideration of the place of Western medicine versus a more traditional approach to healing. A student commented that: *“It is necessary to have black doctors because black people have diseases caused by black magic.”* Another student advised that *“doctors need to work hand in hand with traditional healers. By working with each other they can learn from each other.”*

6.3.1.4.1 Work

Dillard (1980) says that “few positive work related experiences are available to lower socioeconomic blacks since they are persons who are limited in educational experiences, environmental resources,

positive orientations to work, and access to career and employment information” (p.289). Since most of the SFP students have come to university straight from school, few have had much formal work experience. In discussing high rates of unemployment and a general increase in entrepreneurial ventures, many of the students spoke of their own entrepreneurial skills such as sewing, fixing of electrical and mechanical objects and caring for livestock that they had learnt from the areas in which they were raised.

Unlike their parents, where only two in the entire group had a professional qualification, many of these students will emerge with a science degree from which they are likely to gain employment. Along with a job will come recognition and identity which many of their parents lacked.

6.3.1.4.2 Interpersonal Relationships

Through the experience of university and later of work, students will be exposed to a wide variety of interpersonal relationships, bringing with them different opportunities, not experienced to the same extent by their parents. The SFP students have been living through immense social and political transition. Their entry into university has been marked by greater integration of different cultures and races, providing people with the opportunity for richer interpersonal interactions. Sometimes ethnic and cultural difficulties arose among the SFP students, with certain people feeling animosity towards others. The career groups provided a forum in which students could meet one another. The various parties were able to discuss these differences in the groups and to get to know people that they might otherwise not have met. One student said: *“I learn to respect other ideas even though I don’t agree with them.”*

Some of the students who spoke a language spoken by few others said that they felt a little isolated initially. One of these students said: *“I don’t make friends ‘cos of language difficulties.”* The groups helped people to get an idea of who spoke what language and to understand how those felt when few others spoke their language. The groups made it easier for people to meet one another and many friendships arose as a result, which may have increased the support individuals felt during the year.

6.3.2 Macrosystems

While the inner circle reflects more immediate contexts impinging on the individual, the outer circle deals with more remote and distant social and environmental influences. This section will consider the impact that these macrosystems have had on the career development of the SFP students.

6.3.2.1 Social/educational Policy

Social and educational policy has changed dramatically over the past two decades. Many of these changes now apply equally to all South Africans. In a bid to redress past inequalities, policies such as affirmative action in employment and in place for certain courses, now favour black people. Many sponsorship programmes are now available from companies to students, particularly in the area of science such as those in the SFP. The government as well as many universities provide students with academic loans, which, depending on the students' academic performance, may convert to bursaries. Educational policy at universities that has impacted on these students includes an increase in numbers in the bridging courses, which provides students with an alternate route into university if their results are not high enough.

6.3.2.2 Technological Advances

Rapid technological advances meant that many jobs have been replaced by computers, leading to increased unemployment. Science degrees however require that the student become computer literate. This will stand SFP students in good stead when they leave university.

6.3.2.3 Job Opportunities

The present job market is marked more by unemployment than by opportunities for employment. However, with labour legislation increasingly protecting the rights of the worker with minimal wages and unions, and with many companies being required to fill quotas of different races among their employees, students are entering a more promising job market.

6.3.2.4 Organisational/institutional context

The organisational context for these students was the university. Nicholas (1994) draws attention to cultural and racial differences and suggests that "given the very recent history of institutionalised racial exclusivity in higher education in South Africa, it would be naive to assume that racial integration of universities will proceed without crises" (p. 123). The career education groups provided a forum in which students could discuss these differences. They could express their concern about the racism they felt they were experiencing from university administration staff, lecturers and other students. They were also able to speak to one another about their prejudices and preconceived ideas about different ethnic groups. This all helped with easing them into a new and unfamiliar environment.

Students living in residence and returning home in the holidays commented on the fact that they found the transition between these two contexts to be quite striking. They noted the transition from their homes, which were frequently marked by poverty, to the more visible wealth on campus.

Students entering an organizational and institutional context that is markedly different from their home background would benefit from being offered support as they orientate themselves to the new environment. The career groups proved one way for students to realise that others were struggling with similar issues and assisted them in feeling less isolated than they might otherwise have felt.

6.3.2.5 Environmental Conditions

Many of the students came from environments that were lacking in facilities such as water, roads, shops and electricity. A number of the students' homes were places that have been scarred by severe political violence over the past two decades. Students who came from further afield tended to face the added challenge of being far from their families and support structures. In addition, those wishing to make contact with people at home were forced to spend time and money on travelling and telephone costs. These frequently added to the stress of being first-year students enrolled in a rigorous academic course and increased the need for support to be provided more locally.

Students described the difference between experiences of urban and rural living: Rural was described as a place that was not a township, but where people lived in a traditional way. These people spoke the same language. Mostly, they said, rural areas were controlled by a chief. The chief had power to decide about what changes and improvements were to be made in the area. Students commented that this 'old way' or 'old style' was no longer appropriate as people were increasingly becoming dispersed. Casual settlements had developed more recently where people spoke a combination of languages or less pure and correct language, such as 'tsotsi taal.'

Urban areas were described as being more organised and ordered, such as township houses, which people rent. Mostly water and electricity were available. Students said that it was not uncommon for eight or nine people to live in a three-room house, making studying difficult. Many of the students said that people from townships felt more superior to those from rural areas. They say they were easily able to identify someone who grew up rurally, as they tended to be more conservative and conventional. Rural students were defensive in response to this.

■ **Services and amenities**

Part of the government's Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) has been the extension of services to communities that did not have any previously. Therefore, for many of the students, environmental conditions have been improving since the African National Congress-led Government of National Unity came to power in 1994.

Many of the students who expressed an interest in studying engineering had developed an interest since their communities had received water, electricity, housing and/or roads. In the process many had met engineers and gained a better understanding of the work that they did.

6.3.2.6 Labour Laws

Current labour laws now encourage the black student from advancing. Affirmative action, loans, bursaries, sponsorship programmes and bridging courses all aim in some way to redress the imbalances of the past and to assist the students.

6.3.2.7 Sociocultural context

Unlike their parents, these students are now living in a post-apartheid country, where there are greater opportunities for them. As one student noted: 'I wouldn't be on this campus if it was still the 70's.' Much of their previous educational experience has prepared the students for rote learning and less for independent thinking required at a tertiary level of education. Many of the SFP students repeatedly requested greater guidance and assistance. Some of the students demonstrated a sense of dependency, wanting things to be provided for them. Much of the resistance initially to the career groups was that students seemed to have difficulties moving towards increased independence where the task of finding career information was to be shared and not just provided by the group facilitator.

It seems that for many, the years of having been deprived of luxuries had fostered a hunger in some for wealth and status. For some of the students this was the primary motivation behind their dreams of becoming doctors and engineers, and of driving expensive cars, the most aspired to car being a 'Dolphin' (township term for a BMW).

The sociocultural context the students had experienced had been marked by political and familial violence. Many of the students had lived through shocking experiences. One student said: "*At night I couldn't sleep because I was afraid they'd (Inkatha) burn our home, I was very scared and*

uncomfortable.” Three students in the course of group discussions, mentioned that their houses had been burnt down. Another said: *“I have been scared emotionally and I don’t think I will ever be healed.”*

The years of apartheid seem to have eroded a sense of pride and identity among some of the students. A few of the students expressed a distrust of other black people and a tendency to idealise white people. This was seen as some of the students complained about their black lecturers and demonstrators suggesting they were less ‘competent’ and ‘untrustworthy.’ One student noted that if you went for counselling and there was a white and a black counsellor, the black one would be unable to help.

Many of these students were dealing with a culture in transition, particularly for those coming from rural areas. Students said that they found moving between a more collective and cooperative way of life into a more competitive and individualistic life to be stressful. Although many more opportunities were available to these students now than in the past years, it was not always easy for them. Some students said that they were not coping with the pressures of university life. Schlebusch (cited in Power, 1999) speaking about the pressures faced by young black people said that “after 1994, there was a new deal and the promise of a wonderful life. But the pressures that followed have been demanding” (p. 5). He added that he understood some of the problem to have arisen from parental expectations placed on students to make the most of opportunities that were denied them. Although there is greater opportunity now, there is also greater competition.

6.3.2.8 Economic Conditions

Economic issues posed a great difficulty for the majority of the students. Some felt so desperate about their struggle to raise sufficient fees to pay for their studies that they spoke of suicide. Mkhize et al. (1998) argue that “the high rate of unemployment in the country, coupled with the uncertainty brought about by a rapid and unpredictable changes in the information domain in the world as a whole (Gellatt, 1989) renders career guidance even more crucial than ever” (p. 8).

6.4 Evaluation of group content and process

The purpose of the CEP for the SFP students was to increase their knowledge around career issues and to assist them in developing a deeper awareness and understanding of themselves and how this may impact on their career choice. A summative and formative evaluation follows.

6.4.1 Summative Evaluation

The aim of the summative evaluation was to assess the effectiveness of the CEP with the SFP students. This was done to determine its value and whether or not it should be continued.

The CEP run with the SFP students may be understood to have been of value to the students as most suggested in their evaluation that it should continue in the future. The majority of the students changed their career plans at least once during the course of the programme. This may have been for a number of reasons. However, the inclusion of a group forum in which to discuss these changes seemed to make the shifts more manageable and less frightening. Perhaps the groups prompted some of the students who had prematurely foreclosed on their career decisions to rethink them in the light of gaining more relevant information from fellow students.

In the event of the programme continuing, it could be expanded from three groups to five or six. Meeting on a fortnightly basis as opposed to a monthly basis would also assist in maintaining some momentum. However, in a pressurised tertiary context, making that amount of time available may prove difficult.

This model could be generalised to and replicated in other educational settings, both in a secondary and a tertiary environment. A central feature of the programme is the use of groups. Provided there is a knowledgeable and skilled facilitator present, this can be a very effective teaching technique.

6.4.2 Formative evaluation

The purpose of the formative evaluation was to improve the career education programme. To do this, the strengths of the programme have been identified, as well as its weaknesses and limitations.

6.4.2.1 Programme strengths

Using a qualitative approach increased my empathy and my understanding of the students in a way that would not have been possible using quantitative assessment. Had I given the students a battery of psychometric tests, I would have entered and departed with a more static and predetermined view of the students and their contexts.

The advantages of the group discussion format were that students felt less pressurized to let go of their career dreams prematurely. Many students reported feeling frustrated at being presented by

lecturers with the statistics of the high percentage of students who apply yearly for medicine and are not accepted, without being given alternative careers to consider. In the groups they were given time to explore the advantages and disadvantages regarding their planned occupation, and as far as possible to discover the pitfalls for themselves without having them pointed out by an outsider such as a staff member.

It was perhaps less threatening to be challenged by peers as to their suitability for a particular field than by a counsellor or a lecturer. Students were able to meet people in the groups with similar career interests and to pool information. People shared skills with one another. For instance students who knew how to use the Internet offered to assist others in exploring career fields of interest.

Students were also able to give each other personal feedback as to how they come across in class. Some people were willing to self-disclose and were also receptive and able to hear constructive criticism from class mates. This helped individuals to gain more self knowledge and awareness useful for situations such as how they would be perceived in job interviews.

Students commented that they acquired various skills in the groups. Some said that they were helped to be independent learners. They gained practice in group work. Some said that they gained insight into everyday life. Students valued getting to know one another better, and in the process realized that everyone has difficulties sometimes similar to their own. Many said that their self-confidence increased, and that during the groups they became more aware of their own strengths and weaknesses.

Group members said that they appreciated the support they received from others and the opportunity to speak about painful experiences in the group. As one student said 'after I weep in the group the whole year changed around for me. Everything was better.' Another added that 'the group was helpful in that our problems were like a cough. Once they were out, they were better.'

The co-facilitators were very valuable in that they diluted my presence. Being black students who had also come from rural areas and had entered the university through bridging programmes meant that they had a clear understanding of the issues that these students were dealing with. They were able to provide helpful information based on their own experience of university from the students point of view.

The one co-facilitator expressed her opinion of the groups saying:

I feel that the career education groups are very important. Most black students do not have information about careers, not because they are ignorant but because they have not been exposed to a whole lot of careers. The popular careers in science are medicine, engineering and to a certain extent computer science, these careers are popular because most black students do not know what else they can do. Also if a student shows some sign of intelligence, he/she is very much encouraged to pursue the popular careers. Again these careers come with status and money.

The other co-facilitator gave feedback about her participation in the groups, saying:

Students relate to me very well and I serve as a motivation to them. I can understand most of their problems and identify with most of them. The project on career education has given valuable information about different kinds of people in a group, which will be helpful for us in advising students or giving students information about different carers as some of them are clueless of the direction to follow. Others know few popular careers which is to be a doctor or an engineer.

The co-facilitators were an important additional source of support, however their limited experience of groups meant that they were inclined to take a more directive role. They were less able to provide process oriented feedback.

With regard to the group content, the first group provided the students with the forum in which to discuss their career plans, and to voice their queries and concerns, they were able to gain clarity on issues that were troubling them. The reaction to the second group where students drew genograms was variable. Many of the students mentioned gaining valuable insights, whereas some struggled with this exercise. The third group involved linking students' career interests (group one) with their knowledge of themselves (group two), and discussing their experience of the previous two groups. Some said that they valued the opportunity in this group to give individuals personal feedback. As a result of reflecting on careers in general and on themselves, students were provided with a sense of the intricacies and complexities involved in career decision making. By the third career group, students were starting to talk about the possibilities of attending technikon or of changing to other faculties. They seemed less attached to their career plans in general and able to explore other

alternatives. By the end of the programme, people seemed less guarded about their backgrounds and opened up a lot more about their past experiences.

6.4.2.2 Programme weaknesses and limitations

Considering the content of the groups, the second group, where students drew genograms of their families, would need to be considered from a cross-cultural perspective. One would need to decide whether or not such an exercise is too intrusive. If it was decided that despite the discomfort it might provoke in the students, it would also promote individual growth, then it would need to be very carefully framed. Detail to be included in the genogram, such as bereavements and marital status of parents, might be discussed with the group of students involved to establish what they would feel comfortable with. If one does decide to incorporate genograms into a career education programme, it is important to provide opportunities for the students to attend individual counselling if they so choose for debriefing or to discuss issues that they might feel ready to look at.

Resistance to the groups was expressed by some of the students. However, this discontent was not widespread. Reasons given included that students experienced the groups as very different from other subjects on their timetable. Some of these students said they resented feeling tense and anxious, particularly at the start of the groups. A few felt that as the groups were not academic they were unnecessary. Some felt wary of the groups as they reminded them of their difficult lives. A few of the students spoke of feeling embarrassed and ashamed of their past and of their families and said they were uncomfortable talking about them.

However, I felt it was not the role of the facilitator to protect the students from their pain. Difficulties that arise in the group should be worked with supportively and integrated meaningfully and caringly into their self understandings. This could be done in the group itself or in an individual counselling session, depending on what would be more useful to the student and whether a counsellor is available for individual therapy.

Looking at the strengths and the weaknesses and limitations of the study, it would appear that the programme might be improved by increasing its length and the proximity of the group meetings. Fortnightly, as opposed to monthly, meetings would be preferable. Some of the group content could be revised. Additional topics for discussion might be considered with the students.

6.5 Reflections on the research

Using primarily qualitative research methods in this study meant that selecting the data was a subjective process, as was interpreting it. Another researcher would have produced different results from these. The challenge for me was to remain as open as possible to the subjects' point of view and to use my integrity in reporting the results as accurately as possible. However, despite the subjectivity of the process, I believe that the context that has been revealed sheds valuable light on the students and on the issues that many black students are having to negotiate as they enter a tertiary institution and the world of work.

My role as participant-observer within the group and as programme presenter meant that I was simultaneously an insider and an outsider. Having two co-facilitators helped to reduce and moderate my influence to some extent. When running a similar programme in the future, it would be important to spend time training the co-facilitators or to use more experienced facilitators who can work as participant-observers and co-researchers.

Working cross-culturally sometimes limited my understanding of the material. Inevitably, my biases have crept in, for example the bias I have towards an individual and qualitative approach, as opposed to a psychometric and quantitative approach. Areas such as marital status and, possibly bereavements, may have very different meaning in an African culture compared to a Western culture.

A sample size of 135 produced an enormous volume of material to handle. This slowed down the process of analysing the data. Because of the breadth of the material, I was unable to go to the depth I might have liked to, such as focusing more on gender issues, or on issues of cultural transition. With hindsight, it might have been better to choose one of the four classes (with four groups in each) and to have followed them more closely. A limitation of the study with regards the sample is that participants were not randomly selected according to any set of criteria. They comprised the class of SFP students for 1998. Since selection criteria for the course are changed periodically, one cannot say that this sample is representative of all SFP students and certainly not of any broader population. It is recommended that a more inclusive study, using a wider cross-section of first year university students be undertaken before results are generalised any further. The sample was also comprised of mostly black students, with three Indian students. A sample that also includes white students might provide useful comparative data.

Most of the students' families came from a lower socioeconomic status. Students selected from middle and upper class socioeconomic levels would shed insight into the impact of social standing and wealth on career development.

As available questionnaires seemed not to accurately capture the needs and context of the sample at hand, I constructed two questionnaires. The questionnaires were constructed at the start of the groups. At this time the guiding questions were broad. They were

1. *"Who are the SFP students?"* and
2. *"What might be the most effective way to assist the SFP students regards their career development?"*

As a result, the questionnaires were longer than necessary, and less focused on career development issues. A lot of redundant information was collected, and was subsequently jettisoned.

Some of the questions that were thematically analysed were closed-ended, limiting the students' natural response to them and potentially skewing the results. An example of this is *"Did you feel uncomfortable either while drawing your genogram or later on?"* A possible alternative to this question may have been *"How did you feel whilst drawing your genogram?"*

Rereading the data repeatedly in the search for meaning, connections and recurring themes meant that some of the material had to be discarded. This was a difficult process as all of the data seemed to be very rich and interesting. However, I was guided in the process of omitting information by the necessity to present an overall view that was accessible to the reader and which represented the broad flavour of the groups without being overly inclusive.

6.6 Recommendations for future research

It is recommended that career education programmes using groups be run for other tertiary education students. Groups provided a powerful tool for a more collaborative learning experience with the SFP students.

A longitudinal study tracking individuals who had participated in a CEP in their bridging or first year of study, up to when they qualify and perhaps a few years into their work experience would shed important light on the career path of learners. De Haas (1991) found that most students had made a

career choice within three years of leaving school. Longitudinal research could provide data as to when most people decide on their career and how many pursue this decision successfully.

Programmes need to be put in place that focus on providing newcomers to the university with life skills, particularly those from disadvantaged academic backgrounds. Students need to be sensitised and enlightened about entry skills and skills related to work. They need to be alerted as to what skills they bring from their past experience and what their current experience is teaching them. Skills such as time management, typing, summarising information, coping with reading and working in groups are all useful tools for students.

Working with a sample such as the SFP students, where some have been traumatised by the socio-political context, it is necessary to be able to provide counselling for those requesting it, and to be alert and sensitive to those who may experience distress as they adjust to an environment which may feel alien to them, and where their support system has not been well-developed. The SFP is unique in providing the students with a counselling psychologist, and with career education. Few other university faculties and bridging courses provide counselling. Having a counsellor available for individual counselling and debriefing for students attending a CEP similar to the one described in this thesis is essential. Mkhize et al., (1998) support the need for the provision of counselling for black students. They say that these students frequently “find themselves torn between two worlds. On the one hand, they live in a world that values connections and attachments to family and community, whilst on the other hand they have to spend their educational (and later work) lives in a world that values independence and competition against others in order to succeed” (p. 10). They suggest that the stress of negotiating these two vastly different world views often results in great anxiety for the black student.

Further research might be done into the changing roles and aspirations of women in an African culture. African society is typically patriarchal, where the man of the household has more power and status than the woman. With women increasingly entering high profile jobs and earning attendantly higher salaries, tension might arise between the woman’s role as homemaker or wife and career woman.

It is recommended that should a similar CEP be put into place, the facilitator needs to be carefully selected. The facilitator would need a cross-cultural sensitivity and an ability to work with insight. For the programme to be client-driven and responsive to the students' needs, it is necessary that the facilitator be able to tolerate silence and tension. He/she would need to have group facilitating skills, to be able to wait for students' issues to emerge and to not impose his/her own agenda. This approach is very different from a didactic and more directive style often followed by career educators.

Subsequent to running the CEP, and perhaps especially after the students had drawn their genograms, it became clear in many instances how the construct of the self, or understanding of 'I' differs across cultures. The students tended to see themselves as more integrated with their families and less separate than one might expect students from a white middle class context to be. This has important implications for career education as has been mentioned in chapter two. According to Mkhize et al. (1998) "locally derived career assessment instruments are an urgent necessity" (p. 11). Research needs to be done into devising indigenous assessment instruments and techniques that are more culturally relevant. Mkhize et al. (1988) add that "in most collectivist cultures, the process of career development has got to be seen in the larger context of the family and the community, both of which are very central in giving meaning to people's lives" (p. 12).

6.7 Conclusion

My own overall experience of the programme and that of the students as reflected in their evaluations thereof, suggest that the career education groups served as a powerful model of career education in the context of the SFP. The groups demonstrated that career information given in isolation is not sufficient. It needs to be located in the participants' context. I initiated the programme with the aim of finding out who the SFP students are. Their participation and responses in the groups provided me with a richer and more textured understanding of who they are and an understanding of how, with limited knowledge, educators might incorrectly perceive the students and their needs.

The core question that drove this research was: "What is the most useful way to assist these students from disadvantaged backgrounds who are entering the university environment, to make appropriate career decisions?" It seems that what was most useful about the CEP is that it provided the students with important career information, prevented early foreclosure on a career path which may have been unfulfilled and developed their confidence and life skills. I hoped that through gaining life skills, the

students would acquire tools that they could use over the lifelong process of career development. Some of these life skills included speaking in a group, dealing with conflict, developing confidence in one's own opinions and, when necessary, giving and receiving personal feedback from group members. Students were largely responsible for what they got out of the groups. This in itself also seemed like an important life skill, assisting them to articulate their needs and take the initiative for their learning.

Group counselling also served as an effective way of inducting new students into the university. One of the predictors of academic success is the contact that students have with representatives of the tertiary institution outside the classroom (Swart, cited in an interview with Dryden, 1990). Counselling is an essential way of maintaining and ensuring this.

Using the developmental-contextual framework (Vondracek, et al., 1986) as a guiding framework, and the socio-psychological model put forward by Naicker (1994) helped me to gain a greater understanding of the issues facing black students in tertiary education. These models served as useful frameworks from which to explore the many pressures impinging on the students. As a result, a well-rounded picture emerged of this group of students

Running the career education groups opened my eyes to the changing needs of students in tertiary institutions. They reinforced for me the value of psychology as having something relevant to offer to the changing profile of students and, in turn, how psychology as a discipline can only but be enriched by opening itself to the essential nature of its subject matter - in this case letting the students speak for themselves.

Mkhize et al., (1998) speaking about working cross-culturally in South Africa suggest that "the assumption that an individual, granted adequate information about himself/herself and the world of work, will be equipped to make an informed career decision, may not hold" (p. 9). This information needs to be made available in an easily accessible format, and one that the students can relate to. The qualitative and open-ended approach this model afforded provided a relevant and meaningful way of dealing with vital issues around career education.

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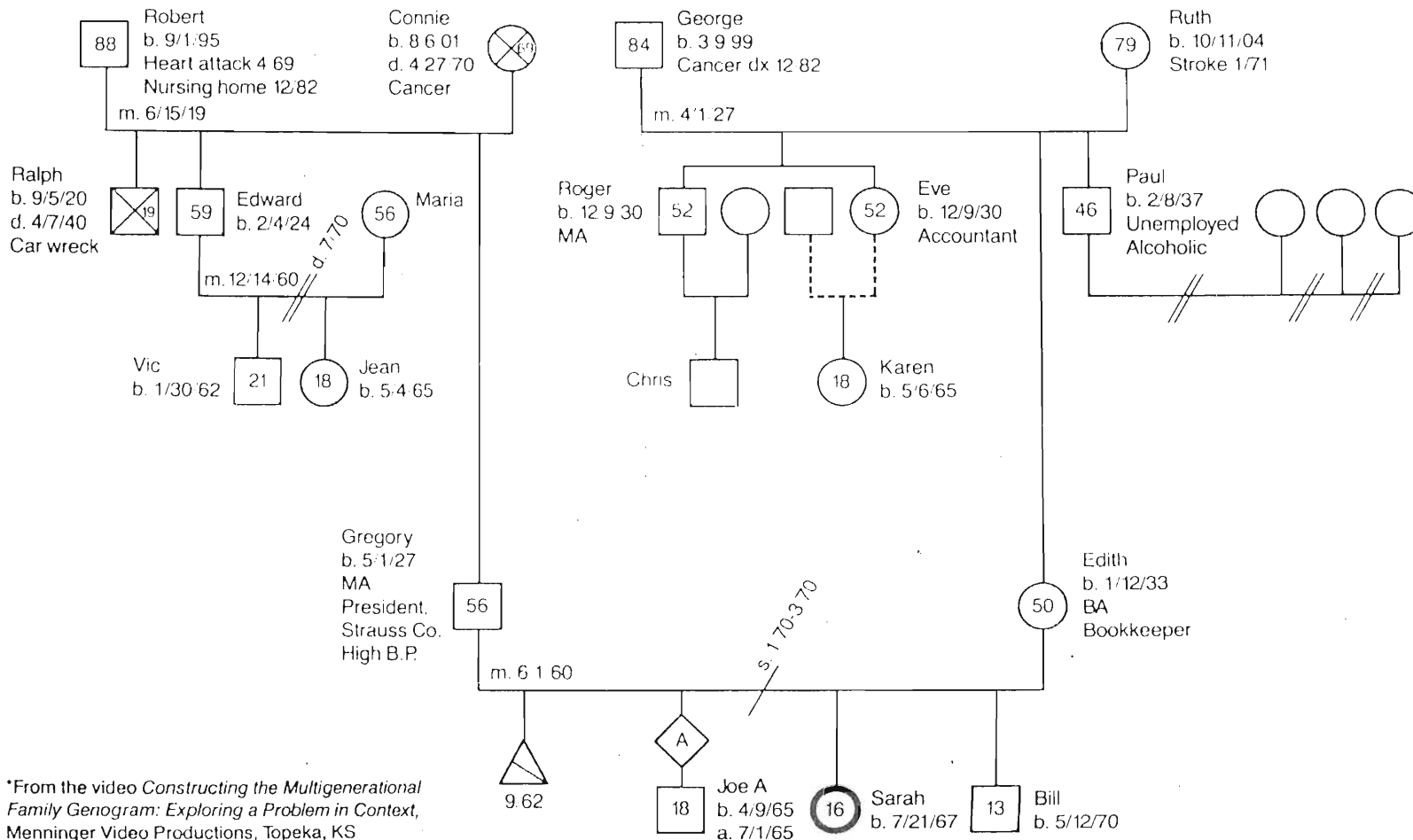
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STRAUSS FAMILY GENOGRAM*



*From the video *Constructing the Multigenerational Family Genogram: Exploring a Problem in Context*, Menninger Video Productions, Topeka, KS

Appendix A:
 Example of a genogram
 (from Lerner, 1989, p. 230).

**Appendix B:
Questionnaire one**

**SCIENCE FOUNDATION PROGRAMME
CAREER DEVELOPMENT QUESTIONNAIRE
March 1998**

Name:-.....

Age:-.....

Student number: -.....

1. Home

Where is your home?

Home language: -.....

Do you have electricity at home?

Do you have TV at home?

Do you have tap water?

2. Family

Number of children in your family: -.....

Where do you fit in (oldest; youngest etc.)?.....

Occupations

Mother:-.....

Father:-.....

Guardian/s:-.....

3. Career

What career would you like?

When did you first hear about this career? (19__).....

Who first told you about this job/career?.....

Who have you met who does this job/career?

What are your strengths/abilities that make you think you are suited to this type of job?.....

.....

.....

What do you like most about this job?

.....

Have you had any previous work experience?

What does success mean to you?.....

.....

What type of car would you like to own?.....

What would make you happy?

How would you know that you are living a good life?.....

What salary would you like to earn per month once qualified?

Before SFP, had you used a computer?

What was un/helpful for you about the career assessment?

Appendix C: Questionnaire two

SCIENCE FOUNDATION PROGRAMME Career Education Questionnaire and Evaluation Form May 1998

“Occupational choice ...is not a single decision but a series of decisions made over a period of years”(Ginzberg et al., 1951, p. 185).

You have now attended three career guidance groups with me, Susan Spencer. Khulile Zuma, and Fairhope Ndlovu have also been present at some of the groups to offer their assistance.

- 1 In March we spent one session introducing ourselves, speaking about where we come from, and about the kind of jobs we would like. We discussed our career plans, asking advice and clarifying certain issues with each other.
- 2 In April we drew Genograms, representing the different generations of people in our families with squares and circles. We looked at the relationship between our families, the attitudes, beliefs and feelings of the people in our world, and our career interests.
- 3 In May we met for the final Career Guidance Group. Here we spoke about our experience of the previous career guidance groups in March and April. We looked at how our ideas about different careers had changed and how sharing information with each other helped to sort out some career issues, and to highlight areas needing more research.

To help me get a clear idea of you and your career path, please answer these questions, remembering that your answers will be confidential and private.

A BIOGRAPHICAL DETAILS

- 1 Name **GROUP.....**
- 2 Gender M/F.....
- 3 What is your father’s highest level of education?
- 4 What is your mother’s highest level of education?
- 5 Are there any family problems that have possibly affected your schooling or your current studies (e.g. drinking, death, money, violence)?
- 6 As a child were you brought up in a rural or urban environment?
- 7 As a child did you socialise with people of the opposite sex?
- 8 If not, how has it been to interact with men and women in the group?
- 9 What does your name mean?
- 10 What does it mean to *you*?

B CAREER PLANING

- 1 Prior to the start of the Science Foundation Programme what career had you planned on following?.....
- 2 Who or what might have influenced your choice?
- 3 Have your career plans changed since the start of the SFP and if so in what ways?
.....

- 4 What career do your family want you to do?
- 5 What is your first choice for a career?
- 6 What is your second choice for a career?
- 7 Do these two career choices have things in common, and if so what?
-
- 8 What will be your next step in career planning?
-
- 9 Where do you see yourself 10 years from now?
-

C POSSIBLE INFLUENCES ON THOUGHTS ABOUT CAREERS

- 1 Considering a number of SFP students would like to become Medical Doctors, if you were ill, who would you first visit a traditional healer or a clinic?.....
-
- 2 What does your culture say about the education of women?
-
- 3 What do you think about the education of women?
-
- 4 What has it been like for you studying with students from different cultures and ethnic groups (Sotho, Xhosa; Venda; Zulu; Tswana etc.)?
-

D EVALUATION

- 1 Do you think that career guidance is important and if so why?
- 2 Any suggestions for how this career guidance programme might be run differently in the future?
-
- 3 How did you experience the facilitators (Susan, Khulile or Fairhope) contributions or presence during the groups?.....
-
- 4 The three sessions of career guidance were too long, or too short?
- 5 Which sessions (1, 2, or 3 above) was most useful and why?
-
- 6 Which sessions (1, 2, or 3 above) was most least and why?
-
- 8 What other career related organisations or opportunities are you aware of?
-

Session 1

- 1 What was it like for you to introduce yourself to your group?.....
-
- 2 What was it like to talk about your career plans?
-

Session 2

- 1 What did you learn from drawing your family - GENOGRAMS?
- 2 Did you feel uncomfortable either while drawing your genogram or later?
- 3 Would you have liked to share information about your family with the group?
- 4 What was the most difficult thing for you about drawing your family?
- 5 Do you understand yourself better after this exercise, and if so in what way?

Session 3

- 1 How did you find the final career guidance session where we spoke about what the groups had been like for us, looking at our careers, our families and ourselves, and also at people's unanswered questions?
.....
- Any other comments of feedback about the career guidance programme?

A longitudinal view, including gender distribution, of students career choices before (Feb) and after (Oct) the Career Education Programme as well as during the programme-March, April and May.

m	f	Feb	Tt	m	f	March	Tt	m	f	April	Tt	m	f	May	Tt	m	f	Oct	Tt
*	*	1 choice	*	*	*	1 choice	*	*	*	1 choice	*	*	*	1 choice	*	*	*	1 choice	*
4	0	agriculture	4	2	1	agriculture	3	1	0	ofcr	1	1	0	ofcr	1	4	7	agriculture	11
1	1	apld chem	2	1	0	architecture	1	1	0	agriculture	1	1	2	agriculture	3	5	1	B Sc	6
28	19	B Sc	47	5	8	B Sc	13	0	2	architecture	2	1	0	architecture	1	0	1	biochemist	1
0	0	botany	0	1	0	botany	1	8	10	B Sc	18	3	5	B Sc	8	1	0	chem analyst	1
1	1	comp sc	2	1	0	analyst	1	2	1	analyst	3	2	1	y	3	15	10	chemistry	25
1	0	n	1	0	1	commerce	1	5	2	comp science	7	0	1	anlyst	1	1	0	commerce	1
0	1	dentistry	1	2	2	science	4	1	0	conservation	1	0	1	commerce	1	4	2	comp science	6
3	1	dietetics	4	0	1	cons mgmt	1	0	1	constrctn mgmt	1	3	1	comp sc	4	0	1	dentistry	1
0	1	eng agric	1	1	0	conservation	1	0	1	dentistry	1	1	0	consrvtn	1	7	3	dietetics	10
3	4	eng chem	7	0	2	dentistry	2	1	1	dietetics	2	1	0	mgmt	1	1	1	eng agric	2
2	1	eng civil	3	2	1	dietetics	3	2	1	eng agric	3	2	0	dentistry	2	5	0	eng chem	5
4	1	eng elec	5	1	1	eng agric	2	3	1	eng chem	4	1	1	dietetics	2	1	0	eng civil	1
6	1	eng mech	7	5	2	eng chem	7	6	2	eng civil	8	1	2	eng agric	3	8	2	eng elec	10
8	4	engineering	12	8	0	eng civil	8	7	5	eng elec	12	5	0	eng chem	5	3	1	eng mech	4
11	2	medicine	13	11	6	eng elec	17	2	1	eng mech	3	5	5	eng civil	10	1	0	engineering	1
2	0	y	2	7	2	eng mech	9	2	1	engineering	3	10	8	eng elec	18	0	1	geography	1
14	8	missing info	22	3	2	engineering	5	1	0	env health	1	2	1	eng mech	3	1	0	geology	1
1	0	not sure	1	1	0	env health	1	1	0	geology	1	5	0	eng mining	5	2	2	hydrology	4
0	1	quant. surv	1	1	0	env mgmt	1	1	0	land surveying	1	3	0	engineering	3	0	1	law	1
				1	0	land survyng	1	18	7	medicine	25	1	0	geology	1	13	11	medicine	24
				18	7	medicine	25	1	0	microbiology	1	1	0	survyng	1	8	0	missing info	8
				0	1	microbiology	1	5	2	missing info	7	20	6	medicine	26	1	0	nursing	1
				5	2	missing info	7	3	0	not sure	3	3	0	y	3	2	1	physics	3
				4	0	not sure	4	1	2	pharmacy	3	10	4	missing info	14	1	0	psychology	1
				1	2	pharmacy	3	1	0	physiotherapy	1	1	1	not sure	2	1	0	RRMgmt	1
				0	1	y	1	0	2	quant surveying	2	1	1	pharmacy	2	2	1	Soc Science	3
				0	1	psychiatry	1	1	0	veterinary sc	1	0	2	physiothrp	2	2	0	statistics	2
				1	1	quant. surv	2					1	0	psychology	1				
				0	1	radiography	1					1	2	quant. surv	3				
				1	0	veterinary sc	1					1	0	radiography	1				
												0	1	RRM	1				
												1	0	sc	1				
*	*	2 choices	*	*	*	2 choices	*	*	*	2 choices	*	*	*	2 choices	*	*	*	2 choices	*
				0	1	eng chem; microb	1	1	0	agric; chem	1	1	0	daily eng elec	1				
				1	0	eng chem/ civil	1	1	0	chem analyst; physcs & chem	1	0	1	radiography dietetics	1				

Table of students' career choices including gender
Appendix D:

Appendix D:

Table of students' career choices including gender / cont.....

A longitudinal view, including gender distribution, of students career choices before (Feb) and after (Oct) the Career Education Programme as well as during the programme-March, April and May.																			
m	f	Feb	Tt	m	f	March	Tt	m	f	April	Tt	m	f	May	Tt	m	f	Oct	Tt
*	*	2 choices	*	*	*	2 choices	*	*	*	2 choices	*	*	*	2 choices	*	*	*	2 choices	*
				1	0	eng; comp sc	1	0	1	biochem; microbiol; eng	1								
				1	0	eng; chem	1	1	0	chem; dietetics	1								
				1	0	teaching	1	1	0	mgmt	1								
				1	0	comp science	1	1	0	eng elec/civil	1								
								1	0	biometry	1								
								1	0	land surv; eng	1								
								1	0	eng; chemistry	1								
								2	0	med/eng c	2								
								0	1	psychtry; comp sc	1								
								0	1	radiog/med	1								
								1	0	B Sc; not sure	1								
*	*	3 choices	*	*	*	3 choices	*	*	*	3 choices	*	*	*	3 choices	*	*	*	3 choices	*
				1	0	med;eng;B Sc	1	1	0	cop	1								
								0	1	med	1								
								1	0	Com	1								
								1	0	civil; Soc Science	1								
								1	0	pharm; med; drama	1								
89	46		135	89	46		135	89	46		135	89	46		135	89	46		135