

**Success or failure? Student experiences of the Extended
Curriculum Programme (ECP) in the College of Humanities,
University of KwaZulu-Natal**

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Uduak F. Johnson

September 2017

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Prof. Sagie Narsiah

Supervisor

Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to all the students from underprivileged backgrounds who succeed through the College of Humanities, University of KwaZulu-Natal despite all odds. I also dedicate it to the staff of Academic Development Programmes like the Extended Curriculum Programme, whose work is making a significant contribution to the academic environment. I dedicate it also to all the students who came to my office as an Academic Development Officer (ADO) seeking assistance on how to improve themselves and overcome the plight of academic exclusion. It was your dedication, resilience and hard work that motivated this study.

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Abstract

South African Universities have responded to the global trend towards massification of higher education by public policy imperative to redress the legacies of apartheid. Extended Curriculum Programmes (ECPs) are used to implement this policy to remedy the limitations of disadvantaged primary and secondary schooling. This serves to improve both participation and success rates of those from these backgrounds who demonstrate potential. Dwindling government funding of tertiary education, high dropout rates, increasing numbers of black students gaining access into the universities, and the threat of a declining quality tertiary education have popularized suggestions in favour of the cancellation of ECPs. While the success of ECPs is being questioned, its value cannot be undermined. Some studies even suggest the expansion of such support to all tertiary students. The imperative to generate strong evidence on the value of ECP to inform policy decisions motivated the current study to target the voices of the ECP students in the College of Humanities, University of KwaZulu-Natal as a case study. The Social Constructivist paradigm was used to inquire into ECP students' experiences of success and failures, using the Attribution theory to assess their beliefs and how they understand and relate to their experiences of learning as affected by the ECP. The Study Process Questionnaire was also used to test how ECP students' learning motives and studying strategies determine their approaches to learning. This mixed methods with emphasis on the qualitative approach was used to collect data. Students from different levels on, within and through the programme were sampled to give a representative view. Twenty-two face-to-face semi-structured interviews, two focus group interviews and 170 responses from the Study Process questionnaire were used to collect the different kinds of data. Thematic content analysis was used on qualitative data, while data from the SPQ was analysed using STATA statistical analysis software. Students' approaches to learning were correlated and presented in graphical and tabular formats as determined by their motives and strategies. The discussion chapter used statistical graphs and tables to support themes derived from the qualitative data on students' attributions. The study found that students attribute the outcome of their studies to a variety of factors that are worth considering in empowering students when implementing the ECP and in policy adjustments on how student underpreparedness can be addressed. The academic and computer literacy skills and other foundational skills from the programme empower ECP students to assist mainstream students. It also facilitates their social construction of university life and enables their adjustment by positively affecting their motivations while preparing them to succeed. The attribution theory was found to have the reflective-tool to enable students understand

themselves and their learning habits. Such self-awareness equips students to learn and adopt more productive approaches to learning; a useful tool for student counsellors. The study suggested that opening the ECP up to all students may boycott a vital element of cooperation and competition that the programme evokes between its students and mainstream student when they compare their performances. Nevertheless, instead of discontinuing the programme due to funding constraints, its foundational modules could be open as compulsory to all students based on the outcome of a university entrance test to determine readiness and skills level in important cognate areas. These modules are to be based in the ECP to demonstrate that all students need support of some sort and to enhance equal socialization between ECP students and mainstream students. This would contribute towards eliminating the stigma on the ECP, and sustain the programme through mainstream students' registration without much recourse to external funding. Nevertheless, financial constraints, difficulty of exiting the programme, and the lack of transparency about its admission criteria remain threats to the programme, but the programme does contribute towards constructing a positive university learning environment.

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List of Abbreviations/Acronyms

ALE	Academic Learning in English
AT	Attribution Theory
AD	Academic Development
ADO	Academic Development Officer
AS	Academic Support
CAO	Central Applications Office
CHE	Council of Higher Education
CSA	Centre for Science Access
DoE	Department of Education
DMI	Division of Management Information
DP	Duly Performed
DHET	Department of Higher Education and Training
DET	(former) Department of Education and Training
EAP	English for Academic Purposes
ESP	English for Specific Purposes
ECP	Extended Curriculum Programme
EDP	Extended Degree Programme
ESL	English as Second Language
GER	Gross Enrolment Ratio
HEQC	Higher Education Qualification Committee
HELTASA	Higher Education Learning & Teaching Association of South Africa
HEQF	Higher Education Qualification Framework
HEP	Higher Education Practice
HESA	Higher Education South Africa
MNO	More Knowledgeable other
NPHE	National Plan for Higher Education
NQF	National Qualification Framework
NBTs	National Benchmark Tests
NSC	National Senior Certificate
NFSAS	National Student Financial Aid Scheme
OBE	Outcome Based Education
SAJHE	South African Journal of Higher Education

SC	Social Constructivism
SET	Science Engineering and Technology
SFP	Science Foundation Programme
UCT	University of Cape Town
UKZN	University of KwaZulu-Natal
UNISA	University of South Africa
UNESCO	United Nations Scientific and Cultural Organization
ZDP	Zone of Proximal Development

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.0 Introduction

This introductory chapter gives a background to the research problem. It provides a rationale for the study and states the research problem, the research questions and the objectives of the study. This is followed by the design of the study, which identifies and justifies the research paradigm and the theoretical framework, the research approach, and the choice for the case study. The chapter proceeds to discuss the data collection and analysis methods.

1.1 Background and outline of research problem

Access to, retention within and successful completion through higher education institutions remain important areas of concern globally (Jensen 2011). The Council of Higher Education (CHE) (2013) reports on the shortcomings of the South African tertiary graduate output in terms of numbers, equity and the proportion of the student body that succeeds. Deplorable failure and dropout rates are also very common (CHE 2013; Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET 2012). A 2005 cohort of students in the university sector drop-out due to myriad factors. First time entrants in a three year qualification indicated an average 26% dropout in the first year; 9% dropped out after the second year and 6% at the end of the third year. In a four-year degree, 15% drop-out after the first year, 7% after the second year, 4% at the end of year three and an additional 3% in year four (DHET 2012: 1).

This is corroborated by other studies (Gernetzky 2012; Letseka & Maile 2008; McGregor 2007; Neves 2008) which confirm an approximate 40% drop out rate in some universities in general. Firfirey and Carolissen (2010) endorse that with a 15% graduation rate, South Africa has one of the lowest graduation rates in the world. Only a quarter (one in every four students) in contact universities graduate in regulation time¹. 48% of contact university students graduate within five years for a three years qualification. If students taking longer than five years to graduate are considered, an estimated 55% of student intake never graduate (CHE 2013). Within this statistical depiction, only 5% of African and coloured youths are reported to be succeeding in any form of higher education (CHE 2013).

¹ Regulation time implies taking three years to complete a three years undergraduate degree.

The foregoing statistics compound the problem of access and retention, especially when considered that participation in higher education was as low as 16% in South Africa in 2007 (Scott 2009). The African population is also the largest in South Africa. This does not meet South Africa's need to develop intellectual talents from all racial communities. It is not likely to change in the near future since no significant change has been recorded since the year 2000 (CHE 2013). On this basis, Dhunpath and Vithal (2012: 2) explain that South African universities have, for a long time, considered issues of access as a crucial matter of national priority, and that 'universities have responded by establishing a variety of programmes, mostly state-sponsored foundation programmes'.

These state-sponsored foundation programmes take the form of Access or Extended Curriculum Programme (ECP). They provide a means of admitting and supporting more students from previously disadvantaged backgrounds in a move to increase both access and success. However, Tinto and Pusser (2006:4) observe that

[T]hough research on student attrition is plentiful and debate over theories of student persistence vigorous, less attention has been paid to the development of a model of institutional action that provides institutions for effective action to increase student persistence and in turn student success (Tinto & Pusser 2006:4).

These concerns demonstrate why a study of the experience of such a programme that provides access to students from 'disadvantaged' backgrounds would serve as a good case study for learning lessons for overall structural and institutional changes in tertiary institutions.

Meanwhile, massification of higher education has posed some challenges to a stringent university culture. Students are entering the university from diverse backgrounds, and some of them are being perceived as 'disadvantaged' based on their impoverished educational backgrounds (Smith 2012). This 'disadvantaged' discourse has been criticised as being uncritical (Godsell 2013; Smith 2012) and a deficient thinking model. It is known to negatively impact on pedagogy due to its focus on student inadequacies to succeed in a fair institution. The focus becomes a stigmatising issue for these students, undermining the more fundamental structural and institutional issues that need redress (Johnson & Narsiah 2015; Firfirey & Carolissen 2010). It has been contended that universities desperately need to adjust to meet the new criteria of widening access. To make these adjustments, this study proposes in line with Godsell (2013) that universities need to learn lessons from the experiences that facilitate the worst off students' success.

The Extended Curriculum Programme (ECP) in the College of Humanities, University of KwaZulu-Natal indicates very positive results where most students who enrolled through it are graduating or out-performing the mainstream students in the university (Clarence-Fincham 1998; 2008; Tyson 2010; Nala 2010). Some studies have already attempted to resolve the problem from the perspective of curriculum restructuring (CHE 2013; Sennett *et al* 2003). Yet, most studies reveal gloomy and negative impacts of the South African Higher Education policy imperative on widening access through the admission of disadvantaged students, associating it with low throughputs and alarming drop-out rates (Larsen, Sommersel & Larsen 2013; Smith 2012; McKenzie & Schweitzer 2010). This study gather lessons from students from such programmes for determining a way forward.

1.1.1 Rationale for the study

The discrepancies in the percentage of students entering tertiary institutions in different provinces in South Africa, added to the paucity of studies in this regard, makes it necessary to focus on understanding individual cases before any attempt at comparative studies. Of the nine provinces in South Africa, KwaZulu-Natal records the second lowest participation rate in tertiary education between 2002 and 2013, with a 1.07% increase in participation in the period. In 2002, the participation rate was 6.4%, but by 2013, there was an 8.85% participation rate in KwaZulu-Natal (Stats SA June 2014). These statistics present KwaZulu-Natal in a poor light, thus providing a justification for focusing this study on an institution in KwaZulu-Natal. Low participation combined with high attrition in an environment of scarce skills and major socio-economic challenges constitutes a threat to development, adding to the widening North-South divide (Scott 2009: 21).

This study responds to the above concerns, relying on the assertion that ‘a social development programme [of which the Extended Curriculum Programme (ECP) is an example] should assist the target underprivileged groups in developing the organizational capacity and knowledge needed to identify and satisfy their own needs’ (Valadez & Bamberger 1994: 9). The study also depends on the assertion by Godsell (2013: 2) and Freire (1993) that the experiences of learners are worth more attention through listening to their voices for policy purposes. Thus, what the ECP students attribute their successes and failures to, are examined in order to understand their perspectives.

Findings should inform programme adjustments necessary to empower students by addressing through the programme their needs within the university. If the needs of the

worst-off students can be met, then lessons from it should be valuable for supporting every other student, whether directly or indirectly. Therefore, using evaluative tools, ECP student experiences of learning are examined through what factors enable or do not enable their success. Research findings can be used to inform the policy framework for dealing with underprepared students in the College of Humanities, University of KwaZulu-Natal.

The purpose of the is to assess students' reports of the factors that influence their learning experiences with the aim of transforming the ECP policy while at the same time contributing to the field of knowledge of student learning experiences. Vital data should be gathered on whether or not the ECP should be discontinued or expanded to cater for more students. The study is even more poignant at this time given the concerns about whether or not the foundation programmes as they are currently structured are still relevant:

The changing realities by the higher education sector since 2009, with the introduction of new school curricula and the resultant rapid increase in the numbers of students gaining access to higher education... endless queues of aspirant matriculants desperate for access to higher education each year interrupt conventional images of institutions unable to fill lecture rooms with suitably qualified students (Dhunpath and Vithal 2012: 2).

Assertions along the lines of the above quotation, while well-intentioned, and supported by improved curricula, the political will and concerted efforts by teachers, needs to be examined through research, especially given the statistics on student attrition and drop-out rates. This study would further the understanding of how universities can adjust to meet the changing tertiary landscape. It responds to the assertion that 'the problem of equity of outcome, epistemological access and quality of graduates are likely to remain critical challenges for some time to come' (Dhunpath & Vithal 2012: 2) in South Africa. Such a study is necessary to inform the projection of the National Development Plan of South Africa that universities expand access with an anticipated 70% increase to a 30% higher education participation rate (Dhunpath & Vithal 2012: 3).

The researcher has been involved with ADPs (Academic Development Programmes) in different capacities: as a student mentor, an Academic Development Officer (ADO) and in monitoring and evaluation of an ADP within the College of Humanities of the University of KwaZulu-Natal. Understanding is sought regarding the extent to which ADPs, like the ECP, respond to students' own needs within the College of Humanities through paying attention to students' voices. This approach should illuminate best practice approaches to ADPs of students with similar characteristics within the context, especially bearing in mind recent

claims that staff of ADPs cannot successfully assist their students if they do not understand their reasons for struggling (Prebble *et al.*, 2004). Moreover, lessons learnt during the course of this research can be very useful for dealing with most of the underprepared students coming into the universities, while at the same time informing the schooling system on how to focus support to prepare students for tertiary studies. The current study is relevant to verify the assertions of the UKZN ECP success through looking at the ECP, using different methodological and theoretical approaches. It seeks to identify the factors responsible for success from the perspectives of the students.

1.2 Problem Statement

It is popularly asserted that higher education should play a significant role in a country's economy by developing the requisite skills and competencies necessary to service the country through its graduates on the one hand, and producing knowledge to meet the intellectual needs of a continuously changing world on the other (Jensen 2011; Kioko 2010; Schalkwyk, Leibowitz & Van der Merwe 2009; Goestellac 2008; Jones *et al.* 2008; Dart 2007; Prebble *et al.*, 2004).

Thus, education is widely acclaimed as a critical tool of development where development refers to the act of growing, causing to grow and becoming more mature, advanced or elaborate (Darvas, Ballal & Deda 2014; Goastellec 2008; Prebble *et al.* 2004). It also implies availing one of the factors necessary for a decent, wholesome and fulfilling life. The benefits that college degree holders have over high school diplomas and certificates holders include higher economic advantages; evidence of increased health and civic engagement; physical psychological, financial benefits and otherwise (Dhunpath & Vithal 2012; Jensen 2011). Moreover, statistical evidence indicates that 95% of South African graduates are employed (Higher Education in Context 2012: 14).

The growing demand for massification and widening participation in higher education, therefore, implies admitting previously underprepared students into the university among others (Smith 2012; Dhunpath & Vithal 2012; Boughey 2010; Clarence-Fincham 2008; Kloot, Case & Marshall 2008; Warren 2003; Moore 2002). Increased participation in higher education promises to abate poverty, high unemployment rates and skills shortages (Dhunpath & Vithal 2012; Jensen 2011). Hence, access to higher education has also become an acceptable indicator of a nation's development, its capacity to produce knowledge, as well as its workforce that amounts to economic and social development (Goastellec 2008). This is

true for many countries, including South Africa and the United States, where the legacies of apartheid and slavery respectively had perpetuated under-privilege for some members of the society. Giving educational access to previously disadvantaged members of the society is considered a necessary means of improving their social status.

Most of these predominantly black students are underprepared due to the poor resourcing of their high schooling, which curtails their access and success options. The minority who get access drop out after the first year because they were unprepared for tertiary education challenges (DHET 2012; Gernetzky 2012; Jensen 2011; Tyson 2010: 1; Leseka & Maile 2008; Neves 2008; McGregor 2007). Tertiary institutions are considered to be unprepared for supporting these students (Smith, Case and Walbeek 2014; Moore 2003; Warren 2002).

Hence, Academic Development Programmes (ADPs) like the Extended Curriculum Programme (ECP), Foundation Programmes (FP) or Access Programmes (AP) have been implemented by universities globally to facilitate the access and success of underprepared students (Dhunpath & Vithal 2012: 4; Kioko 2010; Boughey 2010; Scott 2009). The programmes have sometimes been described as reactive responses by tertiary institutions to improve the access and retention of underprepared students. They often provide extra tutorials, bridging courses or additional courses in English or Mathematics. These interventions are meant to assist students to cope successfully with the university curricula, given their underprepared school backgrounds (Smith, Case & Welbeek 2014). They are also supposed to serve as affirmative action interventions which are imperative to redress inequalities caused by the apartheid system in South Africa.

Nevertheless, some questions have arisen regarding the extent of the success of underprepared students in tertiary institutions (Boughey 2010). Some studies have suggested that these programmes have not justified the budget allocation to them and should be discontinued. In the same vein it has been argued that students from the same backgrounds are making it to the mainstream, hence the irrelevance of such programmes. This study, therefore, joins the growing discourse on the extent of these students' success. A number of studies within the same context present perceptions on why these students succeed or fail (Boughey 2010; Nala 2010; Tyson 2010; Clarence-Fincham 1998). Despite the plethora of studies on students' success, more studies are needed on how bridging, access or foundation programmes students attribute success or failure.

Thus, evaluative tools are used to analyse to what factors ECP students attribute their success and failure in order to understand their experiences of the programme. Findings should contribute towards enhancing the framework for supporting underprepared students in South African tertiary institutions. This follows the assertion that successes in corrective initiatives of this kind serve as models for ongoing affirmative action policies and programmes (Lindsay 1997: 534), and the claim that supporting these students is a social justice imperative (Kioko 2010).

1.2.1 Research problems and objectives: Key questions to be asked

1. What are the students' experiences of learning within the Extended Curriculum Programme in the humanities?
2. To what do students within the programme attribute their successes and failures?
3. Why do they attribute their successes and failures in learning in the way that they do?
4. What are the implications for the Extended Curriculum policy reform?

1.2.2 Research problems and objectives: Broader issues to be investigated

The objectives of the study are to:

- Examine students' learning experiences in comparative and theoretical perspectives.
- Assess to what ECP students attribute successes and failures, why they make such attributions, and identify trends that affect successes from this category of students.
- Address how the Extended Curriculum Programme has created patterns of learning and how it is sensitive to students' original/previous patterns of learning.
- Engage with whether the Extended Curriculum Programme exposes beneficiaries to better approaches to learning with meaningful outcomes.

1.3 Research Design and Methodology

This section presents the overall approach to the study. It begins with the theoretical lens that informs and directs the study and focuses more on the approach used to undertake the study. The case study chosen is justified and issues of how data was collected and analysed are discussed.

1.3.1 Research Paradigm

This study is undertaken within the social constructivist paradigm, which implies that people continuously create, through their actions and interactions, a shared reality that is experienced

as objectively factual and subjectively meaningful (Lefcourt 2014). The social world is not simply given, factual, natural or fully determined; it is made up and transmitted by people through social agreements. What we have not learnt from our senses, our own reason or intuitions, we have learnt from other human beings. For instance, nations, books, and money cannot exist in the absence of human society.

We are all constructivists if we believe that the mind is active in the construction of knowledge. We invent concepts, models and schemes to make sense of experience, and we continually test and modify this construction in the light of new experiences. Furthermore, there is an historical and sociocultural dimension to this construction. We do not construct our interpretations in isolation but against a backdrop of shared understandings, practices, language (Schwandt 2000: 9)

Thus, society's construction of meaning influences that of an individual. A learner's construction of knowledge or meaning is influenced by that learner's experience, perception or view of reality or by the way society structures it. The structuring of meaning is influenced by the viewer's perception, and perceptions are themselves influenced by background and context (Friere 2009). This answers the epistemological question of how we come to know and learn within social constructivism (Hein 1991). Hence, knowledge depends on one's construction of meaning based on personal experiences within the society.

Whatever value a phenomenon has is what society has assigned to it. The same can be said of the concept of self. Identity is created by interactions with other people and our reactions to the expectations of society. As such, learners co-construct knowledge or meaning for themselves with other members of a shared socialisation. Utilising the social constructivist paradigm allows this study to explain how students' construction of their success or failure is based on their past experiences (cultural backgrounds), as well as influenced by their social environment (present context). The study is interested in how the ECP influences the construction of what was responsible for success and how this affects students' sense of meaning.

The analytical framework of this study, attribution theory (AT), falls within the social constructivist paradigm. According to attribution theory, people attribute their fate based on what they believe to be the cause of that fate. In other words, individuals reflect on their experiences and try to figure out the causes of their success or failures. Attribution theory is particularly useful for this study because it helps to understand students' constructions of what successes or failures are, as well as attribute such success or failure to particular events

or experiences. This makes success or failure subjective phenomena. Social constructions of meaning influence the individual's perceptions; therefore, students' attribution will enable the understanding of where ECP student's attributions or meanings need to be modified through influencing their social construction of such meaning by structuring the social reality around them towards ensuring their proper integration into the university to enhance success.

1.3.2. Research Approach

This study adopted mixed method approach with emphasis on a qualitative case study. Qualitative case studies are used for smaller-scale studies with a small sample. The qualitative approach aims at in-depth study of a phenomenon to provide a rigorous in-depth explanation of the phenomenon (Maree 2007). It generally aims to understand the experiences and attitudes of people, their belief system and their perspectives (Bricki & Green 2007; Babbie & Mouton 2002); and is admissible when the phenomena under study are complex, social in nature, and not subjected to quantification (Flick 2009; Liebscher 1998: 669). It is appropriate for effectively answering the questions: "what", "how", or "why" of a phenomenon like students' experiences of learning, rather than the "how many" or "how much", which mark the focus of quantitative research approaches (Bricki & Green, 2007). Its inquiry into what other people are doing or saying is amenable to the philosophy of social constructivism (Schwandt 2000: 2).

The qualitative approach enabled the understanding of students' experiences, attitudes, beliefs, and their approaches to learning. It sought to apprehend to what factors students attribute their successes and failures, why they make such attributions and how such attributions affect their subsequent academic performances. This follows the assertion that 'understanding comes more from looking over the shoulders of actors and trying to figure out what the actors think they are up to. Thus, 'acquiring an "insider" understanding – the actors' definition of the situation – is a powerful central concept for understanding the purpose of qualitative inquiry' (Geertz cited in Schwandt 2007:3).

The case study method was relevant since the design of this study has a small sample and aims at in-depth description of the experiences of ECP students in the College of Humanities for the Pietermaritzburg and the Howard campuses only. It was also most appropriate in attempts to understand students' experiences of learning within ECP within these two campuses in the College of Humanities, University of KwaZulu-Natal. It was not generic to all institutions and allowed the researcher to move from the unknown to the known about

students' experiences and their attributions of success and failure. To meet these goals, two instruments were used to collect data: a semi-structured interview guide and a study process questionnaire. The Study Process Questionnaire (SPQ), was used to collect quantitative data that would determine how ECP students approached their learning among the surface, deep and achieving approaches.

1.3.3 Identifying the case study

The researcher is studying and working within the research site and is experienced in working with students At-Risk both as a mentor and as an Academic Development Officer (ADO) within the College of Humanities, University of KwaZulu-Natal. These add to the researcher's experience in the evaluation of the pilot phase of an ADP within the same College. As such, the researcher is familiar with the context as well as with some of the challenges of students from underprivileged backgrounds, who primarily constitute the sample of the current study. Nevertheless, the researcher has never worked on the ECP. The cohort of students who have been through the ECP from 2009-2015 has not been previously studied, based on reviewed literature. Most studies on the programme are from students preceding these years. Some of these studies, their methodological approaches and findings are presented in the table below:

Table 1 - Some previous studies undertaken on the ECP in the College of Humanities, their methodologies and approaches

Researcher	Study	Where	methodology/ methods	findings/conclusion
Nala 2010	The impact of the ECP and students' experiences of the programme at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (KZN), Pietermaritzburg	University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN) Pietermaritzburg campus	Quantitative approach Students and tutors within the programme were participants in the qualitative data collection.	Extended Curriculum Tutorials (ECTs) were facilitating both academic success and personal development of ECP students. Social capital was also developed among ECP students, contributing to their success. The current study takes these assertions as starting points or assumptions as it investigates students' attributions of success or failure based on their experience of the ECP.
Tyson, N 2010	Examining the impact of the Humanities Access Programme 2001-2004: Throughput Rates and Students' Perceptions of the Programme.	UKZN, Pietermaritzburg campus	Mixed Method approach Quantitative for a cohort study of retention and throughput. Semi-structured interview on students' perceptions, using the Tinto Integrative Model for students' perception. Qualitative data was used to assess the general perceptions of students on the programme through semi-structured interviews.	Humanities Access Programme (HAP) students outperformed their mainstream counterparts. Students perceived the programme positively as contributing to their success. Social and academic integration to university life provided by the programme was the major contributor to success.
Clarence-Fincham 1998	Voices in a university: a critical exploration of black students' responses to institutional discourse. Two action research	University of Natal	Critical action research, within post-modernism. Focusing on the module Learning Language and Logic. How critical language awareness can be	Strong indication that integrating principles of Critical Language Awareness into a first-year course in academic literacy adds a crucial dimension to students' understanding of the university environment. It provides

	<p>cycles developed and integrated into the curriculum.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A short Intervention: students analysed three university texts 2. An eight-week programme: introduced them to principles of Critical Language awareness. 		<p>used to facilitate a greater understanding of institutional conventions and practices. How language encodes asymmetrical powers and is used to construct students. The critical discourse approach was used to analyse data as well as some content analysis.</p>	<p>linguistic insights developing the ability to analyse context, responding critically to academic texts and understanding the roles that they can play within the university.</p>
<p>Kloot, Case and Marshall 2008</p>	<p>A critical review of the educational philosophies underpinning Science and Engineering foundation programmes locating them within their political and institutional context and then tracing the evolution of their educational philosophy</p>	<p>South Africa science and engineering foundation programmes,</p>	<p>Comparative study of the models of ADPs explored in the early 1990s which emphasised the ‘infusion’ of academic development principles into the mainstream to the current model of the Extended Curriculum Programmes.</p>	<p>Government funding integrated foundational provision as an ‘infusion model’. Introducing Academic development works throughout the years of the mainstream. Programmes adopted very simple models of AD that might not elicit transformation of the mainstream as separate foundation programmes allowed for innovative education. There are power interests in the high-status mainstream offerings. Further research should discuss AD within these power relations and suggest pragmatic and effective means towards achieving redress and equity in higher education.</p>

Kloot 2011	Shifts focused from pedagogical innovations, curriculum design or student experience to investigate social structures in order to examine the potential that foundation programmes hold for the transformation of higher education in South Africa. The discipline of engineering was chosen and the object of analysis was the <i>field of engineering education</i> . Compared foundational programmes within engineering in three South African universities: the University of Western Cape, the University of Cape Town and Stellenbosch University.	Two Western Cape Universities: Universities of Cape Town (UCT) and Stellenbosch University. Mainstream professors with a social disposition to affect the field. Academic development managers or programme lecturers involved in foundation programmes	Case studies The theoretical framework of Pierre Bourdieu employed in order to map the structure of higher education in terms of power ('capital' in Bourdieu's terms) and to locate foundation programmes within the university as a social space. Data was collected through 21 semi-structured interviews with academics at various social positions in both institutions. The interviews were analysed using the techniques of narrative analysis. Using Bourdieu's notion of "capital" as power, the study examines how foundational programmes find a social space within the University.	Research activities, <i>intellectual capital</i> , consulting, administrative work and teaching are important prestigious activities for engineering academics which resonate the fundamental principle of the university. AD focuses on teaching and learning that counters university's traditional logic. Through social forces, the engineering faculty in the UCT made space for ASPECT. ASPECT lecturers shifted the structure of the field by modelling a time-economy that is different to the mainstream; their dedication to teaching put pressure on mainstream lecturers. Stellenbosch University struggled over Afrikaans as a language of instruction and administration, which impacted the recruitment of black students for foundation programmes. Reluctant to separate foundation students on the basis of 'race'. UCT foundation programmes may impact the field if students are separated by race. Hence, foundation programmes in and of themselves are unable to <i>transform</i> higher education
Snook <i>et al.</i> ' 2009	Review of Hattie's (2008) book titled: <i>Visible Learning: A synthesis of over 800 meta-analyses relating to achievement</i>		Most studies on students' achievements and student success often have a quantitative approach. Hattie's meta-analysis used statistical techniques to synopsise, integrate, and review about 50, 000	Limitations of primarily quantitative studies include but not limited to: contextual factors sometimes get lost in the process; less significant factors lose weight in the comparison of mean scores and standard deviation of quantitative rigours. Besides, the quality of the studies considered are not important, just as the qualitative

			quantitative studies of variables affecting the achievement of students (Snook et al 2009: 93).	experiences of students on the programme (Snook <i>et al.</i> 2009: 94).
Prebble <i>et al.</i> (2004)	Slavin's (1986) "best evidence synthesis" to demonstrate how significant studies could still be done with care, rigour and the right approach. Critical discussions about class, poverty, resources and health in families, and nutrition not because they are unimportant, indeed they may be more important than many of these issues discussed in this orbit.		Synthesis of 250 studies on student support and identify 13 propositions for practice; ten for assimilating diverse students into institutional cultures, and three that challenge institutions to adapt to the cultural capital that students bring by changing their policies and practices.	The approach was designed to overcome the limitations of meta-analysis and haphazardness of unstructured literature reviews.
Clarence-Fincham (1998)	Explore black students' responses to the university discourses as they begin their studies in the ECP.	ECP UKZN college of Humanities	Used a critical research paradigm to analyse the extent to which critical language awareness can be used to facilitate a greater understanding of institutional conventions and practices.	

<p>Smith, Case and Walbeek (2014)</p>	<p>Reports on a study that used statistical analysis to estimate the impact of first-year AD courses in different programmes in different faculties: the Commerce, Engineering and Sciences at the same South African tertiary institution.</p>	<p>South African Tertiary institutions</p>	<p>Smith, Case and Walbeek's (2014) study compared the graduation rates between AD students and their mainstream counterparts.</p>	<p>The study found that the AD programmes did not improve the graduation rates achieved by its students as compared to their mainstream peers. This finding raised the question about whether the type of AD programmes investigated can alone resolve the South African Higher Education concerns on increasing the number of graduates from previously disadvantaged backgrounds.</p>
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Following the diversity of approaches used in similar studies in the table above, a case study of the ECP in the College of Humanities, University of KwaZulu-Natal was undertaken to assess students' experiences and their attribution of success and failure. Clarence-Fincham (2008: 72) indicated that these programmes might share generic titles and some common features, but they do not have the same pedagogical structure. Various models of the intervention co-exist across the institution and the nation at large. Faculty-specific challenges have their own internal differences, which must be noted among the complex challenges of practitioners in the field. The sciences, for instance, have more favourable funding than the humanities, which affects how they differ and constrains categorical comparison.

This diversity of approaches and the differences in context forestalled any successful attempt at generalisation. For the purposes of this research, a case study was suitable because it 'investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context; when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident and when multiple sources of evidence are used' (Rubbin & Babbie 1997: 402). The relationship between support and outcomes were complex and multi-faceted (Prebble *et al.* 2004: 51), hence multiple perspectives were taken into account to understand the influences of multilevel social systems on subject's perspectives and behaviour (Babbie & Mouton 2002: 280). No other study has adopted attribution theory to understand students' experiences of the ECP, nor have any of the studies assessed the approaches to learning of ECP students as the current study does. A comparative study was not feasible due to the different approaches by different colleges and institutions on such programmes.

1.3.4 Data collection techniques

Two main instruments were used to collect primary data for this study from students who had been through the programme between 2009 and 2015. Firstly, purposive sampling was the plan for gathering data from 22 ECP participants using the semi-structured interview technique. But due to difficulty in reaching the research participants, a snowball sampling was used to reach eight students who have just started on the programme, another eight who have been through the programme and are in their second or third year of studies, and six who have been through the programme and are now doing post-graduate studies or even working. Of this sample, two focus group interviews were conducted with first-year ECP students. Here, the researcher intended to facilitate a real dialogue among a small group of students within a planned and relaxed environment (Bloor *et al.*, 2001) in order to capture collective meanings about their experiences. Interviewing allowed knowledge to be gained

from both individuals and focus groups. It allowed participants to express their views and beliefs while discussing their perception and interpretation of their experiences (Kvale, 1996).

Secondly, a stratified random sampling technique was planned to gather data from 170 students within the cohort using the study process questionnaire: 70 students who had just started on the programme, 50 who had been through the programme and are now in their second or third year of studies and 50 students who had been through the programme and are in post-graduate studies or working were sampled for the study. The sampling was to enable a broad perspective from students at different levels of experiencing the ECP. The Study Process Questionnaire was mainly to assess how ECP students approach their learning by assessing their motives for learning and learning strategies. The instrument is a more standardised measure that would complement data from the semi-structured interview on students' attributions. Students' details were gathered from the Division of Management Information (DMI) and through the programme coordinators, and snowballing was utilised to reach most students due to poor response rates. The main limitation of the study was that some students refused to participate. Questionnaires sent out electronically to about 400 students at a time often yielded very discouraging responses from as few as two students and sometimes no student. Some respondents were very clear that they would not participate in the study if it had no direct benefits for them. This made the data collection process very slow and extended the field research by approximately a year.

1.3.5 Data analysis

Thematic content analysis was used to analyse qualitative data following the analytical themes from attribution theory. The numerical data was analysed using STATA and Microsoft Excel to present graphs and tables to illustrate averages of how respondents fell into surface, deep or achieving approaches to learning as proposed by the Study Process Questionnaire. The findings were discussed qualitatively with support from student's attributions that indicated each approach to learning. The analysis demonstrated students' attributions of meaning² as they construct knowledge of their experiences through their approaches to learning and their attributions of their successes and failures.

² The term "meaning" is used here to denote both students' sense of personal meaning and the meaning of what they are learning. This lends itself to the social constructivist paradigm.

1.4 Conclusion

This introductory chapter gave a background to the study. It discussed the research problem, derived research objectives from research questions, and raised research questions from the research problem. The reason for choosing a qualitative research design was stated as well as the reason for choosing the two research instruments. These were located within the social constructivist paradigm with a justification for the use of attribution theory to undertake the study. The theoretical framework and methodology used in the study were further justified by a brief assessment of other related studies done on this or similar programmes within the University of KwaZulu-Natal and other universities implementing similar programmes in South Africa and around the world. This assessment justified why the case-study approach was used. Literature suggests that similar programmes are too diverse between faculties in the same university and between universities to make a viable categorical comparison non-feasible. The chapter concluded by specifying the methods of data collection and analysis. The limitations of data collection for the study were also highlighted.

Chapter 2: Review of Literature

2.0. Introduction

This chapter reviews literature relevant for the study. It provides the literary background upon which this study is based. It identifies the theoretical basis for the study while noting the systematic and methodological gap that the study aims to bridge in the field of study. Cognisant of the varying definition of students' success, it focusses on how students from under-privileged backgrounds within the ECP construct and attribute their own success or failure. This justifies its base in the social constructivist paradigm and why the attribution theory is its analytical framework. It critically considers Tinto's (2013) aphorism that access without support is not opportunity.

Since the purpose of the study is to assess students' reports of the factors that influence their learning experiences in the ECP with the aim of affecting policy transformation, literature on the evolution of Access Criteria in Tertiary Institutions is reviewed first, culminating in the implications of widening access to tertiary education. The term underpreparedness is discussed, this is followed by discussion of the necessity of Academic Development Programmes (ADPs) in general with attention to its global trends, a focus on ADPs in South Africa and varieties of ECP approaches to ADPs. Particular attention is paid to the ADP for access, which is the primary interest of this study, with a specific focus on the Extended Curriculum Programme (ECP).

Literature on learning styles and approaches to learning are also reviewed given their causal relation to the notion of success or failure in learning. This illuminates best practice approaches to ADPs for students with similar characteristics within the context, and sets a background for agreeing with Boughey (2010) and Prebble *et al.* (2004) that staff of ADPs can more successfully assist their students if they have a critical understanding of their reasons for struggling. The chapter is also in agreement with the concerns of Tinto and Pusser (2006) about the development of institutional action to facilitate effective action towards increased students persistence and success. This lends itself to discourses on students' successes and failures and the contributing factors, such as financial backgrounds, educational backgrounds and issues of alienation that some students face at the university.

2.1 Evolution of Access Criteria into Higher Education

Access criteria to tertiary institutions have evolved over time. Trow (2000) classifies enrolment rates into three access models, namely: “the elite model” for countries with up to 15% enrolment rates of the relevant age group, “the massive access model” or mass system for enrolment rates between 16% and 50%; and “the universal access model” for enrolment rates higher than 50% (cited in Mohamedbhai 2014: 62). Some scholars consider these models as historical evolutions (Darvas, Ballal & Fedaa 2014; Goastellec 2008) of how access to higher education has been classified. Others add that they also represent the different levels of access that nations can adopt at tertiary institutions in a given time (Dhunpath & Vithal 2012) or based on how many students are enrolled at a given period.

Darvas, Bellal and Fedaa (2014) link the evolution of admission criteria to economic growth, pre-tertiary expansion and human capital. They also caution that the evidence of the relationship is anecdotal, lacking statistical evidence and unique to the different cases and stories of individual nations. Goastellec (2008) agrees with these assertions, citing demographic, economic and political pressures as factors that affect higher education admission norms; he further argues that the growing need for equity principles or equality of opportunities increasingly is becoming influenced by funding frameworks. He relates that funding higher education also implies changing its management due to public requirements of accountability for their provision of equity of access. Kourcky, Burtusek and Koverovic (2007) further contend that it has become a matter of social justice to ensure equity of access to tertiary education. As national economies change there is a growing demand for a diverse workforce with specialized skills and education and therefore, improved participation rate and wide access dominates the shift and discourse in higher education institutions.

2.1.1 Elitist Model

This Elitist consideration for access, also known as the “inherited merit model”, dates back to the 13th Century and was influential till the first half of the 20th Century. Access to tertiary education was open to a few traditional elites (up to 15%), mainly political and religious elites (Mohammedhai 2014; Dhunpath & Vithal 2012; Goastellec 2008). Tertiary institutions were academic “ivory towers” where the best students were chosen for training towards the service needs of the local economy and public service (Darvas, Balla & Fedaa 2014). It taught few disciplines for training professions like law and medicine. Only a privileged few could access it after passing an institutional entrance examination (Goastellec 2008). Its role was to reinforce the power of the elite of a common ethnic, religious, professional or social status

and – in colonies - the colonizer's power. It was often inherited and as such legitimated some social inequality as naturally fair (Goastellec 2008).

According to Mohamedbhai (2014) until the first half of the 20th century, education in Europe and most industrialized countries were reserved for these social elites, mostly males and a minute proportion of the population. In the South African context, the apartheid system is the closest most recent form of elitist educational system, where racial groups had differential and prejudicial access to different qualities of education.

2.1.2 The massive access model

Mohamedbhai (2014) notes that the term massification was coined to describe the massive increase in enrollment in higher education following the increase in the number of adults with tertiary qualification from 22 percent in 1975 to 40 percent in 2000 in OECD countries. The massive or widening access model emerged for a variety of reasons, including the growing outcry for equality of rights. First conceived in the early 1900s in Britain, other nations like the United States, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa modelled widening access in practice (Warren 2002: 85; Schalkwyk, Leibowitz & Van Der Merwe 2009). Access was no longer reserved for the elite, but also to those considered very intelligent based on a national entrance examination or matriculation results. It now served a massive segment of young adults in most developed as well as most lower-middle-income economies (Darvas, Balla & Deda 2014: 86; Kourcky, Burtusek and Koverovic 2007).

This model sought to develop students' capabilities, key skills, and lifelong learning (Warren 2002: 86) with the primary motive of equipping graduates for the knowledge economy, the world of work and the global age (Warren 2002; Goastellec 2008). Diversifying the racial, social and economic backgrounds of those receiving tertiary education became an important consideration for widening access for the purposes of equity and equality of access. Thus diversification became an affirmative action imperative. Higher education began to serve as a tool for understanding the legitimacy of social organizations and restructuring society to abate the divisive issues of race, gender, disability, ethnicity, religion, socioeconomic background and social class (Goastellec 2008). As national economies change there is a growing demand for a diverse workforce with specialized skills and education and therefore improved participation rates and wider access dominate the shifts and discourses in higher education institutions.

The universal right to primary education also influenced the organization of tertiary education, leading to growing demands for normalizing and widening access (Schalkwyk, Leibowitz & Van Der Merwe 2009; Goastellec 2008; Warren 2002). Previously excluded groups now had access to tertiary education (Goastellec 2008), but the elitist principle lingered in the selection criteria as academic performance remained attributed to natural intelligence alone, denying ‘the influence of socio-economic determinants of scholastic achievements’ (Goastellec 2008: 74). Factors like race, gender, disability and social class also continued to influence access (Reay, David & Ball 2005; Chang 2002).

During the 1960s and the 1970s the numbers and types of tertiary institutions increased in different countries, indicating diverse reasons for effecting these changes. France doubled the number and geographical location of tertiary institutions, expanding to smaller towns in the 1980s. South African tertiary institutions also increased for the purpose of serving the government policies on separate development within this period. National access policies were developed in these countries to give the non-traditional student an access option. The diversification of degrees and the creation of new kinds of institutions provided non-traditional students with some higher education, but there was no equal opportunity of access (Goastellec 2008). Legal sanctions were soon used to open up access beyond the ruling groups. What emerged was a model that was formally equal, but apart.

Some scholars located South Africa’s tertiary education participation under the massive access model in 2007, given its 16% participation rate (Dhunpath & Vithal 2012: 5; Scott 2009). Others located it within the apartheid days of the Group Areas Act and separate development (Goastellec 2008). The incorporation of economic growth and development into the role of Higher Education (Kourcky, Burtusek and Koverovic 2007; Moore 2003; Warren 2002) elicited two broad criteria for admissions. Some universities in France, South Africa, Indonesia, and Ireland were accessed through matriculation/school leaving certificate results while others used a national entrance examination. The United States moved from a national entrance examination in the first half of the 20th Century (Goastellec 2008: 78), to curb the limitation inherent in collective inequality of opportunities based on the diversities of social backgrounds of students. It adopted affirmative action policies to compensate those from previously disadvantaged backgrounds in the 1990s, only to abandon it for more holistic admission processes (Goastellec 2004 cited in Goastellec 2008: 78).

Smith (2012) notes that massification has increased diversity in the student body in a way that poses a challenge to higher education as a whole. Dietsche (2009) critiques the 20th Century industrial age model for largely ignoring this student diversity by providing a “one size fits all” learning environment. He proposed a 21st Century delivery model based on information and communication technology: a model that is attentive to student diversity, targeting the individual learner through personalized learning opportunities and experiences. This concern is largely addressed by the universal access or equity of access model discussed below.

2.1.3 The Universal Access Model, Equity of Access and Affirmative Action principles

The Conference of Ministers of Education of European Member States of UNESCO on Access to Higher Education, held in Vienna in 1967 emphasized the importance of Higher Education for economic, social and cultural development globally (Teferra 2014; Brew & Jewell 2012; Dhunpath & Vithal 2012: 3). This view is popular among scholars in the field of ADP (Kioko 2010; Prebble *et al.* 2004; Warren 2002; Moore 2003; Dhunpath, Nakabugo & Amin 2013; Kourcky, Burtusek and Koverovic 2007), with other issues like social transformation, equity, national and international development also being highly considered.

Equality of access criteria into tertiary institutions was officially endorsed by the “World Declaration on Higher Education for the Twenty-first Century: Vision and Action” adopted at the 1998 World Conference on Higher Education (Goastellec 2008: 77). Section three of the report, dedicated to Equity of Access, invoked Article 26.1 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights that Higher Education admission must be on demonstrable merit, capacity, effort, perseverance and devotion by aspirants (Johnson & Narsiah 2015; Smith 2012). It also revoked admission discriminations based on age, race, gender, language, religion, economic status, cultural background, social distinction, or physical disabilities. This broadened access to targeted group members like indigenous people, cultural and linguistic minorities, disadvantaged groups, people living under occupation and people with disabilities.

Two categories of equity dynamics in access now included: inherited merit and equal opportunities principle³. The first category mirrors past elitist considerations. The second uses funding policies to determine an institution’s provision for equity of access (Goastellec 2008: 72; Sennett 2003). Equal opportunity in higher education was first justified as a compensation for the previously disadvantaged. HE (Higher Education) admission equity

³ One level of the new construction of learners is the equal opportunity construction introduced by policy.

norms. Justification then shifted towards social identities as a subsidiary to admitting students based on their academic results (Goastellec 2008: 76). This originated in the United States but is now popular in Australia, South Africa, India and indeed globally. Government funding through affirmative action policies has enhanced the admission of underprivileged students (Schalkwyk, Leibowitz & Van Der Merwe 2009).

Equity of access to people from different social and racial backgrounds followed the shift in the responsibility of HE to include development and poverty reduction resulting from more stringent control of states over the HE system in order to steer it more effectively towards economic development, social reconstruction and equity (Moore 2003; Goastellec 2008). Universities now have to develop curriculum models that cater for this diversified student body while meeting the requirements for each professional domain (Warren 2002: 86). The justification of this approach is provided as follows:

The demands related to economic growth and technological development as well as tougher competition as a result of globalization, make it a necessity to use the potential of the entire population, of all social groups and, consequently, to enhance the level of their education and skills to the largest possible degree. At the same time, society is changing and becoming more democratic, and it provides far more opportunity for people to improve their position and life situation. ...tertiary education in particular is seen as a major factor (and a prerequisite) for becoming successful. Efforts to enhance one's own position or that of one's children naturally result in the growth of educational aspiration in all social groups (Kourcky, Burtusek & Koverovic (2007: 3),

Through Affirmative Action policies in nations like Indonesia, Ireland, and South Africa, students from socially disadvantaged families with achievement below the Leaving Certificate requirements for traditional students gained tertiary admission (Rollnick 2010; Clancy, 2006 in Goastellec 2008: 79). Israeli and Ethiopian Universities used the same national higher education admission examination while lower levels of achievement were expected from women, disabled students and those from disadvantaged regions. Although France opened admission for all, access is still sought for students from selected High Schools (Goastellec 2008). These are instances that support the formalization of a new means of admitting previously disadvantaged students in many nations in the form of Access or Extended Curriculum Programmes.

There are concerns that this increasing demand for Higher Education has forced institutions to sacrifice personal interaction for mass modes of delivery in crowded tutorials. Curricula are failing while 'scholarly contemplation and leisurely reflection has given way to forms of

rote learning, and market-like analogies have become commonplace within and among institutions and national governing systems' (Bitzer 2000: 138). This poses a considerable challenge to the widening participation agenda in higher education internationally (Warren 2002). Part-time students and those from ethnic minorities usher in a markedly diverse student body, posing a challenge for developing a suitable curriculum model. In response to this constraint, Mohammedbhai (2014: 59) reckons that 'most public higher education in African, in response to historical conditions, have enrolled students in excess of their capacity, resulting in massification and negative consequences of educational quality'. Hence, while issues of equity of access have been addressed, equity of success of the enrolled students remains a problem (CHE 2013).

Hence, Academic Development Programmes of different kinds have been implemented to facilitate not only widening access but also the implementation of some of the new curriculum designs aimed at enhancing success (Engelbrecht, Harding & Potgieter 2014). The evolution of these programmes is important for understanding our case study. The ECP, which is just one example of an ADP, has evolved through research and policy reform to reduce the negative implications of widening access. This field is still open to research, and the current study contributes towards bridging this gap through its investigation of students' experiences of such programmes. This is in line with the recommendations of scholars like Mohadedbhai (2014); Firfirey and Carolissen (2010); and Sennett *et al.* (2003) that more studies should focus on students' experiences of widening access to tertiary education and the factors that affect their successes and failures.

The current study joins the debate in assessing other factors that affect underprepared students' academic performances through their own attributions of their success and failure. It questions the notion of natural intelligence by appealing to other factors that facilitate or constrain students' success. It assesses the personalised learning opportunities and experiences of ECP learners in order to inform policy. Its methodology and approach also respond to concerns that improving Post-Secondary Education completion rates calls for significant changes in HE institutions' interaction with students. It seeks to understand how the learning environment offers opportunities for attending to specific experiences of individual students.

The focus on previously excluded students assesses the difference between socio-economic determinants and natural intelligence on their academic performance. Using social

constructivism and attribution theory, the study hopes to unearth the contribution of the social environment to the development of one's intelligence, or to one's learning abilities that determines success or failure of students in tertiary institutions.

2.1.4 Implications of widening access

Bloom *et al.* (2014) resist a perception that the international development community encouraged African governments to neglect higher education since it has less impact in the promotion of poverty alleviation. Although this perception is fiercely rejected by the majority of other scholars like Devas, Ballal and Feda (2014); Firfirey and Carolissen (2010); Sennett *et al.* (2003); it is used to justify the meagre 6% tertiary enrolment rate in Sub-Saharan Africa (Bloom 2014). Evidence of this is notable in technological catch-up, economic backwardness, technological retardation, and the poverty gap in the continent. The UNESCO World Conference on Higher Education in 1998 called for equity of access as a worldwide concern, indicating that some groups are still deprived access, despite the proliferation of the number of students entering tertiary institutions (Dhunpath & Vithal 2012).

Massification and widening participation in education have since become a worldwide phenomenon due to factors like affirmative action policies, population growth, democratic governance and gender-related policies (Jensen 2011; Schalkwyk, Leibowitz & Van Der Merwe 2009; Goastellec 2008; Prebble *et al.* 2004). Enrolment increased in tertiary institutions in Britain by 21% between the 1980s and 2000 (Warren 2002: 85-86). In South Africa, participation rates went from 13% in 2000 to 16% in 2007 (Dhunpath & Vithal 2012). The phenomenon has driven national and international development through the discourses on reconstruction, internationalisation, competition and cooperation in both developed and developing countries.

This increasing access to Higher Education institutions has been justified by notions of equity of access for people, especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds (Warren 2002; Boughey 2010; McKenna 2010; Kioko 2010). It is considered a matter of social justice, despite the unsettled criteria for both access and equity in local contexts (Dhunpath, Nakabugo & Admin 2013). The CHE (2016) titled: *South African Higher Education Review: Two Decades of Democracy* records that by 2013, 55% of whites of tertiary age were participating in higher education while the percentage of blacks participating have only grown from 16% in 2013 to 19% in 2016.

Recurring concerns about universities' capacities to accommodate the rapidly increasing and diversifying student populations does not prescribe in any satisfactory manner what universities are for, although it is expected to go beyond knowledge production (Mohamedbhai 2014; Dhunpath, Nakabugo & Amin 2013; Collini 2012). This discourse is made more urgent, given the prevailing data indicating that Sub-Saharan African countries still do not compete against other regions in terms of equity in the tertiary education participation (Mohamedbhai 2014). Thus, advocating education for all is critical to the South African situation (Dhunpath, Nakubugo & Amin 2013; Boughey 2010; Moor 2003; Warren 2002). This is also seriously challenged by the growing outcry that some students are underprepared (Dhunpath, Nakabugo & Amin 2013; Warren 2002). The popular discourse is therefore on how to deal with the growing number of underprepared students gaining access into universities. The next section discusses the notion of underpreparedness

2.2. Students' Underpreparedness

The term underpreparedness has been used to describe students who are "lacking basic skills in at least one of the three basic areas of reading, writing or mathematics" (Tritelli, 2003). According to Ramapela (2012) and Dzubak (2007) students are considered underprepared if they lack above academic skills, or if they have insufficient personal understanding of the academic culture and of what is required to successfully study and learn in the tertiary environment. As students with diverse backgrounds enter the university, the poor ones are 'disadvantaged' by their impoverished educational backgrounds (Smith 2012). Ramapela (2012) adds that the factors that characterized students underpreparedness includes students neediness in areas like mastery of study materials, coping with examination stress, writing academic assignments and understanding real study material. These factors affect their academic achievements. Hence, the high numbers of students entering tertiary institutions have not been prepared for in terms of structures, and resources. For this reason, many students making it into the universities are dropping out. Firfirey and Carolissen (2010: 987) observes that 'approximately 60 percent of students dropped out of university and that 70 percent of families of higher education dropouts are poor'.

Students who have come from underprepared backgrounds continue to be impacted by their poor backgrounds. Their poor social and emotional adjustments capacities pose some serious challenges for them (Sennett *et al.* 2003), since they have to 'use multiple strategies to

circumvent the psychological distress associated with poverty and to disguise their poverty' (Firfirey & Corolissen 2010: 987). They have to take responsibility for their poverty while at the same time attributing them to structural factors. This is under the pressure that economically disadvantaged youth consider a tertiary degree as the only way to overcome their poverty, hence they are resilience in the midst of the difficulty. It becomes even more challenging when Higher Education institutions misrecognize them or use a disadvantaged discourse to discriminate against them (Smith 2012).

This 'disadvantaged' discourse has been criticised as being uncritical (Godsell 2013; Smith 2012). It is also considered a deficit thinking model, which negatively impacts on pedagogy due to its focus on student inadequacies to succeed in a fair institution. The focus becomes a need to fix these students, undermining the more fundamental structural and institutional issues that need redress. It has been contended that universities desperately need to adjust to meet the new criteria of students gaining entry. The situation is worsened by the social and political pressures on African tertiary institutions to respond to historical conditions by enrolling more students than they are capacitated to comfortably and successfully handle (Mohamedbhai 2014). Dhupath and Vital (2012) note that the undepreparedness could be more on the institutions rather than the students.

In the 1980s and 1990s Sub-Saharan higher education was abandoned and under-funded. Students from poor backgrounds continue to be challenged by their financial lack which prompts them to construct a fear that they might not succeed in their studies due to these financial challenges. Dzubak (n.d), notes that their perceived deficiency or dilemma in the South African context has been attributed to the political and historical legacies of apartheid. On the one hand, higher education must address development challenges. On the other hand, institutions face shortages that range from human, physical to financial pressures which affect the quality of education.

It is against this backdrop that the current study aligns with Godsell's (2013) argument that universities need to learn lessons from the experiences and voices of the least well off students in their constructions of their successes and failures for the purpose of viable institutional change. Firfirey and Carolissen (2010) recommend that more qualitative research is needed in this area as it holds implications for student access to university, their retention, and their drop-out rates in higher education institutions. The current study directly responds

to this recommendation. It attempts to bridge an extant gap in the literature with a focus on ADP students.

Academic Development Programmes emerged, among other reasons, to facilitate the admission and support of underprepared students. The current study on the factors to which students on an extended curriculum access programme attribute their successes and failures is necessary to inform how best to increase access to higher education for these students. Since ADP are often meant to support mainly students from disadvantaged backgrounds, lessons could be learnt from such students to inform institutional and structural changes in a tertiary institution. The hope is that findings inform the needed transformation in a South African tertiary institution as envisaged by scholars like Firfirey & Corralissen (2010) and Sennett *et al.* (2003). The next section engages with the discourses on ADPs in general and locates the ECP as a type of ADP that facilitates access of non-traditional students, on which this study focuses.

2.3 Academic Development Programmes (ADPs)

Academic Development (AD) in South Africa is defined by the Higher Education Quality Committee as

A field of research and practice that aims to enhance the quality and effectiveness of teaching and learning in higher education, and to enable institutions and the higher education system to meet key educational goals, particularly in relation to equity of access and outcomes' (HEQC, 2007: 74 cited in Dhunpath & Vithal 2012: viii).

The integrated term Academic Development Programs (ADPs) denotes practical steps, not necessarily theories; they may be born of AD research but refer to development interventions for staff, students/learners, curriculum and institutions/organisations. ADPs are recognised worldwide as strategies designed to improve the academic ability of individuals in order to improve teaching and learning in tertiary institutions (Prebble *et al.* 2004; Nel & Nel 2009: 127; HELTASA 2010). Carew *et al.* (2008), Kreber (2004) and Prebble *et al.* (2004) describe academic development of teaching as a focus on staff development which caters for academic staff in the form of conferences, seminars, workshops and sabbaticals. There are also ADPs for learning; which cater for the academic development needs of students (Boughey 2010; Prebble *et al.* 2004).

However, academic development for learning is strongly based on academic development for teaching. Learning in higher education is supported by a good teaching approach (Scott, Yeld & Hendry 2007). Scholars have argued that experiences from the first two should contribute to the third – curricular and institutional development - where positive change is envisaged (Warren 2002; Goastellec 2008; Moore 2003). The current study locates itself within this discourse in trying to assess students' learning experiences in order to make policy suggestions towards institutionalisation of the ECP, while contributing to the field of students' learning experiences.

Some of the popular reasons why ADPs are considered necessary are often student outcomes described in terms of persistence, retention, completion, graduation, and their antonyms withdrawal, non-completion, drop-out, stop-out, attrition, departure (Prebble *et al.* 2004: 51). ADPs often attempt to reduce the negative student's outcomes listed above, but are also increasingly used as a means of widening access to Higher Education, especially for the previously disadvantaged (Goastellec 2008; Kioko 2010; Smith, Case & Walbeek 2014).

The current study's interest is in the academic development programme for student learning, otherwise referred to as student support (Boughey 2010: 4; Nel & Nel 2009: 120; Preble *et al.* 2004). This is because, despite the proliferation of literature on learning experiences on the one hand, and ADPs on the other, not much literature exists on students' learning processes as affected by academic development programmes, how these programmes actually enhance learning, or how their experiences can contribute towards institutional change.

Within Academic Support for learning, two categories of programmes can be deciphered: AD for Access and other Academic Support Programmes to facilitate learning within university mainstream programmes (Prebble *et al.* 2004; Kioko 2010; Goestellac 2008; Nel & Nel 2009; Boughey 2008; Smith, Case & Walbeek 2014). The access support often but not always continues beyond the access year with the aim of facilitating students' success towards graduation. The focus of this study is on the ADPs for Access; thus, the thesis joins the debate with a focus on how the Extended Curriculum Programme (ECP) facilitates the learning experiences of underprepared students from underprivileged backgrounds admitted into the university. Students' attribution of success and failure is the main focus of the study.

Most studies on ADPs are focused on aggregating outcomes (Smith, Case & Walbeek 2014; Prebble *et al.* 2004; Nala 2010; Tyson 2010, Boughey 2011; Kloot, Case & Marshall 2008; Goestellac 2008), hence the current study's interest in the processes of such programmes that are often overlooked by the exclusive focus on outcomes. Studying the processes and factors that contribute towards student learning experiences is vital for programme improvements because they constitute primary determinants of the outcomes. The current study allows a different way of assessing the factors that lead to both desirable and undesirable outcomes, following from and building on some of the limitations of Clarence-Fincham's (1998) study which focused on academic literacy component of the ECP.

Popham's (2014) study titled: *The Right Test for the Wrong Reason* found that a programme targeting low learners can significantly enhance their cognitive and learning abilities. Kloot, Case and Marshall (2008) also discuss how the Access Programme in the University of Cape Town considers factors that affect students learning. They endorse that targeting disadvantaged students, as the current study does, can enhance their learning abilities.

The current study examines how education can be understood through the lived experiences (Godsell 2013: 2) of underprepared students. More precisely the study assesses how target students articulate their experiences of learning, paying specific attention to the factors to which they attribute their success or failure. The study builds on assertions of scholars like Nel and Nel (2009: 128), Boughey (2010), Hutching, Garraway & Levendal (2010: 5) that we must be critical about how we know, in order to contribute positively to how knowledge is discussed within ADPs. Students' learning experiences are significant to how knowledge grows and how students grow or fail to grow in their capacity to learn.

The study thus aims to contribute to this discourse by questioning why target students have specific experiences of learning. The researcher hopes to theorize an approach to learning that emerges from these students' experiences for the sake of a more responsive policy approach to address the problem. An evaluative case study attempts to explain students' perspectives on why they struggle or succeed academically during or after undergoing the first year Access/Extended Curriculum Programme within the college of Humanities at UKZN. It questions why ADPs are essential and how they can be improved in the light of students' experiences within and through them. The next section considers the trends in ADPs.

2.3.1. Global Trends of Academic Development Programmes

Scholars are not unanimous regarding the impact of increasing access to low-income and underprepared students. While ADPs have become popular as a means of admitting underprepared students, some studies contend that widening participation has not resulted in a corresponding increase in the graduation rates of these students. Studies in New Zealand and the United States also affirm that minority groups are most often affected by attrition issues in higher education (Prebble *et al.* 2004; Jensen 2011:1).

Scott (2009: 21) found that, at South African Universities, about 30% of the undergraduate intake drop out or are excluded at the end of their first year. As a result, different approaches are being advanced by different universities in different countries around the world to address the diverse learning needs of their students (Warren 2002, Higher Education in Context 2012; Hutchings, Garraway & Levendal 2010: 4; Nel & Nel 2009; Boughey 2010). The trend of making efforts to mitigate high dropout rate common in the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Nigeria, Botswana and South Africa (Boughey 2010; Dart 2007; Sennet *et al.* 2003; NPHE 2010; NCHE 1996; White Paper on Reconstruction and Development RSA 1994; Tyson 2010).

Tinto and Pusser (2006) note that 90 percent of underprepared students who find themselves at university in the United States are desperate for some remediation and are at significant risk of failing to complete their degrees. Similar instances of efforts to increase access to higher education in Ireland and Scotland are expressed in the quote below:

Ireland had launched its 'National Plan for Equity and Access to Higher Education 2008-2013, which aimed to 'tackle the complex set of social, economic and educational issues that interact to prevent those at greatest disadvantage from benefiting fully from education' (2008: 5). The Scottish 'More Choices, More Chances' strategy for reducing the number of young people who are not in Education, Employment or Training (Scottish Government, 2006) contains [a] 39-point action plan to be delivered by central and local government and other key stakeholders, such as colleges and universities (Dhunpath & Vithal 2012: 4)

Some ADP interventions have been based on theories that point to students' academic, social and cultural integration in the university setting as a major determinant of students' attrition or retention (Jensen 2011: 1; Prebble *et al.* 2004; Schalkwyk, Leibowitz & Van Der Merwe 2009: 6). Others, like the Scottish example cited earlier, target school age pupils in need of support that would prevent them from leaving the educational system after the compulsory education (Mullen 2010: 6, cited in Dhunpath & Vithal 2012: 4).

The history of Academic Development in South Africa dates back to the 1980s (Volbrecht & Boughey 2004; Van Schalkwyk, Leibowitz & van Der Merwe 2009). Although it has lacked a systematic approach, it has been characterized by an interest in social justice and equity and the recognition of students as human beings. This approach provides the impetus for future holistic approaches to AD; including the first-year experience. Boughey (2010) indicates how the three decades of ADPs in South Africa have revealed their tendency to identify the problem from one of two common perspectives.

On the one hand, there are initiatives which locate the problem of underpreparedness, which the majority of the ADPs try to address, in the students themselves (Kioko 2010; Parkinson *et al.* 2008; van Wyke & Greyling 2008; Enslin *et al.* 2006; Warren 2002; Prebble *et al.* 2004; Lea & Street 1998). These students have been considered to lack skills, conceptual backgrounds and language proficiencies required to enable their tertiary endeavours (CHE 2013). Locating the problem of underpreparedness on the student resulted in the field being referred to as Academic Support (Boughey 2010). It is now generally considered as a defeatist model (Smit 2012).

On the other hand, there are initiatives which locate the problem of underpreparedness on the institutions admitting these students for their un-readiness (Dhunpath & Vithal 2012; Boughey 2010; Goastellec 2008; Warren 2002; Moore 2003). Since the 1980s a group of scholars, in the mid-1980s, began to challenge the notion of underpreparedness embedded in the students and began to lay the problem on the institutions (Smit 2012; Vilakazi & Tema 1985 cited in Boughey 2010). This followed a critical orientation to research and to the way we learn, mainly research-led aimed understanding. The assertion was that an exclusive location of the problem on the student was a fundamental error (Vilakazi 1985 cited in Boughey 2010).

This shift in focus also led to the shift in nomenclature from Academic Support to Academic Development (Boughey 2010). The dichotomy remains the primary and main challenge of progress in the field as some practitioners in AD fields continue to locate deficiencies in the students (Boughey 2010) breeding a prejudiced and stigmatizing perception of these students. Responding to such concerns, Tinto and Pusser (2006: 2) argued that ‘though we are increasingly able to explain why it is that students leave and in some cases why students persist, we are still unable to tell institutions what to do to help students stay and persist’.

The current study is part of the initiative to bridge the gap in the dichotomy between focusing on students as deficient or on the university needing improvement. This informs the study's use of students' reports on their experiences to influence institutional change in the practice. It also bridges the limitations of other studies attempting to address this gap by suggesting that the problem may be addressed if language courses are added for all students with the hope that those struggling would benefit (Nel & Nel 2009). Meanwhile, diversities in institutions seem to make it impossible for some generic answer to these important questions. An initial case by case attention seems necessary because while some ADPs focus on enhancing access, others are focused on enhancing success, improving performance or facilitating higher throughput. This warrants some attention on the diversity of approaches to ADPs.

2.4. Forms and Approaches to Academic Development Programmes (ADPs)

The conceptualization of forms and approaches to ADPs are so diverse and varied that it is difficult to present a coherent synthesis (van Schalkwyk, Leibowitz & van Der Merwe 2009). Meanwhile, some scholars hold that these programmes lack structure, while other scholars have attempted to present models and approaches to ADP.

Prebble *et al.* (2004) argue that the internal bodies within the institution that run ADPs do not base them on any particular research model; mainly because most ADPs generally consist of extra classes to supplement the ones that the learners involved currently take. Tinto and Pusser (2006: vii) assert that 'less attention has been paid to the development of a model of institutional action that provides institutions guidelines for effective action to increase student persistence and in turn student success'. Boughey (2010: 4) explains that the practices that constitute ADPs emerged based on needs at different university environments, not necessarily on well-developed theoretical groundings. This constrains comparison of ADP with the same goals in different institutions.

Some models and approaches to ADPs have been proposed, but given the complexity of reasons for instituting ADPs it is not feasible to expect one model to answer every ADP related question. Moreover, contextual issues determine the diversity of approaches. Boughey (2010: 4) offered some recommendations for the way academic development can be used to contribute to the improvement of efficiency in the higher education system in the medium

(2020) to long (2030) term in South Africa. Boughey identifies three categories of ADPs, which overlap in practice, not based on essential differences from each other or historical evolution, but because they emerged as dominant discourses for articulating these practices. These three different forms/phases of academic development and support programmes in South Africa include: (i) Academic Support, (ii) Academic Development and (iii) Institutional Support. The analysis is meant to make clear the assumptions underpinning each one and to explore the conditions prevalent in the HE system over time.

Van Schalkwyk, Leibowitz and van Der Merwe (2009) agree that there is an urgent need to systematize such transformation; reckoning with McInnis (2001), for a move beyond a focus on student underpreparedness in support initiatives because an exclusive focus on student support marginalizes academic development and thus lacks the potential to influence the entire institution. Kloot, Case and Marshall (2008: 801) observe that when a shift occurred from academic support to academic development, the term 'foundation' emerged to describe a set of courses that attempted to lay the necessary academic foundations for further study.

Van Schalkwyk, Leibowitz and van Der Merwe (2009) observe that there has been a call for student-centered approaches to learning within these programmes for about three decades now. They emphasize the caution that this should not be narrowed to students support, observing that the varieties of interventions with their innovation and sound pedagogies still represent different forms of student support activities. In this regard, scholars like Nel and Nel (2009) and Warren (2002) present different approaches to ADPs with common grounds on their curriculum model. Their different approaches are reconcilable to a certain extent.

On the other hand, Warren (2002) classifies ADPs based on their curriculum approach and presents three different curriculum design approaches to ADPs for undergraduate students in a context of widening participation in higher education in South Africa and Australia (Warren 2002). These approaches include: (i) the separate approach, (ii) the semi-integrated approach and (iii) the integrated approach to ADPs. The emphasis is that each ADP should clearly specify which approach it is advancing in addressing the problem and why it is approaching the problem from that perspective. Boughey (2010) explained that this is pertinent because the ADP approach determines the curriculum model employed. Warren's (2002) models or approaches are ideal for understanding of the ECP, the focus of the current study.

Meanwhile each of Warren's (2002) approaches has specific assumptions and recommendations for specific ways of targeting the groups, tied to a goal. The **separate approach** targets non-traditional students - those students who do not enter the university directly from secondary schools and are thus underprepared. Such support could be undertaken in a different setting from the university. This approach is often critiqued for being so far removed from the university environment that it fails to induct students into the university. Sometimes, the content has no relation to mainstream and students fail to transfer skills learnt when they get into the university environment, thus failing to integrate. The University of Cape Town (UCT) launched the Science Foundation Programme (SFP) in 1986, while the University of Natal-Pietermaritzburg launched a similar programme in 1991.

Dhunpath and Vithal (2012) note further limitations of this approach as anchored in its limiting of the notion of underpreparedness to the black student from disadvantaged schools, ignoring that many students with excellent matriculation results found themselves struggling and alienated from the pedagogies which universities were not managing properly. These foundational approaches were also employing staff who themselves lacked knowledge of the social practices in the universities because they were not members of university staff and thus could not properly induct students into the universities through these programmes. Its conceptualization of transformation by foundational courses entailed remedying perceived students' deficits; teaching them specific skills failed to facilitate their immersion into the teaching and learning that gives them epistemological access. The recycling of the students' deficit syndrome is not only discriminatory and stigmatizing, but also seen to forestall academic development and institutional transformation (Dhunpath & Vithal 2012; Smit 2012Vithal).

The **semi-integrated approach** constitutes mainly study skills development that are integrated into the curriculum but are still standing alone. This is akin to Boughey's (2010) idea of Academic Support mentioned earlier, it may constitute non-credit bearing modules and other interventions. This approach has the weakness of not gaining buy-in from students if they are non-credit bearing towards students' graduation. Besides, after their first year of studies, such support often does not continue. This focus on student support and on skills which they might be missing was identified earlier as marginal academic development. It could be exclusive and stigmatizing to the students and lacks the potential to influence the entire institution (Van Schalkwyk, Leibowitz and van Der Merwe 2009).

The **integrated approach** focuses more on undergraduate students, and provides them with access routes into higher education; this has much in common with Boughey's (2010) Academic Development in the sense that students receive the support within the University setting and the support is integrated into the mainstream curriculum. It encourages students to develop personal, professional, communicative and learning skills in order to understand and apply knowledge. Where modules constitute part of the approach, the modules may be credit bearing. The weakness of this approach lies in the fact that the support is often only during the first year of studies and students begin to fail after the support phase is over. Van Schalkwyk, Leibowitz and van Der Merwe (2009) add that the weakness of such students support activities is their lack of systematic attempts towards transformation. The Extended Curriculum programme – that this study is concerned with - straddles the second and the third approaches. The evolution of the Extended Curriculum Programme, and its embodiments of these different approaches are discussed further in Chapter four.

Other approaches that attempt to build on the weaknesses of the integrated module as described by Boughey (2010) are similar to the one proposed by Nel and Nel (2009), who propose a three-tier model of language development critical to students' success in higher education. According to them, a successful integration of these different phases based on students' needs would reduce the level of attrition resulting from poor background and underpreparedness. This should more likely be an integrated approach. It is a component of approaches like academic literacy, mentorship programmes, student's counseling programmes, financial aid schemes or a combination of some of these programmes. The problem with this approach is pre-supposing that language is the only reason behind students' attrition, it could also have some serious financial implications.

Nevertheless, the successful aspects of each of these approaches can be incorporated to form a more practicable approach, using Tinto's integrative theoretical model of departure. Prebble *et al.* (2004) assert that the model's longitudinal theoretical nature provides room for the interaction of personal, institutional and social factors influencing the departure decision. It also leaves room for the critical functions of both academic and social factors as important influences of student outcomes. The model has been widely tested and has attracted both support and critics alike. Braxton (2000 cited in Prebble *et al.* 2004: 51) indicates that its critics fall into two broad groups: those who wish to revise and improve, and those who

propose alternative theories. The earlier group retains the idea of assimilating students into the institutions of the university, while the latter argue for adaptation, calling for institutional change to accommodate diverse students.

The argument in support of the latter group is that students tend to persist if they perceive that their cultural values are accommodated and respected among other diverse cultures represented (van Schalkwyk, Leibowitz & van Der Merwe 2009; Prebble *et al.* 2004). The bridge that the institution creates between students' culture of origin and immersion are considered as very significant and important by students. These factors are the concern of Dhunpath and Vital (2012) in the book: "Alternative Access to Higher Education: Underprepared Students or Underprepared Institutions?"

The current study also responds to similar concerns like Dhunpath and Vithal (2012) on identifying a more comprehensive way forward through investigating from the students, what they need by first of all understanding how they attribute success or failure. It also responds to the views of Godsell (2013: 2) that integrating students' experiences and history into the educational scenarios would empower them with the critical thinking skills relevant to their experiences and prepare them to resolve their own socio-economic and political problems.

Reflecting on Tinto's approach is useful for facilitating this process, despite the apparent limitations. The main focus of the current study, therefore, is on how the Extended Curriculum Programme affects students' development of learning capabilities; compared to what they attribute their success and failures in learning to. It takes their backgrounds into consideration and tries to determine how they fit into the literatures on learning approaches. It differs from Tyson's (2010) use of the Tinto's *Student Integrations Model* to derive quantitative data for tentatively explaining ECP students' throughput and retentions results based on their perceptions.

The next section reviews literature on the different approaches to Access Academic Development programmes that are common in South Africa and beyond. This allows a focus on the characteristics of the ECP as an ADP.

2.4.1 ADP of Access in Africa and the Southern African Region

ADPs for access are common as redress measures in countries with a history of segregation based on gender, class, caste, ethnicity, language or religious backgrounds (Borden, Vital & Dhunpath 2012). Dhunpath and Vithal (2012) assert that despite the significant growth in gross tertiary enrolment worldwide since 1970, Sub-Saharan Africa still indicates low participation rates. In 2007, only 6% of the tertiary education age cohort was enrolled in tertiary institutions compared to the global average of 26% (UNESCO Institute of Statistics 2009 cited in Dhunpath & Vithal 2012: 4). This section engages with the issues of the dynamics of access to tertiary education.

The literature on Botswana and South Africa are among the most common on access to tertiary education in Southern Africa (Mabila *et al.*, cited in Tyson 2010: 48). South Africa's gross tertiary enrolments have grown by 11.4% of the tertiary age group in 37 years; from 4% in 1970 to 15.4% in 2007. These enrolments are below world enrolments which grew by 40% for the same period (Dhunpath & Vithal 2012: 4). Nevertheless, while the South African participation rate of 15.4% of the tertiary age group is more than double the Sub-Saharan regional average of 6%, it is also significantly lower than that of Latin America and the Caribbean countries of 31%, Central Asia has a 25% participation rate, while East Asia and the Pacific have participation rates of 25%. North America and Western Europe had participation rates of 70% in 2006 (Dhunpath & Vithal 2012: 5), this indicates that Africa is still lagging far behind in tertiary participation compared to other continents. The implication is that access to tertiary education in Africa still needs to be increased to meet global trends and to reap the fruits thereof. It is also necessary to ensure success of those who are being admitted; a matter of primary concern for the current study.

This elicits a need for a shift in the modes of providing access to the 21st Century student. The “one size fits all” learning environment of the 20th Century industrial age model must give way as a more diverse group is getting into the universities. The influence of information and communication technology also calls for sensitivity to diversity and change, and attention to individual learners with personalized learning opportunities and experiences (Dietsche 2009). The next section gives a brief overview of the ADPs for Access into tertiary educational institutions in South Africa.

2.4.2 ADP of Access to Tertiary Education in South Africa

Scott (2009) relates that according to the Gross Enrolment Rate (GER), the percentage of the 20-24 age group in the population in higher education in a given year is 16% in South Africa. This is lower than other countries of similar economic status, but too low in comparison to the minimum of 60% in developed countries. Whites have 60% participation, Indians 51%, while the coloureds and blacks have 12% each; an indication of why blacks are the main target for increasing access.

A review of the three decades since the establishment of ADPs in South African HEI indicates that they did not start at the same time, nor did they have a uniform approach. They were mainly reactive to 'improve black, Indian and coloured students' access to and retention in higher education (Smith Case & Walbeek 2014: 625). To ensure students' success with university curricula, the programmes took the forms of extra tutorials, bridging courses and additional courses in English and mathematics (Scott 2009 cited in Smith, Case and Walbeek 2014).

The transition from apartheid presented a unique context for understanding how education is conceptualized and transformed within similar conditions. The Minister of Education of the first democratic government, Sibusiso Bengu, noted that the structures of South African tertiary institutions were still marred by inequities, imbalances and other legacies of apartheid (NCHE 1996: 1). South African tertiary educational policies therefore needed to meet the principles of equity and redress; with the ultimate goal of providing education for all (Daly & Brown 2007; Sennet *et al.* 2003; Yeld 2001; Lange 2000; DoE 1997; NCHE 1996; White Paper on Reconstruction and Development). The Freedom Charter ignited the discourse on equity of access. It specified various definitions, implications, priorities and strategies necessary to guarantee access to and equity within higher education (CHE 2007 cited in Dhunpath & Vithal 2012: 6).

The South African National Plan envisaged the recruitment of students based on their demonstration of the potential for success (National Plan 2001: 21, cited in Dhunpath & Vithal 2012: 8). These policies have made access to tertiary institutions more flexible and more students who do not meet basic admission requirements are currently entering through Access or Extended Curriculum programmes. Government funding in the form of loans and grants were provided to facilitate this initiative, but the onus was on tertiary institutions to

deal constructively with the needs, while developing the skills of underprepared students through ADPs (Yeld 2001; DoE 1997). Rollnick (2010) asserts the need for Higher Education institutions to transform their practices in response to these new characteristics of students that are entering the university. Reconstruction of university cultures are required to ensure a receptive, and more advanced social environment for preparing students for the global society.

Borden, Vithal and Dhunpath (2012) refer to some studies conducted into the existing foundational programmes in the following South African Universities: University of Johannesburg (Machika 2007), Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University (Wood & Lithauer 2005), University of Limpopo (Mabila *et al.* 2006), Stellenbosch University (De Klerk *et al.* 2006) and University of Cape Town (Fourie 2009). Questions have been raised regarding ‘the extent to which students gain alternative access; the types of alternative access programmes available, their effectiveness and efficacy, graduation rates in comparison to each other and in comparison to mainstream students’ (Borden, Vithal & Dhunpath 2012: 108). They assert that the accounts of students’ success that is often used to support the continued resourcing of these programmes are often weakly substantiated. This motivates the current study’s focus on one institution to learn relevant lessons from students themselves within a single programme.

Meanwhile, two elements prescribed as critical for meeting redress include: (a) Access which ensures that no qualified person is denied access to Higher education. (b) Institutional support which ensures that past inequities and disproportionalities are recognized and properly addressed (NCHE 1996). This mirrors Freire’s (1993) advocacy for the education of the underprivileged as a necessary means for freeing them from the situation that keeps them ignorant and lethargic from all sorts of oppressive forces. It resonates with Tinto’s (2013) aphorism that access without support is not opportunity.

Nevertheless, the South African government’s target of 20% participation rate of all tertiary-age population in Higher Education in its National Plan (2001) has not been achieved (Dhunpath & Vithal 2012: 6). Hence, widening access through programmes like the ECP remains a prerogative: ‘although black students have constituted the majority of all students in public higher education since 2004, they are under-represented as a percentage of the

entire tertiary education age cohort'⁴⁴ (Dhunpath & Vithal 2012: 7). Whites top the ladder with about 55%, Indians with about 45%, and the coloureds are about the same with the blacks with about 15% participation rates in tertiary education as of 2008 (Dhunpath & Vithal 2012: 7). Africans and coloured students (12.8% and 13.6% respectively) are disproportionately represented compared to whites and Indians. These disproportionalities are used to both support the need, and question the efficacy of the existing Access programmes in widening access to higher education despite the considerable investment in these programmes. Added to the failure rates of these students, more studies are necessary to determine how best to bridge this gap, and the current study contributes in this regard.

It has been perceived that these programmes on their own have consistently not met the targets for which they were funded. In 2010, a nationwide total of 13,000 students gained access through foundation programmes (Smith, Case & Walbeek 2014). Nevertheless, the gap between the capacities of the underprepared students and the requirement for tertiary education looms large (Sennett *et al.* 2003; Anderson, Case & Lam 2001; NPHE 2001; NCHE 1996). Statistics reveal that the previously disadvantaged exhibit the highest attrition rates (DHET 2012; Boughey 2010). Despite these perceived inefficiencies, Smith, Case and Walbeek (2014) maintain that 'the primary source of an expanding future graduate body lies in the socioeconomically and educationally disadvantaged population, which makes up the greater proportion of the total population...' and this can be achieved through the ECP.

The question of whether to expand this graduate body through the ECP or through mainstream students has been highly contested and thus justifies the need for the current research which contributes to the discourse. The argument in support of the ECP as an access route is based on the assertion that the standards of higher education would not be lowered for underprepared students, because the educational system has the prerogative of being globally competitive and recognizable. The challenge lies in ensuring that these students have both the access and the means of succeeding in higher education with the required degree. Thus, South African government policies continue to work in concert with university officials and faculties, targeting academic bridging programmes for underprepared students as part of higher education's contribution to the reconstruction and development effort (Lindsay 1997). This endeavor has been expressed in several ways, including the ECP. Although there is a

⁴⁴ Their participation is still less than 15% of the proportion of their racial percentage in the republic.

chapter on the extended curriculum programme in UKZN, it is pertinent at this point to briefly review some literature on the Extended Curriculum Programme (ECP).

2.5. The Foundation, Access or Extended Curriculum Programmes

According to McNamee (1995 cited in Tyson 2010: 48), the motive behind the access programmes internationally is social justice and access to higher education for the disadvantaged. Therefore, as an alternative admissions program, the ECPs take into account both previous educational background and achievement, and academic potential. The names and approaches of these programmes have evolved over the years and Kloot, Case and Marshall (2008) note that the confusion over how the programmes are named follows the ad hoc mode of adopting them to meet the needs of the educationally disadvantaged.

Kloot, Case and Marshall (2008: 800) refer to **Foundation Programmes** as special programmes ‘for students whose prior learning has been adversely affected by educational or social inequalities’. In South Africa, Foundation Programmes emerged in the 1980s, about a decade before the democratic change, as a means for redressing the issues of the apartheid segregated education policies for previously disadvantaged population groups (Kloot, Case & Marshall 2008; Enslin *et al.* 2006). White English-medium universities first used them as **Academic support** for a small number of black students to address skills shortage among this population group. The need was reinforced by the decline from 17% to 15% in the number of students enrolling at universities in the late 1990s (Dhunpath & Vithal 2012). This added to the increased number of black students enrolling at the historically white institutions. These programmes have been called different names which the next sub-section highlights.

2.5.1 Access Academic Support or Bridging Programmes

Kloot, Case and Marshall (2008: 801) relate that they started off as **Academic Support Programmes** (ASPs), a response to the poor academic performance of the target students. The rationale for the programme was to support those students who were not appropriately and sufficiently prepared for the university environment due to their background and previous quality of schooling (Schalkwyk, Leibowitz & Van der Merwe 2009). Their aim was to fill the gaps left by inadequate, uncondusive and unsupportive secondary schooling (Enslin *et al.* 2006). They started with little or no theoretical backing (Dhunoath & Vithal 2012; Kloot, Case & Marshall 2008). It took an extra year to bridge the educational gap or limitation of secondary education in order to prepare students for tertiary studies.

The programme recognized the potential of previously disadvantaged students as the basis for their admission. It was anticipated that support from the programmes would socialize and integrate them into the university, ensuring their success (Boughey 2010; Schalkwyk, Leibowitz & van Der Merwe 2009). Nevertheless, academic support programmes were mainly separated from the mainstream and often not located at the same site. These programmes focused on trying to develop skills lacking in the underprepared students.

The main challenge of the Academic Support model was that although academics in these institutions accepted the initiative as a way of taking a stand against separate apartheid education, they were not actively involved in the act and practice of it (Kloot, Case & Marshall 2008). However, this separate approach of Academic Support allowed a disjuncture between university staff and the curriculum and what the academic developers were doing to prepare these students for an inflexible university structure. Kloot, Case and Marshall (2008) refer to it as a kind of “academic group areas”. Thus, these programmes remained a go between the universities and the black communities and a buffer against university transformation as it diverted such pressure for change. As ASP continued to be criticised, universities took a more decisive move towards underpreparedness in what was to be referred to as Academic Development or foundational Access Programmes.

2.5.2 Access Academic Development or Foundational Programmes

Volbrecht and Boughey (2004) cited in Kloot, Case and Marshall (2008) refer to the transition from Academic support to Academic Development as a paradigm shift. AD ‘meant a shift towards integration within [the] mainstream as tertiary institutions gradually began to take ownership of the phenomenon of underpreparedness’ (Volbrecht & Boughey 2004 cited in Kloot, Case & Marshall 2008: 801). Kloot, Case and Marshall (2008) contend that this shift in attitude marked the ushering of **Foundational Programmes** in previously white universities.

Lindsay (1997: 534) relates a senior faculty member’s description of the University's academic development initiatives as a "special program ...for students who make at least 51% on the matriculation examination, but who may have graduated from a school with limited curriculum and laboratory facilities." The objective is that those students who have successfully completed this programme also succeed in their regular university courses. Such

success in corrective initiatives of this kind should serve as models for ongoing affirmative action policies and programmes

The term “foundation” was used to refer to a set of courses that attempted to lay the necessary academic foundation for further study. It differed from the bridging programmes in its focus. Rather than trying to improve inadequate secondary education of the student, it was aiming to target students at the tertiary level. It was often located within the university environment, this gave it a more semi-integrated orientation. The University of Cape Town (UCT) launched its Science Foundation Programme (SFP) in 1986. The University of Natal-Pietermaritzburg instituted theirs in 1991 to lay a foundation for meaningful learning for the underprepared students (Kloot, Case & Marshall 2008).

According to Kioko *et al.* (2012), the Science Foundation Programme (SFP) in the College of Science, Agriculture and Engineering, at UKZN, registers underprepared students in a year-long pre-university level modules programme. These modules are supposed to be preparatory towards a degree in a science-related career. The SFP foundational modules include: Mathematics, Physics, Chemistry, Biology, Communication in Science and Life Skills. A pass of fifty percent in each course enables students to pursue their first year science degree at UKZN. This differed from the generic skills being taught in bridging academic support programmes.

This practice evolved, as the programmes began to develop new curricula and pedagogies that facilitate epistemological access for the students. It was able to boycott students’ feelings of alienation by appropriately scaffolding their transformation process into the university (Smith, Case & Walbeek; Enslin *et al.* 2006; Moore 2003; Warren 2002). In the early 1990s, the SFP courses were combined with first-year mainstream courses to develop the model now referred to as the “extended curriculum programme”.

2.5.3 The Access Extended Curriculum Programmes

The foundational or academic development model described earlier was associated with a high failure rate. This was against the expansion plans which focused not only on increasing African enrollments in education at all levels but also on retaining and graduating these students (Lindsay 1997). The ECP seemed to have emerged to combat this challenge based on its definition as:

A first degree or diploma programme that incorporates substantial foundational provisions ... additional to the coursework ... for the standard programme. The foundational provision incorporated must be (a) equivalent to one or two semesters of full-time study (b) designed to articulate effectively with the regular elements of the programme and (c) formally planned, scheduled and regulated as an integral part of the programme (DoE 2006 cited in Dhunpath & Vithal 2012: viii).

This entails the combination of foundational courses with the first-year mainstream courses so that first mainstream year is extended over two years. Kloot, Case and Marshall (2008: 802) assert the use of the term “extended curriculum programme” (ECP) by the DoE (2006) as not merely denoting a modified first-year, but to a full degree or diploma programme that incorporates within it some foundation courses. As such, an ‘extended programme’ refers to a degree or diploma that is extended or augmented by certain AD components, courses or modules (Kloot, Case & Marshall 2008: 802). This foundational provision is not necessarily limited to the first-year but could be built in at second or even third year level.

These access programs employ various pedagogical methods and ADP approaches to replace traditionally structured and discipline-based serial courses at the nation's universities. The degrees to be obtained are an open, flexible system that is "modular and credit based" (NCHE, 1996). The implication here is that being accepted into the ECP is equivalent to being admitted into a degree or diploma programme. The difference is that ECP students would take four years to complete an equivalent three year programme. These degrees have slightly different names for the qualification. Rather than normal BSS (Bachelor of Social Science degree), students of the ECP would graduate with a BSS4 (Bachelor of Social Science 4 years degree). The four is just an indication that the degree was structured to be completed in four years because of the foundational provisions in the first year. In the same light, there is the BCOM4 degree for commerce underprepared students and the BSC4 for the Science underprepared students.

This has become popular as the Academic Development Programme for Access in most South African tertiary institutions (Kloot, Case & Marshall 2008). Such a format allows the combination or development of innovative curriculum in the university mainstream (Kloot, Case & Marshall 2008: 802). Schalkwyk, Leibowitz and Van der Merwe (2009) justify the necessity of such programmes on finding that high schooling socializes students into approaches to learning which do not align with what is required at tertiary institutions as they do not promote open-mindedness, creativity and critical approaches to learning. This

argument is also used to justify why every student entering universities should receive such support in their first year.

Such programmes in the United States measure the academic merit of an individual regarding all the handicaps faced to reach this level (Goastellec 2008). Enslin *et al.* (2006) and Clarence-Fincham (2008) discuss the application of this holistic approach in the University of Witwatersrand and the University of KwaZulu-Natal respectively within ECPs. Each institution uses the Biographical Questionnaire (BQ), though uniquely to admit students with notable impacts. While the University of Witwatersrand uses it as a general admission tool before isolating those with potential from underprivileged backgrounds to be on the Access programme (Enslin *et al.* 2006), the College of Humanities in the University of KwaZulu-Natal uses it independently to admit students into the Extended Curriculum Programme (Clarence-Fincham 2008).

It is unclear whether using it as a general tool is more systematic than using it for only students from disadvantaged schools. The one gives every black student⁵ an equal chance of passing through the programme, thus responding albeit partially to the concerns of Dhunpath and Vithal (2012) about opening the programme up to all such students. Having said that, further research is needed to establish which of these access procedures are more favourable; and what the implications of choosing any of the approaches might be. Such comparisons of the different approaches to admitting students into the ECP is a worthwhile area for further research which goes beyond the focus of the current study.

This study can only contribute indirectly towards such research by assessing some factors that are necessary for an effective comparison of the approaches. Its focus on students' learning experiences assesses what students on the ECP in one College attribute their successes or failures to, and how this impacts on their university careers. This should highlight some basis for assessing who should and should not be admitted into the programme or the university. Besides, this transformation is ongoing and evolutionary in nature, giving relevance to this study. There is also an imminent change in the culture and socialization process in the university resulting from this transformation that needs to be better assessed and understood. A social constructivist paradigm is used to assess ECP

⁵ Some students from mainstream in UKZN complain about not being given the privilege of the programme support

students' attribution of success and failure, following Rollnick's (2000) assertion that students have been inducted through the ECP with some evidence of success.

2.5.3.1 The Extended Curriculum Programme in UKZN

The Extended Curriculum Programme in the College of Humanities, University of KwaZulu-Natal has been researched by Nala (2010), Tyson (2010), Clarence-Fincham (1998). Tyson's (2010) Masters Thesis investigates the impact of the programme; using Tinto's *Student Integration Model* to consider throughput and retention rates for students in the programme from 2001 to 2004. Employing a mixed method, the study found that ECP students outperformed their mainstream counterparts attributing their success to the programme. It identifies the main factors responsible for the success as the social and academic integration of the students into university life which the programme facilitates. To such claims, Dhunpath and Vithal (2012) call for caution since they are often unsubstantiated and anecdotal, lacking systematic analysis of performance data related to foundation programmes at national system level.

The current study builds on Tyson's, going beyond throughput and dropout rates to focus on students' approaches to learning. It undertakes a deeper analysis of what is responsible for this success. While both studies pay attention to students' voices, the current study uses attribution theory whereas the Tysons' relied on Tinto's model of integration. A focus on the reasons for students' failure is considered as much as what is responsible for their success. The reason is that understanding the causes of failure would create room for a systematic attempt to ameliorate such factors within the programme. Doing so should also contribute towards the considerations of some performance data which Dhunpath and Vithal (2012) expressed concerns about.

The current study thus asks more critical questions regarding what exactly students in the programme attribute their success or failures to, and why they give particular attributions. This is important, considering that a study in the University of Cape Town, relying on quantitative measures alone indicated that there is no significant difference between students on the programme and mainstream students in terms of performance (Smith, Case & Walbeek 2014: 624). In fact, the study indicated that students in the programme still contribute the highest attrition rates.

The contradictory reports of the impact of similar programmes at different universities raise questions about the uniformity of the programme on the one hand, and whether or not such programmes can provide the solution to the problem of insufficient representativeness of graduates from previously disadvantaged backgrounds on the other. The purpose of a more in-depth assessment by the current study is to ensure that other qualitative factors are considered which affect the outcomes before any suggestions for expanding the success is even contemplated. Such in-depth data is necessary for a more nuanced comparison between programmes to be justified. Indeed even within the same university, the criteria for access and the interventions are quite different, making any real comparison problematic.

Parkinson, Jackson and Padayachees' (2008: 11) assert that Academic Literacy Programmes do improve students' writing skills, with the weakest students improving the most. Nala (2010) found that students who have been through the ECP, in the College of Humanities at the University of KwaZulu-Natal develop both social and intellectual capital. It affirms that the programme equips target students to outperform mainstream students. In fact, some of the programme beneficiaries are able to assist their peers in the main-stream with aspects of academic writing. The positive picture painted by this study needs verification; especially considering Parkinson, Jackson and Padayachee's (2008) findings that at the end of the literacy course, the weakest students are still not equivalent to regular entrants into the faculty. This raises the question about whether the programmes have improved with time to have this success. Otherwise, "what makes the case of the College of Humanities in UKZN different?"

These findings raise questions about the quality of ADPs, and there are far-reaching questions about the quality of support that these students are receiving and the contributions of the programmes to the kind of success that these students are achieving. It should not be ignored that these institutions are in different regions of the nation, which can affect the quality of students admitted. Besides, the criterion for admitting students in each university is unique. The current study proceeds from the above concerns, focusing on students experiences of learning through the ECP in the College of Humanities in UKZN and assesses their conception of how their knowledge grows and how/if the programme facilitates this process. The study is concerned with students' reflection on how the ADPs they were involved in

affected their academic lives. This awareness should be useful in programme improvements that respond to students' concerns.

Findings should inform future approaches to the ECP with a focus on the College of Humanities within UKZN to better understand the context and the quality of success that it seems to be yielding. Broad comparison between contexts, while an enviable endeavor, would be premature and a possible area for further studies. One of the most critical concerns is how ECP students are empowered to engage in their education independently and self-sufficiently after being through these programmes. By assessing their attributions of success the study seeks to ascertain the effectiveness of the programme in meeting set goals. The assumption is that understanding the problem as expressed by the students involved sets a contextual tone for policy approaches towards positive and empowering remedial programmes. Moreover, paying attention to student attributions, is something that Tinto's SIM model cannot assess. Such factors include assessing their approach to learning and students' beliefs about their successes and failures.

2.6 Discourses on Widening Access and the Access Programmes

This section considers some of the prevalent arguments for and against the ECPs to inform policy adjustment in the area. Findings from studies on the impact of widening access are so diverse and sometimes contradictory. This could be due to the diversity of methodologies and focus (Goastellec 2008: 76). Enslin *et al.* (2006), Clarence-Fincham (2008) and Kloot, Case and Marshall (2008) provide evidence that these programmes are implemented in different ways. The criteria for selecting students on the programme and the actual content of the programme in institutions are different. Hence, the current study focuses on one programme in one institution for in-depth understanding of the phenomenon.

The CHE (2016; 2013; 2012) gives some statistics of multiyear undergraduate cohort tracking to demonstrate significant growth in enrolment in both the schooling and the education sector since 1994. Despite this trend, it is noted that the higher education graduation rates have not met the nation's needs. This follows the high attrition and low graduation rates that neutralize the apparent success in access. Dhunpath and Vithal (2012: 3) assess how alternative access to higher education in its various conceptions, motivations, responses and outcomes translate from policy to programme and practices in national, institutional and college/faculty/school levels. They assert that after twenty years of

‘institutional’ access to higher education and ten years since the National Plan on Higher Education (2001), questions about changes in the conceptualization, reception and practice of the access programmes at South African universities are due.

Studies on student success and learning experiences of Access students have two main proponents. Firstly, those who support the continuous use of Access Programmes to admit students from underprivileged backgrounds while seeking better ways to enhance success. Secondly, there are scholars who uphold that such programmes are no longer necessary in South Africa as more students from similar backgrounds are getting admitted into mainstream universities.

Dhunpath and Vithal (2012) call to question the relevance of foundation/Access programmes in their current form. The value for money of the ECP; their efficiency and efficacy; and their justice and fairness to students of similar backgrounds who gain entry to the mainstream without receiving the same support in their early undergraduate years are called into question. Johnson and Narsiah (2015), Firfirey and Carolissen (2010), Smith (2012), Strauss (2003) relate the difficulty that these students making mainstream studies are facing, especially with regards to their finances. These programmes are considered both unsustainable and unaffordable for increasing access, given the changing demographics of student enrolments in Universities with two thirds of the students now enrolled being African. The numbers of African students from disadvantaged backgrounds qualifying for direct entry into the universities and also in need financial support has increased (Dhunpath & Vithal 2012; Firfirey & Carolissen 2010).

Resources should be mobilized to support these students who are gaining direct access (Dhunpath & Vithal 2012), instead of Access programmes which are expensive to maintain, which results in some of these students dropping out or being excluded due to poor academic performance amongst other factors (Schalkwyk, Leibowitz & Van der Merve 2009).

A counter argument by the CHE (2016) and Scott, Yeld and Hendry (2007 cited in Smith, Case & Walbeek 2014: 636) is that “the primary source of expanding [the] future graduate body must lie in the socio-economically and educationally disadvantaged population, which makes up the greater proportion of the total population”. This follows the role that Higher Education is perceived to play in economic development, equity, social reconstruction, national and international development, competition and cooperation (CHE 2016; Dhunpath, Nakabungo & Amin 2013; Moore 2002; Warren 2002). Thus, if funding were not an issue,

and ECP students were not dropping out or excluded due to poor performance, the programme would be a useful means of implementing Affirmative Action policies in the South African Higher Education sector.

The above response is tenable against the admission process in UKZN but not against other institutions using the biographical questionnaire to admit all students before selecting those from underprepared backgrounds for support by the ECP. An underlying idea among these opposing views is that the majority of the students making their way to the universities are grossly underprepared and are generally struggling (Van Schalkwyk, Leibowitz & Van der Merwe 2009). Hence, such programmes might be useful for learning lessons about how universities should adjust in order to attend to the quality of students. In the year 2000, only five percent of the cohort of black students of tertiary age gained access. These students' performance, though not the same in every institution, seems to also affirm the universities' unpreparedness to receive and support such students.

Responding to these broad interests, the current study acknowledges the diversity of the practices of access programmes, and the limited amount of research on it. It focuses on a case-study in UKZN, investigating from the perspective of students' beliefs, values and learning experiences of success or failure. It investigates how the programme has elicited, different approaches to learning by students, while assessing whether or not this programme is achieving set objectives. It questions how underprepared students are coping, if they are indeed coping with tertiary studies. It immerses itself within the conflicting views about the outcome of such programmes. Through these, the study investigates how students on the programme experience learning during and after the programme.

The general success of students in the Access year of ECPs is not contestable but the problem arises when their performance beyond the first year is concerned. Dhunpath and Vithal (2012: 10) indicate that data is silent about what happens to these students beyond the first year (2012: 10). This gap in the literature is what the current study seeks to contribute towards within the College of Humanities in UKZN. Hence, data is collected from students at different stages in the programme. Previous conclusions should be collaborated, and funding concerns, often blamed for underperformances, needs assessment.

The proposal that the Access programmes be opened to all students instead of a narrow focus on those with potential who do not meet normal entry requirements also needs collaborations or contestations (Dhunpath and Vithal 2012). The urgency, relevance and critical nature of

these issues call for priority attention through research; otherwise, premature decisions could be made to either terminate access programmes or to expand them. This would have severe implications for the funding of such programmes which are sometimes erratic. There is no guarantee that transferring this support to all students in the mainstream is worthwhile as many first year students tend to also dropout (Van Schalkwyk, Leibowitz & Van der Merwe 2009). It is therefore of great significance to learn from the least qualified but most supported students with potential, assessing how much success can be reached through such programmes.

As a prelude, Goastellec (2008) highlights controversial findings from the review of literature on the values of such programmes in France. With a focus on inequality, different authors had different findings regarding its prevalence thus: ‘Euriat and Thelot (1995) demonstrated a slight diminution of inequalities, whereas Goux and Murin (1997) underlined two status quo, and others (Duru-Bellat, 2005; Bloss & Erlich, 2000) observe an increase in inequalities. Although the results differ according to the method used and the subsector analysed, the probability is high – as no strong dynamic can be identified – that the enlargement of access does not profoundly affect the social structure of access’ (Goastellec 2008: 76).

The same situation in South Africa has led to suggestions that money spent on Access programmes be spent on other projects, since more students from under-privileged backgrounds are making it to the universities through normal admission processes (Dhunpath & Vithal 2012). Goastellec (2008: 77) adds that enlarging education as a basic right beyond the primary and secondary level, has the tendency to force uninterested people into tertiary institutions for the sake of redressing past inequities, thus impacting negatively on university environments.

This argument is widely supported by scholars who highlight a general lack of interest in studies among current university students as compared to the elite days. Nevertheless, there is no proof that such a lack of interest uniquely arises from students from previously disadvantaged schools who are beneficiaries of the Access Programmes because most first year students are reported to struggle (Fourie 2009, Schalkwyk, Leibowitz & Van Der Merwe 2009). Besides, the Access programmes, if proven successful, can inform how to support the majority of first year students who struggle. This collaborates the need for support as a critical need for students making the transition into the university life in South Africa. It is argued that of the various transition points in students careers, the first year in tertiary

institutions is considered the most intense, traumatic and harrowing (Schalkwyk, Leibowitz & Van Der Merwe 2009). This study is thus necessary.

Scholars like Smith, Case and Walbeek (2014), Enslin *et al.* (2006) and Warren (2002) argue that it is the university that is not sufficiently prepared for the new students that are accessing it. Meanwhile, Goastellec (2008) and Dhunpath and Vithal (2012) oppose a focus on under-privileged students, but do not necessarily oppose the normalization of access. They believe that favouring the under-privileged through a special programme implies denying some of the more qualified students a chance especially as a precaution against the impact of admission mechanisms on the funding and sustenance of admission processes.

While collaborating the above assertions, Schalkwyk, Leibowitz and Van Der Merwe (2009: 4) note that ‘material and social inequality and divisions based on ethnicity pose far greater challenges than might be the case in North America, Europe or Australia, where much of the literature on the first-year experience is produced’. They admit that inequalities in South Africa are amongst the highest in the world, noting that they affect students’ abilities from diverse racial backgrounds to succeed within the university. However, unlike Enslin *et al.* (2006); Warren (2002); Goastellec (2008); and Dhunpath and Vithal (2012), Schalkwyk, Leibowitz and Van Der Merwe (2009) believe that these inequalities continue to provide legitimacy for admitting students from previously disadvantaged backgrounds through unequal and differentiated criteria. Therefore, proper research can uncover a better means of addressing both those who qualify and those who demonstrate potential to succeed through tertiary institutions.

Schalkwyk, Leibowitz and Van Der Merwe (2009) recommend a distinction between the first-year experience and the struggling student. Such a distinction is needed between the Access Student and other struggling first year students. Recognizing Access students as struggling students, which is often the case, might be prejudicial and a stigma that is hard to deal with. This is complicated by the general struggle with the 21st Century students’ needs and expectations which differ sharply from previous generations. Affirmative Action can promote self-efficacy, a confident learning disposition, and a research focus that elicits the voice of the students (Schalkwyk, Leibowitz & Van Der Merwe 2009).

Understanding the 21st Century student, allows universities to determine how best to serve them. The elite model prompted students to compete; but such dispositions are uncommon among current students. A combination of those from the digital world with information

technology and those from rural poor communities needing empowerment through education poses a real challenge. This informs Goastellec's (2008) assertion that value of normalization is masked by concerns about the financial implications of focusing on the previously disadvantaged. He argues that doing so deprives some better performing students the opportunity for Higher Education. Since different universities have different and contradictory reports about the success of the Access programmes in their institutions, the issue is made even more complicated.

Goastellec (2008) and Dhunpath and Vithal (2012) remark that more students from the previously disadvantaged backgrounds have access to tertiary institutions, but the percentage of blacks entering tertiary institutions is still below 15% of their college age population. Nevertheless, they believe that instead of the access programme in its current form, more black students meeting the admission requirements should be admitted. It is not clear how different these students would be from the ones currently supported by the ECP. A problem that is conceived here is that although caring for these students within the mainstream is feasible and possibly efficient, it might be pre-mature at the moment. The current study should throw more light on this.

Meanwhile, Masters and PhD studies undertaken within UKZN on the Access, Foundation or Extended Curriculum Programmes in the humanities have generated very positive findings regarding the performance, and success of students undergoing the programme, albeit their different methodologies and foci (Tyson 2010; Nala 2010; Clarence-Fincham 1998; 2008). In the same light, more lessons must be learnt from having the 21st Century student (Van Schalkwyk, Leibowitz & Van der Merwe 2009) at the university within the widening access model. Lessons must also be learnt from admitting and supporting students from socially and economically disadvantaged backgrounds. Lessons from those students that come into the university with substantial success are particularly crucial. These lessons must be incorporated into the university structure for institutions to pre-empt the move to admit and support all students in the same way or give minimal alternative support to underprepared students.

Tinto (2012) noted that access without support is not opportunity. Lessons from this opportunity should inform policy on access to tertiary institutions with the possibilities of success. At the moment, it could be asserted that whether or not the funding of programmes to support students from underprivileged backgrounds is justifiable ignores the empowerment

it offers them and their communities. Besides, not educating these students would always have financial implications and the demands of social welfare and security on the government purse. This study assesses how these students negotiate the difficult terrain of tertiary education in order to inform the university on better approaches to support students from similar backgrounds. Other first year students should also benefit based on the assertion that that most students making it into the universities are underprepared. Yet, the University of KwaZulu-Natal graduates students from the Extended Curriculum Programme Suma Cum Laude almost yearly.

The current study draws impetus from these recommendations by Schalkwyk, Leibowitz and Van Der Merwe (2009), that a student-centred approach to this remediation with particular attention to the voices of the students is needed. The particular focus on students' attributions of their success or failures within the programme is aimed at meeting this end. The next section focuses on learning styles and approaches to learning, following the assertion that students' success on the programme should imply that the programme facilitates specific learning styles for them. The question is: what approaches to learning does it develop among the students. The next section considers the literature on learning styles and approaches to learning.

2.7 Learning Styles and Approaches to Learning

Arguably, the kinds of support that students receive in ADPs are supposed to develop specific ways of learning. This sub-section explores the literature on different approaches to learning based on the assertion that the main reason for being at an academic institution is to learn. As such, any serious discussion about student success cannot overlook how students learn. Nel and Nel (2009) present the primary importance of reading skills as a learning approach that students must master and grow in order to be successful tertiary learners.

Reading skills might not be enough, Biggs' (1987: 7) study reveals that approaches to learning have an effect on students' progress; noting that tertiary students' approach to learning are strongly related to their motives and strategies. This is reminiscent of the ideas of Tinto's Student Integration Model (SIM) which asserts that students' attributes (motives) like intentions, goals and commitment affect their academic and social experiences within the university. These motives and strategies are also significantly affected by, and affect what students attribute successes and failures to in learning. The Study Process Questionnaire

(SPQ)⁶ identifies three important approaches to learning, namely: Surface - meeting the minimum requirements, deep and intrinsic interest in what is learnt, and achieving - enhancing ego and self-esteem through competition for grades.

These approaches to learning are significant to attribution theory used as an analytical framework of the current study which postulates that students' attributions are made to enhance students' sense of meaning, their control over outcome and their self-esteem:

In the classroom, the understanding students have about the causes of past events influences their ability to control what happens to them in the future. For example, if students fail a test, they will probably attribute that failure to a specific cause, such as (1) lack of ability, (2) lack of effort, or (3) poor instruction. The selected attribution will affect their subsequent motivation to engage in similar learning activities (Anderman & Anderman 2009: 1).

It can be inferred from the above quote, and the foregoing reviews that approaches to learning and attributions affect students' self-esteem either in conjunction or in different ways. One thing is clear, however, that attributions affect subsequent motives. Students' approaches to learning are determined by their motives and strategies. Hence, attributions affect motives, and motives determine which strategic approach to learning students adopt. One of the goals of the ECP is to affect students' motivations, hence the relevance of these theoretical approaches to the study.

The current study used both the Study Process Questionnaire (SPQ) and attribution theory to gather data on students' experiences. The SPQ proposes that those students who adopt an achieving approach⁷ to learning are also trying to exercise control over the expected outcome of their studies. However, the current study seeks to ascertain the extent to which students understand whether their beliefs and motivation affect the outcome of their work. Anecdotal evidence seems to suggest that both students and university structures do not pay sufficient attention to factors affecting students' success.

It is widely acclaimed that students' learning styles and approaches are significantly affected by their backgrounds and previous learning experiences (Dhunpath & Vithal, 2012; Leibowitz, Van Der Merwe & Vaan Schalkwyk, 2009; Prebble *et al.* 2004). Tinto's (1975;

⁶ More details on the SPQ are offered on the theoretical framework in chapter 3

⁷ An approach characterized by students' desire to enhance their ego and self-esteem through competition for grades.

1988) predictive Student Integration Model (SIM), also referred to as the model of departure by York (1999; cited in Prebble *et al.* 2002: 3) has been identified as very popular, dominant and extensively used in the retention literature for explaining students retention and dropout (Prebble *et al.* 2002: 3; Keon 2007 cited in Tyson 2010). The model focuses on how students' pre-entry attributes like goals, intentions and commitment can affect and be affected by their academic and social experiences; thus affecting their approach to studying and learning.

These attributes and motives can also directly affect students' level of engagement with their academic task as theorized by Astin (1985: 133). This validates the assertion that an Academic Development Programme can affect students' learning styles. This phenomenon forms part of what the current study intends to assess among the target population. Meanwhile, Biggs (1987: 1) SPQ "operationalizes his approaches and their constituent motives and strategies in terms of scale and subscale profiles representing an individual's general orientation towards learning". Work with SPQ has demonstrated that approaches to learning may be crucial in determining the quality of learning, formal examination results, student satisfaction and morale, and what plans the student has for future education. The validity of these assertions implies far reaching implications on how ADPs should be theorized for optimum success. This is significant to the current study in questioning how ADPs pay attention to enhancing students' learning approaches in order to enhance their learning experiences. The study makes significant observations such as that age determines the extent of increase in deep and achieving approaches to learning.

While this emphasizes the claims of Piaget and Vygotsky on developmental increase in cognitive sophistication and complexities, it goes further to explain and relate the source of meaning from approaches to learning. Biggs' (1987) ideas also supports the assertions that students who have English as their second language tend to exhibit more characteristics of deep and achieving learning outcomes than the first language English speakers. Nonetheless, studies in neuroscience suggest otherwise that age is not as important as one's development of their vocabulary in their language for learning, while at the same time developing positive learning techniques. The next section assesses the literature on students' learning experiences in more detail, especially given the supposition that they are affected by approaches to learning.

2.8 Students' Learning Experiences

The literature suggests that factors like student motivation, their backgrounds, institutional factors, learning abilities, approaches to learning and many others can affect student learning experiences. Such experiences for students within an ADP can seriously depend on the approach to learning that the programme adopts. This can also be determined by the model of the ADP in question. The main aim of such ADPs is to increase positive learning experiences within the academic setting so as to create an environment where the learners are willing (motivated) to put in more effort (academically) or be more involved, using the terms of Astin (Prebble *et al.* 2004). This is necessary to support the assertion that good teaching practices lead to improved learning outcomes, and well-targeted efforts to support students' adjustment is seen to increase their retention rate in tertiary institutions worldwide (Prebble *et al.* 2004: 9; Biggs 1987).

Nel and Nel's (2009: 127) observe that a lack of reading skills often eludes lecturers as well as students and is something that needs intervention for all students taking part in University studies. They recommend that ADPs be used to bridge the gap and facilitate some level of university restructuring. The current study evaluates how the ECP can be modified to better assist students, through understanding what they attribute their success and failure to. Understanding what they attribute successes and failures to is important for knowing what is working and what needs to be improved or done differently, this brings a different perspective to addressing the problem. Here the focus is on the students themselves. Thus the views of students are given pride of place in the discourses as recommended by Godsell (2013: 2).

Van Wyke and Greyling (2008); Tyson (2010) and Clarence-Fincham (2007) indicate that the language of teaching and learning is a very important determinant of students' learning experiences and success. Daly and Brown (2007) maintain that without language proficiency, students remain at risk. As such, students from previously underprivileged backgrounds need to be assisted in the development of reading and writing skills for success at tertiary institutions (Nel & Nel, 2009; Van Wyke & Greyling, 2008:205). These students need language knowledge, background knowledge, cognitive ability and metacognitive thinking abilities to successfully engage with academic reading.

In Chapter Three, the repeated use of language as a means of dominance and control by different groups in South Africa reveals the importance and sensitivity of the issue of the language for teaching and learning. The transition in the language of teaching and learning in South Africa from using English to mother tongue, to learning some subjects in Afrikaans and the transition back to English was each followed by fierce resistance. This is an indication of how significant language is in students' decision to stay or leave and as such to their success or failure. Biggs (1987) argues that students who have English as a second language and as a medium of learning exhibit deeper learning characteristics than first language English speaking students. Nonetheless, the second language speakers' averages are relatively lower; an issue the current study hopes to interrogate.

The combination of language needs and the different motivations that determine learning strategies and experiences are significant to the study, given that our target students are from underprivileged backgrounds; with a majority struggling with English as a language for learning. It is critical to have these considerations in assessing the learning experiences of such students, to ascertain how the ECP has impacted on them; while at the same time measuring the extent to which it considers target students' needs in its approaches and practices.

The value of these assertions to the current study is to facilitate the investigation of the extent to which students are aware of how their choice and attributions can impact on them, and how that affects their academic endeavour as well as how a lack of understanding of one's capabilities in this regard affects their studies as well. It implies that some attributions can have a negative impact on those who make them. It also challenges the arguments that some students are not good enough for the university. On the other hand, it raises the question "why are many students failing to cope?" It supports the assumption that universities can do something to enhance the learning of people who were not well prepared for its environment.

Van Vyke and Greyling (2008) and Nel and Nel (2009) that language knowledge is valuable in one's learning experience. Thus, the development of vocabulary in a specific language enhances the development of a better brain and mind irrespective of one's age; enhancing one's learning ability, imagination and memory. These factors together can be considered necessary criteria for student learning. Yet, such discourses have been ignored in the discourse of student learning.

The foregoing arguments on students' learning experiences are also significant in that students change due to their university experiences. Indeed, it is a cliché that one changes mentally and otherwise based on knowledge acquired. These changes can either be viewed as success or as failures. Prebble *et al.* (2004: 4) are of the opinion that 'the most consistent research finding is that college years are a period of sustained and widespread development of students'. They believe that undergraduate students experience change or development across a full range of cognitive, psychosocial, attitudinal and moral behaviours. In a positive light, these changes are consistent with the theoretical models that consider college experience 'as a set of developmental or maturational tasks' (Prebble 2004: 4). Indeed, development in learning and cognitive change is always the objective of many college programmes. These programmes often have evidence that students are developing in their attitudes, their psychosocial behaviours and morally.

Moreover, Pascarella and Terenzini (1991 cited in Prebble *et al.* 2004) note that the net effect of attending college, in general, tends to be substantially changed in the person. They also argue that the experience that students have within university programmes is not by chance. It is vastly determined by how each individual student exploits the support that the university makes available. Prebble *et al.* (2004: 5) acknowledge the limited literature on the variable impact of different college programmes and teaching approaches on students with varied preferences or other attributes. Nonetheless, different students have different affinities to different instructional approaches. These notions of individual preferences justify why the current study uses the attribution theory to understand individual differences, while the social constructivist's approach admits that there is a common means of socialising these students through inductions, orientation, and teaching methods.

This is significant in relation to the attribution theory's assertion that what one believes to be responsible for their performance would, in turn, affect their future performance. The point is the tendency to perpetuate those learning experiences that are attributed to one's ability if there is no change in belief about that ability. The implication is that students operate based on their beliefs and act accordingly, and their beliefs are based on their previous experiences of success or failure how they react to those experiences.

Zepke, Lach and Butler (2009: 69) highlight the role of teacher-student interactions as an important determiner of students' learning experiences. Such interactions play a major role in student engagement with learning at their institutions. The examination of interactions

between staff and students in classrooms and programmes; learning interaction with the wider institutions and effect of teaching and the environment on student learning demonstrates some of the variety of factor that influence student engagement and that can be used by institutions to review how to improve the process of students engagement.

Chapman (2003 cited in Zepke, Leach & Butler 2009: 69) note that the complex phenomenon of tertiary student engagement can be operationalized in two general meanings. Firstly, student engagement can emphasise the degree of willing student compliance with organisational and subject rules, values and processes. Secondly, student engagement can focus on students' cognitive investment, active participation in and emotional commitment to their learning. They endorse the second meaning which lends itself to the following related factors to learning: student backgrounds and circumstances, institutional structures and cultures, teaching practices and approaches to learning. The current study endorses considerations of the second meaning, without ignoring the impacts of the first meaning of engagement on student learning experiences.

Meanwhile, the experiences that affect their learning are of little significance, if not considered in terms of students' success. In other words, the ultimate end of students' learning experiences discussed above is determined by the extent to which it can lead to students' success or failure within the university. Some of the changes that accompany students' learning experiences would be considered as leading to their successes in tertiary institutions. It constitutes the value that universities offer to students, besides their degrees. This assertion enjoins a focus on the phenomenon of students' success.

2.8.1 Extended Curriculum Programme (ECP): Engaging Students in Learning

This section relates whatever learning approaches of ECP students to what the literature review suggests with assertions on the kind of success to be anticipated from students undergoing the programme. Different levels of success have been obtained from different cohorts of students' (BMR1 2014). Most studies suggest that the ECP facilitates the adjustment of underprepared students to the university, something akin to Vygotsky's zone of proximal development, where the ECP staff constitute the more knowledgeable other, bridging the gap in the underprepared students' knowledge (Nala, 2010; Tyson, 2010; Clarence- Fincham, 1998).

However, BMR1 (2014) presents the descriptions of a staff who was involved since the inception of the ECP intervention as being akin to putting a bandage on a haemorrhage. His argument is that success is dependent on what students bring to the programme. Those who came with some cultural, social and intellectual capital are more likely to succeed. As such, closely related to the financial constraint is also the cultural capital that students bring; those with more cultural capital are more likely to succeed. Nevertheless, Nala's (2010) finding from his study of the programme indicates that the programme actually develops social capital among its students; and that this social capital creates the enabling environment for these students to learn.

Meanwhile, lower success rates are also reported from bigger groups, while smaller groups demonstrated higher success rates (BMR1 2014). The explanation for this might lie in the fact that it is more manageable to handle smaller groups of students in such intensive-care programmes. The implication is that the tutors and the student counsellors have more time to engage with the students on individual and on a group basis, thus paying particular attention to their personal needs when the number is manageable. Nevertheless, based on the argument on social, cultural and epistemological capital, it can be argued that the success of students cannot be easily assessed based on statistics, because the cultural capital of students seems to be a great determinant of their success and those with a better cultural capital stand the greater chance of succeeding or being able to apply what they learn in their other modules.

The argument from Nala's (2010) study, that the programme develops social capital in students, which in turn facilitates their success is significant in explaining that those students who entered the university with some cultural and epistemological capital are more receptive to and benefit from the provisions of the programme, thus facilitating their successful learning experiences. The argument agrees with the tenet of social constructivism that prior knowledge is significant to the accumulation of new knowledge and is thus, a strong determinant of their success in learning within the university. This study seeks to consolidate this assertion by examining what students attribute their success and failure to. Besides, BMR1 (2014) is of the view that the level of sophisticated knowledge of students' background, possessed by the staff of ECP is a necessary pre-condition for successfully assisting them.

The limitation of discussing students' learning experiences as facilitated by the ECP follows Dhunpath and Vithal's (2012: 10) assertion that it is not clear from available data what measures are being used to define success beyond the foundation programmes, when they note that:

The data are silent on the extent to which students who enter university through foundation programmes do in fact complete and graduate... how long their students take to graduate and how they compare with mainstream students remain elusive. The paucity of data needs to be addressed through cost-benefit-analysis before definitive judgements can be made (Dhunpath and Vithal 2012: 10).

The current study is not undertaking a cost-benefit analysis, but it takes an approach that would shed some light on the extent of success that students from the programme experience after the foundation support phase; especially concerning their learning. It goes even further to articulate how they define this success or failure, and the implications that these beliefs have for future improvements of the programme or dealing with similar categories of students. The focus on learning follows Tinto's (2013) assertion that however, students' success is conceived and however it is measured, it must begin in the classroom. The next section focuses on funding as a critical component of the ECP that needs some attention.

2.8.2 Student Success

The notion of students' success is complex, defined in different ways and even elusive (Tyson 2010: 37-38). Moreover, the relationship between support and outcomes are complex and multifaceted; and different learning environments support and impact on student success in unique ways (Prebble *et al.* 2004: 51 & 52). This section assesses different conceptions of students' success in order to justify why the current study considers students' success from the perspective of attribution theory - from students themselves – and precisely on student beliefs about success and failure. Success is better explored as the opposite side of the coin to failure.

The terms used to describe failure in university from a student perspective are many: dropout, departure, attrition, withdrawal, academic failure, non-continuance, non-completion, whereas their positive counterparts are the antonyms: persistence, continuance, completion, graduation (Larsen, Sommersel & Larsen 2013; Prebble *et al.* 2004), including success resulting from ADP. Generally, drop-outs are caused by lack of finances, a history of learning difficulties in school, conditions at home, such as lack of a quiet area to study, unexpected or unavoidable pressures from work, sickness or death in the family, and a failure to understand the

necessary time commitment before enrolling (Bates nd.). Individual student experiences and context often limit the scope of generalisations involving a matrix between factors that are personal, social and institutional (McInnis *et al.* 2000: 1 cited in Prebble *et al.* 2004:51).

Drop-outs are expensive in time, resources and tuition for students, institutions, society and government, (Ascending Learning 2012), hence, the Department of Higher Education lamented that the drop-out rate was costing the National Treasury R4.5 billion in grants and subsidies to higher education institutions without a corresponding return on investment (Letseka & Maile 2008). Jansen (2010) confirms that the consequences of failure and drop-out are devastating as Universities lose funding resources, parents lose out on hard-earned savings invested in their children, students lose confidence in their ability to gain a university education, and the country fails to gain another skilled graduate from university. Quinn *et al.* (2005) argue that the retention or the uninterrupted completion of degrees by students is a moral imperative for universities. When students withdraw early institutions are deemed to have failed.

Prebble *et al.* (2004: 52) identify two sources of support that influence student outcomes: a focus on student's social/emotional and academic needs; and a focus on institutional support for these needs. The different focus on students' success related to the social/emotional and academic needs include the capacity to adjust into the university, passing exams, and graduating. This makes student success similar to the idea of students' achievement (Popham, 2014; Snook *et al.* 2009; Hattie, 2008; Prebble, 2004). Nevertheless, the University institutions can enhance the realisation of these needs by putting support services in place. This foregrounds the understanding of success as characterised by a combination of disposition, attitude and strength in order to learn how to learn, and relates eight capabilities for students generated by Walker (2006: 128) in Schalkwyk, Leibowitz and Van Der Merwe (2009).

There are other considerations of students' success often based on whether or not students leaving the university are developing leadership qualities, whether they are developed responsible citizens, whether they are making positive contributions to the society, can occupy positions in the workforce and be effective. Others are keener about the extent to which students develop critical thinking and learning skills, while others measure success as the extent to which it allows a student to get a well-paying job. These considerations exceed the scope of this study.

Dhunpath and Vithal (2012: 10) reveal that lack of clarity from available data regarding the measures being used to define success beyond the foundation programmes poses some challenges with regard to conceiving students' success in ECP in relation to graduation rates. The data also does not reveal how many of these students graduate, or how long it took them to complete their degrees compared to mainstream students. This is because 'recent cohort analysis of mainstream qualifications have not isolated this group of students to establish the effectiveness and efficacy of the foundation programmes directly funded by the state' (Dhunpath & Vithal 2012: 10). Such data is necessary for a cost-benefit-analysis to enhance decisive assessment to justify the value for money of the programme (Scott 2012 cited in Dhunpath & Vithal 2012: 12). Such data would create a favourable landscape for systematic change, allowing increased access to meet its goal. Otherwise, it remains a major wastage of scarce resources until the ideal of successful participation becomes the result of the equity of access leading to equity of outcomes through increased graduate outputs.

The current study responds to such concerns, not by undertaking a cost-benefit analysis, but to shed light on the successes that students from the programme experience during and after the foundation support phase. It proceeds from an articulation of how ECP students define their successes or failures, and the implications that these beliefs have for their future performance. It is expected that understanding these beliefs should affect the future improvements of the programme or dealing with similar categories of students.

Bitzer and Troskie-de Bruin (2004) relate that 'higher education institutions have long operated with the philosophy that only those "fit" for higher education will be successful' (Cited in Tyson 2010: 37). They argue that students with the talents and skills cultivated by favourable or advantaged secondary backgrounds are considered as standing the chance to succeed, while those lacking such talents and skills are advised to find something else to do. This focus on success is outdated, given the massification and widening access, especially for students from previously disadvantaged backgrounds who can be defined by the very principles of being underprepared and lacking the requisite skills.

Moreover, neuroscience research supports the censure of any policy or practice that deprives students a chance to education due to underpreparedness. The prejudice in favour of the success of students with the requisite talents is also discounted by high attrition and dropout rates in universities worldwide among "prepared" students. The quality of graduates who sometimes fail to make positive contributions to the society also indicates that not every

“prepared” student receiving access into the university do succeed. Yet, some previously underprepared students are showing evidence of success with the necessary support.

This raises further questions about the meaning of students’ success. Van Schalkwyk, Leibowitz and Van de Merwe’s (2009: 3) explain that ‘the concern with first-year success has grown incrementally with the challenges of the emerging global trends of massification, widening access, the influence of technology and dwindling resources appearing to manifest more strongly at first-year level’. Hence, it is noted that the moment of greatest transition, the first year, has dominated the focus and research on enhancing student success. This follows the assertion that the first year is the most intense of the many points of students’ transitions that is also very traumatic and harrowing (Leibowitz 1995: 39 cited in Van Schalkwyk, Leibowitz & Van de Merwe 2009: 4).

Statistics worldwide indicates that first-year students constitute the highest drop-out rates in universities. This has prompted the assertion that due to the challenges of transition from schools to universities, early intervention is required for students’ success to be ensured (Tinto 1999, 2003; Van Schalkwyk, Leibowitz & Van de Merwe 2009). Lessons from programmes like the ECP would be invaluable for providing such support to first-year students in general. On the same note, Scott (2012: 17) relates the following about first-year students’ success:

The traditional image of the first year at university is one of intellectual and personal discoveries, independence in thought and behaviour, widening horizons, and growth in confidence. This is close to reality for some students, but for many others – in fact, perhaps the majority of South Africa – the experience is marred by failure and loss of confidence (Scott 2012: 17).

No student comes to the university with the intention of failing, but with all the positive motivations for success that the above quote indicates, failure happens to occur as a problem for both the institutions and the students to deal with. This problem is attributed to the fact that high schooling significantly influences the socialisation of students into particular approaches to learning and responses to tertiary institutions (Mann 2008 cited in Van Schalkwyk, Leibowitz & Van de Merwe 2009: 3). Universities should be prepared to socialise these students into more suitable approaches to learning.

Tyson (2010) indicates that universities have made minimal changes to meet the changing student body in the form of approach, curriculum, ethos and institutional practices. He asserts that success must be considered not just in terms of throughput and completion rates but

holistically as encompassing academic achievement and personal growth (Jones *et al.* 2008: 20 cited in Tyson 2010: 38). This would mitigate the negative impacts on students who fail to complete their qualifications; empowering them to be more productive members of society (Tyson 2010: 38). Dhunpath and Vithal (2013: 12) agree that institutional culture has been unprepared for socialising “underprepared” students into the universities:

The belief was despite the institutional culture being disembodied from the culture of the student body it was attempting to socialise. The possibility of systemic-institutional deficit was really contemplated. The CHE’s Access Three Case Studies (2010) reveals that the caricatured ‘underprepared student is not confined to black students from disadvantaged schools. Many students with excellent matriculation scores struggle to negotiate the alienation resulting from the ‘pedagogic distance’ which universities fail to manage’ (Dhunpath & Vithal 2012: 12).

The current study responds to the above quote by asserting that addressing the problem of disadvantaged students, other “prepared” students’ needs should be remotely met. Universities should be informed about some considerations for responding to first-year students’ needs as a matter of urgency. Scott (2009) collaborates that students’ first year experiences exert a powerful influence on their future success. Their cognitive, personal and social development determines their performances and sets the tone for their post-graduate study. This is critical because, ‘the quantity and quality of a country’s graduate outcome have major implications for social, political and economic development, particularly in a context of scarcity of skills’ (Scott 2012: 19).

The first year in the university is very significant for how success is defined because success is tied to and dependent on the quality of the first-year experience. Hence, studies on the ECP which pays attention to the students’ first year in the university can generate useful findings for understanding and dealing with the first years in general. The current study, though not aimed at all first-year students, should generate findings useful for supporting many first-year students. It responds to the debate on whether or not access programmes like the ECP should be expanded or discontinued within the universities.

With a focus on first-year success, Upcraft, Gardner and Barefoot (2005 cited in Van Schalkwyk, Leibowitz & Van de Merwe 2009: 4), suggest a conception of students’ success that is concerned with their holistic development. Its framework defines success according to eight different dimensions listed as the following capabilities:

- Develop intellectual and academic competencies;

- Establish and maintain interpersonal relationships;
- Explore identity development;
- Achieve clarity about career goals;
- Maintain health and wellness;
- Consider faith and the spiritual dimension of life;
- Develop multicultural awareness; and
- Develop a civic responsibility

According to this framework, ‘a successful first-year learner is one who, whilst responsive to others and the society, takes responsibility for his or her wellbeing and plays a significant role in his or her own development’ (Upcraft, Gardner and Barefoot 2005 cited in Van Schalkwyk, Leibowitz & Van de Merwe 2009: 4). In other words, success is here characterised by a combination of disposition, attitude and strength in order to learn how to learn (Van Schalkwyk, Leibowitz & Van de Merwe 2009: 4-5).

Three of Walker’s (2006) eight capabilities for students are evidently worth noting here: educational resilience (an ability to navigate study, work and life), learning disposition (having confidence in one’s ability to learn), and knowledge and imagination (being able to gain knowledge in a chosen subject) (cited in Van Schalkwyk, Leibowitz & Van de Merwe 2009: 5). These dispositions towards successful learning are summed up by Barnett (2007) as one having ‘the will to learn’. This will to learn is very closely tied to the motivation for learning that are important criteria for success for Attribution Theory and the Study Process Questionnaire used in the current study.

Van Schalkwyk, Leibowitz and Van de Merwe (2009: 5) assert that these fundamental requirements for students’ success should be built from the first moment of entry across university portals. Tinto’s model of Academic development, his Students’ Integration Model seems suitable to facilitate such empowerment. This would mark an important point of correlation for the current study while assessing a programme whose most important goal is to ensure such students’ success. It is not surprising that one of the studies undertaken on the same ECP, Tyson’s (2010) Masters Thesis, employs Tinto’s model as its theoretical framework.

Two ways of reflecting on students' success arise here, including: firstly, that programmes are effective in meeting the universities' set goals (Tyson 2010: 51). Secondly, that the students are growing in their sense of agency, responsibility and the capacity to learn and develop as individuals and as learners (Van Schalkwyk, Leibowitz & Van de Merwe 2009: 3). The first is focused on the need of the universities, while the second is based on the needs of the students. The first reflection tends to consider underprepared and under-performing students as victims that must be fixed in order to be able to succeed in the elite environment of the university.

The second, however, seems to respond to the failure of the first, based on the observation that researchers have for a long time focused on what the universities can do to prepare students at the detriment of what Schalkwyk, Leibowitz and Van de Merwe (2009: 5) describe as students' centred approach to research, with a particular focus on students' approaches to learning. This has emerged as the focus for first-year success in the past few decades, according to (Barr & Tagg 1995, Checkering & Gamson 1991; Dietsche 2009 cited in Van Schalkwyk, Leibowitz & Van de Merwe 2009: 5). Meanwhile, Van Schalkwyk, Leibowitz and Van de Merwe (2009) believe that the notion of "students' centred learning" still needs some critical considerations.

Students' success needs to seriously focus on how to prepare and support students to adjust to university life on the one hand, and how universities should adjust its structures to accept students for the purpose of meeting their needs in order to enhance their success on the other. These two must feedback on each other in a continuous mutual beneficial process. Meanwhile, many scholars acknowledge that is a lot easier to expect students to fit into the universities than for universities to adapt to meet students' needs especially given the recent pressures on universities to open up and be more inclusive (Tyson 2010: 37). The move towards a heterogeneous student body has also served as a benchmark for universities to learn lessons that allow them to continue to positively transform themselves to meet the changing socio-political environment on which university institutions operate.

Nevertheless, Volbrecht and Boughey (2004) raise concerns about focusing on the student support to ADPs because its target on specific students, constrain its potential for influencing the entire institution. Van Schalkwyk, Leibowitz and Van de Merve (2009: 5) add that 'the significant focus on extended degree programmes and direct student support has inadvertently led many to associate the first-year experience with the "struggling student".'

Indeed, the literature on the first-year experience indicates that they generally tend to struggle; as many first year students have similar problems to those targeted by ADPs. As such, if AD supports are offered to all interested first-year students, some queries of the “prepared” students who continuously feel deprived of programmes relevant to their needs should equally be met.

Tinto’s Student Integration Model is useful for all students, while benefiting underprepared students the most in ensuring students’ success. Tyson (2010: 39) notes that both academic and social integration are invaluable for a students’ success. He argues that students with stronger academic integration exhibit greater desire to succeed, while those with stronger social integration exhibit greater desire to persist. While both factors are necessary for ultimate student retention, either of them is sufficient to keep students encouraged to stay, but not enough to prevent dropout. This model allows the current study a critical view that considers students’ individual factors, the institutional factors and social environmental factors before considering students’ beliefs about their success and failure.

The challenge of the model’s conception of success lies in its assertion that a student who integrates well into the university will succeed and those who do not will leave (Tyson 2010: 38). In other words, ‘students who are able to access the normative attitudes of their peers and academics integrate well and fit into the institution facilitating their success’ (Engle & Tinto 2008 cited in Tyson 2010: 38; Tinto 1975). While this approach pays attention to students’ views, it misses out the aspect of students’ beliefs that and how these in turn affect their future performance, which is what the current study focuses on. It emphasises students’ belief about their success or failures and how these affect their future success or failures as facilitated by attribution theory. It should allow an understanding of success that is not pre-defined, but which arises from the students own definitions of their success and failure.

2.8.2.1 Financial Constraints to Students Success

Some scholars argue that the government investment of up to R205m by 2013 on foundational programmes in **South African** tertiary institutions is not justifiable (Dhunpath & Vithal 2012; Goastellec 2008). Financing remains a serious dilemma for access and equity in South African universities. Students from disadvantaged backgrounds face various financial challenges that affect their success, like: lack of money, concern about debt, comparative lack in relation to peers, guilt about not contributing to family income, and the

need to supplement income through part-time employment (Firfirey & Carolissen 2010; Tyson 2010; Jones *et al.* 2008; Thomas 2006; Strauss 2003).

Lack of finances causes the anxiety and social pressure that force them to withdraw from their studies or drop out. Lack of accommodation and food threatens students' survival and hamper their concentration with their studies, transportation and book costs add to the list. Inability to dress like other students can bring a sense of rejection by their peers (Tinto 1975; Firfirey & Carolissen 2010). These pressures impede their social integration with other students in financially demanding yet fun activities. Hence, these students need more than academic and social support. They need assistance to negotiate and access funding, emotional support, psychological support and material support that would build their self-confidence and facilitate their interest in staying before integration becomes a question (Tyson 2010: 42).

Scott (2009) suggests that some students may decide to leave universities due to the rising cost of university education when they perceive that they might not succeed. This factor is most explicit through students' resilience in the recent #FeesMustFall campaign by students throughout the South African major universities. Poor students have taken to the streets to protest the continuous increase in registration fees as well as overall fees for making it through tertiary education. Their grievance follows the assertion that not offering them tertiary education entails a continuous discrimination that allowed them and their family to be in the worst of state of not affording to send them to the university by the apartheid regime. The same logic that persuaded what Mohamedbhai (2014) to say that universities were forced to admit more students than they have capacity is what motivates students from disadvantaged background to seek to have a chance at what appears to be their only chance to escape poverty. He maintains that funding has always been a challenge for tertiary education in Africa.

2.8.3 Attention to Students' Background versus Alienation

It is a global phenomenon, as research indicates that students can feel excluded from the university if it does not reflect elements from their background and experience (Koen 2007 cited in Tyson 2010: 43; Peterson, Louw & Dumont, 2009; Jones & Thomas, 2006). This is critical considering the relevance of one's background to one's capacity to learn new information, as evident when Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development is used to explain how learning occurs.

As such, Jones *et al.* (2008: 69) argues, ‘the more marginalized the students are, because of the lack of “fit”, the more alienated they may feel in the institutional environment. Feelings of isolation and loneliness can contribute significantly to students’ decision to withdraw (cited in Tyson 2010: 43). This is especially so for students whose rural background is so different from the modern life of the university environment. This situation is worsened when other students treat them differently based on the perception that they are from poor and rural backgrounds. Those of them residing off-campus and not involved in university extra-mural activities are worse off (Jones *et al.* 2008 cited in Tyson 2010; Lotkowski *et al.* 2004; Lau 2003).

Nevertheless, confusion following the plethora of factors that determine students’ success raises some challenges about defining the concept. Tinto’s aphorism that conceptions of students’ success, its definitions and assessments must begin in the classroom, frames a focus on the support that the university can offer students. The current study proceeds with the assertion that students’ backgrounds should inform universities’ programmes to meet their needs towards institutional change. This is because the student body continues to change as the socio-political environment changes, and critical and responsive changes through research are invaluable. Scott (2009: 21) notes that the shortcoming of researches on students’ success (a focus on retention) based on anonymous responses and self-reported reasons is that it cannot verify any association between drop-out and performance.

Success is characterized by a combination of disposition, attitude and strength in order to learn how to learn. This can be related to the eight capabilities for students generated by Walker (2006: 128) in Schalkwyk, Leibowitz and Van Der Merwe (2009: 4-5). The disposition towards successful learning is embodied in the ‘will to learn’, a fundamental requirement for students’ success that must be ensured upon entry into the university (Barnett 2007). The current study assesses how the ECP empowers students in this regard by investigating what they attribute their success and failure to. The necessary data for this enquiry must be gathered from students themselves.

2.9 Improving throughput rates of ECP students

Scholarly discourses on the throughput rates of ECP students are in agreement that there are some approaches that can enhance the throughput rates of underprepared students (Smith, Case & Walbeek, 2014; Dhunpath, Nakabungo & Amin 2013; Boughey 2010; Rollnick 2010;

Moore, 2003; Warren, 2002). They uphold that university structures be transformed towards sensitivity to such students' needs through pedagogies and curricula that enhance their students' epistemological access while abating their sense of alienation.

Their point of disagreement is that while Dhunpath and Vithal (2012) and Goestellac (2008) question the continuous relevance of foundational programmes in their current forms. They contend these state-funded foundational programmes need to be researched for efficacy and impact, while answering the following questions:

- Is the policy framework for the post-secondary sector sufficiently coherent to offer a more feasible option?
- To what extent have universities transformed their curricula and institutional cultures to accommodate the new student body?
- Have increased university enrolments produced reciprocal numbers of graduates?
- To what extent should the changing mainstream students' qualities affect and attract the funding expended on foundational programmes? A suggestion that foundational programmes be done away with since many of the previously disadvantaged are also gaining access in the mainstream.

These questions identify gaps in the field towards which the current study contributes. Its location in public policy should respond to the first question on the strength of the policy framework of the ECP and how it can be reformed. The second question resonates and reinforces the concerns of Case, Smith and Walbeek (2014) and Warren (2002) about university readiness for students from disadvantaged backgrounds. The current study's focus is on how students from these backgrounds make attributions for their experiences should contribute some response to how universities, through programmes like the ECP might be responding to and providing lessons to support these transformational needs.

The answer to the third question is popularly in the negative (Dhunpath, Nakabungo & Amin 2013: 3), but evidence from UKZN College of Humanities assert remarkable graduation rates of ECP students compared to the mainstream. The current study, therefore, undertakes a case study of a successful case, the ECP in the College of Humanities, University of KwaZulu-Natal, based on prior studies (Clarence-Fincham 1998, 2008; Tyson 2010; Nala 2010). Meanwhile, other studies have suggested that one way of responding to this challenge is integrating a good language programme into the curriculum at all levels (Nel & Nel 2009,

Dhunpath, Nakabungo and Amin 2013). The current study considers how students attribute their success to such factors.

As a case study, the current study allows a focus on the uniqueness of the ECP despite the increased number of previously disadvantaged students on mainstream in response to the fourth question from Dhunpath and Vithal (2012) above. Meanwhile, Smith, Case and Walbeek (2014) make two suggestions that respond to whether funds going into Access Programmes should rather be used to improve mainstream support as follows:

1. Academic Development courses should be extended to second and third years to retain and ensure graduation of these students. This follows the findings in favour of high-level success within first-year AD courses in improving academic performance. Scholars like Dhunpath, Nakabungo and Amin (2013) and Nel and Nel (2009) who agree that language development modules be among such courses spread through different years of study for all students. This is based on the strong indications that first-year AD courses are improving the performances of AD students compared to their mainstream peers (Nala 2010; Tyson 2010; Clarence-Fincham, 2008; Clarence-Fincham, 1998). This is supported by the finding that Foundation students struggle after the first year support is over. The current study should also contribute to this discourse since it focuses on the perspectives of the students on what actually enhance their continuous success after the first year is over. It is obvious that doing this has financial implications for the government and higher education institutions.

2. A balancing act is required for Higher Education Institutions to ensure the reformation of the curricula and pedagogies of undergraduate programmes that meet the epistemological, educational and psychological needs of students, rather than expecting students to adjust to universities' traditional demands (Smith, Case & Walbeek 2014; Boughey 2005; Warren 2002). The caution is that widening access must not undercut the quality of the qualification. Smith, Case and Walbeek (2014: 636) suggest that it is the responsibility of AD practitioners and programmes to facilitate the achievement of these goals. Nevertheless, the question of how to bridge the gap between Academic Development Practitioners and the rest of the universities and incorporating lessons from these programmes to mainstream remains a challenge. The current study can only contribute indirectly to this end by assessing students' experiences with the aim of policy reform, highlighting strengths of the programme for their needs.

This review of literature makes it clear that universities need to support most first year students, irrespective of backgrounds because the secondary school structures do not prepare sufficiently to scaffold university discourses (Dhunpath & Vithal 2012). Indeed more students from the previously disadvantaged backgrounds are now making it to mainstream. The current study, therefore, collects data from students who have experienced the ECP themselves, assessing their attributions of success and failures in order to inform decisions on whether to cancel ECPs and focus support on mainstream or continuing with ECP with some relevant improvements.

Nevertheless, the field of study is still fertile, as the findings from this study need comparison with studies that focus on mainstream students, using the same methodologies in order to assess to what extent the ECP has impacted, and whether it should or should not be continued. Such a study out on mainstream students from disadvantaged backgrounds should provide legible data for informed decision-making in this regard. This, nevertheless, goes beyond what the current study can handle, given its focus, resource and time constraints.

2.10 Conclusion

This literature review chapter focused on the discourses on students learning experiences within ADPs in general and with some background on the ECP in UKZN. Starting with literature and themes related to the evolution of Access criteria in tertiary education it assessed the literature on three historical models of access including the elitist model, the massive access model as well as the universal access models and their implications on how access to higher education is now conceived and confused. Studies on the implication of widening access were also reviewed.

A distinction was made between different aspects of ADPs with an interest in ADPs for access. Trends in ADPs for Access in South Africa were traced to locate the practice in the college of Humanities in the University of KwaZulu-Natal. The different kinds of foundation programmes were identified, and a focus made on the Extended Curriculum Programme and on issues of Access and success. The literature on the extent to which time and energy investment by students amount to successful outcomes was assessed. It is asserted that ADPs should be modelled from students' own identified needs to aid their development of abilities to succeed in the university. Some studies indicate that Foundational ADP students are likely

to sink once they go into the mainstream and the support is no longer there. Other studies indicate the reverse.

The literature on learning styles, approaches to learning, students' learning experiences and students' success were also reviewed. The literature on approaches for improving the throughput rate of ECP students was also assessed. Studies on the ECP in the College of Humanities, University of KwaZulu-Natal indicates that students who have been through the ECP develop both social and intellectual capital. It was found that the programme equips target students to outperform mainstream students; they even assist their peers in the mainstream with aspects of academic writing. Parkinson, Jackson and Padayachee (2008: 11) present a different picture, arguing that Academic Literacy Programmes do improve students' writing skills, with the weakest students improving the most. However, they maintain that at the end of the literacy course, the weakest students are still not equivalent to regular entrants into the faculty. These findings raise questions about the quality of ADPs, the quality of support that these students are receiving and the contributions of the programmes to the success achieved.

Considering the above concerns, the current study focuses on students' experiences of learning through the Extended Curriculum Programme and assesses their conception of how they grow in knowledge and the role of the ECP in facilitating this process. It assesses what students' experiences of learning that leads to the overall results. It presents a case of students' conception of learning before being a part of the programme, whether or not those conceptions changed and why if they think perceptions changed. This allows an investigation into whether or not students' experiences of ADPs as articulated by them is similar to what these programme theories propose.

Chapter 3: Theoretical Framework

3.0. Introduction

Thomas (1985: 4) defines theory ‘as an explanation of how the facts fit together’. It allows connections to be made between facts so that sense can be made for the purpose of creating meaning. The theoretical framework is therefore, the philosophical foundation for research which is a lens that the researcher uses to systematically present facts related to the phenomenon under investigation. It creates a link between the theoretical aspects and the practical components of the investigation. It entails ‘the set of interrelated constructs, definitions, and propositions that presents a systematic view of phenomena by specifying relations among variables (Globlio 2010). Hence, a theoretical framework could constitute a set of theories that together allow the phenomena under investigation to be systematically viewed. Martens’ (1998: 3) considers the theoretical framework as the basic premise of the research problem since it has implications for every decision made in the research process. It can explain the phenomena upon which the study hopes to fill the gap in the field of knowledge.

The facts in this study fit together based on two interrelated theoretical standpoints: Social Constructivism (SC) and Attribution Theory (AT) perspectives. These lenses are used to illustrate the experiences of students within the ECP. They propose some important insights to understand the ECP students’ explanations of their successes or failures and the significant relationships between these facts that answer the research questions. These facilitate deeper insight into students’ interpretation of their experiences and the consequences of these interpretations and, for development. Social Constructivism is the theoretical framework guiding this research project, while the Attribution Theory is its analytical tool. In other words, the SC and the AT are the two frames that inform the operationalization and the conceptualization of the qualitative and numerical data of this study.

The ECP is formulated from a social constructivist policy perspective with affirmative action principles. Offering students from disadvantaged background a social environment to enhance their preparation and integration into the university system resonate the ideas of SC

theorists like Piaget and Vygotsky (Bhattachary & Han 2010; Galloway 2010). Nala's (2010) study found that the ECP develops social capital⁸ among its students.

This chapter demonstrates how Social Constructivism and the Attribution Theory connect for the purpose of this study. The SC paradigm allows a background understanding of target students, how the ECP influences their socialisation, and the changes that they undergo as a result being socially immersed in the programme. The AT analyses students' articulation of the reasons for their performances. Their beliefs about their performances affect future performances. Hence, the AT allows enquiry into individual ECP students' subjective experiences to establish both the influence and the reciprocities of the construction process that goes on in knowledge "creation" and distribution within the programme. The questions to be answered are: how are the personal perspectives of students from previously disadvantaged backgrounds mediated against the university world through the ECP? How do they construct and attribute meaning to these encounters? How do they build new knowledge and assert a new sense of meaning in the process? This study responds to these and assesses the extent to which students know the differences in pre-tertiary and tertiary meaning-making in their transitions.

3.1 The Theory of Social Constructivism

Social constructivism or Social constructionism as a learning theory proceeds from the assertion that learning takes place in the process of relating. It holds that 'a great deal of human life exists as it does due to social and interpersonal influences' (Grenge 1985 cited in Owen 1995: np). According to Kim (2010) SC emphasises the importance of culture and context in understanding what occurs in society and constructing knowledge based on this understanding. Raskins (2002: 1) surmises that human beings create systems for meaningfully understanding their worlds and experiences. SC is relevant for this study following the general outcry for change in institutional practices in order to better serve the new generation of students flooding the universities. Traditional structures of universities are no longer meeting the needs of the new categories of students within the widening and massive access into tertiary institutions.

⁸ The term Social capital refers to the resource, which students who have a common goal of success develop through belonging to a social network. This social resource becomes available to members of the network as a result of their relationship leading towards positive academic results (Nala 2010: 33).

3.1.1 Definition of constructivism

Social constructivism derives its essence from “constructivism”; within the social environment that facilitates the process of knowing and learning. Thus, constructionism is both a theory of learning and a strategy for education. It is rooted in the “constructivist” theories of Jean Piaget, which asserts that ‘knowledge is not simply transmitted by teachers to students, but actively constructed in the mind of the learner’ (Parpet 1993: 3) in (Han & Bhattacharya 2010: 130). The learner is an active builder of knowledge who shares the construction of external artefacts along the paths of learning. Crotty (1998: 8 Cited in Kim 2010) explains that the construction process brings truth or meaning into existence. There can be no meaning without a mind; therefore meaning is constructed through one’s mental engagement with the realities of one’s world. This does not lead to the discovery of its ontology, but one’s construction of it. Construction is, therefore, relative since different people can construct different meaning from the same phenomenon. Thus, realities ‘emerge as partners in the generation of meaning’ (Crotty 1998: 8).

Blumer (1962) adds that the constitution of the mind allows and influences this process since it carries the background, perspective, perceptions and previous experience of the individual. These undergird one’s imagination and creativity and facilitate the process of one’s construction of reality. Hence, one’s concept of things and events - a constructed reality - can be attributed to the kind of engagement that occurs with objects and events and how one relates and directs attention to them (Charon 2001; Denzin & Lincoln 1994). For instance, a policeman’s experience and construction of what happened in a crime scene would be different from that of a taxi driver who was present at the scene of the crime. These two experiences would also differ from that of the crime victim. Each unique construction of what happened is affected by their history, their biography, and their relationship to, or experience of the case.

In the context of this study, different students experience learning differently, determined by their backgrounds and previous experiences. This should affect their attitudes to learning and what they attribute their successes and failures to. Han and Bhattacharya (2010: 130) argue that the learners’ capacities to construct knowledge are more evident when produced through social interaction and shared representations of their thoughts’. This shared representation with significant others distinguishes between the personal and the social constructions. Both cases entail similar processes of experiencing the world and of producing meaning. Different

people can create meaning differently by employing their imagination and creativity to process the object of their experience. This construct is a product of the mind - a mental reality that could be either personally or socially constructed.

3.1.2 The Social Construction of Reality

According to Cromby and Nightingale (1999), Social Constructivism implies that people of a particular social context, construct knowledge about shared phenomena in ways unique to their shared experiences. This facilitates their purposeful understanding of the phenomena or realities surrounding them for reciprocal and peaceful shared existence (Cromby & Nightingale 1999). People continuously create, through their actions and interactions, a shared reality that is experienced as objectively factual and subjectively meaningful (Lefcourt 2014).

Therefore, the social world is not simply given, factual, natural and fully determined; it is made up and transmitted by people through social agreements. What we have learnt from our senses, our own reason or intuitions, we have learnt from other human beings. For instance, the notion of books, nations and money cannot exist in the absence of society (Lefcourt 2014). Moreover, 'The world we experience and the people we find ourselves to be are first and foremost the product of social processes' (Cromby & Nightingale 1999: 4). Hence, the experience is rooted in society, not in God or individual consciousness. Thus, our relationships and who we are is primarily constituted of the social reproduction and transformation of structures of meaning, conventions, morals and discursive practices.

Crotty (1998: 53) argues that although meaning is socially constructed, it is not a static reality. The meaning constructed of a phenomenon can change in different social settings. This is because social constructions employ symbols which have social origins, characters, and conventions. These conventions provide direction for meaningful behaviour in different cultures. These symbols also preserve socially constructed reality (Berger & Luckmann 1996). There are historical and biographical components to the encounter with the social and cultural world through which one socially learns and constructs reality. The physical and social world into which one is born at a given time has already developed the socio-cultural world of meaning with a developed system of symbols and conventions like language. Language constitutes the primary means of constructing meaning and expressing social constructs.

Nevertheless, the world is a cycle of continual social renewal and cultural development. As the individual encounters different segments of society, s/he is prompted to reconstruct reality in order to be integrated into the new sub-culture that might hold new meaning. Thus, one's social construction is continuously changing and developing as one gets into different, albeit, more complex socialisations in one's lifetime. Co-constructing social reality goes beyond mere acceptance and makes room for one's experience to modify the normal or acceptable conceptions that prevail. Nevertheless, in a new socialisation, there is an inclination to integrate and share the prevailing constructions that allow one entry and easy socialisation as it is indeed easier to learn and act as others act than it is to do what they say.

Vygotsky's notion of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) and the More Knowledgeable Other (MKO) appear pertinent as a means of explaining the process of constructing meaning in a new environment. Schwandt (2000: 9) sums it thus:

We are all constructivists if we believe that the mind is active in the construction of knowledge. We invent concepts, models and schemes to make sense of experience, and we continually test and modify this construction in the light of new experiences. Furthermore, there is a historical sociocultural dimension to this construction. We do not construct our interpretations in isolation but against a backdrop of shared understandings, practices and language.

Thus, society's construction of meaning influences that of an individual. A learner's construction of knowledge or meaning is influenced by that learner's experience, perception and by the way society structures it. Perceptions are themselves influenced by background and context. This answers the epistemological question of how we come to know and learn within social constructivism (Hein 1991). It is on this basis that the current study presumes that the inability of a student to be integrated into a new socialization within the university is an indication that they have not felt welcome to that society for one reason or other. Hence, knowledge depends on one's construction of meaning based on personal experiences in a society.

The social constructivist paradigm allows this study to explain how students' construction of their success or failure is based on their past experiences (cultural backgrounds), as well as influenced by their social interactions within the present (university context). It is interested in how the ECP influences the construction of what was responsible for students' success or failure and how this affects students' sense of meaning. This follows the assertion that whatever value a phenomenon has is what society has assigned to it. Society can also affect

one's personal identity by how it constructs it. Identity is created by interactions with others and reactions to the expectations of society. The next section on the epistemological perspectives of social constructivism grapples with the complexity of the SC theory.

3.1.3 Epistemological Perspective of Social Constructivism

As a theory of knowledge and a means of answering the epistemological question about how we come to know, (Kim 2010; Blanche, Kelly & Durrheim 2006) relate that within the Social Constructivist paradigm, culture and context are vital for understanding societal occurrences; and knowledge is constructed based on this understanding. One is always in a culture or going to another culture that is new; implying changes in social constructions based on contexts. This viewpoint is more aligned to the developmental theories of Vygotsky and Bruner on the one hand and the social cognitive theory of Bandura on the other (Shunk 2000) in (Kim 2010: 56). The question that arises is to what extent that which is constructed assumes an independent reality.

Some social constructivists like Kim (2010), Tritelli (2003) Dzubak (2007) and Dzubak (nd) assert that each individual uniquely constructs a version of the reality, which they carry along in their day-to-day human experiences. Others like Amineh and Asl (2015), Powel and Kalina (2009), Adams (2006) hold that two people observing an object never actually see it in the same way. A third view contends that reality does not exist apart from being socially invented by people. The fourth and radical constructivist view holds that although there exist an external physical reality, it has no meaning except for those constructed (imposed upon them) by a people. "Therefore true knowledge of them - or of any 'reality' - does NOT exist. Reality is a social construct" (Kim 2010). These are epistemological, not ontological statements because of their epistemological starting points and meanings.

3.1.3.1 Ontology versus Epistemology of Social Constructions

Human beings have the capacity to mentally construct reality; whether physical or social. This makes subtle distinctions between *epistemology* (a set of beliefs about knowing), and *ontology* (a set of beliefs about what exists or what is real) (Kim 2010). This questions the assumption that the only things that exist are the known (socially constructed); since a thing can exist, which is not known while other things only exist because they are socially constructed. Luckmann (1996) explains that what is known – socially constructed – is shared

and congealed to a point of objectification; giving it the character of a concrete physical reality. This objectified constructed reality can be preserved through culture and passed on, thus assuming ontology. However, it remains subjective to the society and subject to change, like any other physical reality. This instigates confusion about whether social constructions are the only realities that exist.

To forestall the subjectivist versus objectivist debate which social constructivism emerged to combat, the focus here is purely for social reality. The fact that some realities are known in one context and unknown in another is sufficient indication that realities outside of the socially constructed cannot be wished away. Meanwhile, constructivist epistemologies generally insist that no two persons' realities will be the same; this means that different groups of people construct social realities differently according to their contexts. People also move from one social context to another and must refine their social constructions to suit the new social context. The implication is that 'belief about the nature of the external world is not the same as belief about knowledge' (Crotty 1998 cited in Kim 2010).

It can be argued that that if mankind were to be extinct, the planet and the rest of the universe would continue to exist without our meaning-making activities. Nevertheless, constructivism focuses on epistemology, not ontology. The current study does not deny the existence of reality that has not yet been subject to social construction and interpretation. It retains and uses the term social constructivism as an epistemological tool. The question whether or not socially constructed knowledge is realist or idealist arises. This contention developed from the fact that constructivism itself arose in attempts to conceptually bridge between the realist and the idealist approaches to knowledge (Chiari & Nuzzo 1996 in Raskins' 2002).

3.1.3.2 Realist Versus Idealist versions of Social Constructivism

Raskins (2002) presents the argument of Chiari and Nuzzo (1996) that 'all constructivist psychologies attempt to conceptually bridge realist and idealist approaches to knowledge'. Realism holds that "material objects exist externally to us and independently of our sense experience," while idealism maintains that "no such material objects or external realities exist apart from our knowledge or consciousness of them, the whole world is dependent on the mind" (Raskins 2002: np). In other words, objects do not exist outside of our consciousness or apart from our knowledge of them. This attempt to overcome the realism-idealism dichotomy culminated in two broad categories of constructivism; namely: epistemological

and hermeneutic. Other theories of constructivism should fall within one of these categories. Meanwhile, another popular source of epistemological distinction among social constructivists in approaching research lies in the objectivism/subjectivism debate.

3.1.3.3 Objectivism versus Subjectivism

Constructivism also developed as theoretical paradigm for addressing the knowledge gap between objectivism and subjectivism in finding meaning in social research. Objectivism finds meaning to be inherent in the object to be examined, seeking quantifiable and measurable properties of reality as is the case in the physical sciences. Positivism is the theoretical perspective for objectivism with its experimental methodologies and quantitative methods. Subjectivism, on its part, sees meaning as emerging in a vacuum; not out of the interplay between subject and object. Within subjectivism, the object cannot make any contribution on its own to the generation of meaning, but meaning is imposed on the object by the subject (Crotty 1998).

Nevertheless, both objectivism and subjectivism have major challenges in researching social realities (Crotty 1998). For the objectivist, the difficulty is that the social world cannot be studied in the same way as the natural world, which is value free and has objective causal explanations for phenomena. Besides, their absolute position is continuously challenged by the evidence of probability and tentativeness in the nature of reality and how it can be known. It is thus argued that reality can only be imperfectly grasped due to the constraints of human limitations. Values and bias; cultural influence; and the provisional nature of knowledge and understanding make the objectivists' approach unfashionable for understanding social reality. The bounds and probabilities that determine the researcher's discovery of reality at any circumstance delimit the objectivist researcher's capacity to control variables and discount possible alternatives (Crotty 1998; Richardt & Rallis 1994). It is even more difficult to control variables when investigating social behaviours within its environmental context, considering the above-listed limitations.

The difficulty of applying subjectivism to understand the social world lies in its claim that the object in itself cannot make any contribution to the generation of meaning. Since human beings tend to make sense out of something; the threat of importing meaning from other unrelated sources to explain social behavior remains problematic. Besides, its emphasis on the subjective meaning of social action ignores the relationships between individual

perceptions, interpretations and actions; and the influence of external factors. This posed a difficulty of application to the socio-cultural world which social constructivism arose to address. These controversies also led to the different versions of social constructivism that the next sub-section discusses.

3.1.4 Versions of social constructivism

The attempt by constructivists to overcome the realism-idealism dichotomy informed a distinction between two broad categories of constructivism (Chaiari & Nuzzo 1996 cited in Raskins 2002). These categories included: epistemological and hermeneutic constructivism. They held that every other version of constructivist is located under these two (Raskins 2002), except for the notion of limited realism. Theorists within these categories fall under one of personal construct psychology, social constructivism or social constructionism, with their diverse emphasis on idealism or realism. There is also a new version of social constructivism, quite unrelated to the realist/idealist factions known as constructivist leadership. The proceeding sub-sections address the distinctions.

3.1.4.1 Epistemological Constructivism

Epistemological constructivists are not purely idealists because they believe in the existence of an external reality that is independent of the observer. However, knowledge of reality is only acquired through human constructions of it for understanding the world. Knowledge schemes are viable, but not accurate representations of reality. The viability of one's knowledge (how it works), is more important than its correspondence to independent reality (Raskins 2002). As such, people are part of a cognitively closed system; some kind of solipsism. Although Chaiari and Nuzzo (1996: 171) laud this idea of cognitive closure as a means of overcoming the subjective/objective dichotomy and abandoning the traditional realistic perspective, they do not sufficiently explain the relationship between the external reality and the knowledge that one has.

3.1.4.2 Hermeneutic Constructivism

Hermeneutic constructivists, on the other hand, do not believe in the existence of an observer-independent reality. Knowledge of them is a product of the linguistic activity of a community of observers. Their extreme relativist position is that there can be as many knowledge systems as there are groups discursively negotiating them. Language, discourse, and communication are essential in understanding how knowledge systems are developed and maintained. The many forms of hermeneutic constructivism, with their different historical

backgrounds, share certain fundamental premises. They uphold that knowledge (and truth) is interpretation, which is historically founded, contextual, linguistically generated and socially negotiated (Chiari & Nuzzo, 1996b: 174 cited in Raskins 2002). In a sense, Gergen's social constructionism is an example of hermeneutic constructivism, while Maturana's radical constructivism appears to contain hermeneutic elements.

3.1.4.3 Limited realism

According to Chiari and Nuzzo (1996b cited in Raskins 2002) limited realism holds that an external reality exists and can be directly known, but due to the unreliability of human perception, there is an imperfect correspondence between knowledge and reality. Some theorists argue for the possibility of correcting erroneous or illogical thinking that distorts reality. Others like Chiari and Nuzzo (1996b) contend that limited realist approaches are not constructivist because of their claim that subjective representations mirror, with varying degrees of accuracy, an independent reality. They limit the use of the label *constructivism* to those theories that transcend the traditional opposition between realism and idealism by adopting the meta-theoretical assumption that the structure and organization of the known—the knower as known included—are inextricably linked to the structure of the knower.

Hence, they use the distinction between hermeneutic and epistemological constructivism as a framework to discuss three distinct versions of psychological constructivism, namely: personal construct psychology (PCP), radical constructivism (RC), and social constructionism (SC) (Chiari & Nuzzo 1996b in Raskins 2002). Their discourse also furthers the movement from personal constructivism to the other different forms of constructivism. They also introduce a resolution to the contentions between the terms “constructivism” and “constructionism”.

3.1.5 The differences between Constructivism and Constructionism

Although certain scholars sometimes use these terms constructivism and constructionism interchangeably, there are marked differences and similarities between them. They have been widely used for theorising in psychology, sociology, education, and philosophy of science, with controversies in conceptualizations. Its recent popularity within the field of psychology has followed various theoretical researches that gradually linked up over time. Psychologists

do not agree about one constructivist orientation and it has not evolved into a coherent and consistent theoretical approach (Raskins 2002).

According to Papert (1991) the terms constructivism expresses the theory that knowledge is built by the learner, not supplied by the teacher, while constructionism ‘expresses further the idea that happens especially felicitously when the learner is engaged in the construction of something external or at least shareable’ (Papert 1991 in Han & Bhattacharya 2010: 14). When constructivism is implemented in a learning environment, the teacher acts as a facilitator and guide but a classroom that implements constructionism can take on two forms: learning by design (LBD)⁹ and project-based learning (PBL)¹⁰.

Kim (2010: 58) argues that ‘what we believe about knowledge determines a great deal of what we believe about learning’, and as such has practical implications for how we approach teaching and learning. He identifies the subtle distinctions between Social constructionism and social constructivism as two different ways of talking about the same thing. Both terms entail the belief that learning is constructed by learners; either individually or socially, and not merely received from the teacher. Social constructivism generally allows the possibility that people can derive meaning from objects in the environment as well as from social interactions, social constructionism denies such possibility (Kim 2010: 58); (Raskins 2002).

The term constructivism is preferred in this study for convenience and to avoid unnecessary confusion. Its preference follows the assertion that an individual cannot be denied the capacity of relating with the physical world; although doing so is dependent on the individual’s background, culture, language and other limitations. Denying the physical reality puts constructionism in a mental box that reality must be constructed to exist. Hence, the next section highlights the current study’s view about learning within the framework. Owen (1995) admits that there are **several versions** of social constructivism, and different writers make different emphases’. Both terms are based on specific assumptions about reality,

⁹LBD requires groups or individual learners to create an artefact that represents their new-found knowledge (Han and Bhattacharya 2010: 14).

¹⁰PBL is a, “teaching and learning strategy that engages learners in complex activities”, that require learners to, “...choose and organize their activities, conduct research, and synthesize information”. The task in all three of these models is to build some sort of artefact. (Han and Bhattacharya 2010: 14).

knowledge, and learning. For the sake of relevance to the study, the next section discusses learning within the paradigm, providing a basis for logically proceeding with the discussion.

3.1.5.1 Learning

Orey (2010: 8) defines learning as how we come to know. Learning within social constructivism is a process which occurs when individuals are engaged in social activities (Kim 2010). One's background affects one's capacity to learn, hence, people in a society come to learn the things in different ways. Despite having a common meaning of what is learnt, the outcome of learning is not always the same. One might not automatically learn what was intended, but being engaged in the social construction process implies a change from what was known before. Being in a social activity where people are singing does not automatically make one a singer, but one would have learnt significantly about singing.

Nevertheless, the above definition clearly refutes the idea that learning is exclusively a process of receiving knowledge transferred from a teacher as facts to students. It entails making connections between different experiences in learning; implying that the learner must possess some implicit level of the will to learn and a purpose. Orey (2010: 8) explains that people of a similar mode of thought are more likely to relate better with each other than those who have different modes of thought and this creates a better platform for learning. This mode of thought can be explained as purpose or common goal, but they also seem to derive from the Piaget's notion of mental structures and schemas. Biggs (1998) refers to these as influencing the motives and strategies for learning.

Social Constructivist learning in the early teaching of any subject can take the form of the teacher providing guidance to accelerate the learners' thinking; where the learners are encouraged to first of all enquire about the phenomenon to be learnt and grasp basic ideas of it intuitively¹¹ (GTC 2006). This allows them to relate the new phenomenon of knowledge to something that they are already familiar with in their past. The teacher can then structure the curriculum to revisit these basic ideas, build upon them incrementally until the learner has a full understanding and can see and add elements to the phenomenon that they could previously not envision or that were initially beyond their grasp.

¹¹ This resonates Vygotsky's ideas of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) and the More Knowledgeable Other (MKO).

In this way, individuals construct knowledge, whether with other individuals or with a group. Learners always share a social context in the learning process. Thus, their subjective conceptualization of the phenomenon of knowledge, when shared through their interaction with others', enriches their knowledge of the phenomenon, leaving room for further improvement of the knowledge. As such, what one can learn about a phenomenon is dependent on what others sharing the social setting can grasp, share, and to what extent, one can leverage previous knowledge and experience to facilitate this new element of one's social context.

This justifies the constructivists' value for remembering while justifying the importance of culture, context, and language as prerequisites of the learning process. The entire learning process thus affects the learner's sense of meaning, hence the next section's focus on the sense of meaning.

3.1.5.2 The Notion of Meaning

There are two important uses of the term "meaning" that must be delineated because of their continuous and inescapable use in this study. A distinction is to be made here between the making of meaning as referring to learning, and (the sense of meaning) making meaning as central to one's identity. Firstly, the notion of learning has been used interchangeably with the idea of making meaning. Secondly, Lambert (2002: xvi) notes that something needs to be repeated sufficiently enough to be accepted as a necessary part of one's being. In this case, it has garnered a sense of meaning for that person as the following quote illustrates.

These patterns of learning must repeat themselves throughout the lives of individuals if our personal, professional, and community endeavours are to make sense to us, to have coherence and meaning (Lambert 2002: xvi).

This can imply that the person understands the phenomenon or that it constitutes the character of the person. A pattern of doing something can be adopted and accepted as the norm in as much as it constitutes a reliable repeatable or even predictable means of doing something. This is the kind of knowledge and learning that constructivist learning entails.

Lambert (2002: xvi) claims that 'constructivism is the primary basis for learning for children, adults, and organizations'. It presupposes that individuals and organizations bring who they are into the learning process. In other words, they bring previous experiences and beliefs, their histories and world views into the process of learning. These influence interaction with and interpret encounters with new ideas and events. Personal perspectives are mediated with

the world through inquiry, allowing one to construct and attribute meaning to these encounters, and building new knowledge in the process (Lambert 2002: xvi–xvii). This process justifies the use of attribution theory as the analytical framework for this study.

The questions are: how are the personal perspectives of students from previously disadvantaged backgrounds mediated against the university world through the ECP? How do they construct and attribute meaning to these encounters? How do they build new knowledge and assert a new sense of meaning in the process? This study responds to these and assesses the extent to which students know the differences in pre-tertiary and tertiary meaning-making in their transitions. Lambert (2002) argues that the reciprocal learning process enables individuals to make meaning together in a community; enabling shared purpose and the possibilities for mutual growth and development. He identifies the principles of interdependence, sustainability, partnership, flexibility, diversity, energy flow and co-evolution as being constructive in nature.

Social constructions can facilitate the identification of the primary patterns of learning to the community of people with a shared purpose. This follows the claims that patterns of relationships form the primary basis for human growth and development. Thus the patterns of learning which evolve from a community of people often remain and perpetuate within this community. As such, relationships among members of the community become central to a successful and a self-renewing community, school, programme or district. These patterns of relationships¹², in the words of Lambert (2002: xvii) “are the connecting nodes of the educational community through which meaning and knowledge are constructed and shared”.

The identity of the individual - the individual’s sense of meaning - is only formed on the basis of these relationships. This makes relationships the most important factor in one’s past, present and future possibilities. Hence, to achieve a certain vision, one should be placed with people with similar visions for the purpose of socialization. Herein lies the potency of SC as the relevant paradigm for discussing the growth of students from a previously disadvantaged background placed in the ECP with other learners of a common purpose. The programme deliberately attempts to socialize target students into the university community. The assumption here is that one’s potential is not limited by some innate makeup, but by socialization opportunities.

¹² The apartheid system created a pattern of relationships that affected the patterns of learning in a tremendous manner in South Africa.

Social constructivism further asserts that diversity provides complexity, depth, multiple perspectives, and equity to relationships; thereby extending human and social possibilities. Learning from diversity is dependent on an understanding that diversity is a fundamental complexity in relationship and perception. Much more can be learnt from diversity among members of a community if the diversity is positively acknowledged¹³ by those who share it. Understanding every member as equal and as capable of bringing something of value to the learning process is vital for the formation of a relationship that promotes growth and purpose. This shields the process from power, and authority and allows learning to drive the culture.

Accordingly, the use of Social constructivism as a learning theory has become an increasingly popular theory for different kinds of educational development approaches for decades (Trent, Artiles & Englert 1998; Hein 1991¹⁴). This has resulted in different versions of SC in learning. Kim (2010: 57) presents these different versions of SC in education based on the argument that ‘social constructivists see as crucial both the context in which learning occurs and the social contexts that learners bring to their learning environment’.

3.1.6 Social Constructivists’ Approach to Learning

Gredler (1997) cited in Kim (2010) presents four general perspectives that inform how learning could be facilitated within the social constructivist framework to include: the cognitive tool perspective, idea-based social constructivism, the pragmatic or emergent approach and transactional or situated cognitive perspective. This study would adopt mainly a transactional or situated cognitive perspective, but a brief description of the others are presented below.

3.1.6.1 Cognitive tools perspective

Cognitive tools perspective focuses on the learning of cognitive skills and strategies like memory, ability to learn, speech, and understanding of written material. Students engage in those social learning activities that involve hands-on project-based methods and utilization of discipline-based cognitive tools (Gredler, 1997; Prawat & Folden, 1994). As a group, they impose meaning on it through the social learning process.

¹³ It was the negative acknowledgement of diversity that led to the segregation and ills of the apartheid system which spread into the educational structure.

¹⁴ Any recent reference?

3.1.6.2 Idea-based social constructivism

Idea-based social constructivism sets a priority on important concepts in the various disciplines (e.g. part-whole relations in mathematics, photosynthesis in science, and point of view in literature) (Gredler, 1997:59; Prawat, 1995; Prawat & Folden, 1994). This can easily be related to Piaget's views on the working of schemata in the learning process. These "big ideas" expand learners' vision and become important foundations for their thinking and construction of social meaning (Gredler, 1997).

3.1.6.3 Pragmatic or emergent approach

Those with this perspective assert that the implementation of SC in class should be emergent as the need arises (Gredler, 1997). Its proponents hold that **knowledge, meaning, and understanding** of the world can be addressed in the classroom from both the view of individual learner and the collective view of the entire class (Tinto 2012; Gredler 1997; Cobb 1995)

3.1.6.4 Transactional or situated cognitive perspectives

This perspective focuses on the relationship between the people and their environment. Humans are a part of the constructed environment (including social relationships); the environment is in turn one of the characteristics that constitutes the individual (Gredler 1997; Bredo 1994). People who share a social environment perceive a need for change and construct the kind of change that is desirable to make living in that environment suitable. SC must, therefore, be understood from the perspective of a society of people who perceive the physical world, are progressive by virtue of their rationality, and therefore advance this environment by constructing better ways of interacting with each other and the environment. The development of traffic rules and what is akin to the social contract in the domain of ethics are examples. One's mind interacts with the environment, and if the environment and social relationships among group members change, the tasks of each individual also change (Gredler 1997; Bredo 1994). Learning takes place within the environment.

The common factor among these SC approaches to learning is that meaning is constructed. Each perspective implies different forms and approaches, based on what is emphasized. People construct knowledge differently within the social environment, as influenced by their

background. The construction of meaning as a social process among people who share an environment, a culture or a value has three consequences: Firstly, the learner must be the focus in thinking about learning (not only on the subject/lesson to be taught). Secondly, there is no knowledge independent of the meaning attributed to experience¹⁵ by the learner, or community of learners. Thirdly, one's approach to constructing meaning can change as affected by the context, culture, social milieu or new socialization.

3.1.6.5 Constructivist Leadership

This more recent perspective is embedded in patterns of relationships known as “reciprocal processes”. Through these patterns community members co-learn within a shared purpose, allowing the emergence of collective action about what matters to all. Leadership here enables reciprocal processes among people; and manifests itself within relationships in a community, not in sets of behaviors’ by an individual leader. Lambert (2002) argues that the environment, culture or field is predicated by subjective histories; energies; emotions and thought; conflicts; and affections of members. These are places where community members find room to be sincere and authentic with each other in their conversations.

The place of vulnerability, lack of knowledge or diversities in background among members of the community creates what Vygotsky (1962) referred to as the “zone of proximal development”. This is a space where participants can negotiate their own knowledge, meanings, intelligence, influenced by social, cultural and historical forces. Within the same space, the diversities of participants become apparent while the social milieu gives room for interaction. Through these interactions, individuals make sense of their beliefs while acknowledging its disparities with the beliefs of others. New schemas are created in their intellect to upgrade previous knowledge as they gain ideas and information through interaction processes. Transformation emerges in this process through reciprocity and respect for everyone's sense of autonomy (Lambert 2002).

3.1.7 Link to the Extended Curriculum Programme

The Extended Curriculum Programme (ECP) tries to affect the way its beneficiaries learn, and the SC allows this study to examine how students succeed in moving from one way of learning in high school to another way of learning at the university. Hein (1991) explains that social constructivism entails structuring reality (the ECP) in order to influence the viewer's

¹⁵If it does not make a sense or have meaning to the learner through some form of experience, then it really cannot be learnt.

(students') perception and learning within the University. This follows the assertion that the learner's capacity to construct knowledge in the mind can be influenced either by personal structuring of reality or as structured by a significant other. Thus, the University's construction of this reality to influence these students' learning is being assessed. At the same time, how learners are involved in co-constructing knowledge for themselves is equally assessed. This should inform how to re-focus the ECP interventions in the future.

The Extended Curriculum Students have been specifically chosen with an intention to affect target students' socialization and learning within the university, under the premise/understanding that their previous academic backgrounds were not ideal to prepare them for the demands of or the social context of tertiary studies. The university, therefore, a significant other, has structured university reality in such a way as to influence these students by socially integrating them into the university culture, and empowering them to proceed through it to be successful students.

3.1.7.2 Implications of accepting Social Constructivism

In line with Hein (1991), accepting social constructivist theory (a willingness to follow the path of Dewey, Piaget, and Vygotsky among others), implies giving up Platonic and all subsequent realistic views of epistemology. This would be the case for the current study, because, following Plato's argument, that **knowledge** is the understanding of the "true" nature of things by remembering dimly perceived perfect ideas will not be useful to the discourse which suggests that social reality is objectified in the minds of those who share a social context. Plato discussed knowledge of all kinds (including social norms) as an entity that awaits discovery; knowledge "out there" independent of the knower.

Piaget (1977) on the other hand postulates that knowledge can be generated by an individual through a process of knowledge production akin to the biological adaptive characteristics of organisms when planted in different habitats (Piaget 1977: XI). He argues that the mind can adapt to understand reality that is also constantly adapting. Thus, the observer fits what is observed into concepts formed through prior experiences (Piaget 1977: 63). The social constructivist position, therefore, follows a pedagogy that provides learners the chance not just to interact with sensory data, but to also construct their own meaning of the world.

On a social level, an analogy of Piaget on biological adaptability deduces that primary education is a nursery, preparing students for transplant into the garden of tertiary education. Contemporary challenges of tertiary students indicate not only that the nursery is not properly preparing students, but also that tertiary gardens are also not fertile enough for the quality of students coming in. Dhunpath and Vithal (2012) collaborate this analogy in their argument that the challenges of tertiary institutions in South Africa are not only reflective of underprepared students, but more so of underprepared institutions.

Social Constructivism offers explanatory tools regarding the incoherence of the differences of discourses between the secondary and the tertiary levels of education. It engages these differences in both discourses on the preparation of students and in the practice of it. Thus, it explains the gap between these different levels of socialization and their various social constructions. It clarifies the discriminatory and alienating potentials and explains the gap between these two crucial levels of socialization. It also gives room for assessing the requirement for successfully moving from a lower level of socialization to a higher. It facilitates the understanding of the challenges faced by students from a previously disadvantaged background who are underprepared for tertiary studies.

The Attribution Theory facilitates the eliciting of the voice of target students. It is used to gather data to inform the social reconstruction of better discourse and for redressing the apparent programme limitations. Such data should respond to how students on the ECP are coping. It should provide a framework for understanding the preparedness of tertiary institutions for students from previously underprepared backgrounds. The approach supports the assertion that social reality is constantly changing and evolving. The SC theoretical approach has an empowering characteristic which makes it preferred over Platonic epistemologies that lends itself to discriminative practices in education like the apartheid system of education.

Moreover, Edwards and Mercer (1987) favour Vygotsky's argument that understanding is shaped by two processes: through adaptive encounters with the physical world, and through interactions between people in relation to the world. This world is not merely physical and apprehended by the senses, but cultural, meaningful and significant through language. Human knowledge and thought are fundamentally cultural, deriving their distinctive properties from the nature of social activity, language, discourse and other cultural forms. ECP students are always considered to be disadvantaged in many regards within the universities. They are

being offered the social and cultural milieu to enhance their integration and their success through the university. This validates the use of the social constructivist paradigm for this research. It is useful for assessing students' learning within the Extended Curriculum Programme.

3.2 Analytical Framework

In order to address the complex issues involved in learning as the literature indicates, the current study used the attribution theory (AT) as an analytical framework. This theory gives credence to other models of academic development like Tinto's (1975) predictive model of integration; Astin's (1985) model of involvement; and Biggs' (1987) Study Process Questionnaire.

3.2.1 Background to the Attribution Theory (AT)

Weiner (1992; 1974) developed Attribution Theory (AT) as a theoretical framework that has become very influential in social psychology and the most influential theory with implications for academic motivation. In the 1980s and 1990s, Weiner based it on attribution principles explored as early as the 1950s by Fritz Heider (1896 – 1988), assessing the way people explain their successes and failures (Grabeal 2013). Heider (1944) originally use AT to understand 'unit formation' and persons as the 'prototype of origins'. 'Unit formation' is the process whereby the origin (cause) and effect, (actor and act) were seen as parts of a causal unit.

AT later focused on two perceived causes of behaviour: the perceived causes of other people's behaviour, and the perceived causes of one's behaviour. This study is interested in the perceived causes of one's behaviour. Individual's perception of how social (institutional and cultural or organisational) construction of reality influences their performance. Students' attribution of success and failure reveals their perceptions of these influences. It also indicates the extent to which such constructions fail to influence individuals.

In the 1960s and the 1970s AT became popular with social psychologists for understanding how people explain everyday occurrences in secular terms (Kelly & Michela 1980: 458; Shaver 1975; Jones et al., 1972; Kelley 1967). Its focus on causality reflects the works of Piaget (1930) on causality in children, Fincham (1983) on causal language, Michotte (1946) on the perception of causality through the apparent movement and collision of geometrical shapes (Hewstone 1983).

Haggins and LaPointe (2012) emphasize its utility in unveiling the connection between students' causal explanations and their future success as a thing which often elude lecturers and students. They explain that explanations are the window into students' causal understanding of the world. They believe that these explanations can be adapted to help students predict and control future events and outcomes. Hence, AT may contribute to increased motivation among students to set realistic goals and achieve them. It aids an understanding of how students view their own role in successful and unsuccessful outcomes in their studies (Graybeal 2013).

Kelley and Michela (1980) suggest that there is not one, but many attribution "theories"; each referring to unique problems. Hewstone (1983) relates that the study of people's understanding of the causes of behavior has a long and distinguishing philosophical tradition. The philosophical explanations ignored the beliefs of the lay person, why such beliefs were important, nor did they explain how the beliefs are arrived at. As psychologists tried to bridge this gap, AT was popularized. Hewstone (1983: 2) argued that AT is not a formal theory but a set of loosely structured propositions or a conceptual framework. It is neither a monolithic theory nor hegemonic theory. Meanwhile, its systematic hypothesis has been applied in social psychology, education, and motivation within the workplace. Heider called it "naïve" or "common-sense" psychology where people, like amateur scientists, try to understand other people's behaviour by piecing together information until they arrived at a reasonable explanation or cause. The different fields of application made variations of its important elements.

Contending definitions of "attribution" have raised questions about what attribution is, and what it is not. There are questions about whether attributions are always explanations; and if they are, are explanations are always causal (Hewstone 1983: 1). The debates extend to whether people do actually answer the question 'Why?' or 'for what reason?' something happened. It is applied to people's sense of self-efficacy in achievement oriented task environments that measures their success or failures (Graybeal 2013).

3.2.2 Definition of Attribution Theory

Kelley and Michela (1980: 458) define AT as 'the study of perceived causation; where attribution refers to the perception or inference of cause'. Weiner (1992) describes it as

people's attempt to determine why they or other people do what they do. This reflective act leads people to attribute possible causes to events or behaviours. HSrtel, McColl-Kennedy and McDonald (1998) add that AT is also concerned with the consequences of people's explanations of their own behaviors or the behaviours of others. These consequence of attributional explanations are important for behavioural change, following Hewstone's (1983: ix) assertion that AT emphasizes the social¹⁶ foundations and consequences of explanations and their functions. Three implications of this statement are discussed in the following paragraphs.

Firstly, the explanations of causation that AT emphasizes are based on the social environment of the person making attributions. This could be the current social environment or the previous social environment, depending on which one has a greater influence on the students' life. It identifies how the person making attributions fits into the society, thus responding to the social constructions of reality that the ECP policy and practices develop amongst students. The explanation of causation can be affected by or indicate how socially integrated the individual is as evident from their perception of behavioral causation. The function of such social foundation of explanation is that it reveals the individual's most dominant influence, whether it is the current socialization (meaning they have been integrated), or the previous socialization which means they are likely to struggle in the new environment¹⁷ (have not co-constructed the new reality).

The social consequence of the explanation, on the other hand, is that people seek to make sense of their experiences by understanding the causes of the experience (Anderman & Anderman; Spilka, Shaver & Kirkpatrick 1985: 2). Confidence can be enhanced if the explanation aligns with the goals of the social group or depleted if explanations do not align. The social consequence of attributions is the sense of meaning that the individual attributor develops. One's explanations of one's experiences is indicative of how the person thinks about themselves in the present and has consequences for the person's future as it influences their current choices. Consequently attributions impact on an individual's self-esteem; which

¹⁶ The idea of social foundation here resonates what relates the AT to social constructivism. How one perceives causes is often determined by how the phenomenon is constructed by their society. It also justifies why both theories can be used together in this study. Social foundation because people often attribute the causes of events either to themselves or to others or to other events/circumstances around them.

¹⁷ The SPC assesses to what extent students have been integrated by how much their approaches to learning exhibit university recommended approaches as opposed to high school.

in turn affects their control over the outcome of future experiences. It affects what they believe they can do in the future and how they define their abilities to fulfill certain tasks.

AT does not assess how accurately the learner knows or can recall the correct cause of events. It is concerned with what they believe these causes to be, and how these belief affect their behaviours. This articulation is affected by their integration into the social environment, which then affects what they think about themselves and how they think they can proceed or have proceeded from one stage to another. The next section focuses on the causal categories of attribution.

3.2.3 Causal Categories of Attributions

Weiner (1974) originally conceived four major categories of causes that students often believe to be responsible for their performance. These reasons for success or failure often depend on their abilities, the difficulties of the task at hand, the amount of effort invested into the task and/or whether or not they were lucky. Experiences are often outcomes of intentional and goal-directed stimuli¹⁸. As such, actions are ascribed to **causal agents** (that which bring about a change) or **reasons** (that for which a change is brought about). Anderman and Anderman (2009) consider AT as a theory of achievement motivation¹⁹ which serves as an important means of understanding motivation in academic settings:

In the classroom, the understanding students have about the causes of past events influences their ability to control what happens to them in the future. For example, if students fail a test, they will probably attribute that failure to a specific cause, such as (1) lack of ability, (2) lack of effort, or (3) poor instruction. The selected attribution will affect their subsequent motivation to engage in similar learning activities (Anderman & Anderman 2009: 1).

Students use these causal categories to relate events to causes. Their achievements affect their behavior modification, where pleasant outcomes motivate learners to feel good about themselves. In line with cognitive theory and self-efficacy theory, learners' current self-perceptions influence their interpretations of the success or failure of their current efforts. These also affect their future performance within similar tasks. The four causal categories of

¹⁸ Motive and strategy in SPQ

¹⁹ 'Motivation theories are important to discuss because everyone has them. And consciously or unconsciously, people rely on their theories of what causes behaviour when deciding how to try to change their own or another's behaviour' (Bacon 2010: 1).

attributions that influence motivation in education within the theory include ability, task difficulty, effort, and luck.

3.2.3.1 Ability

Ability is a **relatively internal and stable** factor over which the learner does not exercise much direct control on the short term. It entails the students' perception of their capacity or lack thereof, on an academic task. Passing modules indicates to students that they have the requisite ability. Failing to cope with the challenges of a module or a chosen specialization could be ascribed to the students' lack of ability (Weiner 1992). This is related to intelligence quotient (IQ).

3.2.3.2 Task difficulty

Here the attribution is made to an **external and unstable** factor that is largely beyond the learner's control. External in the sense that it is outside the personality of the learner, and unstable because of the likelihood of a difficult task becoming easy with sufficient preparations. If the task difficulty is related to lack of ability then that is not likely to change on its own. The student might not be able to cope with the demands of differences in writing style, analysis of information and performance expectations between high school and university. This can be overwhelming for a student causing him/her to struggle and even face the risk of giving up.

3.2.3.3 Effort

This is an internal and unstable factor. It is a characteristic that is personal to a learner and over which the learner can exercise a great deal of control. For example, if a student makes an effort to attend classes, meet due dates and study, he or she is more likely to succeed. On the other hand, a lazy student, having the poor commitment and poor attendance is likely to fail. It is unstable because the student can decide to change their attitude towards how much effort is invested. Hence, when a student attributes their success or failure to effort invested, it is likely to change in the future if they do change the amount of effort invested.

3.2.3.4 Luck

This is an **external and unstable** factor over which the learner exercises very little control. For an example, a student who believes that the reason for their success or failure is that they were lucky implies that the outcome is based on something totally out of their control. It is unstable because they cannot guarantee what extent their future performance in similar tasks would produce the same results if all circumstances remain the same. Such attributions

cannot improve the students' self-confidence. As already hinted from the foregoing discussion on the causal categories of attributions, students make attributions in order to satisfy certain needs related to their new social environment. The next section focuses on the needs that students try to meet through the attribution process.

3.2.3.5 Poor Instruction

When performance is attributed to poor instruction it is an external factor which is unstable. It is not controllable by the student and is likely to change if the quality of the instructor were to change. Nevertheless, it might affect the student if the poor instructor was supposed to lay foundations for the module requirement. Weiner's model of attributions emphasizes the importance of the different dimensions of these causal attributions in determining persistent behaviour. Thus the next section presents these dimensions of attributions.

3.2.4 Dimensions of Attribution

Haggins and Lapointe (2012) uphold the Weiner's (1985, 1992) model of the attribution as key in achievement motivation which postulates that causal attributions have dimensions. Three to four dimensions of causal categories are believed to directly or indirectly determine persistent behaviour (Haggins & LaPointe 2012: 1). This depends on whether the attributed cause is: (a) internal–external locus of causality, (b) controllable–uncontrollable causes, (c) unstable–stable (i.e., temporary vs. long lasting), or (d) global and generalizable causes (Weiner 1979; Fernandez-Ballesteros 2002). The model proposes an “attribution–affect–action motivational sequence, which theorizes that thought determine what we feel and feelings determine what we do” (Weiner, 1980: 676 cited in Haggins & LaPointe 2012:1).

3.2.4.1 Locus

The term locus denotes a place, situation or location where something happens (Ballesteros 2002). It refers to where the causal category of attribution is located. This cause can either be within or outside the attributor. Hence, it is considered as either being internal or external to the attributor (Haggins & LaPointe 2012). If the cause is located within the person making the attribution, it is referred to as an internal attribution. If it is located outside the person making the attribution (due to the situation) then it is considered to be an external attribution. Attributions of ability and effort are classified as internal and are assumed to originate within the person. The attributions of luck, task difficulty or poor instruction are classified as external, caused by events outside one's control.

3.2.4.2 Controllability

Weiner (1979) explained that attributed causes are either controllable or uncontrollable by an individual. A cause that is controllable can enhance the self-esteem of the attributor, while an uncontrollable cause can hamper self-esteem. Hence, Ballesteros (2002: 117) argues that the dimension of controllability is the most important attributional style dimension whereas globalist is the least important.

3.2.4.3 Stability

According to Weiner (1979), causal categories are either stable or unstable factors. The term stability answers the question: to what extent is this causal category a constant indicator? The stable causes do not vary over repeated attempts at a task; they are long lasting in the words of Haggins and LaPointe (2012). The unstable category varies over time; in the words of Haggins and LaPointe (2012), they are temporary causes. How likely will an event occur again, given similar circumstances? If the causal category is said to be stable, then the event (outcome) is going to occur again – the outcome would not vary if the task is repeated. A cause is unstable when repeated attempts at the same task might yield varying results; similar outcomes are not likely to recur (Ballesteros 2002). The stability of a cause is strongly determined by its location or situation, and the extent to which the category is controllable by the actor.

3.2.4.4 Globality

The dimension of globality is added by Peterson *et al.* (1982) in Fernandez-Ballesteros (2002: 116). It is concerned with whether a causal category is limited in its influence or widespread. The difference between stability and globality is its assumption that there is a high degree of cross-situational consistency in the type of attributions that people make. This assumption has been severely questioned on the basis that situational factors may play a more important role in predicting attributions. It is for this reason that the attribution theory is more valuable in context-sensitive situations. In Ballesteros' (2002: 118) words, 'increased specificity should increase the ability of such measures to predict actual attributions. The table below sums the theory's basic tenets.

Table 2- summary of the dimensions of attribution under locus, stability, and controllability

STABILITY	LOCUS			
	INTERNAL (Due to the person)		EXTERNAL (Due to the situation)	
	Controllable	Uncontrollable	Controllable	Uncontrollable
Stable (likely to occur again)	Long term effort	Aptitude	Instructional bias/favouritism	Ease/difficulty of school course requirement
Unstable (unlikely to occur again)	Skills/knowledge temporary or situational effort	Health on day of exam	Help from friends/teachers	chance

The perceived causes of events are rated along the above four dimensions within attribution theory. The assumption is that an individual's perception of an achievement-related task and their performance of that task are mediated by beliefs about causes of success or failure. Sweeney, Anderson and Bailey (1986) and Ballesteros (2002) relate the attributions of negative events to depression. The argument follows that people who make internal, stable/global and uncontrollable attributions for negative events tend to be more depressed. In the words of Haggins and LaPointe (2012),

[A]ttributing a negative outcome to causes that are personally (i.e., internally) controllable and unstable (e.g., low effort) is considered functional as such explanations lead to higher expectation of future success in that domain. In contrast, attributing a negative outcome to causes that are personally uncontrollable and stable (e.g., low ability) is considered dysfunctional, as these causes lead to lower expectation of future success in that domain, lower hope and lower persistence (Haggins & LaPointe 2012: 2).

This leads us to the needs that are achieved through the attributions process. Personally controllable, unstable causes of failure elicit guilt and subsequently greater behavioural efforts to improve in that domain, whereas personally uncontrollable, stable causes of failure elicit shame and reduced behavioural attempts to improve in that domain (Weiner 1985 cited in Haggins and LaPointe 2012: 2).

3.2.5 Needs Achieved through the Attribution Process

The previous section explained how people make attributions, while this section discusses why. People make attributions in order to satisfy certain needs. Bacon (2010: 1) asserts that

people rely on motivational theories when deciding how to try to change their own or another's behaviour. Three basic needs, desires or motives²⁰ evident throughout the attribution process include: for a sense of meaning, for control over outcomes, and for self-esteem.

3.2.5.1 For a Sense of Meaning

Developing a sense of meaning²¹ implies an awareness of what was responsible for past success or failure through attributions made. Attributions allow students to assess their significance or relevance within the university environment. It allows them to answer the question: why am I here? This is a fundamental questioning of one's value and worth in a society; and an inescapable characteristic of humans as rational and social beings. The sense of meaning desired or found through attributions is akin to what occurs when knowledge is socially constructed. Thus, attributions allow a weighing of how much one feels accepted and adjusted or belonging to the University social environment.

The social constructivists' view on **meaning** is something that individuals in a social setting create through their interactions with each other and with the environment they live in (Thomas' 1985: 6). **Culture, religion, and social interactions** are popular sources of developing a sense of meaning. Attributions allow students to determine their sense of meaning through determining whether or not they are in the right place; and whether or not they are fitting in. Once it begins to make sense to them why they are there, they can think about whether they are succeeding as members of this social context. The sense of meaning is determined by alignment of personal beliefs with social norms. Hence, the sense of meaning that students had in high school differs from what they need to succeed at the university.

Answers to questions like: "am I at the right place?" and "will I succeed?" determine students' sense of meaning. Attributions that meet the requirement of the social context and enable adjustment to how knowledge is socially constructed within the university setting integrate students into the university learning processes, thus, enhancing their sense of self. As such, attributions that embody positive social integration develop students' sense of meaning. Conversely, attributions that do not enhance students' beliefs that they have been well integrated can be dysfunctional in enhancing students' sense of meaning. Once the sense

²⁰ The SPQ relates that students' motives and strategies determine which approaches to learning they exhibit. Motives is a common concern for both tools

²¹ The free dictionary online defines meaning as the significance or purpose of something.

of meaning is established, their sense of competence is assessed and students can plan how to exert control over the outcome of their endeavor. The next section discusses students' need to control the outcomes of activities.

3.2.5.2 For Control over Outcome

When students have established a sense of meaning within a learning context, they have assessed their level of competence and they strive to control the future by forming ideas about what they expect in the future. With a good sense of self, students can develop a sense of self-mastery based on the belief that they have personal control over life outcomes (Haggins & LaPointe 2012). Thus, students build on the positive attributes and re-enforce them to ensure success in the future. They develop persistent behaviours and learn necessary skills that would enable their resilience. This entails trying to control their activities, acts or experiences in order to determine what outcome they would achieve. Students choose favorable actions that would aid them to pre-determine the future outcomes of their endeavours. As they figure out how to control outcomes, they develop confidence or self-esteem in the new environment. The next section discusses self-esteem as the third need that students seek to achieve through attributions.

3.2.5.3 Self-Esteem

Self-esteem here assumes the same meaning as the term self-efficacy. As students develop the capacity to exercise control over the outcome of achievement-motivated activities, they develop some level of confidence about how they can perform in future. The extent of control over outcomes that students have affects how they esteem themselves. Those who believe that they are succeeding esteem themselves higher than those who believe that they are not.

The outcomes of achievement-motivated acts are often attributed to the ability of the student, the difficulty of the task, the amount of effort invested by the student or their luck. Hence, assurance or confidence about how they can control the outcomes of their endeavours in the midst of these factors gives them a sense of what they are capable of and determines their self-esteem in such matters. The extent to which they can determine the outcome of their endeavors, based on their previous successes or failures indicates how they meet the university requirement and a measure of their self-esteem. They esteem themselves low if unable to meet the university requirement. This self-esteem is further depleted if they believe that they cannot change the constraining factors that make them unsuitable members of the university social group.

As students develop their sense of meaning, control over outcome and self-esteem, their social acceptance in the learning environment is affected, which in turn affects their social interaction and co-construction of knowledge (their ability to learn). This process seems to continue in an infinite regress cycle. The next section focuses on the implications of attributions.

3.2.6 Implications of attributions

Attributing a negative outcome to causes that are personally (i.e., internally) controllable and unstable (e.g., low effort) is considered functional (Weiner 1985 Cited in Haggins & LaPointe 2012). Such explanations lead to higher expectations of future success in that domain, higher hope, and higher levels of persistence behavior. In contrast, attributing a negative outcome to causes that are personally uncontrollable and stable (e.g., low ability) is considered dysfunctional. Such causes lead to lower expectations of future success in that domain, lower hope, and lower persistence (Weiner, 1985). For example, a personally controllable, unstable cause of failing a math exam would be “I got drunk the night before,” and a personally uncontrollable, stable cause would be “I’m no good at math.” Both causes are internal to the student who failed but differ in control and stability.

Personally controllable, unstable causes of failure elicit guilt and subsequently greater behavioural efforts to improve in that domain, whereas personally uncontrollable, stable causes of failure elicit shame and reduced behavioral attempts to improve in that domain (Weiner, 1985, 1992). Conceivably, once a student identifies personally controllable stable causes of failure, they automatically know what effort is needed to avoid future recurrence. Nonetheless, the need to improve on one’s ability through training should not be undermined. The SPQ further assess what learning approaches students employed while believing that they lack ability. They might have employed a weak approach in their studies.

Nevertheless, AT has indicated that experiences often have many possible and perhaps compatible causes. The attributor's task then is to choose among them or rank them in terms of relative importance or causal impact (Spilka, Shaver, & Kirkpatrick 1985). This makes attributions an integral part of successful problem-solving and coping with the demands of the environment. People attributing human causal agents rather than impersonal objects have

dominated attribution research; leading to arguments that ‘people tend to attribute events to enduring dispositions and traits of actors’ (Jones & Nisbett 1972; Heider 1958).

Overestimation of dispositional factors and underestimation of environmental forces has become so prevalent in explaining behaviour that it has been labelled the “fundamental attribution error”. When the presumed causal agent is a human-like actor, attributions are frequently made to some enduring trait(s) or other characteristic(s) of the actor. To deal with this fundamental attribution error, the social constructivist’s theoretical approach which underpins the extended curriculum programme and the study is employed in this study. This ECP asserts that students on the programme were previously disadvantaged at a social level and can be supported at a social level to gain integration into the university. This allows the study already to also pay attention to environmental factors that affect students’ attributions.

3.2.7 Criticism of the Attribution Theory

Attribution theory has several limitations, some of which are methodological. One of these limitations is the lack of psychometrically sound instruments for measuring attributions (Kent & Martinko 1995). To address this limitation, the current study uses a qualitative approach; although the qualitative approach in attributional research has been critiqued for having difficulty with terminology. The argument is that attempts to provide explanatory categories to participants may imply forcing causal explanations to fit casual dimensions (Kent & Martinko 1995); and if participants provide their own category, it may be difficult to identify the underlying causal structure. However, the current study does not aim at causal structures per se, but on finding the diversities of attributions that the target students make for their academic experiences; it assesses themes that emanate from participants’ responses and assesses whether or not these relate to attributional categories and the implications.

Moreover, Ballesteros’ (2002) discussion on methodological approach from the ideas of Peterson (1992) on Content Analysis of Verbatim Explanations (CAVE) provides a response:

This allows analysis of the ecologically valid events without requiring the participant to complete a questionnaire. The CAVE can also be applied to historical data, and it has established the stability of attributional style over a 52-year period (Burns & Seligman, 1989). Coders first extract causal explanations from a text, then rate them along the dimensions of locus, stability and globality. Inter-rater reliability for CAVE technique is satisfactory, and internal consistency has been reported as low to

adequate... CAVE has been proven to be useful when written content is all that is available (Ballesteros 2002: 117).

A related critique of attributional theories is based on its primary focus on respondents' reactions to organizational mishap or failures, without a focus on other stakeholders like the government, policy, the media, and government. The current study addresses these limitations by taking a public policy approach to the analysis of findings. The extended curriculum is implemented as a government policy initiative which the University has to implement, therefore the theory, in this case, would be used to analyze the implication of institutional and government policies on students in the long term. Moreover, since the current research begins its analysis from a social constructivists' paradigm, it, therefore, implies some level of attention to the influences of culture and other institutions of the state in targets' being (the kind of persons they are) and knowing (how they come to know).

The theory's capacity to measure attitudes is put to the question with the argument that there is a strong relationship between attitude and behavior in literature which seems to lack emphasis in the attributional models. Attributional theories intend to explain judgments of causation and predictions of the behavioral consequences of such explanations. Emotion and attitude only play a secondary role in these models. Attributional theories assume that emotions and attitudes follow from attributions in a simple and straightforward way to influence behavior. There is a contention, however, that the relationship between emotion, attitude and behavior is very different for different contingencies. This is a matter for another study, but for the purpose of this study, the assumption that there is a simple correlation between emotions and attitudes and the corresponding attributions is retained.

There are numerous and a variety of studies of the reasons for students' success and failures, this study focuses on what could be termed "the excuses and justifications" that students give for succeeding or failing and the implications of holding these justifications. These attributions are what students believe. Assessing these attributions should elicit a new way of understanding students' struggles, challenges, and successes. Some of these are mentalities from their previous socialization. Acquiring and sharing this knowledge with educators should inform their dealing with the students. Some student's beliefs may be unfounded, but if this is understood, the student can be supported accordingly.

Finally, AT is critiqued for including emotion as a variable in attributional researches without a corresponding operationalization of emotions as part of the attitude construct. This limits

the ability of the models to predict the attitude-behavior relationship. This is because attitudes are comprised of affective and cognitive components and the relative weights of each may vary. Therefore, attitude measures that fail to capture both subcomponents will only partially capture consumer attitude. Second, no attributional model considers the role of each of the two attitudinal subcomponents in driving a given behavior. Nevertheless, Weiner's attributional theory is considered the best for a study that meets some of the limitations cited above.

3.2.8 Attributions of Success/Students Success

Hsieh and Schallert (2008: 513) use two of the most popular theories for studying motivation in one study: the self-efficacy and the attribution theory. The self-efficacy theory by Bandura (1977, 1999) and the Attribution theory by Weiner (1976, 2000) present two influential perspectives of what students believe and how they explain their achievements (Hsieh & Schallert 2008: 514). These two are important in the explanation of achievements and very popular in studies that focus on **performance, persistence, and emotions of students** in a learning environment (Hsieh & Schallert 2008: 514). These are exactly the interest of the current study which focuses on students attributions of their success and failures in order to understand where efforts may be made from a policy perspective on the ECP to serve them better.

The progression of the debate is Motivations – results (achievements) – beliefs about achievements – motivation – results – beliefs. This goes on in infinite regress building self-efficacy and self-esteem. Self-efficacy is the beliefs that individuals have about their capabilities to successfully complete a task (Haggins & LaPointe 2012; Hsieh & Schallert 2008), while Attributions refer to the explanations that individuals give for their success or failure in a particular performance along three dimensions: locus, stability, and control, according to Weiner (1976). It appears that self-efficacy is often demonstrated through attributions. Nonetheless, all these affect persistence and the emotions of the students involved. The prevailing view is that the reactive reasons (attributions) that students give have the potential of affecting how proactive (their self-efficacy) they can be in future. Thus, reasons given for reactions can change, based on the understanding of perceived factors of influence.

Hsieh and Schallert (2008) notes that whether test scores represented successful or unsuccessful outcome students make attributions. They provided self-efficacy ratings for

their grades and used dual measures of attributions including using dimensions of attributions on the one hand and asking about actual reasons for a real outcome on the other. 'In regressions predicting achievement, self-efficacy was the strongest predictor, supplemented by ability attributions' (Hsieh & Schallert 2008: 513). Where lack of effort was considered the reasons for failure, students had higher self-efficacy than those who did not make attributions to the effort.

The current study is similar to this on its qualitative discourse, while also assessing students' approaches to learning in a different manner. Meanwhile, attribution itself can assess self-efficacy, since one's attribution of success or failure over an achievement related act always affects their effort and as such their future performance. Besides, the notion of achievement and its focus on capabilities are also inbuilt in attributions to some extent. One's attributions are very likely to affect their self-efficacy which in turn is generally linked to academic achievement with a strong degree of precision. The next section highlights how the SPQ and the AT are compatible for analysing findings in the study with the SC paradigm.

3.3 The use of both the Study Process Questionnaire (SPQ) and the Attribution Theory (AT) within the Social Constructivist (SC) paradigm

Biggs' (1987) SPQ is also used as a tool to complement the AT. It offers an alternative approach to popular research in the field which tests the assumptions of lecturers and counsellors in order to advance practice, and theory. The SPQ allows a focus on students' approaches to learning, assessing their motives and strategies and indicating whether they are surface, deep or achieving learners. The motives that students have for learning and strategies that they adopt result in specific approaches to learning. It is unclear whether students make attributions in line with these motives and strategies, and hence using both instruments for this study should indicate to what extent these approaches interlink; if they indeed have any link.

While the SPQ focuses on pre-determined motives and strategies, AT goes beyond motives to focus on perceptions that students have about their performance and how these perceptions tend to become their beliefs and affect their future performances. It uses of common sense explanations to identify the extent of transformation students have undergone in a new social space regarding their construction of university realities. This reveals their levels of

integration into the university. It can be assumed that that students' integration also affect their motives and strategies and their approaches to learning.

Both the AT and the SPQ are concerned with how students derive meaning from their learning experiences. The SPQ notes that students who are intrinsically motivated read widely, extract most meaning from their learning and relate new content to what they already know. The AT notes that students make attributions in order to gain a sense of meaning, to control the outcome of their endeavors and to enhance their self-esteem²². According to the SPQ, students who are motivated to achieve highest grades are likely to organize their work. This is in line with the idea of exerting control over the outcome of their learning activities which AT proposes. Those students who just try to pass their subjects without aiming high, focus on the bare essentials and rote learn them (Biggs 1987: 9). AT explains that students who indicate such attitudes in their attributions are likely to develop low self-esteem. Their learning approach brings about emotional or affective outcomes of dissatisfaction, boredom, or outright dislike. It is for this reason that students who predominantly use a surface approach to learning at college or university often terminate their formal education after obtaining their first qualifications.

The achieving approach, particularly, in combination with the deep approach (which amounts to deep-achieving approach), leads to good performance in examinations, a good academic self-concept, and to a feeling of satisfaction (Biggs 1987: 11). If these results are expressed by the learner through attributions, they would imply developing a good sense of control over the outcome of studies and a development of a good self-esteem. Students who predominantly use deep and/or achieving, approaches often tend to pursue a higher degree of some sort. This explains why the deep-achieving approach is more ideal for formal education (Biggs 1987: 11).

Biggs (1987: 11) believes that students' approach can be strongly influenced by immediate situational factors. This is exactly what AT proposes, except that these situational factors would be revealed by students' attributions within the AT, and would be determined by their approaches to learning within the SPQ. Moreover, Biggs (1987) argues that the deep and the achieving learning approaches are most effective when students are aware of their learning processes and try deliberately to control them. This resonates the idea of control over

²² It is conceivable that the more students realize their sense of self or relevance in the university, the likelier they are to have intrinsic interest and deep-learn, given that they are enrolled on their suitable careers. As they try to control the outcome of their endeavours they more achieving approaches they adopt

outcome which is the need that students want to achieve as they make attributions. Hence, the AT fills in the gaps that SPQ cannot address.

Finally, the SPQ also believes that ‘meta learning’, allows students to adopt those strategies that are congruent with their motives. *Curious* students would employ deep motives to *find out and understand all* that they can about it (deep strategy). The motive of *achieving top marks* (achieving motive) uses the strategy of organizing accordingly; *study according* to schedule, hand *assignments in on time*. These students have control over the outcome of their endeavor and are building their self-esteem through such learning processes. This indicates that the theoretical framework is indeed at sync and suitable for the purpose of the current study.

3.4 Conclusion

Students always perceive a cause for their experience of success or failure. This is because explaining the reasons for their success or failures, allows descriptions of their experiences within the programme. These explanations, though personal, reveal the prevailing social constructions of the ECP and the university community as a whole. It should elicit understanding of how social constructions have affected their integration into the system. Thus, students’ expressions of their own success or failures should enhance the measuring the success or failure of the ECP used to socialize these students into the new culture of the university.

The theory is relevant to the current study whose targets are learning how to solve problems within the university and how to cope with the university environment. The assumption is that what individuals attribute to be the causes of success or failure will influence how the individuals approach the task in the future. One’s perception will, in turn, affect future performance on the task (Asmus 1986: 71). This is important especially when there is a need to understand and support the healthy causal factors while seeking means of mitigating the negative causal factors. The theory is an interpretive lens for viewing and explaining why the Extended Curriculum students undergo specific kinds of learning experiences; and why they perceive these experiences in specific ways. It provides a constructive starting point for examining students’ learning experiences. Furthermore, it offers a means of assessing the basic tenets of the Extended Curriculum policy based on the findings to ascertain the extent to which it addresses the problems and how the policy can be adjusted for greater impact.

The relationships of the students' perceptions of their own tendency for success in education to their attributions are investigated. Specifically, the study should determine the patterns of attribution perceptions of Extended curriculum students; whether differences of causal attributions and perceptions of success tendency exist due to sex, career goals, academic and economic backgrounds; The relationship of success tendency with attributional perceptions (Asmus 1986: 72). Being able to predict students' reactions to success or failure would greatly benefit the management of their future success or failures. The SPQ uses motives and strategies to determine students' approaches to learning, while the attribution theory argues that students' attributions affect and are affected by their motives.

Chapter 4: The Extended Curriculum Programme in UKZN

4.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the case study, the Extended Curriculum Programme (ECP) in the college of Humanities within the University of KwaZulu-Natal. The chapter demonstrates how students are inducted into the ECP; how they are assimilated into the University; and how they are supported through tertiary education. It locates the ECP as an Academic Development Programme (ADP). A background to how the ECP addresses the plight of the underprepared students within the policy notions of equity and redress is followed by its historical background in the College of Humanities, UKZN. Its evolution over time and its compositions within the College are discussed. Student's experiences of learning after the ECP support are also assessed. The chapter discusses some considerations on how the programme engages students in the learning process, and the strength and weaknesses recorded of the ECP.

4.1 Background of the Extended Curriculum Programme as an ADP

The last two decades have seen a growing concern about how to make higher education more inclusive (Bozalek & Boughey 2012). Jaffer, Ng'ambi and Czerniewicz (2007) are of the opinion that higher education globally is under pressure to increase participation from diverse groups of students and to produce the skills required for a rapidly changing society. Most universities globally have increased participation for different socio-economic groups. The South African situation is racially based and aimed at redressing the ills of apartheid education. The South African government policies are therefore aimed at equity of access for disadvantaged learners from diverse educational backgrounds into the university. This is to redress the marginalization of previously disadvantaged groups post 1994 in order to meet the social and economic transformation that is considered to be achievable through education.

Acknowledging the considerable capacity and international excellence of the nation's tertiary education, the South African Minister of Education for the first democratic government, Professor Sibusiso Bengu, acknowledged the inequities, imbalances, and distortions that proceeded from its apartheid history (NCHE 1996). Also obvious is the enduring disjuncture persisting between policy aimed at promoting inclusivity and the experiences of students and

staff in the higher education sector (Bozalek & Boughey 2012). Foundation programmes like ECP became acceptable means for universities to address the issue of access and retention of previously disadvantaged students as an urgent political imperative (Odhav 2009). The next section conceptualizes underprepared/disadvantaged students; defining what constitutes underpreparedness, and clarifying its roots and implication for the ECP and for the study.

4.1.1 The Notion of Disadvantage/Underprepared Students

Disadvantaged/underprepared students are those who were deprived a meaningful formal learning through social and economic circumstances perpetuated by past discriminatory policies that maintained for them and their parentage, a culture unfavourable to tertiary education. These conditions left students unprepared for the demands of the 21st-century tertiary studies. They are unprepared for the demands for a wholesome social integration into the university society (Firfirey & Carolissen 2010).

Another conception of the term derives from the very diverse student body resulting from massification. This poses a severe challenge to higher education leading to an uncritical conception of the notion of the “disadvantaged” student (Smit 2012; Boughey 2010). Students admitted from previously disadvantaged backgrounds continue to struggle with tertiary studies due to inadequate schooling, skills gaps, literacy deficiency, language challenges, lack of autonomy and poor conceptual knowledge. They also have to bear a discriminatory and prejudiced and stigmatizing recognition by the university environment (Johnson & Narsiah 2015; Smit 2012; Boughey 2002).

Tyson (2010: 15) notes that the definition of the term disadvantaged is highly contested and debated due to the variety of viewpoints from which the term is open for understanding. It is used as an umbrella word to describe their shortcomings (Johnson & Narsiah 2015; Smit 2012). Rather than attempting to adjust university structures to meet this clientele of students that are making entry, the students are being misrecognized by a prejudice directed at their backgrounds and parentage (Smit 2012).

They are perceived as lacking, ‘cultural and moral resources necessary to succeed in what is presumed to be a fair and open society’ (Smit 2012). This perception of deficiency could be located in their abilities or internal shortcomings that are cognitive and motivational. On the other hand, they have been misperceived as having some external weakness linked to their cultural or family background (Smith 2012; Firfirey & Carolissen 2010; Johnson & Narsiah 2010). The current study’s use of the attribution theory would facilitate a critical assessment

of how these students perceive their capabilities as influenced by their backgrounds and how they are perceived in the university environment.

Rooted in primary and secondary schooling, underpreparedness for tertiary education have diverse reasons. This deprives them of access and the opportunities that come with tertiary qualifications and limits their future opportunities. The causes are often racial, class or economically related; with issues of slavery and apartheid being the most prominent. As such, understanding “underprepared/disadvantaged” students in South African tertiary institutions would be discussed through two sub-sections. The first is rooted in apartheid education, while the second considers it from the legacies of apartheid.

4.1.1.1 Apartheid Education Producing Underprepared Students

Student underpreparedness in South African tertiary institutions was related to language, power, and economic suppression, echoing the apartheid South African policies (Smit 2012; Firfirey & Carolissen 2010; Tyson 2010; Kloot, Case & Marshall 2008; Sennet *et al.*). Increased British settlers in the 1700s and the 1800s made English the main language of instruction for all, evoking resistance from the Afrikaners who were first to establish formal education in South Africa through the Dutch Reform Church (Tyson 2010: 15). Afrikaans soon became a medium for instruction and grew in dominance in the late 18th Century.

Meanwhile, the first colleges were created in the 19th Century in the Cape Province of South Africa, where most of the British migrants were concentrated (Goastellec 2008). By the early 1900s, African (black) students could only enrol into Mission schools since their enrollment into government schools was prohibited by the apartheid laws of the time. This was legally consolidated by the Population Registration Act of 1950, which officially segregated South Africans into four racial groups, namely: the Whites, the Indians, the Coloureds and the blacks (Africans). This also prescribed hierarchy of racial supremacy, following the same order (Sehoole 2013). This was consolidated by the Group Areas Act of 1950, which created separate residential and business areas for different racial groups. Accompanied by forced removal of blacks especially from areas not allocated to whites. This separate development included separation of schools.

According to Sehoole (2013: 12), ‘Education became a strategic sector for the implementation and promotion of the apartheid philosophy, since most South African

children would go through it to some extent'. The Christian National Education (CNE) system applied the Calvinist teachings to all areas of life and even informed public policy in 1948. Article 14 and 15 of the policy made black education the responsibility the "[white] Boer nation as the senior trustee of the 'native' who is in a state of cultural infancy". Racial superiority informed the paternalistic approach to constructing education for the black majority.

A Christocentric and separated education by racial lines extended from a focus on Afrikaner children to a National Educational Act of 1967 culminating in the Bantu Education Act of 1953. Education for the blacks was transferred from the Department of Education to the Native Affairs Department. African primary and secondary schools were to be transferred from the church and mission bodies to the government or suffer diminishing subsidies or total deprivation of Education to the African majority population. The government closed down any educational programme that did not support its goals. Curriculum, code of conduct, rules and regulations as well as conditions of employment were monitored to control the education of Africans (Schoole 2013).

Laws soon prevented teachers from criticising the government. Dr. Hendrik Verwoerd proposed that education "must train and teach people in accordance with their opportunities in life," and added that "there was no place for the Bantu in the European community above the level of certain forms of labour". Africans were thus trained as menial workers and left in a position of perpetual subordination to the whites. It is asserted that the allocation of resources, the appointment to jobs and remunerations at work were arranged to ensure that black people were socialized into inferior positions. These are the ills that modern tertiary education has to combat when providing access to these previously disadvantaged members of the community.

When Dr. Hendrik Verwoerd²³ sensed that the mission schools were giving black people the confidence to make political demands, the Nationalist government took over control of the mission schools and implemented the *Bantu Educational Act* of 1953 which aggravated the already inequitable educational system of segregation (Fiske & Ladd 2004 in Tyson 2010).

According to Goastellec (2008), the first higher education institutions globally were designed for the elite, with some marginal acceptance for students from low-status families. Except

²³ He was the 7th Prime Minister of South Africa, between 1958 till his death in 1966. He is notable for conceiving and implementing the apartheid system of government in South Africa.

that the South African case was perpetuated along racial lines, higher education participation was known to reproduce the domination of the minority. Although it is the majority that was disadvantaged in South Africa, it is worth acknowledging that first-year students' low throughput and high attrition existed since the apartheid days. The prevalence of white students' attrition in their first year prompted the commissioning of a study by the then Minister of Education, J. H Hofmeyr (Akooje & Nkomo 2007).

A survey of 8000 students by the National Bureau of Education and Social Research found that 47 percent of all first-year students failed in at least one subject and 25 percent failed in more than one subject. This high failure of white students did not deter the policy to open access to all with a broader basis for screening and an alternative to School-leaving matriculation. No care was taken lest standards are compromised, but access to more white people was to increase their chances of becoming managers and supervisors (Akooje & Nkomo 2007). Funding was even increased for these white students to the factor of 64 between 1940 and 1974. Access was not only unhindered for whites, but funding was also increased to the extent that it is referred to as the most expensive for any civilized group in the world (Malherbe 1977 cited in Akooje & Nkomo 2007). It was on the same basis that access programmes in South Africa were in place about a decade before the democratic government (Smith, Case & Walbeek 2014). It was not just to admit disadvantaged students from other racial groups, but to facilitate the success of the more white students with potentials that were being admitted (Kloot Case & Marshall 2008).

Bozalek and Boughey (2012) note that establishment of separate institutions for black and white population groups was also controlled by the government determining what programmes these different kinds of institutions could offer. This reflected the apartheid government's beliefs about the roles appropriate for different social groups. A historically black university (HBU) was more likely to offer nursing rather than medicine, and public administration rather than political philosophy. HBUs had limited research functions over the movement against apartheid. This defined their function as contributors to certain categories of labour for a segregated workforce. It had limited post-graduate programmes compared to historically white institutions.

Moreover, these different categories of universities were governed and resourced differently to disadvantage HBU. Bozalek and Boughey (2012) note that HBIs were located either in deeply rural areas in the former 'bantustans' or 'homelands' or in urban areas designated for

the population groups²⁴ they were intended to serve, often on the fringes of more affluent areas. Overcrowding and poverty compounded by maladministration on the part of the homeland governments themselves were the main characteristics of HBIs. This historical legacy continues to be significant even today as Universities in remote rural areas are less likely to attract highly qualified staff than their urban counterparts. The best-qualified school leavers also tend to be attracted to the urban areas.

Government policy on the allocation of financial resources to the different racial schooling groups was skewed with African students receiving a tenth of what white students were allocated (Bozalek & Boughey 2012). Unlimited funds were committed to the education of whites (Akooje & Nkomo 2007). Unequal and very meagre funds were allocated to other racial groups, which further disadvantaged students from these racial groups (Smith, Case & Walbeek 2014). It is for this reason that the policy imperatives of the democratic government have tended towards economic development, social reconstruction and equity (Moore 2003). Yet is it still held that the amount of money spent on previously disadvantaged students cannot match what the apartheid government spent on its white students.

The first democratic government, therefore inherited a system that was fractured along lines of race, the type of institution (university or 'technikon'), location and language of instruction (English or Afrikaans). These divisions continue to affect the quality of education available to different population groups (Bozalek and Boughey 2012). A language policy, which introduced mother-tongue as a means of instruction was implemented to congeal the segregation of the different population groups. Another language policy eight years into the use of mother-tongue for instruction required that half of the instructional courses in all schools be taught in Afrikaans²⁵.

Impoverishment education for the blacks was resisted by the African National Congress (ANC); especially the different racial population groups and their different educational departments. The determination is to change the Act which racially segregated the Africans from the Coloureds, the Coloureds from the Indians and the Indians from the White students.

Reactions to these unjust policies ruptured into the famous Soweto student uprising of 1976. Thus, the Nationalist Party used to abuse of power through language and economic

²⁴ The apartheid state established ten small geographical areas as self-governing 'homelands' for the black majority.

²⁵ The Afrikaners implemented the same kind of policy that they had resisted the English from implementing.

suppression within the educational system to socially construct and control the reality to disadvantage the majority of the African population. Decades of perpetuating this practice propagated a culture and status of disadvantage/underpreparedness of the majority African students towards participation in higher education and other development opportunities. The legacies of these policies are now being redressed through such programmes as the ECP.

4.1.1.2 Legacies of Apartheid Education Causing Student Underpreparedness

The impact of Bantu Education was so destructive that it would take decades to repair (Bozalek & Boughey 2012; Firfirey & Carolissen 2010; Kloot Case and Marshall 2008; Sennett *et al.* 2003; Wilson 2001). These legacies of apartheid continue to determine school experiences for the majority of South African youths. It also seriously affects their chances of succeeding at Higher Education Institutions in South Africa (Smith, Case & Walbeek 2014). Post-1994, the democratic government made a significant effort to increase spending on black students in urban townships but the gap remained as African students had two and a half times less funds than their white counterparts.

Meanwhile, structures that maintain and perpetuate apartheid ideologies still persist (Cross & Chisholm 1990; Kallaway 1986; Enslin 1984). This is endorsed by the assertions by Kloot, Case, and Marshall (2008) that there are severe challenges facing tertiary education in South Africa as a result of the history of segregation in South Africa. Some of those challenges that are faced particularly by the black majority pose a serious threat to their access and success in tertiary institutions in South Africa (Johnson & Narsiah 2015; Smith, Case & Walbeek 2014; Firfirey & Carolissen 2010).

The goal of transformation was thus to ensure the enhancement of human potential in order to address the devastating consequences of its neglect by the apartheid system, and as a means of ensuring social and economic development (ANC 1994b cited in Clarence-Fincham 1998: 3). Affirmative action policies have been implemented to meet these ends and to redistribute people within institutions; not only in education but throughout the public sector (Teferra 2014; Smith 2012; Firfirey & Carolissen 2010; Castle 1994).

Historically white universities began to refocus already existing academic development programmes which started gaining popularity since the 1980s (Kloot, Case & Marshall 2008). The focus on racial and gender equity was changed to meet the communicative and academic needs of underprepared/disadvantaged students (Sennett *et al.* 2003). These Academic Support Programmes (ASP) were reactive responses to black students' poor

academic performance. They had no theoretical underpinnings and constituted extra classes making up a year of bridging the educational gap for students from inferior schools (Kloot, Case & Marshall 2008: 801).

The *Natal Witness* (March 3, 1990: 5) reported myriads of other far-reaching non-academic problems entrenched in the structural violence of the apartheid system which affected students: financial challenges, transportation, housing, counselling and other extracurricular activities which impeded the successes of black students (Engelbrecht, Haring & Potgieter 2014; Boughey 2010; Clarence-Fincham 1998). The focus of the problem also had to shift from the students to a broader focus on the underpreparedness of the institutions. This remains a serious concern even today, given the violent protests that accompany the ongoing #FeesMustFall campaign. African students also lacked skill and capacities for the workplace and entered the university with no computer or internet skills.

Some of the main problems arising from the Apartheid Education system as residential segregation, poverty and inequality, low educational attainment and achievement and the lack of a culture of teaching and learning have been assessed (Smit 2012). There is a continuous incidence of poverty among students from previously disadvantaged backgrounds. The apartheid system as a whole has been considered to have seriously disadvantaged students in such a way that most of them are still from very poor backgrounds and have to overcome so many odds in order to survive in tertiary institutions, when they manage to gain access (Johnson & Narsiah 2015; Smit 2012; Firfirey & Carolissen 2010). This situation is worsened as universities seem to either ignored or be helpless or unready to respond to the myriads of challenges that these students bring (Smit 2012; Firfirey & Carolissen 2010).

Post-apartheid South Africa is still primarily stratified along racial lines with a few middle-class African families having moved into predominantly white suburbs. Thus, access to quality education is still a major challenge for most black students, due to either distance to, or fees cost in suburb schools. Under-resourced schools still predominantly serve the African population, having poor facilities; despite governments redress attempts (Fiske & Ladd 2004 in Tyson 2010: 19). The schools are overcrowded; lacking electricity, water, and sanitation infrastructures; also lacking access to media and teaching equipment. There are inadequate textbooks provisions in some of these schools that serve the black majority (Harber 2001 in Tyson 2010: 19). Moreover, when these students come into the university, they have too

many odds to overcome; the university pays little or no attention to these odds (Firfiery & Carolissen 2010). This gives a slight idea to the violence with which these students would react to their predicaments as obvious from the recent #FeesMustFall campaign.

The resource condition and location of High schools serving the majority of black underprivileged students have also not attracted qualified teachers, leading to the use of unqualified or poorly trained staff in many black African students' education to date (Fiske & Ladd 2004 in Tyson 2010). Poor leadership and lack of proper preparation for principals make their educational conditions worst off. This has resulted in their low educational attainment and achievement in tertiary institutions, following the hurdles to an adjustment that they have to overcome in addition to the already challenging adjustment to tertiary institutions (Sennett *et al.* 2003). Sennett *et al.* (2003) identify that their major adjustment challenges social and emotional. The 1996 statistics indicated that 19% of South Africans aged 20 years or older, the majority being Africans had never been to school. Of those who were in school, one in seven Africans had successfully completed high school and only one in thirty had any tertiary education. Hence, the generations of adults who were deprived now need adult education (Fiske & Ladd 2004: 56 in Tyson 2010: 19-20).

Moreover, the inherited stance of "liberation before education" adopted by the African National Congress (ANC) leading to constant disruption of education in the years following the Soweto students uprising of 1976 still lingers, leading to a culture of learning that is characterized by absenteeism, indiscipline in schools, violence and the destruction of school property through strikes as a mark of for discontent (Tyson 2010: 20). High absenteeism and low morale of staff have added to these woes (Johnson & Narsiah 2015). Some staff do not test and sometimes not mark students' work (Chisholm & Vally 1996 cited in Tyson 2010: 20). Staff miss 64 of 191 days of schools to meetings, days off on pay day, memorial services and registration of students; some teachers conduct private business during school time giving the students an impression that learning is not important (Tyson 2010: 20).

Sennett *et al.* (2003) indicate that since most of the black students in South African universities are still first generation students, their disadvantaged educational and socio-economic circumstances that are direct results of the apartheid system makes them more vulnerable to the difficulties of making the transition into tertiary institutions. Firfiery and Carolissen (2010) outline more of the challenges that these students are likely to face.

Odhav (2009) also highlight the structural flaws of the apartheid higher education system that have spilled into the post-apartheid era. Flaws like unequal access of staff and students into the higher institutions due to gender and race. Some of the curricula have also been considered to lack relevance in the educational system for this category of students. Their graduation rate and the quality of African graduates have also been a source of concern. Their competence in fitting the requirement of the transforming society has also been called into question. It is now the responsibility of contemporary tertiary institutions to mitigate these limitations and gaps through a strategic and creative allocation of funding and capacities to address the problem (Odhav 2009; Sennett *et al.* 2003) These factors have all been linked to the impact of the apartheid system which affects the education of black African students.

This surmises a poor culture of teaching and learning in High schools, which is different at the Universities. Universities on their part continue to be affected by ‘limited resources, financial mismanagement, poor teaching and low achievement in institutions serving black students’ (Fiske & Ladd 2004: 202 cited in Tyson 2010: 20). Thus, the many challenges faced in all spheres of the South African society have stifled the transition from the attitude of “liberation before education” to the one of “education for liberation” (Fiske & Ladd 2004: 49 in Tyson 2010). These factors inform the definition the underprepared/disadvantaged student.

They are generally considered not to be strong enough academically due to their prior learning and language skills, approach to learning, attitude, and expectations. Prone to a diminished learning culture or inability to take responsibility for their learning, coupled with the challenges of students’ life and other pressures that could be personal, social, financial or having to do with their families or backgrounds (Dhumpath & Vithal 2012: 11). This is in spite of South African democracy having created middle and upper-class citizens among the blacks, making race only one of the determinants of underpreparedness/disadvantage as compared to economics. The persisting challenge remains such that

Students from better resourced schools with qualified teachers come into the university with epistemologies and discourses that intersect more closely with those that are required by university lecturers compared to those from poorer schools. These students adapt to the requirements of tertiary education much more easily. Their counterparts from under-resourced schools, often in rural areas, come with discourses and epistemologies that do not fit well with those required at university causing these students to be doubly disadvantaged... economically disadvantaged [and] educationally disadvantaged... many urban black schools are beginning to rise above their apartheid past and are producing students that are able to adapt to and succeed in

tertiary institutions and so disadvantage can no longer be defined by race and economics (Niven 2010 in Tyson 2010).

The above assertions indicates that the type of school and the standard of education received there must be taken into account as a determinant of whether or not a student has epistemological access to the institution (Kloot, Case & Marshall 2008). Other factors like the class size, facilities, quality of teaching as well as the economic status of the surrounding area of the school also determine which student can be considered disadvantaged/underprepared. Meanwhile, Dhunpath and Vithal (2012: 14) contend that empirical evidence compels a reconceptualization of ‘underpreparedness from a problem of students’ deficits to a problem of systemic deficit since underpreparedness is actually a problem faced by a majority rather than an exceptional minority’ of students in South Africa. Underpreparedness/disadvantage of students has called for equity and redress within the university.

Predominantly African students are underprepared in South Africa due to the Apartheid system that constructed for them the reality that they were inferior to their white counterparts (Case, Smith & Walbeek 2014). Thus, the majority in South Africa are disadvantaged, unlike other countries where only a minority is disadvantaged. Meanwhile, what translates into “disadvantaged/ underprepared” students in South Africa is different, though related to its use in the United States of America, Brazil, the United Kingdom and Australia (Tinto 2013). Its use has often proven to be uncritical and sometimes having some negative effect on pedagogy (Johnson & Narsiah 2015; Smit 2012).

4.1.2 Access and Redress

Post-apartheid South African Educational policies at all levels target the principles of equity and redress; with an ultimate goal of providing education for all (Daly & Brown 2007; Sennet *et al.* 2003; Yeld 2001; Lange 2000: 8; DoE 1997; NCHE 1996; White Paper on Reconstruction and Development; RSA 1994). Foundational ADP has been used to give access and support to students from disadvantaged backgrounds (Smith, Case & Walbeek 2014).

Democratic principles, issues of globalisation and the international trends in education have boosted educational policies that incorporate quality assurance systems and life-long learning for all (Ngara 1998 cited in Clarence-Fincham 1998). This prompted the development of more flexible access routes to tertiary institutions that allow more students

who do not meet basic admission requirements to enter universities. ‘Special programmes for students whose prior learning has been adversely affected by educational and social inequalities’ (Kloot, Case & Marshall 2008: 800) were implemented in the form of foundation programmes.

The democratic government introduced policies proposing foundation programmes as a means of achieving broader institutional change to promote equity and redress in South African tertiary institutions (CHE 2013; Kloot, Case & Marshall 2008: 800; Alexander, Badenhorst & Gibbs 2005). These bridging or foundational programmes were to fill the gaps left by inadequate schooling in order to equip target students to cope with the demands of tertiary studies (2008: 801). Such programmes were to provide ‘ “epistemological access” to students with the potential to succeed at tertiary level but constrained by inadequate secondary schooling experience’.

The policy imperative for admitting students from disadvantaged communities into the University was encouraged in higher education to address social developmental needs (Schoole 2013). It was also to serve the labour market, in a knowledge-driven and knowledge-dependent society with its ever changing high-level competencies and expertise necessary for growth and prosperity (South Africa 1997: 3 in Tyson 2010: 23). This was to redress skilled workers shortage created by the apartheid education structure by increasing the participation rate of previously disadvantaged students in higher education (Tyson 2010; Kloot, Case and Marshall 2008: 801). The 1997 White Paper towards the transformation of higher education expresses the intent thus:

The principle of equity requires fair opportunities both to enter higher education programme and to succeed in them. Applying the principle of equity implies, on the one hand, a critical identification of existing inequalities which are products of policies, structures and practices based on racial, gender, disability and other forms of discrimination or disadvantage, and on the other a programme of transformation with a view to redress (South Africa, 1997: 6 quoted by Tyson 2010: 24).

The White Paper for the Transformation of Higher Education in South Africa made a commitment to government funding towards bridging/foundation and access programmes in Higher Education (South Africa 1997 in Tyson 2010: 24). It acknowledged higher cost for teaching learners from disadvantaged backgrounds compared to teaching learners from advantaged backgrounds. It thus incorporated the academic development, foundation, and extended programmes into funding formula of 2004.

Reformed admission policies and new, more relevant curricula were developed (Sehoole 2013; Bawa & Bulman 1996 in Clarence-Fincham 1998: 3). Student groups could no longer be identified in racial terms but as traditional versus non-traditional students. This later changed to prepared versus underprepared students. More recently, the label has been between mainstream versus non-mainstream students. The perception that these labels are losing popularity and use as student populations continue to change (Sennett *et al.* 2003; Clarence-Fincham 1998: 4) is still debatable, given the influence that it continues to have on student performances (Smith 2012; Firfirey & Carolissen 2010). The South African government provided a policy framework, loans, and grants, while universities have the responsibility of dealing constructively with the needs of underprepared students and to develop their skills through ADPs (Simth 2012; Yeld 2001; DoE 1997).

The redress sought two critical elements (a) Access which ensures that no qualified person is denied participation in Higher education (b) Institutional support which ensured that past inequities and disproportionalities are recognized and properly addressed (NCHE 1996). This responded to Freire's (1993: 12) advocacy that educating the underprivileged is necessary for freeing them from the situations that keep them ignorant and lethargic from all sorts of oppressive forces. Meanwhile, the gap between the capacities of these previously disadvantaged and the requirement for tertiary education continued to loom large (Firfirey & Carolissen 2010; Sennett *et al.* 2003; Anderson, Case & Lam 2001: 37; NPHE 2001; NCHE 1996).

Statistics reveal that the previously disadvantaged students constitute the highest attrition rates (DHET 2012; Boughey 2010; Firfirey & Carolissen 2010). The standards of higher education would not be lowered for the previously disadvantaged because the educational system must remain globally competitive and recognizable. The challenge, therefore, lies in ensuring that students have both access and means of succeeding through higher education with the required degree. Thus university officials and faculties with the South African government used academic bridge and enhancement programmes for underprepared students to contribute towards the reconstruction and development effort (Lindsay 1997).

Therefore, South African universities implement different Academic bridge/foundation programs employing various pedagogical methods and approaches to ADPs; replacing traditional, discipline-based serial courses to an open, flexible system that is "modular and credit based" (NCHE, 1996: 19). These expansion plans focus not only on increasing African

enrolments in education at all levels but also on retaining and graduating them (Lindsay 1997: 532; Kloot, Case & Marshall 2008: 800). Whether or not these programmes are achieving set objectives only raise curiosities about how underprepared students are coping, if they are indeed coping with tertiary studies. Such curiosities make the current study relevant.

A study commissioned in 2010 by the South African Council of Higher Education (CHE) assessed the factors militating against equity and redress through ADPs and identified three factors for explaining unsatisfactory access and throughput as student-related factors, staff-related factors, and systemic factors. The student-related factors remain the focus of this study. Failure was identified on the part of university staff who do not revise their teaching approaches and pedagogies despite the change in the diversity of the student population. They also had negative attitudes towards students (Johnson & Narsiah 2015) and were underprepared in teaching and assessment skills and practices. Some staff lacked energy, while others were demotivated by the changes taking place at the university (CHE 2010: 30 cited in Dhupath and Vithal 2012: 11). The following sub-section discusses the extent to which the ECP mitigated these challenges.

4.2 The Extended Curriculum Programme in South Africa

Historically white English-speaking universities like the University of KwaZulu-Natal, the University of Witwatersrand, the University of Cape Town and others were already trying to admit black students through ADPs in the apartheid days in recognition of their unpreparedness since the 1980s (CHE 2013; 2009 Kloot, Case & Marshall 2008, Enslin *et al.* 2006). They used this to demonstrate their stance against separate education (Kloot, Case & Marshall 2008: 801; Lazarus (1987: 11). However, these early Programmes were ‘reactive response’ to the problem of black students’ poor performance and had no defined theoretical underpinnings.

The aim of assisting underprepared students through an extra year to bridge the gap in their learning was common among the practicing universities, but their approaches were different. Different institutions viewed the problem differently and saw the needs of their students differently and independently (CHE 2013; Clarence-Fincham 1998; 2009). For instance, the University of Witwatersrand understood students’ potential through the Biographical Questionnaire (BQ) (Enslin 2006). Different faculties within the same

universities, like the University of Natal and the University of Cape Town, approached the problem differently in terms of providing remediation (Kloot, Case & Marshall 2008: 801; Enslin 2006; Clarence-Fincham). Some faculties provided bridging courses, others offered additional tutorials either integrated into mainstream courses or semi-integrated to the normal requirements of degree programmes:

Even when interventions across faculties carry the same generic title and share certain features (De Kadt 2007), this does not necessarily imply identical pedagogical emphasis or structure. In the same way that various models of intervention continue to co-exist across the institution, and nationally for that matter, so too will internal differences between similar programme signal faculty-specific challenges and constraints. These variations are to be recognized and accepted as a crucial part of a complex set of challenges facing the academic development practitioner (Clarence-Fincham 2008: 72).

It was expected that students who complete this program would also succeed in their regular classroom courses. A critical question was whether or not students were empowered to independently and self-sufficiently engage in their education after being through these programmes (Lindsay 1997: 534). The current study assesses this problem through the beliefs of the students on the ECP sets a contextual tone for policy adjustments.

Programme courses attempted to lay necessary academic foundations for further study. This was the case in the University of Cape Town's Science Foundation Programme (SFP) in 1986 and University of Natal-Pietermaritzburg's in 1991 (Kloot, Case & Natal 2008: 801). The programmes evolved into what the DoE (2006) referred to as the Extended Curriculum Programme (ECP). This is a full formal degree or diploma that includes foundational courses, as against simply a modified first year that is either integrated or separate to mainstream degrees and qualifications (Kloot, Case & Marshall 2008: 802). It gained more popularity than separate programmes and was preferred by the experienced practitioners. Although the content of foundational programmes was introductory, they were structured to exert sufficient academic demands on the students that as required of higher education.

Although there was a general sense of welcome to the initiative by mainstream academic staff, their support was often ambiguous. Their attitudes were business as usual as they expected academic support staff to deal with preparing disadvantaged students for university institutions that remained unchanged. Growing criticism towards such programmes forced universities to pay attention (Kloot, Case & Marshall 2008: 801). Scott (1986: 19 in Clarence-Fincham 1998) argued that relegating the work of ASP to the periphery, where it

is nothing more than a survival kit for disadvantaged students who manage to gain admission to the first year, can only enable a university to respond in a limited, albeit visible way to the inequalities of the society, incapable of effecting institutional change that is non-racial, and accessible to all.

Notwithstanding, Scott argued that ADPs should also enable disadvantaged students to be competent and independent in their studies. Emphasis was on conceptual development skills that would enhance positive approaches to learning, social adjustment and awareness of the social context of the university. Clarence-Fincham (1998) added that accessibility of the university to students can be further enhanced through a critique of the social construction and ideologies that are foundational to institutional practices. The next section focuses on the Extended Curriculum Programme at the University of KwaZulu-Natal.

4.2.1 The Extended Curriculum Programme at UKZN

A document entitled *The Role in Society of The University of Natal: 1989 Onwards* – also known as the Mission Statement, articulates the then University of Natal's protest against unjust apartheid structures through the admission of African students (Clarence-Fincham 1998: 7). The structure and work of the university, including the racial composition of the student body, administrative and academic staff were changed to accurately represent national demographics

This prompted a need for special academic support programmes for underprepared students at the university. The aim was to transform students' educational deficiencies and support them to realize their potential (Clarence-Fincham 1998). It was given a central place in the university's transformation process and part of its affirmative action policy. This was against the backdrop of high attrition rates and low graduation rates of students from previously disadvantaged backgrounds (Tyson 2010). The 1986 Academic Support Programme conference hosted on the Pietermaritzburg Campus of the University of Natal emphasized why universities should pay attention to the broader socio-political struggles in the South African transformation at the time. Course evaluations were encouraged, while entrance requirements and Academic Support Programmes were advocated for turning their institutions into centres of relevance for South Africa's most pressing needs for a new society (Khanyile 1986: 41). Kloot, Case & Marshall (2008: 801) relate that since the programme

started ad hoc, lessons had to be learnt in the process; hence the evolution of the programmes. The next sub-section discusses this evolution in the ECP in the UKZN college of Humanities.

4.2.2 Evolution of the Extended Curriculum Programme in UKZN

The ECP is the latest version of an ADP for access that resulted from the evolution of different strategies adopted to bridge the gap for students coming from disadvantaged schools and backgrounds (Nala 2010). The earliest form of this intervention was *extra tutorials* (BMR1 2014); based on the conception that more time meant more tuition (Kloot, Case & Marshall 2003: 256 cited in Tyson 2010: 49). It was soon discovered that non-credited extra work through tutorials was putting more burdens on already struggling students (Clarence-Fincham 1998).

In response, a first-year, credit-bearing course, *Learning, Language and Logic (LLL)*, was introduced in 1984 as part of ADP and was available to students from the faculties of Art, Social Sciences, Commerce and the Sciences within the Pietermaritzburg campus (Clarence-Fincham 1998). Kloot, Case and Marshall (2008 cited in Tyson 2010) are of the opinion that lack of theoretical basis and the prerogative to fill the gaps in students' knowledge was not sufficient. It focused on competencies, skills, and how to approach the university systems for success.

The **Critical Language and Studies Programme** developed academic credit bearing literacy modules including, ACS (Academic Communication Studies) and Effective Writing in the Social Sciences. The modules were meant to teach students skills perceived to be lacking due to their backgrounds, yet necessary for their success (BMR1 2014; Tyson 2010). The deficiencies of the model soon became obvious as students were not transferring the skills taught to mainstream modules and as such, it did not help their academic writing skills (Tyson 2010: 49).

Subsequently, the University of Natal's **Teach-Test-Teach programme** emerged as the first alternative admission programme that selected students based on their potential to succeed rather than on past performance. It was separate from the university curriculum. Its assumption was that affirmative action does not contradict equal opportunities, but serves to implement it on the basis of potential to succeed, rather than on past

performance (Clarence-Fincham 1998). As an **Integrated Skills Model**, it focused on foundational skills to equip students to succeed in subsequent years of study (Kloot, Case & Marshall 2008 cited in Tyson (2010: 50). This ushered in **English for Academic Purposes** cycle of ADP; informed by theories of deep and surface learning, constructivism, metacognition and Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development in academic Development Theories (Tyson 2010: 50).

Experience and time revealed that one course was not enough to meet the need or address the learning gap. If the terms of Vygotsky are anything to go by, then, the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) needed more support than the literacy modules were offering. More modules like Basic Numeracy and Africa in the World were considered necessary, leading to the development of an academic programme to address the need. Initially, this programme was called **Access/Foundation/Bridging Programmes**. Kloot, Case & Marshall (2008), maintain that such a programme may be defined as "a special programme for students whose prior learning had been adversely affected by educational or social inequalities".

This marked an introduction of the final model of Foundation Programmes, namely: the **Holistic Model** (Kloot, Case & Marshall 2008) or the **Academic Literacy Model** (McKenna 2003 cited in Tyson 2010: 50). It is distinguishable from the previous model in that it incorporates theories of cognitive development as a social/cultural activity from Vygotsky (1978). It is also characterized by its **integration** of foundational learning into the mainstream materials and attempting to induct students into the university culture through the life-skills workshop (Tyson 2010: 50). The foundational training instructed students regarding the norms and expectations of their disciplines. This allowed real learning to occur, as students were able to apply academic skills to their reading and writing within their areas of study. Thus, foundational provision evolved from an add-on bridging programme to a fully integrated ECP that not only fills the gaps but equips students for their studies in subsequent years (Tyson 2010: 50). The next section discusses the ECP in the College of Humanities, University of KwaZulu-Natal

4.2.2.1. Extended Curriculum Programme in the College of Humanities UKZN

The ECP in the college of Humanities, originally referred to as the **Access Certificate in Art and Social Sciences (ACASS)** was founded in the year 2000 (Nala 2010: 10; BMR1 2014). It differed from prior ADPs that were non-credit bearing (Nala 2010). It replicated the Science Foundational Programme (SFP); a similar programme in the College of Agriculture,

Engineering, and the Sciences to mitigate notable struggles of students from disadvantaged backgrounds with the ACS (Academic Communication Studies) module in the Humanities. This birthed the (ACASS) a bridging/access programmes to prepare Humanities students for mainstream programmes (Tyson 2010; BMR1 2014; Nala 2010: 10; Clarence-Fincham 1998). It was separate from the university curriculum and later evolved into the Humanities Access Programme (HAP).

Meanwhile, the **Humanities Access Programme (HAP)**, a bridging/access programme became an alternative means of admitting and integrating students from disadvantaged schools, who do not meet the normal admission criteria into the university based on their potential. This was to bridge the epistemological, social and economic gap from their previously disadvantaged backgrounds (BMR1 2014; Nala 2010). It was also considered a means of addressing admission inequities and to prepare students for mainstream programmes (Nala 2010; Clarence-Fincham 1998). It was perceived that ‘it is much easier to train/prepare students for the university than it is to change the university to accommodate students’ (BMR1 2014). However, the programme was also remedial to university curriculum, separate from mainstream university programmes. Their orientation attempted to “fix” the students’ problems (BRMR1 2014). The programme mainly filled the gaps in students’ knowledge in order to prepare them for further studies.

Tyson (2010) notes that the programmes did not articulate well with the – mainstream study and its students failed to be integrated into the mainstream (Nala 2010; Clarence-Fincham 1998). Programme courses were not credited towards formal qualifications despite the financial burden on students, which were not covered by the department of education (DoE). Hence, the mostly poor students on the programme considered it a waste of their time and the efforts. These deficiencies led to the development of the Augmented Programme.

The **Augmented Programme (AP)** was semi-integrated into mainstream curriculum towards an augmented degree programme. Underprepared students could register half of the normally required credit per semester, extending their first year into two years. Thus, it allowed students a feel of the university requirement in an incremental manner with necessary academic and other psycho-social support. It was an additional academic intervention within mainstream programme taking the form of additional tutorials to supplement and complement mainstream modules workload (Tyson 2010: 3). The deficiencies of this model also led to it

being reviewed and reformed into what is now obtainable as the Extended Curriculum Programme (ECP).

The **Extended Curriculum Programme (ECP)** learnt from and was an improvement on their limitations. The introduction of the Extended Curriculum Tutorials (ECTs) into the Access Programme marked its change to the ECP (Nala (2010). Tyson (2010) describes the ECT as the backbone of the ECP developed in response to changing national imperatives and the internal weaknesses in the AP. The programme is described as follows:

ECTs are a form of extra supporting tutorials within the various disciplines ...to students from previously disadvantaged academic backgrounds entering the university... (Clarence-Fincham 1998). This... [entailed] implementation of augmented courses [on] mainstream study for the students in the ECP. The extra tutorials supplement the mainstream tutorials... taught by post-graduate students at Masters' level and some members of faculty within the extended disciplines. ...Students attend two compulsory 45-minutes tutorials weekly per elective discipline. ... [Hence] the ECTs support "... is closely articulated with the rest of the curriculum, so that it is developmental rather than remedial and appropriate to the subject domain" (Nala 2010: 11).

These ETCs are integrated within the first and second year of mainstream study within a four-year extended curriculum, as opposed to the Access programme, which had one separate preparatory access year plus three years of mainstream study (Clarence-Fincham 1998 cited in Tyson 2010; Kloot, Case & Marshall 2008: 802). Access modules were not credited but foundational modules have foundational credits (FC). Although these foundational credits do not add up to the required credit for the qualification, ECP students are to pass them along with other requisite credits bearing modules as a necessary condition for graduation with a BSS4 degree within the four-year minimum time (College of Humanities 2014)

The Department of Education defined the ECP as a foundational provision for an undergraduate degree or diploma, which is integrated to the coursework requirement for a regular programme (Tyson 2010). The resulting qualification is Bachelor of Social Science (BSS4) degree (College of Humanities 2014: 75). Thus, the ECPs are known as 'programmes that generally extend the generic, three-year Bachelor's degree by one year, providing additional foundational content during year one' (Schalkwyk, Leibowitz & Van Der Merwe 2009: 11).

These foundational components were academic development modules which programme students undertook, extending their first year by one or two semesters of full-time study (de Klerk, *et al.* 2005 cited in Tyson 2010; Kloot, Case & Marshall 2008). They were formally planned, scheduled and regulated as an integral part of the degree programme (DoE 2006: 2). The programme constituted a combination of credit bearing modules, subsidized by the department of education, and non-credit bearing modules (Academic Development Modules) funded through special funding from the DoE. Before illustrating the modules and their requirements on a table, the next section presents the entry requirements for the different programmes that have evolved into the ECP, highlighting what the components of each programme were in tabular forms.

4.2.2.2 Entry Requirements for the Extended Curriculum Programme

The programme evolved as it was improved upon based on lessons learnt. The criteria for admitting programme students also changed alongside the number admitted and the procedures for admission. Initially, students did not a bachelor pass for direct entry into the university. While mainstream students needed a minimum of 32 credit points with endorsement to be admitted to the College of Humanities in the former University of Natal, Access Certificate in Art and Social Sciences (ACASS) required that candidates show potential to succeed in Arts or Social Science degrees to be admitted (BMR1 2014; UKZN 2004: 64 cited in Tyson 2010: 10). This potential was verifiable through an entrance test, the personal profile questionnaire, and the students' Matric results. The university formulated the questionnaire to gather information on the demographics of prospective students' previous school facilities, class size, biographical information and motivation for studying (Tyson 2010: 5).

Between the 2001 – 2004 period students with a variety of qualifications were admitted, including Matriculation without Endorsement (Senior Certificate), O levels for foreign students, and students with Matriculation with Endorsement Tyson (2010: 5, 9). Matric points for admitting students ranged from 17 to 31. The entrance test, comprising of an assessment of language ability, a small numeracy component, and the personal profile questionnaire became the main criteria for selection. The questionnaire determined the level of disadvantage. These, together with entrance test and matric score was used to rank students who were then interviewed (Tyson 2010: 5). The challenge was that students who met the mainstream admission requirement but were struggling were automatically exempt from the programme.

By 2005, the DoE funding kicked in and the selection process became more stringent. Students with Matriculation without Endorsement were not funded. Those funded had to meet these set criteria: have Matriculation Endorsement, score a Matric point of 24-31, and be from an educationally disadvantaged background as defined by the DoE Resource Targeting Ranking deciles system. Schools within deciles 1-8 were favourably disposed to having their students selected. Only students who had English as their second language were selected (Tyson 2010: 10). The College of Humanities Handbook (2014: 77) indicates that preference is given to students from quantiles 1-3 schools'. Other criteria for choosing students as obvious through the evolution process of the programme are summarized in the table below:

Table 3- Evolutionary criteria for choosing ECP students with relevant programme components

Year	ADP Name and Model	Programme Components	Means of selection	No of applicants	No of students	
					PMB	HOWARD
Pre 2001	ACASS	ACASS (Access Certificate in Arts and Social Sciences) 1. Academic literacy (language, numeracy, and computers). 2. Psycho-social support. 3. Contract staff 4. No credit towards degree/diploma	1. Interviews 2. Matric results (no bachelors' pass) 3. Personal Profile questionnaire 4. Potential to succeed in arts and social sciences 5. Entrance test	22	22	
2001-2004	HAP	HAP (Humanities Access Programme) 1. Academic literacy (language, numeracy and computers). 2. Psycho-social support. 3. Contract staff 4. ACASS (Access Certificate in Arts and Social Sciences)	1. Advertisement in university prospectus 2. Matric results without endorsement. Matric points between 17-31. O levels for foreigners 3. Personal profile questionnaire 4. Entrance test: Language proficiency, basic numeracy skills 5. Personal Profile questionnaire. 6. interview	400	75	125

2005-2008	AP	<p>ACP(Augmented Curriculum Programme)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Curriculum change DoE three years funding. Three years funding Some full-time staff: coordinator, counsellor, some staff. Similar programme structure Credit-bearing 2nd Semester Modules (a mainstream module as elective) BSS4 (Bachelor of Social Science–Augmented Programme). Extended Curriculum Tutorials 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Matriculation Endorsement, score a Matric point between 24 and 31. Students from an educationally disadvantaged background as defined by the DoE Resource Targeting Ranking deciles system. Schools within deciles 1-8 were favourably disposed to having their students selected English as second language Availability of DoE funding 		75	125
2009-2012	ECP	<p>ECP (Extended Curriculum Programme).</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> DoE three years funding. Three years funding Some full time staff: coordinator, counsellor, some staff. ECT (Extended Curriculum Tutorials) for each modules. ADP or Foundational modules equivalent of one semester. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Matriculation Endorsement, score a Matric point between 24 and 31. Students from an educationally disadvantaged background as defined by the DoE Resource Targeting Ranking deciles system. Schools within deciles 1-8 were favourably disposed to having their students selected. 		75 70	125 130

		BSS4 degrees (Bachelor of Social Science-Augmented Degree Programme.				
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Table 3 was designed by the researcher based on data from Tyson 2010; Nala (2010; and Govender (2014)

4.2.2.3 Component Programmes of the ECP and Enrolment Statistics

This section discusses the different components or strategies that characterize the ECP in the College of Humanities. Tyson (2010: 5) identifies a two-pronged strategic approach that the programme uses to provide both academic support and psychosocial support to target students. The academic support takes the form of a literacy intervention through Language, Literacy, ECT and Computer modules. The psycho-social support is made up of the group and individual counselling by a registered education/counselling psychologist. This section deals mainly with the academic component of the programme. Tyson (2010) presents the curriculum of the (HAP) from 2001-2004 in a table adapted below:

Table 4- Curriculum of the Humanities Access Programme 2001-2004

1 st Semester		2 nd Semester
1	Academic Communication Studies 101 A	Academic Communication Studies 102 A
2	English 110A – Introduction to Writing A	English 111A – Introduction to Writing B
3	Africa in the World 110	Africa in the World 120
4	Basic Numeracy	Information Literacy
5	Basic Computer Literacy	

(Adapted from Tyson 2010: 6)

In 2005 when the HAP was officially an AP, modules were changed to suit target students. Second-semester modules were credited towards mainstream Bachelor of Social Science degree and degree name was changed to BSS4 (Bachelor of Social Science-Augmented Programme) (Tyson 2010: 5-6). Students on the programme were able to select a mainstream module as electives from among Psychology, Sociology, Politics, and Drama. The four modules chosen were based on their popularity among Humanities students on the one hand, and to allow sufficient room for the access modules. The table below summarizes the revised curriculum.

Table 5- Revised Curriculum for 2005-2008 changes from ACASS (Access Certificate in Arts and Social Sciences) to BSS4 – Augmented Programme

1 st Semester		Credit	2 nd Semester		Credit
1	Academic Literacy A	0	1	Academic Literacy B	16c
2	English Language Development A	0	2	English Language Development B	16c
3	Africa in the World A	0	3	Africa in the World B	16c
4	Basic Numeracy	0	4	Mainstream elective	16c
5	Basic Computer Literacy	0			
Total Number of Credits		0	Total Number of Credits		64

(Adapted from Tyson 2010)

The programme was allocated some funding in 2006 to facilitate the establishment and pilot an augmented tutorial project for students on the mainstream modules in 2007 (Tyson 2010: 7). Tutors from mainstream disciplines provided additional material and support, assistance and advice on assignments, test, and preparations for exams. This support went on to 2008, supporting second-year students.

Students continued to offer at least one augmented module in their second year from the list of Psychology, Sociology, Politics, Drama & Performance Studies, Ethics, and English. After one year, Drama & Performance Studies, English, and Ethics were substituted for Legal Studies, Media and Communication Studies, Geography and Environmental Studies in response to students' interests and to broaden their options (Tyson 2010: 7).

By 2009 the programme shifted towards a **fully integrated** four-year degree with academic support within the first five semesters of the degree (Tyson 2010: 8). It officially became an **Extended Curriculum Programme (ECP)**. Modules like Africa in the World A and B were replaced by Politics 101 and 102 from the mainstream, giving students the chance to earn credit for their first semester of studies while the access modules were fully integrated into their mainstream modules. The two politics modules had tutorials like other electives offered in the second semester. An AD module, Exploring Literacies in the Humanities (ELH) replaced English language B and Academic Literacy B in the second semester. ELH introduced students to genres of literacy skills, preparing them on how to search for relevant materials, extract pertinent information and either paraphrase or quote the materials for their assignments.

Table 6- First year Extended Curriculum Programme modules 2009-2012

1 st Semester		Credit	2 nd Semester		Credit
1	ACLT001 Academic Literacy A	16FC	1	Exploring Literacies in the Humanities	16c
2	ELDV001 English Language Development A	16FC	2	Politics 102	16c
3	BCLT001 Basic Computer Literacy Science	8FC	3	One elective is chosen from mainstream (Media & Communication, Psychology or Sociology)	16c
4	BNMR001 Basic Numeracy	8FC			
5	POLS 101 Introduction to Political	16C			
Total number of credit		16C	Total number of credit		48C

Designed by the researcher from Tyson (2010: 10) and from the ECP Programme Coordinator).

After the first year of study within the ECP or BSS4 degree, students now accumulated 64 credits towards their qualification. They did 16 credits in the first semester along with 48 foundational credits (FC) modules. Foundational credits do not contribute towards students' degree but must be passed for graduation with the qualification. The four foundational modules allowed students a feel of the pressure of a typical first-year semester workload. Three 16 credit bearing second-semester modules were offered towards students' qualification. This curriculum structure indicates that the ECP was now an **integrated** programme. The College of Humanities Handbook (2014: 77-78) indicates that the modules have been changed and restructured as typified on the table below:

Table 7- Structure of the first year ECP curriculum from 2014

1 st Semester		Credit	2 nd Semester		Credit
1	ACLT001 Academic Literacy A	16FC	1	ACLT100 Exploring Literacies in the Humanities	16C
2	ELDV001 English Language Development A	16FC	2	Two sets from the list of modules and their respective augmented modules.	
3	BCLT001 Basic Computer Literacy Science	8FC		POLS 102 16C AUGMENTED POLS 112 12FC	16C
4	BNMR001 Basic Numeracy	8FC		PSYC 102 16C	
5	A 16 credit module with its 12 credit foundational module can be chosen from the list:		3	AUGMENTED PSYC112 12C SOCY 102 16C AUGMENTED SOCY 112 12C	16C
	POLS 101 16C	16C			
	AUGMENTED POLS 111 12FC	12FC			
	PSYC 102 16C	16C			
	AUGMENTED PSYC101 12FC	12FC			
	SOCY 101				
	AUGMENTED SOCY 101				
	Total number of credit towards qualification	16C		Total number of credits towards qualification	48C

Designed by the researcher with data from (College of Humanities Handbook 2014: 77-78); Govender (2014); Tyson (2008)..

The table below indicates the structure of the four-year degree, outlining how 384 credits are obtained to graduate students with a BSS4 degree in the College of Humanities.

Table 8- Year 2-4 Extended Curriculum Programme module from year 2-4 from 2014

Year 2 Extended Curriculum Programme					
1 st Semester		Credit	2 nd Semester		Credit
1	A 100 level module chosen from sociology, psychology, Media and Communication, Legal Studies or Geography and Environmental Studies	16c	1	A 100 level modules one of which must be chosen from sociology, psychology, Media and Communication, Legal Studies or Geography and Environmental Studies	16c
2	One elective 100 level	16c	2		16c
3	One elective 100 level	16c	3		16c
Total number of credit		48c	Total number of credit		48c
Year 3 Extended Curriculum Programme					
1 st Semester		Credit	2 nd Semester		Credit
1	200 level modules chosen from sociology, psychology, Media and Communication, Legal Studies or Geography and Environmental Studies	16c	1	200 level modules chosen from sociology, psychology, Media and Communication, Legal Studies or Geography and Environmental Studies	16c
2	One 200 level elective	16c	2	One 200 level elective	16c
3	One 200 level elective	16c	3	One 200 level elective	16c
Total number of credit		48c	Total number of credit		48c
Year 4: Extended Curriculum Programme					
1 st Semester		Credit	2 nd Semester		Credit
1	A 400 level module from major subject	16c	1	A 400 level module from major subject	16c
2	A 400 level module from major subject	16c	2	A 400 level module from major subject	16c
3	A 400 level module from major subject	16c	3	A 400 level module from major subject	16c
4	A 400 level module from major subject	16c	4	A 400 level module from major subject	16c
Total number of credit		64c	Total number of credit		64c

Designed by the researcher with data from Tyson 2010: 9).

4.3 Funding of the Extended Curriculum Programme in UKZN

The Tertiary Educational Fund of South Africa (TEFSA) was established in 1991. The National Students Financial Aid Scheme Act (No 56 of 1999) endorsed the National Students

Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS) in the year 2000. These enabled many deserving students from disadvantaged backgrounds to enter higher education. The national student financial aid and support was expanded to cater for more students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds with the better opportunity to obtain their degrees through ECP (Hay & Monnapula-Mapasela 2009: 15). This significantly increased enrollment of black students and many others who, due to lack of funds, would not have been able to enter higher education institutions (Tyson 2010: 24).

Initially, everyone who got into the programme was fully funded. Tyson (2010: 4) notes that for the period 2001 to 2004, the programme was financed by the Faculty of Humanities, Development and the Social Sciences, but by 2005 formal funding was received from the DoE. Higher Education institutions were invited to apply for funding in a letter entitled: *Foundational Programme Grants: 2004/5 to 2006/7* aimed solely at “improving the success and graduation rates of students from disadvantaged backgrounds” (Badsha, 2004: 1) cited in Tyson (2010: 25). This assertion is supported by Dhunpath and Vithal (2012) in the quote below:

Funding for alternative access or foundational programmes at a national level as well as broad policy guidelines for these programmes were introduced in 2004, (the year the newly merged University of KwaZulu-Natal was established). ...the policy on foundation programme grants was approved in 2006... ...universities have been receiving ring-fenced funds to provide alternative additional access to mainstream programmes. All 23 universities in South Africa have been receiving funds earmarked for foundation programmes since 2007 (with the exemption of the University of South Africa which has received funds since 2009 (DHET, 2011) signalling the importance of state in placing and expanding access to higher education (Dhunpath & Vithal 2012).

According to Dhunpath and Vithal (2012), the Ministry of Education allocated funds to target policy objectives to increase access to poor students and the disabled in higher education in recognition of the dilemma of access and equity from 2003. The funds were meant to enable universities to introduce and to continue offering extended curricula in key subject areas as a means of improving access and success rates for students from disadvantaged backgrounds.

A three-year period funding was granted to three programmes in UKZN, namely: the Science Foundation Programme of the Faculty of Science and Agriculture, the Humanities and Commerce Access Programme in the Faculty of Humanities, Development and the Social Sciences and Management Studies respectively. This indicated that ‘extended curriculum-related approaches are “critical to dealing with the educational disadvantage, rather than

relying on supplementary support especially in the numerate areas (National Plan 2001: 22; cited in Dhunpath & Vithal 2012: 8).

Institutions were invited by the Department of Education (DoE 2006: 4-5 cited in Tyson 2010:6) to apply for foundational programme funding in 2006 and 2009. Programmes to be funded had to be primarily focused on providing a set of learning activities designed to enable students from disadvantaged educational backgrounds to perform successfully in their chosen fields. The foundational component of the programme had to be an intrinsic part of an extended curriculum programme. The foundational provision had to be divided into formal courses that are credit-bearing and counting towards students' graduation. Each of these courses also needed a foundational provision with relevance to the overall curriculum of the programme. Finally, the foundational provision had to be added to the coursework prescribed for the regular curriculum. The credit total of foundation courses in the extended programme must be at least 0.5 and not more than 1 (DoE 2006: 4-5 in Tyson 2010: 1).

Between the 2004/5 to the 2010/11 financial years, almost R1 billion rand has been disbursed in the form Foundation Provisioning Funding to higher education institutions as earmarked grants to universities (CHE 2009 cited in Dhunpath & Vithal 2012: 9). Funding for the next year was released based on progress reports from the previous year. The two main indicators included students' enrolment into the programme and success rates of foundation students in both foundational and regular courses. Foundation courses often indicate up to 70% pass rates in most universities, while the average of 60% pass rate in other courses is often recorded.

The challenge externally funding the programme was its constant threat of discontinuity (BMR1 2014). This challenge is exacerbated by the university's seeming indifference towards such programmes. Thus, the continuous decline of commitment from both the government funding body and the university gives the programme directors a hard time of continuously fighting for funding to keep the programmes alive (Altbach & Knight 2007). The introduction of the RAMs funding model has made the programme unviable and termed expensive. This growing disinterest on funding the programme was largely due to the poor and inconsistent results that the programme was making with regards to students' success (Tyson 2010: 1).

4.4 Factors Affecting the Extended Curriculum Programme

This section discusses the strengths and challenges of the ECP as a means of inducting students into the learning culture of the university. Scott (2012: 26) highlights a challenge as follows:

Given the persistence of inequalities, increasing enrolment will increase the proportion of underprepared students in higher education. Unless the performance patterns are substantially improved, this will exacerbate failure and attrition rates, or negatively affect the quality of education, or both; unless there are decisive steps to improve success across students body, African student attrition will increase disproportionately, defeating the object of widening access. Since access without success is hollow achievement and wasteful of talent and resources, the focus must be on widening successful participation – that is, on growth in graduate output – and on ensuring that equity of access is accompanied by equity of outcomes (Scott 2012: 26).

The suggestion that too many underprepared students might downgrade the quality of tertiary education requires attention. It aligns with the view that admitting many of these underprepared students would negatively impact their general success (BMR1's 2014) and reechoes a popular assertion that South African Higher Education institutions are not ready for the demands of the realities of underprepared students. Matriculation performances also continue to signal underperformances of both the schooling system and higher education; indicating that this problem is unlikely to disappear in the near future (Dhunpath & Vithal 2012; Scott 2012) Tertiary institutions can therefore learn from the successes of programmes like the ECP to enable the realization of the full potential of every students coming into the university.

The introduction of new high school curricula in 2009 has rapidly increased the number of students gaining access to higher education (Dhunpath & Vithal 2012: 2). Many such students are desperate for a place in higher education institutions than the institutions can handle. This questions the continuous relevance of ECP in its current form and structures at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. Dhunpath and Vithal (2012: 2) highlight that in spite of the changed landscape of higher education in South Africa, and increasing eligible students for the sector, increased access has not guaranteed that students are able to productively participate in their chosen fields of study. Those who meet the minimum requirements for direct entry into the university struggle and need remediation (Dhunpath & Vithal 2012; Tyson 2010: 4). Besides, many of the students ready and prepared to access higher education institutions are still not representing some of those with potentials from underprepared schools in the rural areas. Ignoring this implies a contravention of the equity policy

imperative. Thus both underprepared schools and the underprepared institutions should be under the spotlight. The un-readiness of universities for the new characteristics of students coming in (Scott 2012: 26) can benefit from the reported ECP success (Nala 2010, Tyson 2010, Clarence-Fincham 1998). Lessons can be learnt for supporting the vast majority of students in tertiary institutions for equity of outcomes, epistemological access and quality graduates (2012: 3).

Another challenge of the ECP is related to the government funding requirements. If programme support is cut, as funders often threaten, the programme has no safety net. Initially, Dhunpath and Vithal (2012: 8) note that foundational programme accounts for only 14% of the overall entrant into the university in South Africa. ECP also continues to be challenged by the fact that only one or two matric point often determines who gains admission into the foundational programme and who gets into the mainstream.

Two students from the same township school and very similar disadvantaged backgrounds can each be admitted differently; one to the ECP which is well supported, the other admitted to mainstream because of a point to two differences. The foundation student succeeds while the mainstream student fails, thus raising questions about what universities are rewarding and questions the support that mainstream students receive as compared to foundation students. Some students do in fact consider it an injustice or a punishment being admitted into the mainstream because of having a better pass. This presents a dilemma for selecting students as funds allocated are just not enough to support all students coming into the university in such intense manner (Dhunpath & Vithal 2012: 10).

Moreover, the significant increase in the number of African enrolment in universities calls to question the value of foundational programmes like ECP. About two third of South African University enrolments are Africans, even more are qualifying for direct entry into the universities (Dhunpath & Vithal 2012: 10). The point is that although the support for students from disadvantaged backgrounds is increasing, there are more students that qualify for direct entry than the universities can handle. The sustainability and affordability of ECP for increasing access are also called to question. They are considered as unfair to others with similar disadvantage who gain entry to mainstream and fail to get the requisite support in their early undergraduate year.

The current student offers a critical reflection on how this programme has contributed to understanding teaching and learning for people who are poorly prepared. Nonetheless, the programme would always be valuable if certain backgrounds are producing students fit for the mainstream. Some even more disadvantaged backgrounds should be considered for the same equity principles' sake while more developing backgrounds may be systematically excluded from the support. That is also dependent on whether those gaining mainstream access are succeeding. While these challenges continue to be poignant, it is clear that if every student entering the university were to be given an improved version of the support that ECP students are receiving and there was sufficient funding to support the venture, a lot of the challenges raised here would be ruled out.

As such, it could be argued that the main challenge is that the programme is staffed by full-time staff working on a contract basis, having non-permanent positions. Tinto (2013) remarks that this poses a threat to such programmes as staffs often have the sense of job insecurity and are threatened by the fact that such programmes can be discontinued at any time. This makes it difficult to professionalise the field. However, the DHET three year cycle funding (3-year rolling plans) (Hay & Monnapula-Mapesela 2009: 3) for the programme does not allow long-term commitment to employing staff on a permanent basis. Changing some of these factors would make a significant difference to the support that students receive and their propensity to succeed.

4.5 Conclusion

This chapter on the ECP in UKZN presents the context of the study. It foregrounds the need for the ECP in the South African context. The chapter underscores the meaning of an underprepared student as defined by the ECP and locates it in its historical context. The evolution of the ECP in UKZN and specifically in the College of Humanities was discussed. The evolution of entry requirements for students admitted into the ECP was also discussed. This was followed by the components of the ECP and how that has also changed over time, including the factors that affected these changes. How the ECP engages students in learning, the factors affecting the programme, beginning from its funding to other issues were also considered and the chapter closes with a consideration of some of the challenges that the ECP has faced over the years and the threat of discontinuity that looms over it with arguments for and against it.

Chapter 5: Research Methodology

5.0 Introduction

This chapter discusses the methodological approaches used for this study. It presents the different qualitative and quantitative tools that were used to collect and analyse data in the study. It begins by presenting the research paradigm. It discusses the approaches used for conducting the study within the chosen research paradigm and how the case study was identified. This covers the study population and relevant sampling techniques. The reasons for choosing attributions theory to design the semi-structured interviews, and the Study Process Questionnaire to determine students' approaches to learning are presented. The chapter goes on to discuss how the participants were reached, how data was analysed and the limitations of the study. This chapter also presents the analysis of quantitative data from the study process questionnaire. This would allow for the discussion in chapter six to combine these quantitative graphs and tables where appropriate in order to support findings from the qualitative instrument. The quantitative data section is too short to constitute a chapter on its own.

5.1 Research Design

Terre Blanche, Durrheim and Painter (2006) describe research design as a strategic framework for action. It serves as a bridge between research questions, execution and implementation of the research. According to Mouton (2001), it focuses on the end-product of research, that is, the kind of study being planned and the kind of result that is being aimed. As a blueprint for action (Babbie & Mouton 2001) it entails a visualization of data and the problems associated with the employment of those data in the entire research project (Leedy 1997). The chapter begins with an understanding of the research paradigm.

5.1.1 Research Paradigm

This study was undertaken within the social constructivist paradigm, which implies that people continuously create, through their actions and interactions, a shared reality that is experienced as objectively factual and subjectively meaningful (Herbert 2014). Hence, knowledge depends on one's construction of meaning based on personal experiences within society. As such, learners co-construct knowledge or meaning for themselves with other

members of a shared socialisation. The social constructivist paradigm allowed this study to explain how ECP students' construction of their success or failure is based on their past experiences (cultural backgrounds), as well as influenced by their social environment (present context). It is interested in how the ECP influences students' construction of what was responsible for the success and how this affects students' sense of meaning.

The analytical framework of this study, the Attribution Theory (AT), falls within the social constructivist paradigm. It entails that people attribute their fate based on what they believe to be the cause of that fate. In other words, individuals reflect on their experiences and try to figure out the causes of their success or failure. The Attribution Theory is particularly useful for this study because it helps to understand students' constructions of what success or failure is. It also facilitates the assessment of particular events or experiences that students attribute their success or failure to.

The Study Process Questionnaire (SPQ) on the other hand was useful in assessing how students' motives affected the kind of study strategies they were adopting. It is also social constructivist because it presupposes that student's motives are affected by their backgrounds and their previous socialization. It takes this forward by allowing an assessment of what approaches to learning students adopted in their studies. Approaches to learning are determined by the combination of students' motives for learning and the learning strategies that they adopt. One's learning motive should determine their strategies, but students sometimes use learning strategies that are not commensurate with their motives. The SPQ is quantitative while the AT is used for qualitative data within the paradigm.

5.2 Research Approach

This study adopted a mixed quantitative and qualitative approach, with much of the focus being a qualitative case study approach because of its focus on smaller-scale studies with a small sample, but aiming at in-depth study of a phenomenon to provide an explanation of the phenomenon (Marre, 2007). This approach aimed to understand the experiences and attitudes of ECP students; their belief system and their perspectives (Brikci & Green 2007; Babbie & Mouton 2002). It is admissible when the phenomena under study (students' experiences of success and failure) are complex, social in nature, and not subjected to quantification (Flick 2009; Liebscher 1998: 669). It was appropriate for effectively answering the questions: "what", "how", or "why" of students' experiences of learning, rather than the "how many" or

“how much”, which mark the focus of quantitative research approaches (Brikci & Green, 2007). The quantitative section used the Study Process Questionnaire, for the sake of quantifying target students’ motives and strategies as these affect their approaches to learning. A semi-structured interview guide was used to engaged with what respondents attribute their success failures to. Since both instruments assess motivation in different forms, combining them within the different research approaches was considered valuable to enhance the findings of the study.

5.2.1 Identifying the case study

Rubbin and Babbie (1997: 402) define a case study as an empirical enquiry that ‘investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context; when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident and when multiple sources of evidence are used’. As described earlier, multiple sources of evidence are used in this study, one being qualitative, and the other being quantitative. The qualitative approach took the form of both one-on-one, face-to-face interviews and focus group interviews, while a survey was anticipated for the quantitative approach.

The researcher is studying and working at the research site and is experienced in working with students At-Risk both as a mentor and as an Academic Development Officer within the College of Humanities, University of KwaZulu-Natal. These add to the researcher’s experience in the evaluation of the pilot phase of an ADP within the same College. As such, there is familiarity with the context, and with some of the challenges of students from under-privileged backgrounds, who primarily constituted the sample of the current study. Nevertheless, the researcher has never directly worked with ECP students, which ensured some level of objectivity and was important to avoid bias. No previous study was found of the cohort of ECP students from 2009-2015. Besides, the study could not compare what is going on in the College of Humanities with other ECPs in other colleges because of Epistemological, pedagogical and theoretical differences. It could not compare it to other Colleges of Humanities in other universities in other South African universities because the approaches to implementing these programmes are so different and there are not enough studies on each to build from.

5.2.1.1 Study Population and Research Participants

Permission was first granted by the Access Programme Coordinator, and an Ethical Clearance was received from the office of the Dean of Research of the University of

KwaZulu-Natal. A list of four hundred (400) ECP students who have passed through the ECP in both Howard and Pietermaritzburg Campuses between the years 2009–2015 was received from the Division of Management information (DMI) of UKZN for the study. 170 ECP of these students who had been through the programme within this cohort were sampled from three levels of studies defined as follows: Educational level 1 are students who had just entered the university and were on the ECP for the first semester, undertaking the Foundational modules and the Augmented Support for one of the mainstream modules. The Educational level 2 constituted students who had completed that foundation phase and were mainly in their second, third or fourth year of study. Those in Educational level 3 are students who had completed their undergraduate studies; they are either in postgraduate study, studying and working or mainly working.

The educational level 1 students were very easy to access through the Access programme. The educational level 2 were problematic because they would not respond to questionnaires sent about 10 times. The educational level 3 respondents were reached through snowballing. Data collection was very challenging except for the first year students. Many respondents out-richtly indicated that they were not interested in taking part in the study. The point of collecting data from these three groups was to validate the data and compare findings between the group to determine whether there were changes, and whether the changes were in any way attributable to the ECP.

5.2.1.2 Sampling and Data Collection

Powell and Connaway (2004) describe sample as a selection of units from the total population to be studied. This is often because the total population cannot be studied. Since this study was envisaged and planned to be predominantly qualitative, studying the entire population was not an imperative. The sampling for both qualitative and quantitative data was done separately from participants in both Pietermaritzburg and Howard Colleges of the University of KwaZulu-Natal.

Firstly, a purposive sampling was used to gather qualitative data from 22 ECP using a semi-structured interview. This was the main tool for data collection for the study because it allowed the researcher to have an in-depth understanding what ECP students in the College of Humanities attribute their successes and failures to. Eight students who just started on the programme; another eight who have been through the programme and are in their second or

third year of studies; and six who had been through the programme and are now doing post-graduate studies or even working were interviewed. After determining the different levels of studies, it was more practical to reach respondents by snowballing and referrals from other participants.

Interviewing allowed participants to get involved, express their views and beliefs while discussing their perception and interpreting their experiences (Kvale, 1996). This is in line with the views of Boyce and Neale (2006) that in-depth interviews is a qualitative research technique that involves conducting intensive discussion with a few individuals using a semi-structured guide to explore their perspectives on a particular idea, programme or situation. The one-on-one interviews with selected students on the programme were audio-recorded using a digital audio recorder with the permission of the participants after informed consent forms were signed. Notes were also taken by the researcher during the interviews.

Two focus group interviews of four and six students respectively, in accordance to recommendations by Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2000) were also conducted with first-year ECP students to engage them in a real dialogue among them in small groups within a planned and relaxed environment (Bloor *et al.*, 2001) to capture collective meanings about their experiences. Gibbs *et al.* (1997) defines focus groups as “a group discussion on a particular topic organized for research purposes. This discussion is guided, monitored and recorded by a researcher”. The interaction within the group is guided by the researcher on a topic proposed by the researcher to ensure that the views of the group are gathered (Cohen, Manion & Morrison 2000). Group members are allowed to discuss the topic without much interruption by the researcher. The focus group interview was also audio recorded by the aid of a digital recorder after consent of the participants was sought and granted.

The justification for the focus group interview follows the ideas of Watts and Ebutt (1987 cited in Cohen, Manion and Morrison 2000) that such is useful where the group of people, like the ECP students have worked together for some time or a common purpose. It is also useful as in this case, when participants are also aware of what others in the group are saying. Group members were also challenging and extending each other’s ideas. Another reason for using focus group interviews is upheld by Bogdan and Biklen (1992 cited in Cohen, Manion & Morrison 2000) that they can aid the gaining of useful insights into what is obtained or would be obtained using individual interviews as employed in this study. The group interview also brought together students with different opinions.

A stratified random sampling technique was envisaged for gathering quantitative data from 170 students within the cohort using the study process questionnaire. Initially, a survey was anticipated, but due to poor responses, data was to be gathered from 70 students who had just started on the programme (level 1), 50 who had been through the programme and are now in their second or third year of studies (level 2) and 50 students who had been through the programme and were in post-graduate studies (level 3). However, data was eventually gathered from 63 students at level one, 83 at level two and 24 at level three due to intense difficulties in data collection on the Study Process Questionnaire. The results can therefore be generalizable to the programme within these two campuses studied. Although there were difficulties in data collection, the fact that study was mainly qualitative and quantitative data was collected for diversifying the instruments used in the case study as well as for testing students' approaches to learning. This mitigated the challenges of whether data collected was sufficient and how generalizable it was. The sampling was to enable a broad perspective from students at different levels of experiencing the ECP.

Quantitative data gathered through the Study Process Questionnaire was used mainly to assess how ECP students approach their learning in terms of their motives and strategies (Biggs 1987). The SPQ (Biggs 1987) is a 42-item self-report instrument consisting of three main scales: (1) deep approach to learning, (2) surface approach to learning and (3) achieving approach to learning. It was administered to assess the extent to which ECP students used the deep, surface and achieving approaches to learning. All items were scored on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (never or only rarely true of me) to 5 (always or almost true of me). The two subscales that determine each main scale were assessed by measuring students' attitudes towards studies (motives) and their usual ways of studying (strategy). Students' motives should determine their learning strategies.

The SPQ was designed to provide six subscales scores: Surface Motive and Strategy, Deep Motive and Strategy and Achieving Motive and Strategy. The validity of the SPQ was established by means of confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). Items of the SPQ were clustered into groups representing the six subscales. This technique is called "item parcelling" (Little *et al.* 2002; Bandalos & Finney 2001). Item Parcelling is a measurement practice that is commonly used in latent variable analyses. According to Little *et al.* (2002), a parcel can be defined as an aggregate-level indicator, comprised of the average of two or more items. For further analysis, all items belonging to subscales were parcelled (i.e., six parcels were formed) as applied to the SPQ in previous studies (Snelgrove & Slater 2003; Zeegers 2002; Biggs *et al.* 2001).

This standardised quantitative measure was to complement data from the semi-structured interview on students' attributions. A comprehensive list of students who have been through the ECP between 2009 and 2015 was requested and collected from DMI. The questionnaires were sent to all these students via their student e-mails. Emails were sent out over ten times within the period from 2014 to 2015. The response rate was so poor that the help of the programme coordinator was sort. A lot of the data was also gathered through snowballing as some ECP students did not like to be identified. The limitation is mitigated by the fact that the study remained mainly qualitative.

Psychometrically, Biggs et al (2001) confirmed the validity of the SPQ – that the test measures what it sets out to measure – through complex factor analyses. The reliability of the SPQ – that the test has internal consistency with respect to its items - was reported as established by means of the Cronbach²⁶'s α , which was .74 for surface learning approach .87 for deep learning approach and .86 for achieving approach (average SPQ .82). Thus the construct validity and internal reliability were deemed adequate (Biggs *et al.* 2001).

5.3 Data processing and Analysis

This section presents the data processing and analysis of both qualitative and quantitative data. The three sources of data processed and prepared for analysis included the one-on-one semi-structured interviews, the two focus group interviews and the Study Process Questionnaire. Due to the volume of qualitative data, it could not be presented here but is used extensively in Chapter 6 during the discussion of findings. However, since the quantitative data analysis is not much, the data is presented in this chapter. The section therefore presents the processing and analysis of qualitative data, and then the processing and analysis of quantitative data, followed by the graphs and tables for quantitative data analysis.

5.3.1 Qualitative Data Analysis

Qualitative data from both one-on-one interviews and the focus group interviews were audio recorded using digital audio recorders. The data were first transcribed by typing them out word-for-word in text format unto a Microsoft Word document. The responses of the

²⁶ Cronbach's alpha determines the internal consistency or average correlation of items in a survey instrument to gauge its reliability" (Santos: 1999)

different respondents to the semi-structured interview amounted to hundreds of pages of transcribed data. Speaking of qualitative data analysis, Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2000) noted thus:

This involves organizing, accounting for, and explaining the data; ...making sense of the data in terms of the participants' definitions of the situation, noting patterns, themes, categories and regularities.... the researcher taking a wide angle lens to gather data, and then, by sifting, sorting, reviewing and reflecting on them the salient features of the situation emerge. These are then used as the agenda for subsequent focusing. The process is akin to funnelling from the wide to the narrow.

Another suggestion of Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2000) which was considered in the study was that qualitative research data analysis typically commences during the data collection process. To avoid data overload, the researcher after noticing similar patterns in responses to specific question asked guiding questions to interrogate those aspect of the responses that were glossed over by most respondents in order to gather some in-depth data.

Similarly, Sarantakos (2005) suggests that the processing of qualitative data is based on words used to derive meaning. The different participants' qualitative responses for each questions were put together in one document to assess flow. This data was read over and over again to derive some categories out of the responses to each question. Relationships between these categories were also sought by a repeated process of reading through the data several times. Summaries of the data was made while some sense was made of the data leading to conclusions based on the data. LeCompte and Preissle (1993: 237–53 cited in Cohen, Manion and Morrison 2000) advise that

Researchers should set out the main outlines of the phenomena that are under investigation. They then should assemble chunks or groups of data, putting them together to make a coherent whole (e.g. through writing summaries of what has been found). Then they should painstakingly take apart their field notes, matching, contrasting, aggregating, comparing and ordering notes made. The intention is to move from description to explanation and theory generation (Cohen, Manion & Morrison 2000: 147-148).

Thus, the main outlines of the phenomena under investigation were determined by both the main research questions that guided the study and the principal theories by which the theory was framed, the attribution theory. Responses were summarized compared and contrasted to field notes while at the same time, sub-themes were identified to enhance the discussion of findings. The analysed of qualitative data could not be included in the study due to its length, but chapter six used the data extensively.

Thematic content analysis was used to analyse qualitative data following the analytical themes from attribution theory. This was done manually using Microsoft word windows package. The data were read through repeatedly and themes were identified and put into headings. It was borne in mind that these themes need to be useful in answering the research questions in order to meet research objectives. The contents within these themes were discussed against the major concepts that constitute the Attribution Theory. These were also analysed to answer research questions and in relation to the existing literature. For the sake of anonymity and confidentiality, respondents were given pseudo names. A difference was also made between the one-on-one interviews and the focus group interview responses where the earlier is a word and the latter is hyphenated.

5.3.2 Quantitative Data Processing and Analysis

The numerical data from the SPQ was analysed using STATA Software Package and Micro Soft Excel data processing package. Data was analysed into graphs and tables to illustrate averages of how respondents adopted surface, deep or achieving approaches to learning with their respective motives and strategies as proposed by the Study Process Questionnaire (Biggs 1987). Motives were also analysed separately from students' strategies in different levels of study to assess the extent and kinds of change that students experience in their learning motives and strategies as their years of studies progressed.

5.3.2.1 Motives

The means for the study motives across all three educational levels may be seen below in Table 9 and are represented graphically in Figure 1.

Table 9- Means for study motives by educational levels

	Surface Motive (SM)	Deep Motive (DM)	Achieving Motive (AM)
Educational Level 1	27.14	26.41	29.29
Educational Level 2	27.65	27.53	29.87
Educational Level 3	26.29	25.58	27.63

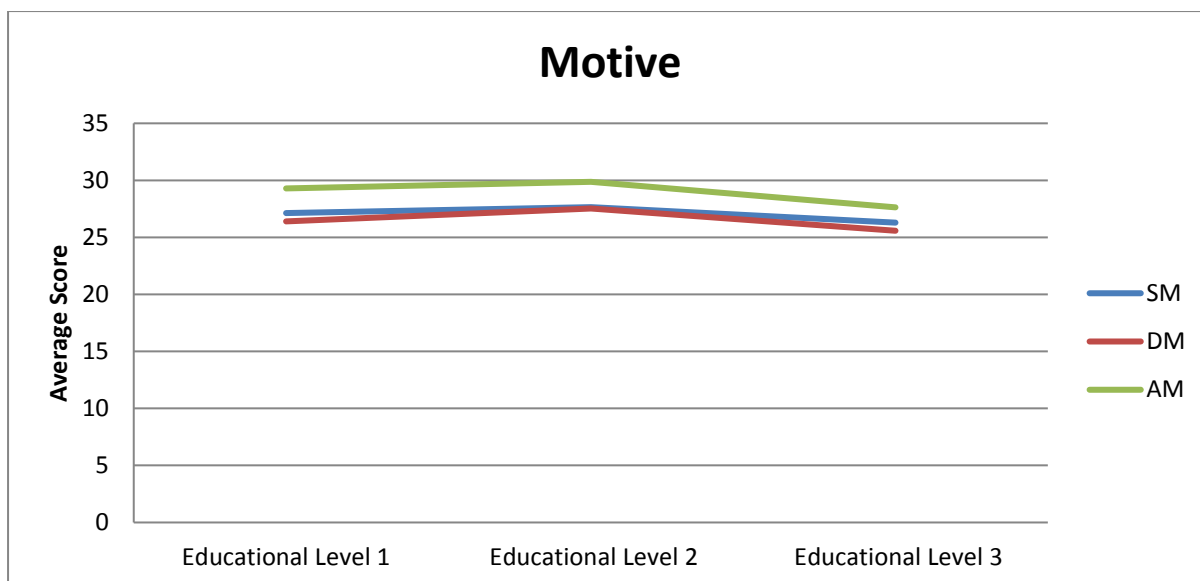


Figure 1- Line graph for study motives by educational levels

The composite results for the three motives (surface, deep and achieving) were submitted to a two-way mixed analysis of variance (ANOVA) with educational level as the between factor and the motives as the within (repeated measures) factor. The ANOVA did not yield a significant result for the year of study ($p > 0.05$) as this difference only approached significance ($F(2;167) = 2.948; p = 0.0552$). There was a significant result for the motive ($F(2;334) = 32.525; p < 0.00001$) but a non-significant educational level by motive interaction ($P > 0.05$). The source of the significant motive result was located in the achieving motive having a significantly higher overall mean compared to the surface and deep motives.

5.3.2.2 Strategies

The means for the study strategies across all three educational levels may be seen below in Table 10 and are represented graphically in Figure 2.

Table 10- Means for study strategy by educational levels

	Surface Strategy (SM)	Deep Strategy (DM)	Achieving Strategy (AM)
Educational Level 1	26.1	26.65	27.11
Educational Level 2	26.78	27.6	26.28
Educational Level 3	24.42	27.21	23.92

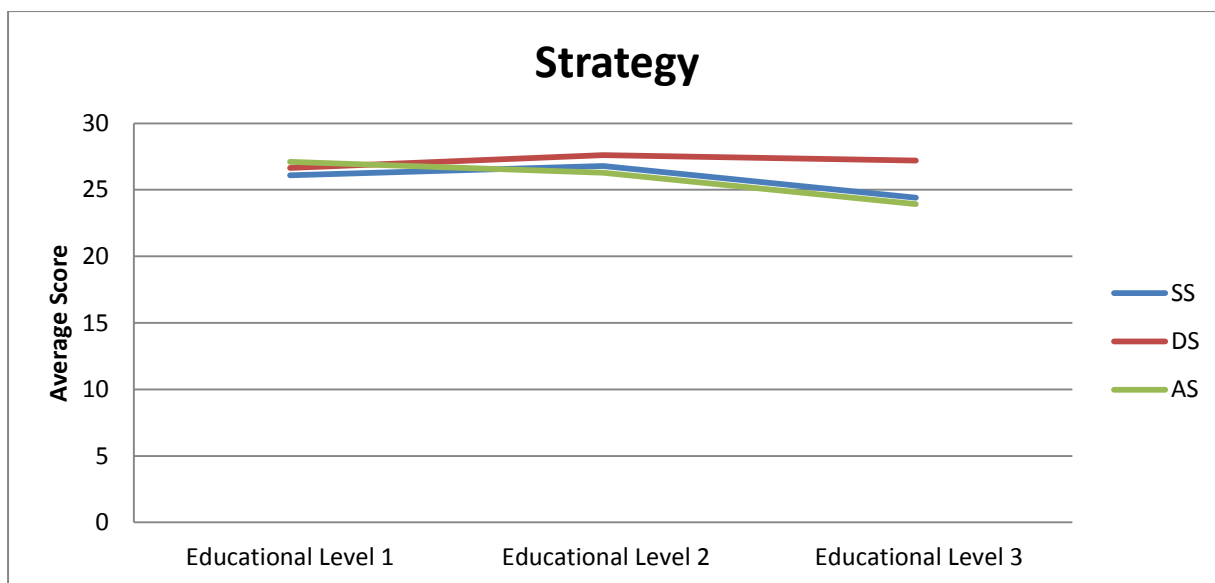


Figure 2- Line graph of study motives by educational levels

The composite results for the three strategies (surface, deep and achieving) and submitted to a two-way mixed analysis of variance (ANOVA) with Educational level as the between factor and the strategy as the within (repeated measure) factor.

The ANOVA yielded no significant result for year of study ($p > 0.05$). Strategy was significant ($F(2,167)=4.832; p=0.0085$) and the educational level by strategy interaction was significant ($F(4,334)=3.404; p=0.0095$). The source of the significance for the strategy was located in the deep strategy having a significantly higher overall mean compared to the surface and achieving strategies. As a main effect is weakened by significant interaction, inspection of Figure 2 shows a dip in Year 3 for both surface strategy and achieving strategy, while the deep strategy has remained relatively constant, maintaining a higher mean.

5.3.2.3 Motive and Strategy

Since year of study is not significant, the collapsed comparison of motive and strategy within the three approaches to learning are presented in table 3 and figure 3 below.

Table 11- deep surface and achieving approaches by motives and strategies

	SURFACE	DEEP	ACHIEVING
MOTIVE	27.3	26.8	29.3
STRATEGY	26.2	27.2	26.3
Total	53.5	54.0	55.6

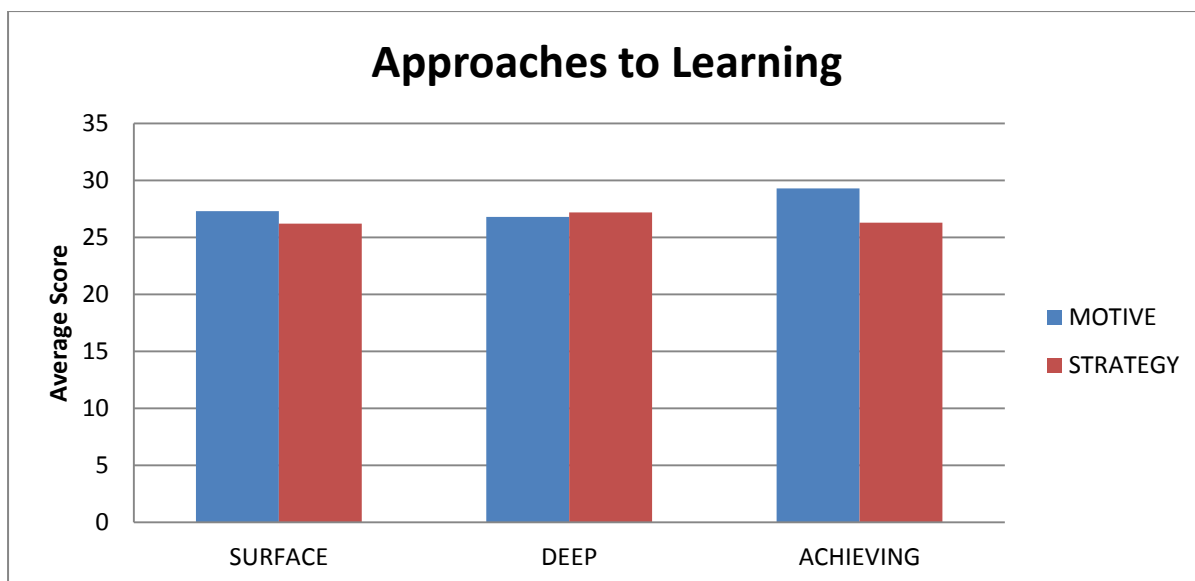


Figure 3- Bar chart for students' approaches to learning indicating motives and strategies

5.3.2.4 Descriptive analysis – summary

Figure 3 above indicates that majority of the respondents are achieving learners. These achieving learners exhibit stronger motives than their strategies. This is followed by the number of respondents that are deep learners. There are more respondents with deep strategies than there are with deep motives. The surface approach represents the least approaches that students within the cohort have towards their learning.

Taken individually, the achieving motive is the strongest amongst the target population, followed by the surface motive. Motives demonstrate to be higher amongst ECP students than their strategies. The implication is that if these students are more highly motivated, they can be supported to adopt more rewarding strategies to enhance their academic successes.

The high level of surface learners per year is an indication that something has to change in order for these students to be successful. This follows the assertion that the surface approach to learning is the least fancied for its capacity to produce relevant success results.

5.3.2.5 Spearman Rank Correlation

The data yielded by the questionnaire required students to rank various activities. This meant that the data yielded were ordinal in nature, and would therefore require a non-parametric statistical technique for further inferential analysis. As the researcher wants to establish whether there was a relationship between the motives and strategies measured on the SPQ, a correlational technique was necessary, the suitable one being the Spearman Rank Correlation.

According to Wissler (1905), the Spearman correlation is a formula for calculating the true correlation by the Pearson formula for observations of variables. The formula assumes that the successive observations upon the same individual, ...are constituents of the exponential law" (Wissler 1905: 310). Spearman Rank Correlations were run between motives and strategies to test the relationships between the different motives and strategies. SM & DM, SM & AM and SM AM.

i. Correlations for Motives

Results of the correlations between motives showed positive relationships, but only one of them was moderate. The other two were weak. The correlation of Surface Motive with Deep Motive was weak $t=4.750;p=0.0000;r=0.344$. The correlations between the Surface Motive and the Achieving Motive was also weak: $t=4.803;p=0.000;r=0.347$. The correlations between the Deep Motive and the Achieving motive was moderate $t=6.549;p=0.000;r=0.451$. The indication of a moderate relationship between students with deep and achieving motives call for more attention.

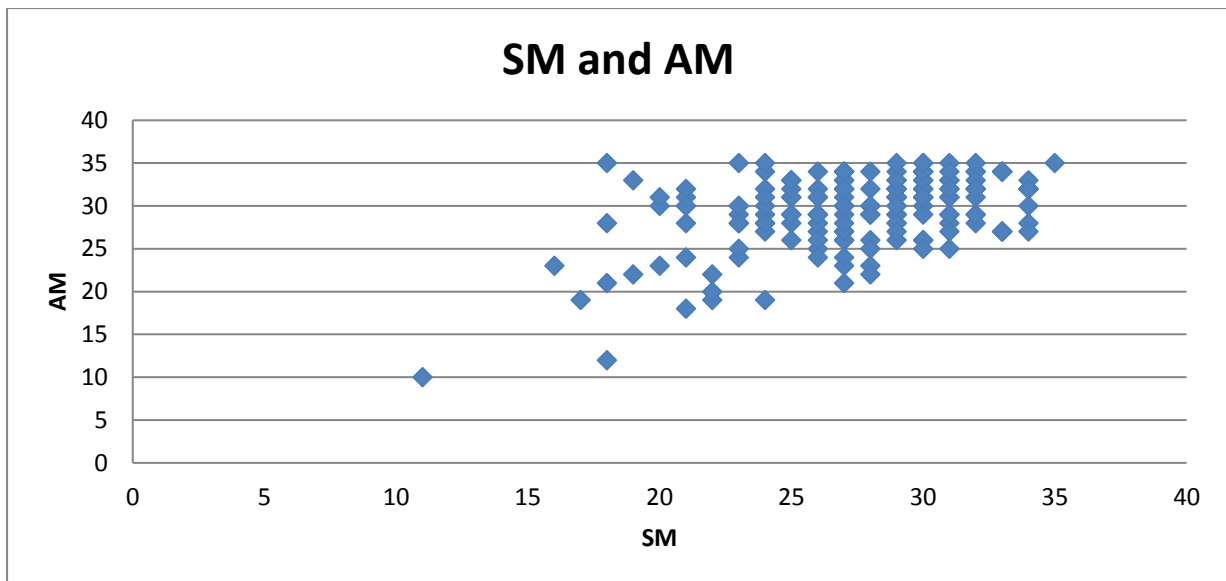


Figure 4- Spearman's correlations between surface motives and Achieving motives

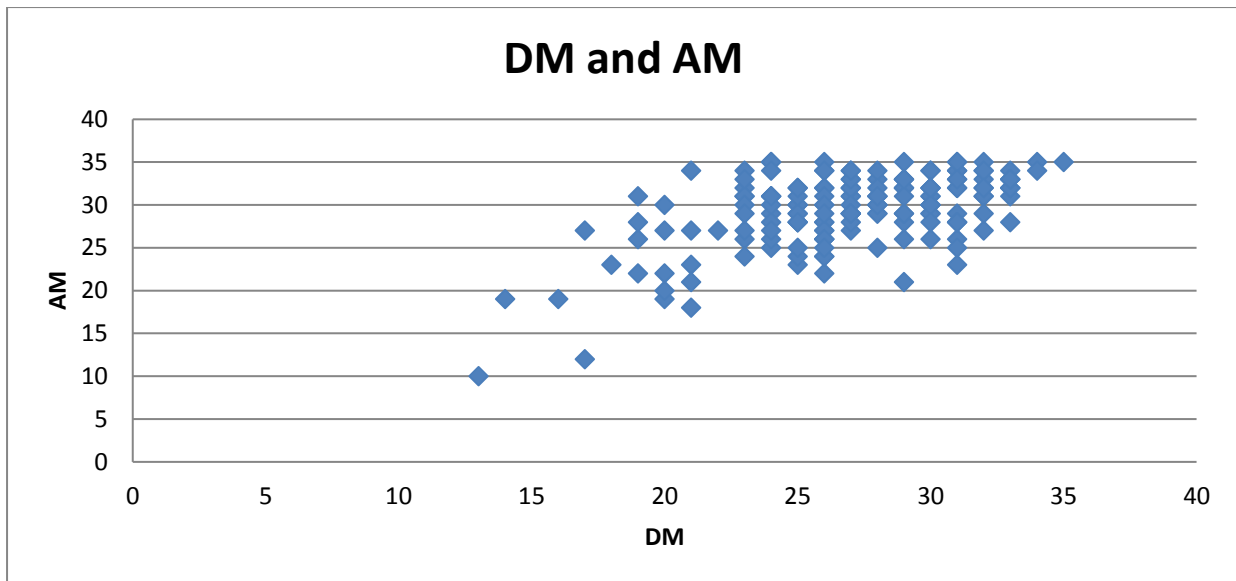


Figure 5- Spearman's correlation between deep motive and achieving motive

ii. Correlation for Strategies

The correlations of strategies also showed all positive and moderate relationships. Correlation between Surface and Deep Strategies was $t=7.306; p=0.0000; r=0.491$. Surface Strategy correlated with Achieving Strategy as $t=6.259; p=0.0000; r=0.581$. The Deep and Achieving strategies demonstrate the highest relationships.

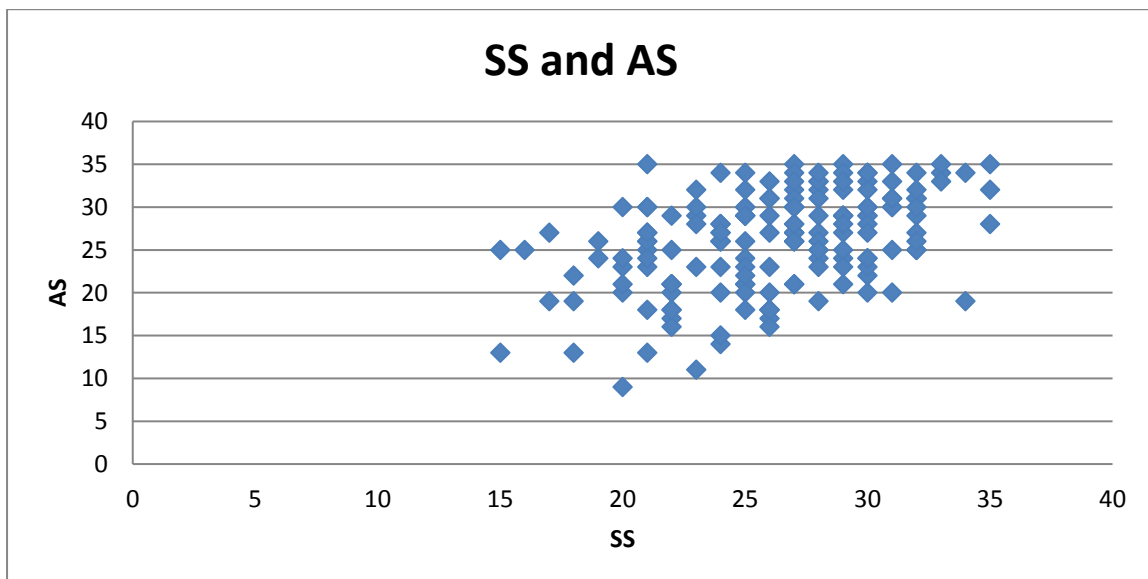


Figure 6- Spearman's correlations between surface strategy and achieving strategy

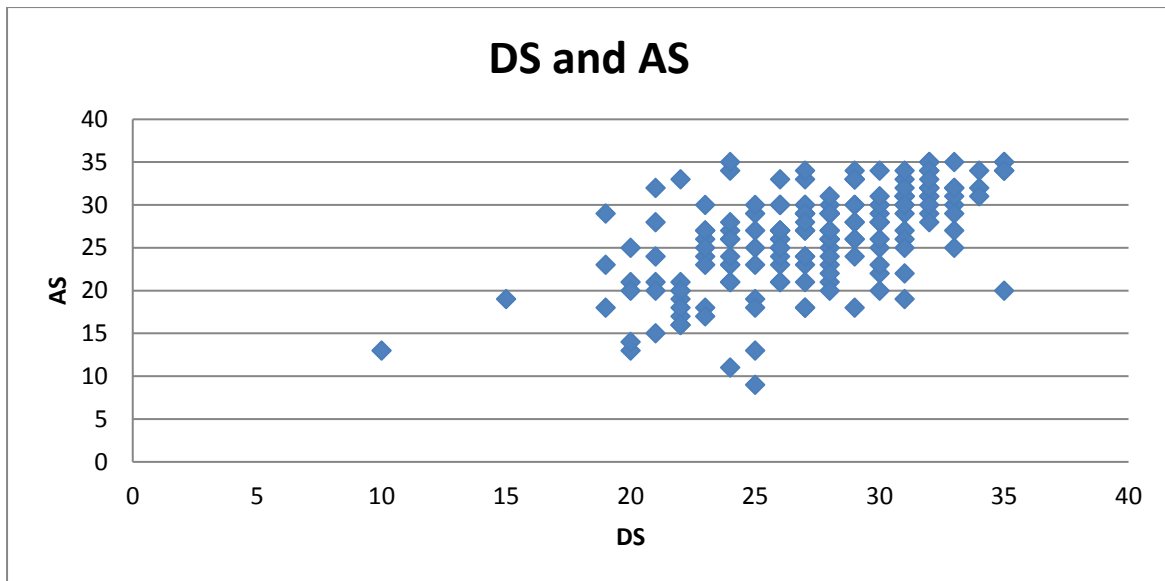


Figure 7- Spearman's correlations between deep strategy and achieving strategy

5.4 Validity and Reliability

The validity and reliability of research instruments are important. Terre Blanche, Durrheim and Painter (2006) explain reliability as referring to dependability of a measurement instrument. This is concerned with the extent to which it would yield the same results on repeated trials. The test of reliability is different for quantitative research than they are for qualitative research.

5.4.1 Validity of Qualitative Instruments

Cohen, Marrion and Morrison (2000) present the views of Kvale (1996) on the validation that must take place in the seven stages of interview-based investigation. The first stage is Thematizing: this entails checking to ensure that the theoretical underpinning(s) of the research is (are) sound and there is also a logical link between the theory and the research questions. The theories used in this study were the Attribution Theory within the Social Constructivist paradigm. The research questions were derived directly from the research problem and the research objectives. The research questions were also formulated against the Attribution Theory that was chosen for the study.

The second stage is on research design: it is required that the research design is adequate and sound in terms of methodology, operationalization, sampling and ethical defensibility. The research methodology was determined based on relevance to the research questions and

compatibility with the theoretical framework. The two research instruments were based on different approaches to understanding the same phenomena; ECP students' experiences of learning within the College of Humanities, UKZN. The use of individual face-to-face interview alongside the focus group discussion was to validate the process and ensure rigour. The instrument efficiently tested what ECP students attributed their success and failures to. A quantitative measure from the SPQ was also relevant to test predetermined approaches to learning as exhibited by ECP students. The quantitative data was only secondary to the qualitative one but there were still sufficient responses to generate data.

The third stage is focused on the interview process. It proposes that data must be trustworthy and that the interview must be conducted to the highest standards, with validity and reliability checks being made as it unfolds. Golafshani (2003) is of the view that unlike quantitative research, which emphasize validity and reliability, qualitative research is more concerned with precision, credibility²⁷ and transferability²⁸. A relevance of the social constructivist paradigm used for this study is its contribution towards rigour is that:

Constructivism values multiple realities that people have in their minds. Therefore, to acquire valid and reliable multiple and diverse realities, multiple methods of searching or gathering data are in order. If this calls for the use of triangulation in the constructivism paradigm, then the use of investigators, method and data triangulations to record the construction of reality is appropriate (Johnson, 1997). ...Engaging multiple methods, such as, observation, interviews and recordings will lead to more valid, reliable and diverse construction of realities. To improve the analysis and understanding of construction of others, triangulation is a step taken by researchers ... (Golafshani 2003: 604).

The above view justifies the use of different methods to collect data, including one-on-one semi-structured interviews, focus group interviews and the study process questionnaire. The analysis of data was a triangulation of the findings from these different data sources. This demonstrates the credibility of the research. It demonstrates trustworthiness, rigour and quality of this study. Moreover, triangulation in this context is defined as

²⁷ "The credibility criteria involves establishing that the results of qualitative research are ... believable from the perspective of the participant in the research. Since from this perspective, the purpose of qualitative research is to describe or understand the phenomena of interest from the participant's eyes, the participants are the only ones who can legitimately judge the credibility of the results" (Trochim 2006)

²⁸ "Transferability refers to the degree to which the results of qualitative research can be generalised or transferred to other contexts or settings" (Trochim: 2006)

“a validity procedure where researchers search for convergence among multiple and different sources of information to form themes or categories in a study” (Creswell & Miller, 2000, p. 126). Therefore, reliability, validity and triangulation, if they are to be relevant research concepts, particularly from a qualitative point of view, have to be redefined as we have seen in order to reflect the multiple ways of establishing truth (Golafshani 2003: 604).

The above is an indication that having used multiple data, the study engaged in triangulation of results to ensure “validity” of the qualitative data. The next section engages with the validity of quantitative data.

5.4.2 Validity and Reliability of Quantitative Instrument

The definitions of reliability and validity in quantitative research reveal two strands: Firstly, with regards to reliability, whether the result is replicable (Golafshani 2003). This is also referred to as dependability of the measuring instrument; the extent to which it would yield the same result on repeated trial (Terre Blanche, Durrheim and Painter 2006). Secondly, with regards to validity, whether the means of measurement are accurate and whether they are actually measuring what they are intended to measure (Golafshani 2003: 599). The SPQ which quantitatively measured respondents’ approaches to learning have been used extensively and proven to be reliable by several studies in the past. Biggs et al (2001) confirmed the validity of the SPQ – that the test measures what it sets out to measure – through complex factor analyses. The reliability of the SPQ – that the test has internal consistency with respect to its items - was reported as established by means of the Cronbach²⁹’s α , which was .74 for surface learning approach .87 for deep learning approach and .86 for achieving approach (average SPQ .82). Thus the construct validity and internal reliability were deemed adequate (Biggs *et al.* 2001).

5.5 Limitations of the Study

The primary potential limitation of the study was the fact that the researcher has worked extensively with students from similar backgrounds to those on the programme. This work includes working as a mentor in the same College of Humanities and working as an

²⁹ Cronbach's alpha determines the internal consistency or average correlation of items in a survey instrument to gauge its reliability" (Santos: 1999)

Academic Development Officer (ADO) within the same College as well. This means that the researcher always plays an emancipatory role with students in the College, some of which are students from the ECP.

This limitation was mitigated by the fact that the researcher has never directly worked with students on the ECP. Moreover, to ensure that there is no bias, the researcher chose different data collection instruments and different methods of data collection. For instance, some of the students on the programme had interacted with the researcher in other forums and there is a possibility that this familiarity could negatively affect the quality of their responses in the semi-structured interviews. To ensure that such bias does not affect the study, the focus group interviews were used to complement the one-on-one interviews. This allowed for triangulation of findings to counter any form of bias.

Besides, participants were guaranteed confidentiality on any information they provided during the study. This was done by ensuring that all the research participants signed an informed consent form before taking part in the research. A copy of the consent form is attached as an appendix at the end of the study. Pseudo names were used for the analysis and the data generated from the study would not be used for any purpose other than academic and scholarship. Respondents were also made aware that the findings of the study could be used to affect the future of the programme.

Another potential limitation of the study was the fact that it was very difficult to gather data from the students because many of them were unwilling to participate. One of the reasons for this reluctance was that there is some kind of stigma attached to being on the programme. This limitation was addressed by informing respondents on the consent forms that this study could contribute towards improvement of the programme. A snowballing technique had to be applied in order to gather data which was originally envisaged to be collected through random sampling techniques. For this reason, data could not be collected from all the respondents as sampled in the proposal.

Hence, as discussed earlier, measures were taken to ensure validity and generalizability of the data. Firstly, both qualitative and quantitative data was collected for triangulation purposes. Findings from both the Study Process Questionnaire and the Semi-Structured interview were integrated through a triangulation process on the discussion chapter. Secondly, data was

collected from students at different levels of studies including those in first year of study, those who were through with the Access year and were currently in years two, three or four and those who had completed the programme and were currently working were sampled for the study. This allowed for data to be collected from students who are still experiencing the programme and from those who are looking at their experiences reflectively and from hindsight.

5.6 Conclusion

This methodology chapter discussed the research design, the research methodology and approach, it engaged with how the case study, the ECP in the College of Humanities, Pietermaritzburg and Howard College was identified. It presents the study population and the sampling process and procedures for both quantitative and qualitative data collected. The chapter also engaged with issues of data processing and analysis. A distinction is made between the processing of qualitative and that of quantitative data.

The analysis of the data from the semi-structured interview could not be presented herewith because it runs into hundreds of pages. Its salience is used extensively in the next chapter. Quantitative data from the SPQ was analysed and presented in this chapter to make room for discussion in the next chapter. Although data correlations did not have strong significance, this is mitigated by the fact that the study is predominantly qualitative. Hence, the findings are still relevant to explain what students on the programme attribute their success and failure to. Questions of validity and reliability for both data sources are discussed and the study is justified. Finally, the chapter engaged with some of the limitations of the study. The next chapter engages with the discussion of both qualitative and quantitative data and triangulates the findings. The triangulation of qualitative with relevant quantitative data is used to complement the discussion.

Chapter 6: Discussion

6.0 Introduction

This chapter discusses the findings of data gathered from the two instruments: the semi-structured interview schedule and the SPQ. These discussions follow the themes of the semi-structured interview and use data from the SPQ to compare and contrast or validate and counterclaims arising from the interview responses. This information is also used to assess what was found in the literature review for the purpose of answering the study research question which was as follows:

1. What are the students' experiences of learning within the Extended Curriculum Programme?
2. What do students within the programme attribute their success and failures to?
3. Why do they attribute their success and failures in learning in the way that they do?
4. What lessons can be learnt from the findings for the Extended Curriculum policy reform?

As these questions get answered, the chapter also ascertains how the Extended Curriculum Programme has created patterns of learning and how it is sensitive to students' original/previous patterns of learning. It engages with how the ECP exposes beneficiaries to better approaches to learning and how students reported these experiences and their outcomes.

6.1 Students' pre-programme experiences of learning

Many factors affect students' experiences of learning, making it a complex phenomenon. Findings revealed that students made attributions to pre-programme factors, preliminary programme factors, factors related to programme processes, and post-programme factors which affected their experiences of learning. Students' beliefs about their reasons for being on the programme, their expectations of the programme, and the programme's relevance to their needs are discussed. These factors affect students' motives and strategies and determine their approaches to learning. This section discusses factors that affect students' experiences prior to and independent of the ECP intervention. It is widely held that High Schools socialise students into approaches to learning that do not align with tertiary requirements (Schalkwyk, Leibowitz & Van der Merwe 2009). It is also asserted that the resources that students bring into the university affect their approaches to learning and their learning experiences (Tinto 2012). Hence, the gap between the capacities of first-year students in general, and the

requirements of tertiary education continue to loom large (Sennett *et al.* 2003; Anderson, Case & Lam 2001; NPHE 2001; NCHE 1996). Therefore, there are pre-programme factors, or what Biggs (1987) refers to as presage factors that affect students' experiences. These factors are either personal or situational. Personal factors include their intellectual abilities, their home backgrounds and personal characteristics.

The situational factors include their context, the subject content, the method of teaching and of evaluation and the course structure. The situational factors create a breach between students' previous socialisation and how they now negotiate the current social environment. These factors affect students' performances directly or indirectly. Scott (2012) sums it up that contrary to the positive image held of first-year students as being marked by intellectual and personal discoveries, independence in thought and behaviour, widening horizons and growth in confidence, the situation in South Africa is predominantly marred by failure and loss of confidence. The themes from the interview data related to pre-programme factors that affected students' learning experiences were related to students' reasons for being on the programme, their expectations, the programme duration and the stigma associated with it.

6.1.1 Reasons for being in the ECP

The backgrounds of students on the programme were diverse and most respondents did not consider being on the ECP as an indication that they were struggling academically. This is aligned to scholars like Boughey (2010) who are of the opinion that an exclusive location of the problem on the student was a fundamental error. The summary of responses indicates that situational factors were mainly responsible for respondents' choices: some were advised by previous ECP students to apply for the ECP during their completion of the CAO forms. Some chose it because of funding and other support incentives that it promised. Late applicants to mainstream saw an entry option through the ECP, others did not meet the matric requirement for mainstream admission or lacked relevant Matric equivalence. A few still had no clue about how they got onto the ECP.

These factors affected students' motivation, their settling into/engagement with the programme, and their approaches to learning. Findings were in line with the ideas of Biggs (1987) that motivation for undertaking an endeavour affects engagement and results. Below are some of the respondents' views in this regard.

RASIK: ...because of financial problems ...with my Matric score, I could go straight to mainstream and I had applied for the mainstream. But because I wanted financial aid, I had to pick that one...

RASPD: I had to get a Matric certificate to qualify for the first-year university, but coming from Swaziland, of course, we still don't have Matric, we have an ordinary level, which we refer to as O level. So you had to go through Access as well...

RAHLEMS: ...to be on the programme: either you were from a disadvantaged school ...or... your point were not enough. ...I didn't get a space in ...Community Development B Arts. [It was] full. ...Since I was from a disadvantaged school, I had to pass the test, and be part of the ECP.

FRAY-1M: I was a bit lost because I thought I was going to be in the mainstream, I did not know anything about the ECP. I only found out about it when I got here. It was almost, not that relevant to me...

MKHIRNTHANDO: many of my friends ...knew that I did well in matric, but.... I applied for the access programme as my first choice.... [I was] told that if I choose ... I will get financial aid ...residence, and all that. So I never had ...all the information...

RAMNOTH: I failed to obtain the relevant mark ... to study engineering. Then I was asked to go to the AP [ECP]...

Lack of information on alternative options; poor advising; financial constraints; late application and insufficient credit for the chosen field of study were among the reasons why respondents were in the programme. Many respondents chose the ECP because of the promises of financial support for those in the programme. Others were shocked to find themselves on a four-year programme while their colleagues had three years for the same qualification; they considered this to be unfair. This was worst for respondents who felt lost because the ECP was not relevant to them. A respondent invoked his peers' awareness of how well he did in matric, to justify why being on the programme should give no wrong impression about him. All respondents' make no voluntary claim for choosing the ECP. Doing so would imply their belief that being on the programme implied some inherent personal disability or lack of potential. Hence, their attributions were made to situational and unstable factors which can easily be remedied if the perceived causal situations are addressed.

Nevertheless, respondents demonstrated a general appreciation for the programme. This indicates that the programme was able to socialise students into the university environment in spite of the circumstances of their situation of their entry. Tinto (2012) discussed the impact of an integration strategy that pays attention to pre-entry attributes of students in a way that facilitates their academic and social intentions, goals and commitments. Respondents express this characteristic of the programme as follows:

FRAY-1M: It was great in that it got me to interact with different people from different backgrounds with whom we shared the common goal of passing our modules.

MKHIRNTHANDO: It was a way for me to get access into varsity so that I can change in the second year.

RASIK: it had a package for tuition and a package of financial aid. It was very exciting for me when I first came, in terms of adjusting from High School to Varsity.

RAMNOTH: ...it is the foundation... it will give me, and the direction to be able to pursue at the University.

RAHLEMS: I was comfortable with it. [However] the famous atmosphere with the programme is that: because you had low points you couldn't get straight into the mainstream.

Respondents indicate that they continued on the programme in spite of the challenging enrolment circumstances and misrecognitions because it served as a good access route into the university; it offered financial promise for those on the programme; it facilitated unique adjustment into the university. It was able to socialise students into university discourses by providing the foundation, the direction, the social capital and enhancing their interaction with other students who share a common goal to succeed. This next section considers how respondents' expectations about the programme affected their experiences.

6.1.2 Students Expectations about the programme

The reasons that respondents held for being on the programme aroused either anticipation or fear in them. This is in line with the assertion that of the various transition points in students careers, the first year in tertiary institutions is the most intense, traumatic and harrowing (Schalkwyk, Leibowitz & Van Der Merwe 2009). Respondents' expectations were their responses to the change from high school to the tertiary environment. These factors collectively affected their motivations and how they engaged with the programme, leading to the quality of their success. Some were worried that it was going to take them longer to complete their degrees given the financial constraints and the stigma related to being on the ECP. Most respondents expected the programme to be too easy since it was an alternative access route, but most respondents were in for a shock. A focus group interview with first-year Respondents expressed their expectations below:

RAY-13M1: I **expected** something that would be easier; maybe I did not think that I was going to put more effort.

RAY-13M2: Yea, similar, but the way of studying is too different from previous... it seems difficult, but maybe eventually it will be right, but ...I am still struggling a bit.

RAY-13M 3: I also thought ... it is not going to be that difficult, but it started to become challenging. ...but because of the way it is structured, it is challenging within the programme, but when we go to the mainstream, we find it a bit easier.

These responses are in line with scholarly views that of all the transitions in a students' career, the transition between High School and tertiary education remains the most intense, traumatic and harrowing (Schalkwyk, Leibowitz & Van Der Merwe 2009). Scholars like Smith, Case and Walbeek (2014), Eslin *et al.* (2006) and Warren (2002) argue that it is the university that is not sufficiently prepared for the new characteristic of students that are accessing it.

Meanwhile, these students underestimated the difficulty of the programme because it was for students from underprivileged backgrounds. This informed their expectation that it ought to be easy. Conceivably, expectations can affect students' motivations and the amount of effort they invest. Therefore, when their expectations are challenged by their experiences of the programme's difficulty, their motivations are also forced to change. Students found the programme provisions more challenging than mainstream courses; an indication that it is a serious programme that received their full attention and commitment from the start. Trying to meet up the difficult requirement of the programme gave them an early introduction into the habit of always putting in more effort to academic tasks. They develop the requisite skills for negotiating their transition from High School and for settling into the university. This created a positive challenge that provided them with the right foundation and encouraged the habit of hard work from the beginning. It oriented them early to the difference between the tertiary approach to learning and High School.

The ECP helped the adjustment of their expectations and motivations, in line with literature assertions that student motivation, their backgrounds, institutional factors, learning abilities, and approaches to learning can affect their learning experiences. Hence, the ECP tried to increase positive learning experiences within the academic setting so as to create an environment where the learners are willing (motivated) to put in more effort (academically) or be more involved (Prebble *et al.* 2004) in order to support their adjustment and increase their retention rate (Prebble *et al.* 2004: 9; Biggs 1987). As such, the programme responded to some of the challenges of transition from High School to tertiary institutions. Despite its integration capacity, a few respondents thought that the rigours of the programme were unnecessary and repetitive; especially regarding the programme's four-year duration.

6.1.3 Programme Duration

Students' expressed concerns about the programme exceeding mainstream duration for those studying for the same qualification. Some of the responses in this regard were as follows:

RAQIM: ...I was thinking that it was going to be... too long to complete my degree, but while I was at it, I noticed that it did help me a lot because I was coming from a poor background school, ...

MKHIRNTHANDO: But it limits you... if you ...are capable of taking four modules instead of three. Some people are able to add more modules ... [but] the programme... [allows] you three modules every semester until your final year where you have to ... do four. ...you get lazy because you know that you have less work than the others students, so you spend most of your time, relaxing and not studying as hard as the other students who are on the mainstream.

Although respondents appreciated the ease with which the programme guides their transition from High School, there were some concerns about the length of the programme. The programme is considered as not challenging enough during the second and third years when ECP students have to do one module less than mainstream students on the same qualification. Those who believed that they could take up more modules and challenge themselves were forced to settle for the impression that they were not good enough. They only felt the pressure of doing four modules like mainstreamers in their final year. This adversely affected their final year performances as they were unprepared for the pressure of doing four modules causing many of them to struggle as the graph below illustrates about how student motives dropped in their third year of study when the support was no longer there, and they had to take up equal workload as their mainstream counterparts.

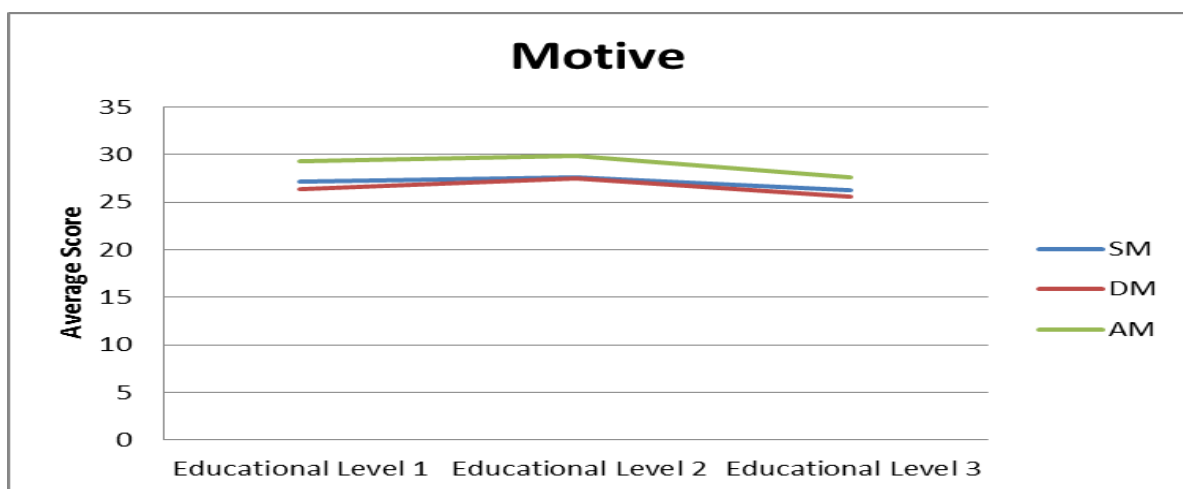


Figure 8- ECP student surface, deep and achieving motives by educational levels

Figure 8 above indicates how ECP students' motives for learning were generally increasing and peaked at the second level of study, but took a decrease by their third year of study. This can be explained by the sudden increase in their workload during their final year to equal the workload of their mainstream colleagues and this affects their motives and performances.

This problem was aggravated by the limited options of majors within the ECP. Students who become more aware that they are registered for an unsuitable degree lose motivation when they cannot find a suitable alternative and this affects their effort. Some of them plan to undertake their desired degrees after completing the current one but are worried about time wasted by the extra year; added to the financial and time commitments. This affects their motivation deflates their enthusiasm, and can negatively impact their efforts. Moreover, some of these students have more urgent family and financial challenges. Nevertheless, most of them find themselves completing their four-year programme ahead of some mainstream colleagues whose studies go beyond four years.

As such, some respondents viewed the extra year and reduced workload as valuable in adapting them from High School and preparing them for the rigours of the university. This attribution boosts their sense of self of those enrolled on the right degrees as they perceived themselves to be lucky. They are motivated to exercise control over the outcome of their efforts. Meanwhile, respondents acknowledged stigma associated with being on the programme.

6.1.4 Confronting Programme Stigma and Programme Opportunities

Potgieter (2015) asserts that the most dominant negative theme of ADPs is a feeling of discrimination and isolation that derives from the experience of being stigmatised. Stigmas are socially constructed views generally shared by members of a society. They constitute 'modes of analysis that begin with the social, cultural and historical context that provide a necessary framework for understanding the individual' (Ainlay *et al.*, 1986: 39). Entering university from disadvantaged backgrounds embodies the challenges of adjustment to the new environment and lifestyle. The stigma associated with being on the ECP adds to these challenges with implications for students' success. The presence and effects of stigma on the ECP programme were expressed by respondents as follows:

MKHIRATHANDO: when we first came here in ...mainstreamers were always ... saying: "heya these guys are doing access programme!" Yea! People did not want to be seen ...doing the access programme because ...they think that you're dumb or you're lazy... you don't really deserve to be in varsity... [We felt] that the course is a

disgrace... So students were always hiding from that. [After] class we run [in] different places to mingle so that other students won't notice...

RAFENG: ... when I came to the programme, I had a stigma. You know when you are doing the first year and you see your friends are in the mainstream, and you are in the ECP. You just think like you are very low in terms of capacity... and you have been given the chance to come in through the back door.... But ...I realised that it was a very good thing to go through it before one could start with the first year.

RAHLEMS: ...You can't tell your mainstream friends that "I'm in the Access Programme". ...It is an embarrassment or it is a shame to say that... when you're still there! You feel like you don't fit in here

RAQIM: ...When Access students wanted to register for ethics ...they said: "you know, it is gonna be different for you who are coming from the Access". ...then it makes us feel bad... the programme should be given classes ...[outside] the OMB ... [Which] is isolated ...people should not look down on ... [us] because it is also demotivating.... Sitting in class with ...mainstream, who...think ...you are dumb... People ...in the AP ...are [not] unfit....!!!

MKHIRATHANDO: At residences, we wouldn't talk about it. If I know someone else doing the programme... we don't talk about it in front of other students who are on mainstream... haaa nooo! Everybody else [would] now know that we're doing the course.... [Laughing at himself so much]. So there [would be] no place to hide...

Ainlay (1986) asserts that obvious discrimination perpetuated by socio-cultural and historical forces can affect students' perceptions of themselves as well as the dynamics of how they respond to the stigmatised status. Respondents were being recognised as dumb, lazy, lacking in capacity and unqualified for the university by mainstream colleagues. Some academics also undermined their capacity to register for certain modules. Students had the choice to either believe these misrecognitions or discarding them with implications. According to the AT those who believed and internalised such demeaning social recognition are more likely to lose their sense of self and to give up. Respondents who did not resist such recognition tended to believe that they were low in capacity compared to their friends in the mainstream. Misrecognition has a way of negatively impacting self-esteem, motivation, and sense of self, assessment of one's potential and social integration. Students who believe and attribute their failures to personal factors that are static and unchanging deplete their chances of future success. Prebble *et al.* (2004) argued that discrimination has such influence on retention, persistence and withdrawal from tertiary institutions that it can result in social isolation, alienation, difficulty in making friends, and homesickness.

Nevertheless, most respondents tried to deal with this misrecognition with some amount of resistance. They tried to conceal their ECP identities from both staff and mainstream

students. Respondents who overcame the stigma chose to focus on the positive provisions of the programme. They resisted any reason that would give them an excuse to fail. They ensured that their failures were not attributed to internal personal factors that are static as such mindsets and beliefs about themselves would not motivate them nor enhance their self-esteem. Meanwhile, some respondents interpreted the experience positively and were motivated to disprove what they considered to be misrecognition:

MKHIRATHANDO: I had a friend... in his 30s... [who] never cared what other people said. He even boasted about it in the kitchen; saying yea, “we’re doing access programme bra... [Laughing] have you done this job [assignment].

RAFENG: when I came in, personally, **I had the conviction that I deserved to start from the mainstream**, but through the courses that they give, I realised that I needed more. Despite how confident I was. So **the relevance of the modules** given in the Programme ...allows me to say that the experience was good³⁰.

Some students were happy with just having the opportunity to be on the programme and were uninterested in what others or the university community thought. Others who believe they ought to be on the mainstream indicated that the programme provided positive academic support for every student. Hence, in spite of the stigma, some students’ beliefs changed as they engaged with the different provisions of the programme. They were motivated to develop self-confidence; to prove themselves; to boost their self-esteem and to achieve through some level of competition against mainstream students. As ECP students tried to confront the stigma on the programme, they developed competitive attitudes and other positive approaches to learning.

6.2 Preliminary programme/ Integration Experiences

The previous section focused on factors that affected students’ learning experiences in their early days in the programme. It assessed their initial responses to opportunities and challenges. This section engages with attributions that students made to the programme’s foundational contents and its approaches. It addresses issues of relevance of programme contents and approaches. It starts off with how students found the programme contents and approaches to be eye-opening towards ensuring their integration and success in spite of apparent challenges.

³⁰ Follow RAFENG’s discussion on whether the programme should be offered to all students on the section on “Offering the Programme to all students.

6.2.1 Eye opening and social foundational experience

Respondents' believed that the ECP programme provisions revealed to them the factors necessary to integrate them into the university socialisation. They described this revelation as being eye-opening and foundational to their social adjustment into the university. These revelations cleared their fears and motivated them towards progress and success. This is in line with Munroe's (2009) assertion that substantial changes like the transition into a tertiary institution, whether positive or negative, minor or significant, can alter our lives and cultural status quo. As such prior preparation is necessary for navigating such changes. This section discusses the psychosocial and academic means through which the ECP prepared students for the transition and to overcome imminent fears. In spite of the stigma, the duration and other challenges that confront ECP students, the programme won their enthusiasm by exposing them to some statistics and the success stories from previous ECP students to arouse their interest:

RAFENG: when we just arrived, they brought in former ECP students to tell us what they are doing: some of them were doing masters, others were tutors, others were working, and those statistics show that most ECP students graduate on time, ...so it developed that attitude within myself to say that I don't wanna be one of those ECP students who don't finish their degrees on time. And then ... again, you find that they succeed in post-graduate studies.

The above motivation which is external to the students is attributed as a good orientation element of the ECP for its students. Seeing people who had succeeded through the programme, inspired new students to overcome all odds and embrace the programme. This was eye-opening and inspired them to believe the possibility of their success. This evidence prompted respondents mentally to work towards their own success.

As respondents found that as they immersed themselves in the programme, it prepared them for what is required to prosper at the university. They also observed the struggles of mainstream students and how the programme was preparing them against such struggles:

RAVERNS: It doesn't matter the nature of the High School because you get people who were in ...top set ...struggling to do ...maths from grade eight in varsity Varsity is a completely different ball game! So ...I think it is harder ...to jump into the mainstream without ...help.

RASIK: ...you get introduced to how things happened at the mainstream level. And you get an opportunity to be with the same people for a longer period of time.

RASPD: **eye opening**... experience where one could easily get used to the university... easily acclimatise... coming from high school, or ...a gap year... It is very

important ...to understand the environment which you are being introduced into ...before you can ...carry on... the purpose of you being there. You need to have a relaxed mental environment. This programme ...contributed positively towards me acclimatising properly....

This illustrates the programme's role in facilitating students' social construction of the reality of university studies. It confirms the views of scholars that high schools are not sufficiently preparing students for the university and that universities should be taking responsibility for integrating these underprepared students into its social structure (Potgieter *et al.* 2015; Kloot *et al.* 2008). Thus, the ECP serves as the zone of proximal development creating an eye-opening experience for students. Responses from a focus group discussion with the first year ECP students confirm these assertions as follows:

RAY-13M 2: ...the information which the university is now giving is too different from the information which you got from school...

RAY-13M 1: a great opportunity... to know ...about what is happening.... in the foundation stage. Next year ...we are not going to be ...like those ...starting... [mainstream].

This supports the assertion that underpreparedness should be located in the universities and not just the students (Bouhey 2010). This follows respondents' acknowledgement that going through the ECP gives the better chances of success through the university than mainstream students. This means that the ECP responds in some ways to the quality of students entering the university, but still embodies the gap that the students are underprepared. Students need assurance that they can succeed. They need to be well-informed early about the difference between the university and high school. A good orientation into the university is identified as an important precursor for success. The next section discusses responses on how the programme assisted students to find their career paths. It indicates the programme's contribution to how universities should adjust to meet the quality of students being admitted.

6.2.2 Career Path-Finding

Schalkwyk, Leibowitz and Van de Merwe (2009) identified clarity of career goals as an important dimension of a successful student. It ranks fourth in the list of eight characteristics that would ensure students' holistic development. Respondents from all levels admitted that the programme aids an understanding of what it means to be at the university. Refining this relationship with individual students implies that they are assisted in choosing and pursuing the right career path. This section presents the conflicting responses with regard to how the

programme facilitated students' choice of the right careers, starting with the positive responses that follow:

RAMNOTH: ...many... at the university... don't know which module to take, or which degree to pursue. ... [M]any South African High schools... don't have ...any person assisting us to know [if you] want to do engineering... the [matric] points that you need ... and ... the relationship between me and the profession that I'm pursuing ... [through the] AP I found ...myself in terms of which profession I can do...

RAY-13M3...we have our own ...psychologists, which helps us because ...going to the main [college] psychologist is difficult... [The] psychologist ... actually teaches us ...life-skills... as well. That ...is very important to us because they teach ...how to live life... in university [which] ...many students do not get.

A resident psychologist teaches ECP students life-skills as a module and this enhances students' motivation, and their confidence necessary to pursue their studies in a conducive environment. Clarity of career paths prompts students to work towards it with a purpose. They can forecast the outcomes of their studies and invest a proportional amount of effort to achieve this goal. This implies some achieving characteristic in their approaches to learning. Moreover, students who are pursuing their career of interest are more likely to develop intrinsic interests in what they are learning. They are likely to employ the deep approach to learning as well (Biggs, 1987). This affects their self-esteem as it enhances their sense of purpose.

However, some ECP students could not study towards their careers of interest because the programme only offers **limited varieties of majors**. If High School does not prepare students to choose their careers it should be the responsibilities of universities to ensure this. Augmented modules gave respondents a taste of some mainstream courses at the first semester to enhance their decisions on which ones meet their careers interests. However, they were only exposed to very few modules which the programme favours. This limited the career options of students whose interests precluded the selected few majors offered by the ECP, disadvantaging, and de-motivating them:

RAVERNS: ...each extra [augmented] tutor comes and does a presentation at the beginning for each course that they offer... which is nice, but it is not broad enough ... You... choose from [limited] options... a lot of underprivileged kids ...come from rural schools ...with the mentality of getting ...normal jobs [as]: a teacher, or a lecturer... [but are] given a limited scope ...mainly because ...that is safer [easy to pass] than what they are really interested in... It doesn't help the person broaden their horizon ...

RAY-13M 3: you ...choose [from] 3 subjects: ...psychology, political science and sociology. ...that is another challenge that we find ourselves having...

FRAY-1M: It is very limited!! ...I wanted to do Law, LLB, but I was only given three choices... At least if there was a law module there, it would have been much better, or if [we] were given an opportunity to choose our own subjects ... But now I feel as if I am wasting time. Next year I will have to start from the first year with my law.

Although the ECP assists some students in finding their career paths, it is hugely constrained by the limited options of possible majors that it offers. Some students are persuaded to take majors outside of their interests based on the programme offering. Others have to wait until they are done with the current degree so that they can enrol in a more desirable one. It is clear from other studies that disinterest in the degree that students are enrolled in fall among the primary reasons for students' underperformance (Kalenge & Samukelisiwe 2015; Engelbrecht *et al.* 2014; Clarence-Fincham nd). This can be explained through Biggs (1987) assertion that lack of interest in what is learnt would lead to a surface approach to learning where they limit their target the bare essentials by reproducing what is learnt through rote learning and memorization. Their interest could be to meet the minimum requirement and to aim for just a pass. Such students can fail not because they lack the ability, but because they have no interest in what they are doing.

The ECP offers a limited number of Majors due to limited funding. It endorses three to five of the most popular Humanities modules for ECP students to choose from. The challenge is that many students only discover their interest after hearing tutors address them about each module offered by the programme. However, since they do not get such orientation about other possible modules offered in the College, they are oblivious of other majors that might have interested them. They discover later on in their university careers through electives that might arouse their interests. Whether or not the programme should continue, in its current form, has been a source of controversy, hinging on such challenges; the argument has been that the limited funds be invested in ensuring proper orientation that all students make appropriate career choices (Dhunpath & Vithal 2012).

Chapter four on the ECP explained that the programme offers modules that have over the years been popular among the interest of students from similar backgrounds in the Humanities. However, students have contrary beliefs about the reasons for the module preference by the programme. Some believe that modules on the programme are limited to only easy modules to ensure students' throughput without recourse to the value of the qualification for the student. Students who graduate with degrees outside their field of

interests unjustifiably sacrifice their careers of interests. Moreover, studying something that one is not interested in requires a lot of effort because of the lack of intrinsic motivation for the content Biggs (1987). This can alienate and contribute towards the relationship between psychological challenges of the university and students' dropout rates (Kalenga & Samukelisiwe 2015; Potgieter *et al.* 2015). It is due to such factors that some students begin to seek exit routes from the programme. The next sub-section focuses on respondents' beliefs about the programme allowing limited exit routes for changing majors or exiting the ECP.

6.2.2.1 The programme's limiting exit options

Some ECP students sought to exit the programme due to stigma, the limited number of possible majors, and the opportunity to try only one of these major **modules in their first** semester and two in the second semester of their first year. Making such exit was found very difficult by some of these respondents; so also was the option of taking majors outside of the ECP. It was not easy to switch from the BSS4 degree³¹ to a BSS or BA general degree. Others felt constrained from electing to complete their degrees in three instead of prescribed four years. Hence, some students felt stuck in a programme that is longer to complete, does not provide their desired major, yet making them subject to discrimination:

RAHLEMS: I think that something should be done, [so that] even when you're doing your first year [as] an Access student, you can embrace the fact that you're there, that you're gonna make it.

RAY-13M 3: 1st semester, you take one core [mainstream] module, and in the 2nd semester, you take two... all of a sudden, we heard that ...we cannot take sociology in the second semester, we have to take psychology... I heard from people that you cannot join sociology 102 without doing sociology 101... but they [did not inform us about this]... before [Those who] don't ...belong in psychology ... (not able to work fully in psychology) cannot ... understand it... with that kind of attitude.

RAY-13M 3: ...I have heard that you cannot just change from BSS4, you have to continue ...until you finish your degree, which I think for some people would be inconvenient to go through a certain degree which they don't really want.

RAFENG: ...certain students ...after 1st semester, perform more, and ...the programme becomes a bit lower than their capacity. So if there could be a way of saying if a student performs this way, they need to be shifted to the mainstream. I know that those things are there, but they would say you need to pass with a certain amount of ...marks for you to be moved ...to the mainstream, but I believe some of those policies... for moving certain students to the mainstream, ...really don't touch

³¹ These students did not want their degree certificates to indicate that they BSS4 products because they consider it not as popular and recognizable as the General BA or BSS degrees qualifications. This might also have something to do with the stigma associated with the ECP.

...students, because some students would find that at the second semester, they ...think beyond the programme.

After doing one mainstream module in first semester, ECP students can take two modules with augmented support in the second semester. However, respondents noted that once a module is chosen in the first semester, it is difficult to change it as major in the second semester. This is because some qualifications have first semester pre-requisite requirements, and cannot be commenced from the second semester. Hence, those who find that they chose an undesired module in the first semester are stuck with it. There seems to be a fear that changing majors in the second year might make an already long four years qualification longer to complete. This follows the assertion that ECP students cannot take more than three modules prior to their final year. This limits the realization of career goals for those whose career options were not supported by the programme and cripples the ambitions of those who wanted to challenge themselves by doing up to four modules per semester:

MKHIRATHANDO: ...one point ...I was performing very well, and I wanted to do four modules instead of [the recommended] three. ... The Dean never had a problem ... because they checked my marks and ...said “yea you’re performing, so there wouldn’t be a problem”, but I was called there by Access programme coordinator who said: “hey you need to de-register one!” I was like: “No! You can’t be serious!” I think that if I’m working under pressure, I work better. ... Given three modules, definitely, I won’t perform. ...giving me four or five, I would work hard, because I know what is at stake.... But if you give me three modules, I’m not even going to pay attention. I will just think... it is easy. ...if a test is written tomorrow, I would study tonight, come back and get a 55%, it is ok (laughs).

The lack of support for students’ personal ambition and belief expressed above can constrain enthusiasm and motivation for excellence. This aligns with the challenge expressed earlier that career options are limited for ECP students because they have to pick one from the list of five majors in the College that the programme supports and provides augmented tutorials for. Any interest or passion on something else cannot be supported. Thus, while espousing good results for most students, the ECP restrained the ambitions of some other students. It was for such reasons that some students sought to exit the programme in order to explore their interests outside the ECP.

The danger of completing an undesired degree is enough reason why students should be allowed to choose a major outside of, or leave the ECP. A respondent admits that the policies guiding such changes are either not being implemented or students do not know how to access them when such policy requirements are met. However, going into mainstream implies a change in the name of the qualification to a BSS or BA general or other structured degree

within the College. Either respondents were unaware that they can pick up other majors and still graduate with a BSS4 degree or they were actually prevented from pursuing that as an option. Some of them wanted to exit the ECP because doing less than four 16 credit bearing module was not challenging enough. Transferring ECP students to mainstream would affect the monitoring of their success as affected by the ECP. The next section assesses respondents' attributions of their success and failures.

6.3 Students' Attributions of their Success and Failure

Haggins and LaPointe (2012) argue that the years of experience in assessing everyday experience has not improved the awareness of staff and students about 'the connection between their causal explanations and future success'. This section explores these connections in respondents' attributions. The factors believed to have affected how the ECP contributed to respondents' performances and results included: the foundational modules, the augmented lectures, the reduced/increased workload, membership in small groups, enhanced class participation and consultation with lecturers. There were also concerns that the programme might have restrained some students' ambitions. The ECP modules provided useful background to mainstream modules, and created the right studying atmosphere.

6.3.1 Foundational Modules

Respondents attributed their success to foundational modules like: English Language Development (ELDV) and Academic Communication Studies (ACS) - academic literacy and research skills; Computer Literacy; and Basic Numeracy offered within the ECP. Early introduction to relevant academic skills were worthwhile preparation that facilitated their adjustments into the university

The value of the foundational provisions of the programme became apparent to students after their first years when they compared skills acquired to those of mainstream students. The juxtaposition of high school approach to learning and university approaches to learning reveal a gap that the ECP is trying to address for its students. This emphasizes assertions of Perry (2003 cited in Haggins & LaPointe 2012) regarding how high school requirements for writing comprehension does not meet university requirements for researched essays that are computer typed and referenced. The assertion is supported by the findings of this study that the requirements that gain students admission into the universities are not sufficient to support them through it.

It follows therefore that as students mastered relevant academic foundational skills, it affected their sense of self-mastery (control over outcome of their academic endeavour). The argument is that when a student has persistence, self-mastery and makes attributions of personal control, then the “paradox of failure” can overcome. This is a situation where bright enthusiastic high school students become unable to make the adjustment to meet the demands for increased [personal control]. These, they argued are common in 1st year university students, leading them to give up (Perry 2003 cited in Haggins & LaPointe 2012: 2) The following sub-sections present students’ attributions of their performances to foundational modules in the ECP and how these facilitated their self-mastery.

6.3.1.1 Academic Literacy

Academic literacy is invaluable in the Humanities. The language, academic writing and reading skills support of ACS and ELDV respond to Nel and Nel’s (2009) views that reading is a skill that students must master and grow in in order to be successful tertiary learners. Its curriculum structure also affected how students could engage with it, dedicate time to its content and learn it successfully. They contend that lecturers are often oblivious of students’ lack of mastery of basic skills of reading and writing such as phonics, word recognition and fluency; reading factors that facilitate their comprehension difficulties. Respondents’ demonstrate that academic literacy modules enhanced their success as follows:

RAQIM: when I reached this place, I couldn’t even make a complete English sentence. There were a lot of errors: syntax, grammar, and others. But the programme equipped me with reading skills and skill of writing ...They encouraged us to read and write.... The programme has helped me... to understand the structure [and] to discuss critically [any] given essay.

RASIK: Academic Communication Studies (ACS) exposed me to better approach of writing academic essays because at High school we only wrote comprehensions ...I didn’t know anything about referencing. ...Straight to mainstream, I was going to struggle....

RAVERNS: Ok a course like academic literacy [is relevant] in all and everything that I do, I always have to write. It is all about writing essays, especially in exams, writing about how you learnt. Like the skills that I learnt about how to write certain types of essays, I am able to apply it. So even in studying, I know that in this exam, there is going to be an essay from whatever chapter... so I go through all my chapters and read about what can be chosen as essay questions and I write mine.

The above respondents indicate how the academic literacy module empowered respondents with relevant skills towards their success. Both respondents express an air of confidence that accompanied being equipped with reading and writing skills and a positive attitude towards

their future performances as they demonstrate conviction about the continuous relevance of such skills in their university endeavours, thus, a positive influence on their self-esteem.

Parkinson, Jackson and Padayachee (2008) cautioned that although academic literacy programmes do improve student writing skills in a way that the weakest students benefits the most, the skills of these weakest students still do not meet those of stronger students. Nevertheless, they upheld individual differences among students as an important factor. Some respondents demonstrated this in how their performances improved as their skills and abilities were developed through the programme:

RAY-13M 3: ...I performed well ...an average of 75%. I did not start well ... in the semester ...with my first assignment. But the more we grew, ...I started developing ... marks started rising and rising, and I think it was like that for almost all the students because we started from the bottom and we kept on increasing, which shows the level of understanding also increased...

RAY-13M 2: ...I didn't do excellent in one module... the percentage was not high, it was low, about 50% but below 60%. ...which means I was performing badly.

The above responses differ from each other in significant ways. One indicates that the literacy module facilitated an increase in performance with time and the students' confidence grew and as their understanding equally advanced. The second indicates a respondent who admits that his marks were generally low. The second respondent believes that he was performing badly, but it is uncertain whether his poor performance was attributed to his ability or his effort. Clearly, the literacy module affected their performances. The emphasis on this improvement and growth being incremental as students progressed on the programme is in line with the views of Haggins and LaPointe (2012). The willingness to do better is obvious amongst these respondents' determination. Even when 50% pass is not good enough; if this is measured against personal ability or perceived potential. The next respondent expounds:

RAVERNS: the reason why I did well [77%] in that module was that I got help. I could go to [the lecturer] at any time. ...and we brainstormed in class, so I felt like it was more of a study group ...everyone gave inputs, we had debates on the topics that we were writing about so we learnt from both sides. And we learnt how to write different kinds of essays ... [we] worked like teams... [with] the people you knew ...in class ...mingle with other people who weren't also from privileged schools.

RAY-13M 3: English Language Development which I got 75%... our lecturer used to push us. We used to get pushed to the limit so that we can try and get grasp...

The above responses attribute success to the socially constructed approach to learning in the classroom. The implication is that a lot of the good performance was also attributed to the quality of the lecturer and the pedagogic approach. Students were able to contribute their background knowledge and the lecturer adds new and more complicated information to what students already knew. The lecturer also allowed debates amongst students acknowledging their potential and allowing them to appreciate their giftedness and self-worth through this learning process. Learners perceive knowledge as - not simply dished out by the lecturer to the students but facilitated in a class which is more of a study group where learners learn together and discover more about their subject matter. The lecturer facilitated the discussions and debates, is available at any time for students and coordinates students to work in teams.

Another respondent indicates that he would have done better had he invested more time studying as presented below:

MKHIRATHANDO: I performed very well in ... [ELH] on my first year. I got 69% but ... I could have done ...much better, but... in high school, I was considered as a smart person. So when I first came here and I got into access programme, I was like: “this is much easier, I don’t have to spend much time studying”. I never spent... 2 hours studying ... [in] my first year. ...I never took books to go to the library to seriously study.

The above response is characteristic of the views of Perry (2003 cited in Haggins & LaPointe 2012) on the relationship between persistence, self-mastery and attributions of personal control. He terms it a “paradox of failure” when students who were “bright” and enthusiastic in high school become demotivated and fail at college because they cannot adjust to make personal control in the new academic setting of their first year of tertiary studies. He believes that this can erode a students’ sense of self-mastery and cause them to give up. The above respondent realised by retrospection, however, that his reason for performing below potential was his attempt to employ the same approaches to learning that ensured his success in high school. Admitting insufficient effort, rather than lack of ability means he considers his intelligence as improvable. Such reflection would elicit the tendency to develop personal control over similar future learning situations.

He did not dedicate more time to studies because he underestimated the difficulty of the module, and relied on high school affirmations that he is intelligent. He assumed that the knowledge base and the amount of effort that ensured his success in high school was sufficient to sustain continuous success at the university. This is in line with Conley’s (2003) view that students who mistake tertiary requirements as equal to secondary demands, often

find themselves failing. However, having an Academic literacy module early on the programme made this student aware of the negative implications of such suppositions. It allowed him to reflect on the value of what he was learning as compared to how he would have fared without the knowledge of AL. The Academic literacy module was therefore found as useful for assessing both his readiness and his skills level for succeeding in tertiary education. He was able to redefine his potential based on tertiary requirements and exert personal control to meet tertiary demands in order to ensure future success. Reflection appears to play a major role in one's approach to learning; an aspect of what Biggs (1987: 5) refers to as meta-learning. Some students lack this capacity to reflect and be aware of, amongst other things what skills might be necessary to ensure future success. The implication, therefore, is that students can be supported through such modules to advance from one level of understanding or knowledge to another.

The development of confidence that proceeds from learning is certainly acknowledged to be relevant to future success is also identified here. Essays, tests and examinations also test students' academic writing skills. McKenna's (2010: 11) warning that specialised use of academic language that are neutral sets of generic skills can be problematic because it excludes people who are not familiar. But, this problem is taken care of because the ECP also has augmented tutorials that deal with the disciplines specific contents. The value of academic literacy as a foundational module lies in providing students with an understanding of what could have been missing in determining their success. Most students notice in retrospection that had they put in more effort, they would have been better off.

6.3.1.2 Computer Literacy

Kalenga and Samukelisiwe (2015) identify the reality that computer literacy is a real challenge for students from underprivileged backgrounds as most of them from deep rural backgrounds see the computer for the first time upon their arrival at the university. Yet they are always expected to be able to use them in their assignments and essay writing. It is against this backdrop that excellent performances by ECP students on Basic Computer Literacy are considered. Respondents attributed their success on the module to a variety of factors. The amount of time dedicated to work was primal. Students who already had a prior experience in using computers excelled on the module:

RAFENG: Not all good schools had computers. So you find that you know how to type, edit your work, and design a power point presentation, while your fellow

[mainstream] students cannot. You realise the importance of the programme... after being outside the programme ...having... a strong foundation, and ... trying to prove.

RASIK: I was [also]...prepared in ... **computer skills:** ...to type my work and also for searching for information on the web.

Like academic literacy, computer literacy is a skill that many students coming into the university do not have prior to their entry. As one of the respondents above acknowledges, some of the good schools do not have computers, speak less of disadvantaged schools where a majority of the students on the programme come from. The respondents acknowledge that their realisation of the value of the programme comes when their first semester is completed and they find out that some mainstream students are impoverished in computer skills. They realise this because as discussed earlier, mainstream students tend to undermine ECP students, leading some of these students to strive to assert themselves through competition for marks against mainstream students. They realise that they are better equipped than some mainstream students in the acquired computer skills. They can type, edit, research online and so forth. The students who scored high on computer literacy made their attributions thus:

RAVERNS: ...I got an 80 + [in basic computer literacy]... because I had a background in computers... I... knew about computers...

RASIK: If only I had dedicated my time studying the manual, I would have gotten a very high score, even 100% because I remembered things just because I knew them and I had touched them. Some of the things I knew after I had touched them. [When] I was asked: “what is this?” I could not answer on the test. But when I got out, I found out that this thing I knew, [but] I did not know the concept and I could have known these things had I read the manual³².

RAY-13M 3: I really performed very high... [in] basic computer literacy. I got 94% or [so].... I’ve got love for computers as well, so that is why I got that mark...

The first two responses on excellent performances in computer literacy are attributed to the previous background of using computers and time commitment for the first time user respectively. Both responses assert the value of practical experience in computer literacy. For the one this experience was the external and uncontrollable factor of having a prior background of using computers. The other attributed success to effort which is an internal and controllable factor. The respondent asserts in retrospection that in spite of investing much effort, the effort was one-sided in favour of practical experience to the detriment of theoretically reading the manual. This deprived the respondent of the measure of success that

³² This is an instance where social constructive learning can mitigate students’ success if care is not taken in ensuring that after having an understanding of what things are, that students still apply it to the conventional knowledge about the things learnt. Examination questions would always be conventional.

he was capable of within the module. Finally, intrinsic interest in the subject matter of computers, an internal and uncontrollable factor, was considered crucial for excellent performance by one without prior background knowledge of the subject matter. With such interest or love for the subject matter also comes a deep approach to learning the subject matter in different ways and a deep learning approach (Biggs 1987).

Balancing conceptual knowledge with practical experience was considered very valuable in facilitating excellent knowledge of the subject matter. These different sources of knowledge or approaches to learning create a background and a foundation for understanding the subject matter. This is more enhanced when there is an intrinsic love for the module. The following response reaffirms the value of having an intrinsic interest in the subject matter for ensuring future excellent performances in similar or related modules:

RASIK: there was a strong likelihood that I will continue to perform... ISTN [was]... something similar ... [it] had to do with website development. ...I think I would have succeeded because I liked computers at that time, and it was fascinating for me working on the computer.

In addition to conceptual knowledge and practical experience, the above response adds that similarity of content to a module of success (background knowledge), love and fascination for the subject matter were critical motivation in sustaining excellent performances. Nevertheless, respondents identified that successful learning in one module also affected students' future learning and performances in the university in different ways, including the practical application of the knowledge and the confidence to pursue excellence in other modules as the following response demonstrates:

RASIK: it affected... positively ...because I did not only get high mark academically but also the skills. At university, when you submit, you have to type and you have to print to submit. You can't just submit hand-written work. So it helped me a lot because you also have to search for sources on the internet; so you use the computer a lot at varsity, especially, the more you progress.

RAFENG: ...basic **computer literacy**; ...not all good schools had computers. So you find that you know how to type, edit your work, and design a power point presentation, while your fellow [mainstream] students cannot do that. So you realise the importance of the programme... having... a strong foundation.

The skills learnt from computer literacy were transferable to other modules, facilitating success in those modules with regards to research, typing, presentation and other important computer skills relevant for success at the university. Learning such foundational skills that are transferable enhances the confidence of respondents and develops what Haggins and

LaPointe (2012) refer to as self-mastery. This is a belief or orientation that reveals an individual's sense of personal control over the outcome of their endeavour. In this case, it is based on and develops as students develop such skills that are considered relevant for success in tertiary studies as is the case with the computer literacy. This enhances their self-esteem as they find that some mainstream students who are considered special and intelligent struggle with the use of computers. The next sub-section discusses Basic Numeracy.

6.3.2.3 Basic numeracy

Basic Numeracy presents a different way of learning. Its focus on mathematical and arithmetic skills is discussed separately to pay attention to such issues. Success in this module was attributed to dedicating more time to study and the lecturer's approach in facilitating successful learning:

FRAY-1F: I got 94% ...because the class is small and there is very much attention. We do work in class... and the teacher is always there to answer questions.... I can say that it was the devotion and time you take to learn the subject. The teacher was very understanding, very welcoming and open. She used to put off embarrassment and fear. You know people have fears raising their hands...? She just makes sure that your mind is just in the class, you are not afraid of anyone.

It can be presumed that students that score high marks are already aware of their abilities unless they make overt attributions to luck. Meanwhile, the above success was attributed to external factors that are controllable like small group learning, the lecturer's excellent skills of facilitating the learning in class through appropriate class exercises, creating decorum for students to comfortably ask questions and her general positive characteristics. An internal attribute of devoting time to learning the subject matter was also acknowledged. The small class size facilitated individual attention from the lecturer to each student. Nevertheless, the lecturer's attitude towards the students and towards the module was also identified as crucial in educating excellent performance by eliminating fear and encouraging participation.

It is noteworthy that whilst staff and students from the outside discriminated ECP students, programme staff understood and were able to pacify students by their attitudes. This could be seen to not only have facilitated students' learning; it also encouraged them to overcome programme stigma. They created an environment that facilitated students' interest and engagement in the subject matter; encouraging them to ask and respond to questions without fear or intimidation. It can be surmised that the lecturer's attitude constructed a positive social environment that allowed students integration and successful learning. It makes sense

that this respondent identified his reason for scoring higher marks in these modules than in others was simply because she knew what the module required.

FRAY-1F: a bit harder and they needed more time, they need you to read and this was just practical.

The above response echoes her understanding of what is required for success in an academic literacy module: love for subject matter, spending more time on it, working hard and continuous practice of what was learnt were crucial to sustain continued excellent performance in the subject. The lecturer's approach received more accolade as facilitating this success by eliciting and encouraging persistent behaviours that ensure success. Bandura (1986 cited in Haggins & LaPointe 2012) describes persistent behaviour and the tendency to continue trying to improve on a difficult module in spite of the difficulty. It can be inferred that such resilience, as expressed by the response was strongly facilitated by the lecturer's approach to teaching. It is said to ensure successful adaptation, which in turn inspires success.

The more such constraining factors are eliminated, the easier it is for students to focus on the actual learning experiences that really matters. Haggins and LaPointe (2012) noted in this regard that the more students persist through difficulties, the more likely they are to perceive themselves as competent. This is a way of asserting one's control over the outcome of their ability. This assertion is collaborated in respondents' expressions of the effect of high marks on their future performances and on their learning experiences within the university:

FRAY-1F: it encouraged me to do more in other subjects. It showed that I am capable of passing like that.

In line with the views of Haggins & LaPointe (2012), the above respondent indicates the likelihood of performing well in this and even other subjects in the future. The current success strengthened, the respondent's belief about future success. It follows the realisation of personal worth and potential to pass other modules in future with excellence. The motivation, going forward was to transfer such excellence to other modules. Hence, success in one module motivated some students' future performance in other modules. Although students might hold this motivation, they might fail to excel in the future if they do not have an achieving mentality in their studies. The next section considers the relationship between the foundational modules discussed above and mainstream modules.

6.3.2 Appreciation of foundational Modules and Experiences

Respondents expressed their appreciation of foundational experiences as they attributed their success to the ECP. It enabled some respondents to overcome their fears and anxiety about the programme while serving as a good introduction to university discourses for others. The following post-graduate respondents illustrate how the foundational modules relate with each other and their value in the latter years of their studies.

RAFENG: ...in ELDV, we were given a task to research... And we ...collected data, analysed and put them in graphs. ...we could do power point presentations because of the basic computer literacy. So you find that there is a link between ELDV and computers. ...My first literature review was in [the ECP]. ...in post graduate study ...you had that background. ...sociology students do this ...in their third year.

RAQIM: ...EDDE ...I scored 75%. ... [because] the module was mainly about academic writing, so ...the skills that I ...acquired in the access programme... helped me ...to perform in that module... I found that very easy. ...the good framework ...acquired from the ... [ECP] ...helped me ...on this module.

The two responses above are a testimony to the fact that the ECP foundational students were able to both interrelate skills learnt from different foundational modules and to transfer the skills to the mainstream. A clear synergy is demonstrated here among the ELDV (a language and literacy module) assignment which required research that exercised statistical skills (from Basic Numeracy) for graphs and the use of (Computer Literacy) skills for the analysis and power point presentation of results. This early introduction to research skills would continue to be developed even at post-graduate level. It affirmed for some respondents that intelligence is not static and that knowledge is developmental. This is in response to the concerns regarding the value of such programmes beyond the access years as expressed by Dhunpath and Vithal (2012). Like they assert, the success of foundational students against the failure of mainstream students questions the extent and quality of support that mainstream students are receiving. Indeed it should also appraise what quality of support foundational students are receiving and consider the possibility of learning lessons from it. This is more so, following the assertion that ‘many students with excellent matriculation scores struggle to negotiate their alienation resulting from the ‘pedagogic distance’ which universities fail to manage (Dhunpath & Vithal 2012: 12).

Meanwhile, the attribution of success in a mainstream module to the skills learnt in an ECP module denotes how the foundational modules foregrounded and facilitated these respondents’ mainstream learning experiences. This is considered as preparing students to be achieving learners in related modules (seeking high marks):

RAQIM: I think it ...for me, coming from a poor background school, and scoring that mark, it encouraged me very much and it made me to be proud of myself and also to think that for anyone, who really takes his school work seriously, he can do better, regardless of the background of the school.... If you ...start following your classes and not missing your classes, you can do better. So it encourages me very much...

The above response indicates that the foundational modules elicit achieving approaches to learning from students. Scoring high here is attributed to an internal and controllable factor of effort, a dedication to what was learnt and hard work. This hard work was appropriate because respondents understood what was required of them and the skills needed to meet this requirement. These skills might have been lacking if not developed through foundational modules in the ECP. Possessing relevant skills boosted respondents' confidence, as belief in their capacity to control the outcome of their endeavours were enhanced. These characteristics are not often considered in the critique of foundational modules as the teaching of generic skills (Dhunpath & Vithal 2012; McKenna 2012). The skills learnt can be said to have facilitated approaches to learning that avail them of how knowledge is constructed at the university.

A growing sense of self-esteem developed from a positive sense of achievement evokes further determination for students to control the outcomes of future endeavour. This growing confidence led to a desire to know what is required for better future performances as asserted:

RAQIM: yes it is possible, but it depends on the dedication. So dedicating much time and studying - I can say - it was going to help me much to score better marks than this. Just that we are busy doing a lot of things... but if I was ...doing only this, I was going to get more marks.

RAFENG: ...counselling made me look at the university in a very positive way... we had a class of counselling where we ...talked life, challenges, university life. ...You get equipped about what is happening in the university ...the challenges facing students... You develop a vision ...of what you are going to face within the university, so get prepared ...to face some of those challenges.

Here again is an expression of meta learning characteristics by students by the assessment of previous performances, to determine what facilitated or constrained success in specific modules (Biggs 1987). A good grasp of what went wrong is likely to evoke an enquiry to how the challenge can be ameliorated for better future performance. For instance, in the midst of all the optimism comes a sober reflection that there is much to be done and not enough time to put in all the effort required to get the highest marks possible in every single module. Here, the ability to anticipate future challenges proves to be critical to a student being mentally prepared to face them. Where such awareness is lacking, then failure can be

anticipated, irrespective of students' optimism about previous success and their perceived ability leading to either failure or despondency (Saunders, Nolan & Provost nd). In other words, optimism must be informed by lessons learnt in the previous experience. Such awareness of challenges that prompts students to assess skills or resources required to overcome these barriers to future success.

One of the responses above makes attributions to student counselling classes as the enabling provisions that facilitated the management of their experiences in the university. This aligns with the ideas of Akoojee and Nkomo (2007) regarding a call for improved school guidance and counselling for all students coming to the university. It enabled the forecasting of future challenges and prepared them for future challenges; allowing time for planning or strategizing how to overcome them. Lacking such awareness could be shocking on confrontation with such acuteness that can adversely influence students' performance and self-assessment. Meanwhile, foreknowledge of future challenges can motivate an assessment of skills required to negotiate them. Where these skills are lacking, students can seek means of developing such relevant skills ahead of time and be mentally prepared. Preparation allows students to face such challenges with the necessary skills, and confidence that they can control the outcome of this endeavour. It facilitates resilience and persistent behaviours.

Relevant foundational ECP modules were considered motivational for learning especially as mainstream students struggle with these skills while ECP students continue to utilise them in post-graduate studies. Considering these values of the programme seemed to outweigh the burden of perceived challenges of the programme:

RASIK: I used to think to myself: "here I am working the whole year; ...a person who came with me and ... straight to mainstream ...would finish before me... It might be a waste of time". But the experience that I got there ... was worthwhile. ... I was actually happy that I ... started there. So it was a blessing in disguise.

RAMNOTH: 2010 ...I'm sure that if I did not come through ...the ECP, there are modules that I could have failed... Because I've seen a lot of persons who came into the mainstream in 2010, they completed their degrees with me [in 2013]. But they should have been doing their masters this year [2014].... Attracting marks in essays in relation to other students... the ECP... [Made us] appear ...very brilliant; although we were not brilliant, but... we were taught how to attempt questions and ...exams.

McKenna (2012) and Dhunpath and Vithal (2012) observe that ECP students' success that goes beyond their mainstream counterparts whom they were meant to match might be an indication these mainstream students also lacked relevant foundational skills. Indeed,

respondents appraised skills learnt in the ECP as responsible for their success as they demonstrated preferring towards starting from the ECP rather than mainstream in this regard.

In line with Haggins and LaPointe (2012) therefore, persistent behaviour and resilience can be developed as students attempt to succeed in the midst of difficulties created by their disadvantaged backgrounds. This occurs when students' optimism about future success adds to foundational support and skills learnt from the ECP, and they invest sufficient effort based on their perception of their self-mastery. The above respondents fared better than mainstream students in terms of skills and performance results in tests, assignments and exams. They did not hold a limiting view of their potential being low; rather, they built their confidence through learning appropriate skills and acknowledging that "intelligence" is incremental and their capacity to socially construct knowledge can be improved upon. Skills learnt through ECP enabled them to outperform mainstream students; an indication that these might be relevant skills for every student. This follows the assertion that some mainstream students take four or more years to complete their three-year qualifications. It is against this backdrop that Scott (2012) is of the opinions that the knowledge and skills acquired over the years should be used to translate alternative access to meet the needs of mainstream.

6.3.3 Challenges of inconsistency between foundational and mainstream modules

In spite of the benefits of the skills learnt on the ECP, there were also some negative attributions. Some respondents perceived that skills learnt in the ECP were not considered with the same value by mainstream lecturers. They found it discouraging to perceive that their background knowledge in essay writing skills were not considered with the same rigour by some mainstream lecturers in marking essays. This frustrated students who believed they were doing the right thing, but were not rewarded in marks commensurate to their efforts.

RAQIM: ... different lecturers have different structures for essay writing.... [T]here is no single way of writing an essay.... [S]ome lecturers will tell you that this is how ... others ...will tell you something else. So when ...using the method that you have been taught, you find ...it is in contradiction with what you have... [I]n the Access programme ...an essay, [has] an introduction... [where] there is supposed to be a topic sentence, a statement of intent and a thesis statement. ... [In] other schools... [if] you write your essays [and] provide all these things ... [you] find that they are not considering [them].

The above response indicates signs of constraint, frustration and de-motivation. The respondent believes that his diligent adherence to strict academic styles learnt in the ECP are not considered in the assessment of some mainstream essays. This follows his attribution of

failure to the model of assessment, and external uncontrollable and stable factor. This is considered a dysfunctional attribution (Haggins & LaPointe 2012). Such ‘causes lead to lower expectations of future success in the domain’ (Haggins & LaPointe 2012: 2). This attribution could be correct, and explicable by the fact that majority of the mainstream students lack academic writing skills, and the lecturer decides not to assess their essays on strict rudiments of academic literacy. Such students might be motivated to abandon good skills learnt because they are no longer considered important by lecturers. The implications of that would be a reduced quality of education perpetuated by the lecturer(s) in question.

Nevertheless, the respondent could be rigidly trying to apply what was learnt in the ECP without creative adaptation to mainstream module requirements. He may believe that he knows how to approach the essays when he actually does not. Sanders, Nolan and Provost (nd) refer to this as unfounded optimism, where a student is so optimistic about their performance but they actually do not put in the required effort nor do what was required of them in the academic task. They suggest that students who exhibit this characteristic often have the ability but do not do enough to excel. Meanwhile, as obvious from the response, the respondent was frustrated. This may lead to low expectation of future success in the domain, lower hope and lower persistence (Weiner 1985 cited in Haggins & LaPointe 2012).

Such experiences may adversely affect student motivation and efforts. Frustration may also accompany lack of continuity and link between what was learnt as requirements and what is currently being upheld as standard as expressed below:

RAQIM: ...Even when you check other people who scored better ... they were using the first person.... Yet I was told that in academic writing, you don't use the first person... contradicting... that is the challenge ...because all the documents I have saved and I am still using ...provided in the Access Programme from 2010 [for] writing essays. But sometimes when I am using these methods, they don't perform well for me.

The above response marks failure in an attempt to take control over the outcome of performance. He questions why expected results are not produced by investing the right effort and skills. The response indicates more clearly that there is leniency on the part of lecturers on academic literacy concerns in essay writing. Nevertheless, this achieving learner might not be aware that marks are not only gained from the structure of the essay, but also from content and other factors which the respondent might not have considered. Meanwhile, such enquiry indicates a positive attitude of seeking answers by the student. Such attitudes could question the status quo as necessary for sustainable learning. If he is right, then the quality of

university is already being undermined in mainstream due to the quality of students and therefore support systems like the ECP should be offered to all tertiary students. The next sub-section presents the respondents' view on resolving this problem.

6.3.4 Resolving the challenge

When under-performance is not attributed to internal personal factors that are uncontrollable, it does not affect students' self-esteem and they can proffer some possible solution to the problem. The response below is how the respondent would have resolved problem.

RAQIM: So ...to score better - I think - ...would have been going to that lecturer to ask him ...: "how is [the] structure of your essay...?" ...I just assumed that I know the structure of an essay.... That made me to score around 78% ...but some scored 91%... I noticed that the lecturer was very lenient. So with regards to that ...I know that I've been doing essays for so long, so I was supposed to be on the 90s somewhere there, but I was nowhere near ...because I didn't consult

The respondent believed that consulting and asking the lecturer about the focus of assessments would have ameliorated the challenge. Such consultation would have revealed to him whether or not the problem was with the structure, although it seems obvious from his assertions that the lecturer was lenient in terms of structure. The implication is that the student's content might not have been good enough. Nevertheless, the drive to succeed explains why the students sought to know what is necessary to satisfy the sense of entitlement for high marks. It is also worth noting that the expression of resilience by the respondent in seeking to know what could be done to improve the performance is an indication that he has a high amount of self-mastery. This could as well be attributed to the programme. Haggins and LaPointe (2012: 2) note that

the relationship between persistence, self-mastery and attributions of personal control are revealed in what Perry (2003) refers to as the "paradox of failure", where "bright, enthusiastic ...students become demotivated and fail once they reach college, seemingly unable to make the adjustment to meet the demands for increased [personal control]".

While this is not a case of failure per se, it does resonate the ideas of Sanders, Nolan and Provost (nd) that poor performance might be associated with overly optimistic attributions based on past success. The next section analyses respondents' views about how the difficulty of a module and undermining the work requirements of a module can affect students' performance and the role of motivation in this process.

6.3.5 The Value of Augmented Lectures

Augmented lectures or Extended Curriculum Tutorials (ECT) are additional tutorials to supplement and complement mainstream modules (Tyson 2010: 3). These tutorials are in the various mainstream disciplines available to ECP students. They are taught by post-graduate students and some members of faculty within the extended disciplines. The support "... is closely articulated with the rest of the curriculum, so that it is developmental rather than remedial and appropriate to the subject domain" (Nala 2010: 11). Students attend two compulsory 45-minute augmented tutorials weekly per elective discipline. Although these augmented modules are not credited towards the students' qualification, they must be passed as a necessary condition for graduating with a BSS4 degree (College of Humanities 2014). Some respondents attributed their success to augmented lectures as follows:

RAY-13M 1: we have that advantage of being taught in a lecture together with students in the mainstream.... the same thing is ...repeated in our augmented lectures. ...when we have assignments, in the mainstream, we don't have time to ask the lecturer what you don't understand, but [here] we are able to ask our lecturers questions ...and they tell us what to do in order to find the right information for answering that question and the right technique of doing that.

RAY-13M 3: ...it boosts our confidence because sometimes we were not really able to ask questions in the mainstream. During augmented lectures, we are able to ask different questions.

RAVERNS: I don't think that augmented courses are mainly for those who are disadvantaged because... even for those of us who went to ... "privileged" schools, it is still very helpful.

RAFENG: But when we started to do Pols 201, you realise that I had massive support, so you see the importance. ... (Augmented) modules in political science, psychology, sociology, gave extra help. ...One could not miss those...

All respondents above asserted that the augmented modules provided great support in the cognate areas of specific disciplines. Success is particularly attributed to the small group environment of the augmented tutorials which allowed students to receive quality individual attention to their views and answers to their questions. This support came from both staff and their fellow students. This boosted their confidence within the university environment as they engaged with the module content. This was more so as they received advice on strategies and techniques for finding information and approaches to their assignments. These characteristics can be seen to boost students' self-esteem and empower them to face the mainstream which is often threatening to students, especially the undergraduate students. This is due to language difficulties or even the stigma that is associated with coming from disadvantaged schools. One respondent from a previously privileged school admitted in line with Scott (2012) and

Dhunpath and Vithal (2012) that mainstream students would need the ECP support because she would have struggled in the mainstream without it. While all these are external factors that were uncontrollable and unstable, engaging with specific augmented modules follows for further discussions.

6.3.5.1 Political Science

The following are the kinds of attributions that respondents made to the augmented tutorials in their political science module:

FRAY-1M: Politics. The... 84% was because of my 196 [augmented] classes. It was more effective than the mainstream. Another reason is that if I was lost in my work, I could go to my classmates and ask for clarity and they would offer me help, as opposed to my mainstreamers who also are lost (chuckles).

RAHLEMS: ...I was really good at it! ...I understood politics from back in access ECP... I had the 60s and above with politics and 50s in sociology but I actually liked sociology more. I don't know what happened, but I understood sociology more

RAMNOTH: ...I didn't score that much ...like a 65%. At some point, I could pass as far as a 75%, mainly in political science...

Excellent performances in political science were primarily attributed to the augmented modules. It was generally considered as laying a good foundation for doing the module. The explanations for these claims were, for instance, that when unfamiliar with the subject matter, students could turn to their fellow ECP students for support. It was also asserted by another respondent that marks in political science developed incrementally, an indication that there was a solid foundation for future performances. It might also be related to the quality of foundation that a respondent found herself performing better in political science than in sociology which she seemed to understand and have a deeper interest in. This external uncontrollable attribution could imply that the module was easy or that the respondent was just lucky. The following response qualifies the value of the foundation laying to the quality of lecturers

RAHLEMS: ...the ...politics [tutor] back in the Access Programme was [better] than the sociology [tutor]... it was about the foundation. ...Politics... lecturers... know their stuff. ...We constantly had to prepare for the lectures every morning because he'll randomly pick us to answer a question. That ...really makes you sit up. It would make you really do your readings... He would even go: "chair number one! Chair number two!! Chair number 3!!!" We... had to be prepared ...because he started by asking ...what we did previously, and then ...what we were going to be doing now.

The quality of lecturers that students first encounter lay the foundation for their future success based on the foundation that they laid in the discipline. The inferences here are on the

lecturers' teaching approaches. The strategy of pushing students to learn was very useful in laying the foundation in the discipline and motivating some students to become both deep and achieving learners. The students who run away from being pushed are more likely the ones who fail. Once a sense of meaning is established, the need for self-assertion and control over the outcome of their endeavours becomes imminent. Moreover, an environment conducive for interactions with the lecturer and asking questions about what is unclear were identified as crucial success factors. Respondents' believed that the possibility of performing better in future lay in "putting in more effort" in order to improve their already good performance. Hard work within an awareness of skills requirement and assurance of support indicated founded optimism. Respondents were confident about their control of future outcomes based on these factors.

Nevertheless, some of the first-year ECP respondents expressed uncertainty about continued success without the extended tutorial and other support as asserted below:

FRAY-1M: [if] I am also attending my 196 [augmented] classes ...I am likely to perform ... [otherwise] you could push yourself but... [very little optimism in his voice], individually ...If you want to get great marks, you have to push yourself... [The] huge set back [remains that you] cannot fully participate in the mainstream class because it is crowded. There is always noise.

FRAY-1F: no backup [with a tone of near despair]... I am sure you will never be in advance! ...because there will be other modules and other work. The 196 [augmented module] ... makes you be in advance.

FRAY-1M: ...it would affect our performances drastically ...you are on your own. ...likelihood that ...one's marks would drop! **You had four hours of the same module** plus some group discussions. But now you will only have 2 hours of that module ...without the group interactions ...

The contrasts between the optimism towards future performances by older students and first year ECP students are worth noting. While older students demonstrated more optimism (well-founded optimism), the first year ECP students were a lot less optimistic about their continuous future performances. They feared that they were likely to struggle in the absence of augmented modules and small group support with interactions. They admit from their experience of the mainstream that it is difficult to participate there. These are indications of realistic expectations as they mainly attributed their success to their class participation; an indication of the social capital amongst them (Tyson 2010).

Despite being aware of the need for hard work, these first-year ECP respondents believed that without the augmented modules and corresponding support, they might not be able to balance

the workload and that they might not be in advance with their work as they were used to in the ECP. Hence, their successes are being attributed to the following benefits of the augmented modules evident in their responses: working as a group and discussing what was learnt in class; augmented modules that are characterized by group interactions, increased time to engage with the study materials; having different staff to guide learning, completing assignments in advance because it needed to be assessed by the augmented lecturers first with corrections to be effected before the mainstream lecturers would assess them.

Meanwhile, comparing their fears with the confidence of the older students, it could be asserted that the programme develops students' confidence incrementally. As asserted by a respondent earlier, the value of the programme becomes obvious mainly after the first year of the programme. Nevertheless, their poor optimism also indicates that they have not yet developed self-mastery in the university environment and there is a likelihood that some of them will in the course of time. Post-graduate level respondents who did not major in politics made the following attributions for future success in retrospect as follows:

RAHLEMS: ...I think I got the foundation of how to study politics... [from the augmented tutorials]. So ...I think I could have managed to go further, and considering the people and the lecturers that I had in Politics... because I had already created relationships with them. I think it wouldn't have been that hard to go back to them to say I'm struggling with this module or that and how do I go about it.

While mindful of the fact that individual differences are critical in attributions, two distinguishing factors are worth noting from the above respondent include: Firstly she believes that the ECP gave her a good foundation on how to study political science. Secondly, she had created a rapport with her tutors and lecturers during the augmented days that she could still go back to for some support in case of difficulties. The first year respondents may realise this after reflecting on their experiences, or when faced with the challenges, but the reality is that they are afraid of the future. The value of having such fears, however, lies in the caution of Sanders, Nolan and Provost (nd) that sometimes poor performance can result from overly optimistic attributions based on past success. Hence, these fears can also prompt them to brace up to the challenge ahead of them.

On the other hand, if these students do not develop increased personal control, they may lack self-mastery and give up (Haggins & LaPointe 2012). Nevertheless, the preceding discussions have indicated that mastering the skills learnt through these programmes is essential for developing such personal control and developing self-mastery and self-esteem. It

can also be asserted from the discussion that the kind of attributions that students make, change as they persist and are familiar with the environment, its requirements. First-year respondents made more externally controllable attributions that are unstable to justify their fears towards future successes and they had not developed personal skills and self-mastery. Older students, on the other hand, made more internally stable and controllable attributions to justify their future successes. The point is that students tend to make more functional attributions as their time and skills develop within the university.

6.3.5.2 Ethics Studies

Another mainstream module with augmented tutorials that generated responses was Ethics Studies. Enjoyment of the subject matter and the quality of rapport with the lecturers were considered the primary motivation for excellent performance. Like in political science the augmented curriculum were also considered important. High performances were attributed mainly to time dedicated to studies as opposed to previous background or group learning.

RAGUCE: ...I was able **to interact** with... [Ethics lecturers] they were... the best.... ...It wasn't like a 75% or 100%, but that was the one module that I did enjoy very much. I had to drop it ...because I was afraid of philosophy. I was to make ethics my major, but I was afraid of philosophy because I heard that people failed... I loved ethics, but then the lecturers made it easier for me to understand it. There were difficulties... when bored, I am not really interested in [learning]. But then [ethics lecturers] ...tried to make it more interesting...

The above respondent indicated not having any prior background in Ethics Studies. However, she attributes her excellent performance primarily to the good quality of lecturers which she describes as the best. Her love for the module proceeded from the lecturers' ability to present the content in an interesting manner. The good lecturer served as a more knowledgeable other in the learning situation to facilitate the zone of proximal development for the student. This attribution is mainly external (lecturers) and uncontrollable and unstable because these good lectures can change or be replaced.

This might explain to some extent why in spite of the interest in the subject matter and the high-performance, she was pessimistic about future excellent performance. While it might be asserted that she did not retain some unfounded optimism based on past performances (Sanders, Nolan & Provost nd), it is concerning that she did not persist with a module that she loved and enjoyed. This might be an indication that she lacked self-mastery (Haggins & LaPointe 2012). This weak personal control might have allowed the social construction of the difficulty of philosophy by her colleagues to be more persuasive than her experience of

enjoying the module in determining her career choice as she indicates she could have. This indicates a critical role of social pressure in this students' career choice over her intrinsic interest in the subject matter. This raises some serious concerns especially considering her assertions that

RAGUCE: it wasn't the best but I did push myself... I tried. Apart from the marks... (smiling) the module itself was just interesting!

This indicates that in spite of a student's love and motivation for a subject, with good lecturers, the social atmosphere and popular perceptions can influence a student's choices and confidence. It can also influence their motivation and goal settings.

Such fear of failure as exhibited by the student indicates, however, that the student is an achieving learner who seeks high marks instead of a deep learner seeking more knowledge in a subject matter for edification (Biggs 1987). The concern lies in forgoing a module that is loved based on the perceptions of other students. The student's lack of confidence was further revealed in her assessment of future high performance:

RAGUCE: mmmmmmmh... I don't know! I don't know... I really don't know... (Laughs)

Despite the lack of confidence, she admitted that excellent performance or continuously passing ethics modules equipped her and enhanced her future performances as follows:

RAGUCE: uhh hmm! It did because I am usually a 50% ... sort of person, [but] with Ethics I would normally get 60+. Yea! ...it gave me hope about the university. It gave me hope that I can do it. That I can try harder.

This data confirms that she did not only love the module, she was equally achieving best marks in it than the ones she eventually majored in. This raises important questions that emphasise the role of personal career counselling for students as suggested by Kalenga and Samukelisiwe (2015) and Akoojee and Nkomo (2007). There is an indication that a mere perception from peers that a module might be difficult can affect students in different ways. One might settle for mediocrity, ignoring the fact that hard work also pays.

Careful analysis of this response indicates that the student was also covertly making attributions to her poor ability; going by the last response above. This follows the ideas of Haggins and LaPointe (2012: 2) that 'explaining failures with low ability attributions is demotivating, and if accompanied by an implicit belief that one's intelligence is fixed and unchanging, will typically lead to avoidance of challenges/difficulty due to a greater concern

with looking unintelligent to others'. Although the main cause for dropping the module was external, coming from other students, it reflects this respondent's confidence in her ability. Despite repeatedly acknowledging that the module was very interesting and the lecturers were very good, she still dropped it because of the fear of failure, as advised by colleagues, despite the fact that it was her best performing module by far. This indicates the devastating implications of how prejudices about modules can deter a student's progress when widely held.

It is clear that the respondents' marks were increasing, giving her more confidence and hope for success. She felt fulfilled about studying Ethics, but she was more persuaded by popular acclaim that the module was difficult and dropped it with such unfounded reason. Interestingly, there is no reference to the augmented module as a motivating factor for excellent performance in this case. Success in most modules reported the augmented support as facilitating self-mastery. The question remains: why does a student drop out of a module which she claims to enjoy and to pass more than any other; a module which boosts her morale and makes the university any easier? The answer seems to lie on the impact that the social factor has in affecting students' choices.

6.3.5.3 IsiZulu

IsiZulu is considered for three reasons. Firstly, it was not augmented though it was offered by first year ECP students, secondly it is a language module, different from many other modules and thirdly, students chose it primarily out of their own discretion. A respondent attributed one of the reasons for scoring this high marks in IsiZulu to class attendance thus:

RAMNOTH: I think the basic way to passing is to **attend**... From day one, I always attend. ...it is not easy to pursue IsiZulu, even if you are a Zulu speaking, but you should consult books, you should attend and then you should try to relate the information that you knew before and the information that you gather in lecture. ...that's how I think I managed to get +80%.

Regular attendance at lectures, reading books and relating new information to prior knowledge are all characteristics of deep approaches to learning (Biggs1987). This approach, the respondent maintains was instrumental in overcoming the difficulty of the module and achieving good results. The respondent had realistic expectations and knew strategies that would produce results and exercised them. He had self-mastery in that he understood what was necessary for him to achieve specific outcomes. His individual personality determined his preferred approach to learning. Hence, the value of self-awareness with regard to

approaching studies. What works for an individual is important in ensuring a persistent future performance as the following response indicates

RAMNOTH: ...I think I started to get 80% when I was in my first year. There was a foreseeability that I can still pursue this mark, but in order for me to continue with getting that mark, I should work hard, or harder than I did before because level 200 is harder than level 100 so I should always try to double my strength towards my module.

The response also emphasises the fact that knowing what could ensure continuous high performance on its own will not yield the desired result if it is not accompanied by an incremental effort at hard work. This entails an awareness that module requirements increase as one advances in years of studies. Lack of such awareness can stand in the way of continuous hard work. It counters the fear of the first year respondents that continued support was necessary for continued success with the focus on increased efforts. This persistent behaviour, according to Haggins and LaPointe (2012) indicates the respondent's resilience that might have been developed through being successfully adapted into the university through the ECP despite challenging or threatening circumstances. It is a measure of his self-mastery.

6.3.5.4 Sociology

The focus on sociology is mainly on how difficulty in the exams affected students' attributions of their success and their failures. It presents two different responses to poor performance, one discouraged by it and the other motivated by it. One of the challenges with performing well in examinations was the kind of questions asked. This sometimes limits students' options to express what they learnt as noted below:

RAHLEMS: ...Sociology 305! ...I got 75% ...in my overall class marks, but ... (chuckles) ...I got 57 in my final marks... Something always happens with my exams in sociology... Three essays... 100 marks each... in section one ... [and] in section two... If you don't know these questions... that's it. Maybe... It shouldn't be an essay ...just small answer questions.

RAMNOTH: I think sociology was a bit challenging, compared to other subjects. ...we only write essays. ...not the content, but the manner in which we were expected to respond to it. It was just one question that you needed to respond to. If you failed to respond to that question, then you need to write another ...essay.

The above attributions of poor performances are made to external, uncontrollable and unstable factors of task difficulty in sociology examinations. Following the assertion that achievement may correlate more with locus of control than measures of intelligence, these

respondents' lack of control over their performances in sociology seems to have assumed a stable character or them, although their perceptions about their abilities are not necessarily affected (Reyes, Medrano & Carlson 2005). In the above case, both previous and current performances indicate a lack of control, as they perceive themselves to be unlucky to be meeting difficult essay questions in sociology. Reyes, Medrano and Carlson (2005: 5) also warn that such persistent failure of sociology, they tend to attribute current failure to a stable cause like their ability.

Although RAHLEMS does very well in her class assessments and only struggles in her exams, she attributed to her failure to a stable cause when she indicates that she does not know what she could do to improve her performance in sociology:

RAHLEMS: I don't know what I could have improved! ...I honestly don't want to be hard on myself... Whatever outcome that may be, I know that I did my best. If they had another strategy of testing us, maybe I would have done much better. ...I think my problem was probably mixing up the essays. I'll check and be like these are all the same, and I don't know which one is which and I end up answering this question on the other question ...If they were ...like Politics, I think I would have done better.

She asserts is that Sociology was more difficult for her as a subject. Although the cause is eternal (exams difficulty), it is uncontrollable, which has some indirect implications for her ability in sociology per se. The point is that such poor performance is very likely to recur; and Reyes, Medrano and Carlson (2005) relate that when such attributions persist with time, they tend to be accepted as internal and uncontrollable. This depletes motivation for future success. This is also in line with the assertions of Kelly and Michaela (1980) that if an attribution can be controlled, it can be changed.

Nevertheless, respondents believed that having given their best in Sociology and, their self-esteem of was not affected, neither did it affect their future performance in other modules:

RAHLEMS: I think with failure, you kind of **accept it** and you get comfortable with it, I suppose! I think it wasn't a big deal you know.... I don't think I was the only person ...a lot of us. It never really affected my self-esteem. It is only until you fail the semester that you actually have a problem with your self-esteem, but throughout the semester, everybody feels, "it is just a test!"

RAMNOTH: aaaah I think it depends on who you are. To get lesser marks compared to the other modules that you did is a motivation in itself. There are persons who get de-motivated by such experience, but I'm not that kind of a student. Yea, so if I get like 65% in Sociology and I get like 75% in Political Science, so it is a question that I should pose to myself: "How come that I get 65% in Sociology?"

The acceptance that the first respondent admits of failure is such that could entail mediocrity or acceptance of anything short of excellence. If poor performance does not affect her self-esteem, it might elicit a laissez-faire attitude endorsing poor performance as common and therefore acceptable result because the majority of the students are performing poorly. This is exactly in line with Reyes, Medrano and Carlson's (2005) discussion of Stipek's (1998) ideas. They argue that such an attitude is likely to occur in what is termed "social norm performance" as an influence on performance. When the majority of a group of students perform poorly in an academic task the tendency is to attribute it to an external cause like module difficulty. This may impact on motivation and future efforts in such tasks.

Meanwhile, RAMNOTH's experience presents an alternative, where poor performance on a difficult module motivates future excellence. He expressed a stronger sense of personal control and self-mastery and persistent behaviour (Haggins & LaPointe 2012) in seeking to learn lessons for future improvement after reflection on the possible causes of the poor performance. This prevents the loss of self-esteem due to the failure of the module.

Therefore, the two respondents demonstrated different responses to their perceived poor performance in sociology as follows:

RAHLEMS: well it affects you because you're like: "this is the dead end" and you have to come back for a whole semester to finish up this thing.

RAMNOTH: ...I tried to score up to 69% in Sociology, so I think it was all intertwined with the question that I used to ask myself after I get a certain mark. Every mark that I get ...becomes a motivation... they don't impose any disadvantage to me or any negative impact on me.

The one respondent conceded that continuous poor performance led to an extra semester of study and loss of self-esteem. This clearly implies a dysfunctional attribution. The other respondent demonstrated resilience, and persistent behaviour to successfully adapt in spite of the challenging situation. This demonstrates a perception of competence and self-mastery (Haggins & LaPointe 2012) evident in his reflection on what led to the poor result and a determination to eliminate the negative factors in order to improve future performances. Having considered students' attributions of success based on module content and performance, it is obvious that the way students attribute their successes or failures affect their approaches to learning.

6.3.5.5 Psychology

One respondent believes that his failure in psychology was not just resulting from module difficulty, but that the subject matter was alien and irreconcilable to his culture and experience. The respondent could not locate his experience within some of the content that the module was theorising. The respondent's challenges were presented as follows:

RAQIM: Psychology! Eish ...I dismally failed. I think that it is the only module that I failed on this campus. ...Psychology [222].... Child development Psychology... I failed that module ...not because psychology was difficult, but [it] is different for different people ...some people understand psychology better, even if they don't go to classes... [yet] you attend... regularly but... not passing the module.

RAQIM: And it is more Westernized... and for ...us who have grown up in rural areas and not... familiar ... [with] other things that are learnt in psychology... it becomes a challenge... [For instance] ...topics ...about child development and schooling...: they say that in school, learners are not supposed to be punished, while it is different ...where I grew up, where they believe that for each and every learner to learn something, you have to use a stick to enforce them to learn. ...in psychology, they will tell you that: "no, you know with the learner, the way to punish the learner is to ask them to go outside and stand. So I said wow... this is going to be a difficult module for me. And then, they would tell you about how the child develops, only to find that it is completely different from ...the experience that I have. So psychology for me was more Westernized, so I couldn't survive in that pot.

While the point of being in school might be to learn the perspectives that are different from what one is used to, the respondent indicates here that his background was not considered at all in the contents of child development in psychology. He attributes his failure on this module to the disconnect from personal experience or lack of relevance. This is a personal uncontrollable yet external factor that affected the students' success. This is likely to persist unless there is a deliberate attempt to adjust the module content to have relevance.

This view identifies that learning should be socially constructed, but the module tended to approach students' minds as blank slates. Not attempting to help the student relate what is being learnt to their background experience seemed to have discredited the content and relevance of what is learnt. This made the module difficult for the student to learn as it was contrary to his own experience. The respondent claims that he could not understand, despite attending, whereas, others, whose cultures are in line with the prevailing theories being learnt could be away from class and still pass because they could relate it to their personal experiences. Closely tied to the value of having a background on the module is the fact that students who loved the subject matter experienced significant success in those modules. This

is the topic of the next sub-section. The next section, therefore, focuses on how students' attributions affected and were affected by their approaches to learning.

6.3.6 Reduced versus increased workload

While some respondent believed that the ECP reduced their workload, others thought that it increased compared to the mainstream. Respondents also differed about whether the pressure was necessary to prepare them for mainstream as expressed in the following responses:

RAY-13M 3: Some people would think that because we've got augmented lectures as well, we've got a greater load, but I tell you we have lesser loads because there are certain things which we do not have to worry ourselves with. For example at the beginning of the year, trying to get registration; trying to set up a timetable; those things we don't have to worry about, which means that we've got only to worry about how to prepare for different lectures. ...If mainstream lecturers do not give us... slides, we know that we will get the slides from our augmented lectures.

RAGUCE: We had ...lots of assignments which is the same as the mainstream, so it wasn't really any challenge.

RAVERNS: ...they ...help us for varsity, I felt that support, but, especially second semester which is really short, and I felt the pressure ...now you could take the second mainstream course, and then ... two other access courses which [were not] credited. But ...they started drilling us [in]... an English course where every week we submit an assignment. And it was pressure. We worked on it in class ...wrote our own essays, but they help us with ideas and we brainstorm. ...at the end of every week, there was an assignment. That was my only challenge, but then they helped us because even though mainstream is not really like that, it helps you to keep to deadlines.

MKHIRATHANDO: some of the challenges were that we had ...evening lectures, tutorials... Friday tutorials. So it was a ...challenge for me to attend those... because I didn't really see the need for them... with tuts everyday of the week. ...7: 45 am on a Friday is not a very good time to come and attend a tutorial...

The views on the workload were very subjective and based on individual perception. The ECP students' augmented tutorials in addition to mainstream lectures are considered by some as necessary and very helpful in the preparation for the mainstream; others view them as additional and unnecessary workload. While it creates useful background knowledge of the subject area for some; others find it repetitive, unnecessary or over indulgent. Nevertheless, both the complainants and those in favour of the workload in the ECP admit its value towards their success by its provision of background for mainstream modules as well as helping students in planning, logistics, and preparations for tests and exams. Some students see dangers with so much in one year and no support the following year. They consider this to be

a good reason why ECP students struggle by the end of the first year's support. In other words, they propose that the support should continue and not just withdrawn after year one.

6.4 Approaches to learning

This section discusses findings from the administration of Biggs' (1987) Study Process Questionnaire (SPQ) to determine the extent to which the ECP students endorse different approaches to learning and their relevant motives and strategies. In his words "The SPQ is a 42 item, self-report questionnaire that yields scores on three basic motives for learning and three strategies, and on the approaches to learning that are formed by these motives and strategies" (Biggs 1987: 2). This provides an alternative approach to assessing ECP students with regard to their success or failures. The aim is to get a more structured discussion about how and why the ECP might have prompted the different approaches to learning outlined by the SPQ.

After a very thorough critique of the SPQ, Choy, O'Grady and Rotgans (2010) provided suggestions on how to mitigate the limitations of using the instrument to determine the relationship between students approaches to learning and their learning outcomes as including observational measures that captured the following: (1) the level of students' engagement in the learning process, (2) the extent to which they engaged and persisted in self-directed learning, (3) the degree to which they participated in group discussions and work in teams, and (4) their understanding of what they had learned. Attention is paid to these factors in these discussions as well as to the fact that the combinations of the SPQ and the Attribution theory based semi-structured interview schedule was meant to ameliorate some of the limitations of the instrument.

A total of 170 questionnaires were filled out by students from three levels of studies. The first level of study represented students who were still within the access support in the first semester of their first years. Students in level two represent students had who completed the access year and were in the mainstream. While students in level three were those who had completed their undergraduate degree and were either doing their post-graduate studies, were working or both. The findings are qualitatively analysed in relation to students attributions obtained through the interview data. Some comparison was also made between the different years of studies and students' approaches to learning and these findings were complemented with discussions of relevant findings from the interview data.

Biggs (1987) identified three approaches to learning: surface, deep and achieving; and their learning outcomes which are determined by students' motives for learning and strategies that they adopt in the learning process. **Surface learners** – aim to meet the minimum requirements, **deep learners** have an intrinsic interest in what is learnt, while **achieving learners** – aim to enhance their ego and self-esteem through competition for grades. Meanwhile, Choy, O'Grady and Rotgans (2010) in their review and critique of the SPQ as a reliable means of assessing the relationship between students' approaches to learning and their learning outcome made the following worth considering observations:

Students may report that they generally perceive themselves as deep learners, but that does not necessarily mean that they apply these deep learning strategies in the actual classroom. Only if they demonstrate the appropriate learning behaviours in the classroom (e.g., being actively involved in searching for meaning, relating and applying concepts to real-life examples and engaging in discussions in identifying the main ideas with others), they will perform well on the assessment because they have translated their self-reported approaches to learning into actual behaviour (Choy, O'Grady & Rotgans 2010: 162)

It is important to address this concern before presenting the findings on ECP students' approaches to learning as measured by the SPQ. Interview data on students' attributions of their success had respondents identifying that the teaching approaches of Foundational modules contributed to their approaches to learning and their success in disciplinary modules in a way that mirrors that their approaches to learning are not unfounded as follows:

RAQIM: ...they don't give you that space of ...relaxation... with a comparison to... mainstream ...you have more of the work... that work is shaping what is going to happen ...in the mainstream.

MKHIRATHANDO: ...You get some mentoring and ... advice that you need... with the modules... The coordinators made sure that we were always in class. ...you had to participate... and ask questions. If you don't ...they would ask questions.

RAHLEMS: I [learnt] the manner of studying... Access tutorials - you had to answer a set of questions. ...You'll be randomly pointed at... It created an atmosphere of studying all the time, which helped me with all my other modules... understanding the ...manner of approaching and writing essays... built my confidence...

FRAY-1F: doing things in advance ...we begin immediately. When mainstream is having a problem, we still continue.

The above responses provide a justification for using the study process questionnaire above amongst other reasons, that students were reporting realistic experiences of being socialised and inducted into these different approaches to learning that the SPQ measures. These

assertions collaborate the criteria proposed by Choy, O’Grady and Rotgans (2010). Achievement-related behaviours in the classroom, they noted, should be the focus of assessing whether or not there is a real relationship between approaches to learning and learning outcomes. They tried to mitigate the challenges by addressing the following variables: (1) the level of students’ engagement in the learning process, (2) the extent to which they engaged and persisted in self-directed learning, (3) the degree to which they participated in group discussions and work in teams, and (4) their understanding of what they had learned (Choy, O’Grady & Rotgans 2010: 162).

These factors are embodied on the responses above as they indicate how the ECP students’ integration educed important disciplines among students that facilitated their success. It was identified as putting intense pressure on students to work hard without ‘space of relaxation’. This is an important requisite engagement skill for success in tertiary studies. There is a belief that ECP students worked harder than mainstream students; had appropriate mentoring support and curriculum advice to prepare them for successful learning in the university. Class attendance and participation were enforced and students were required to come prepared to ask questions or be ready to answer questions. This required that they are prepared prior to coming to class. Trueba (1991 cited in Reyes, Medrano and Carlson 2005) would agree that developing such skills for students creates a socio-cultural system that upholds an opportunity for meaningful socialisation, integration and cognitive development.

These students’ development of self-confidence is obvious by their sense of self-mastery and exercise of more and more personal control over the outcome of their studies (Haggins & LaPointe 2012). Lacking these characteristics, as other studies confirmed, significantly adversely affected some mainstream students’ performances within the same university (Johnson & Narsiah 2015; Kalenge & Samukelisiwe 2015). Hence, ECP students had several opportunities to assess their approaches to learning and studying skills. For instance, the need to be always prepared to answer or be prepared to ask questions developed in them a culture of reading at all times, self-directed learning and understanding what they learnt. This is in response to the major concerns raised by Choy, O’Grady and Rotgans (2010).

It can be asserted that ECP students were prepared to read with a stronger determination to succeed, which implies their stronger tendencies and adherence towards achieving and deep approaches to learning according to Biggs (1987). A respondent acknowledged when transferred to mainstream modules that these skills elicited a sense of confidence amongst

them. The art of submitting assignments ahead of time were other important achieving characteristics that these respondents learnt from the programme. Anderman and Anderman (2009) confirm that the above-mentioned disciplines and skills are important determinants of students' success. It is not surprising, therefore, that the ECP was even able to successfully support a student whose background was not originally in the social sciences to scaffold transition into the Humanities degree as expressed below:

RAMNOTH: I came from a science background: ...I did digital science, geography..., I was fine with Basic Numeracy... I didn't deal with writing essays and essay structure.... [In] the university I did Political Science... (writing essays)... The ECP... helped me... link the information: ...your own idea ...in relation to other scholars... The first semester ...ELDV was challenging; ...requiring us to respond to questions ...phrased very academic in nature... We knew nothing about how to ...argue. [It] was challenging to change from what we knew... to construct academic essays.

The above response from a post-graduate respondent demonstrates how in spite of the difficulties of transition, the programme provided appropriate support to ensure success for students who had no prior background in the Humanities. The belief that the programme supported the transition from the sciences to the Humanities would continue to affect how much faith the respondent has in skills and strategies learnt through the programme. In other words, his beliefs would continue to affect his motives, while these motives influence his strategies. A strong sense of personal control and self-mastery can be asserted of this respondent who believes that anything is possible with hard work and the right support.

When appropriate support meets students at the point of their need, it can change their belief about their capacities. The ECP supported students adjust and redefine themselves from their backgrounds to the new university environment. This is in line with Piaget's (1977) assertion that the adaptive capacity to adjust from one socio-cultural setting to another can be achieved through the structuring of the new environment to be more receptive of the person than leaving everything to chance. Modules and support offered in the ECP and the procedures of presenting these modules enhanced necessary skills for the success of ECP students. It laid the foundation that enhanced students' development of confidence and a motivation for them to prove themselves by achieving high marks as a mark of competition against mainstream students. This marks another indication that achieving approaches to learning were elicited from ECP students. Its facilitation of students' capacities to link what they knew to the ideas of other scholars is also an indication of some deep learning strategies.

6.4.1 ECP Students' Approaches to Learning According to the SPQ

Below is the presentation of the different approaches to learning exhibited by respondents and the implications this has for the ECP. Table 8 below indicated the average of respondents who demonstrated the surface, deep and achieving approaches to learning through the SPQ. Table 12 and the graph figure 9 below presents a distinction between students' motives for learning and their accompanying strategies:

Table 12- Averages of ECP students' surface, deep and approaches to learning by motives and strategies

	SURFACE	DEEP	ACHIEVING
MOTIVE	27.3	26.8	29.3
STRATEGY	26.2	27.2	26.3
Total	53.5	54.0	55.6

This is also graphically represented as follows:

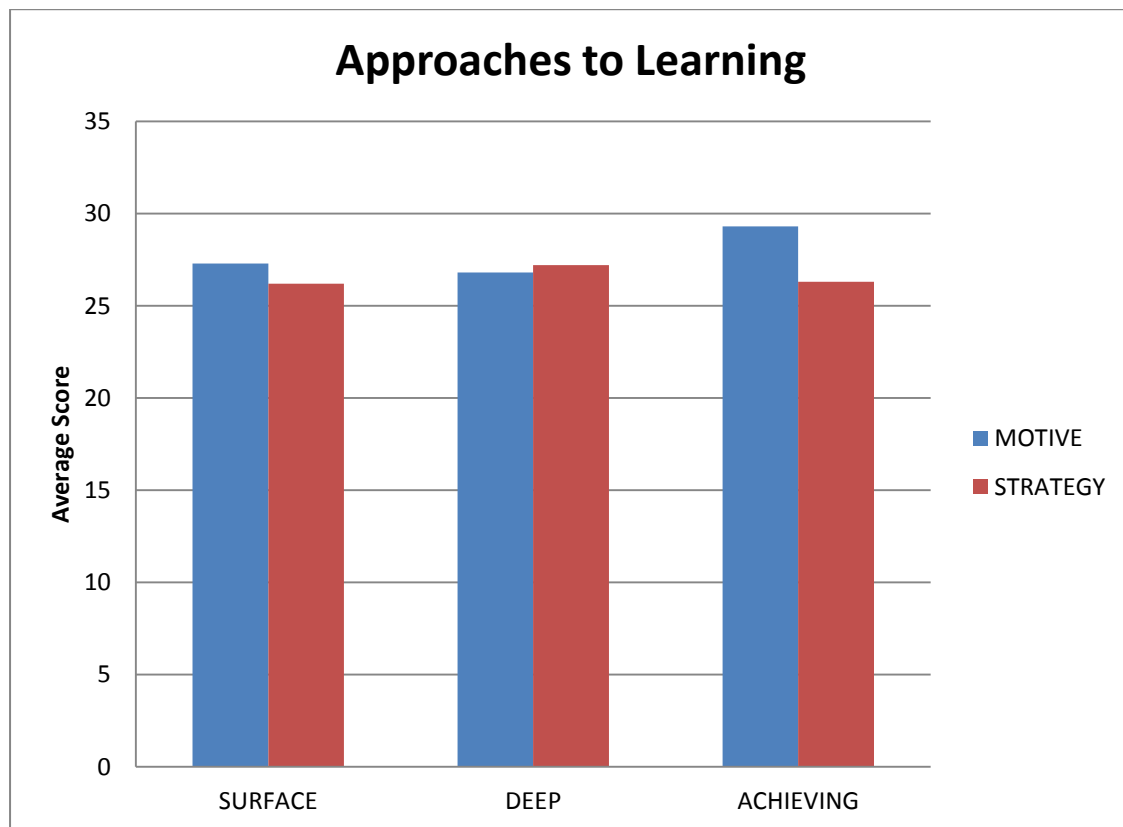


Figure 9- ECP students' surface, deep and achieving approaches to learning by motives and strategies

Figure 9 above indicates that ECP students were almost evenly distributed between the different approaches to learning. The achieving approach received the highest responses

while the surface approach was the lowest. Choy, O'Grady and Rotgans (2011) identify a few studies, like Zeegers (1999); Astin (1970); and Neilson *et al.* (1998); suggesting that students become more deep learners as their years at the university increases. Biggs (1987) noted likewise that most first year students entering the university are surface learners. It is also widely held that deep learners should perform better than surface learners (Choy, O'Grady & Rotgans 2011; Biggs 1987).

Taking a general position that most students entered the university as surface learners allow room for engaging with why students would have demonstrated higher deep and achieving approaches to learning than the surface approach. From this assumption, the ECP would be considered to have made a great impact on the students. Meanwhile, to prove this, each of the approaches to learning would be considered in the light of supporting evidence from interview data.

6.4.1.1 Surface ECP Student learners

Surface learners were the least of the approaches to learning among the respondents. According to Biggs (1987), surface learners have the motive of minimally meeting the minimum task requirements for completing a course or passing the examination. They do not want to fail, but they do not want to work more than is necessary for a mere pass. They are at the university as a means to getting a job. This might be the only motive that they know and are familiar with. They rote learn or memorise the study materials, with the aim of remembering the concepts without understanding their meaning, hence, they fail to internalise information (Choy, O'Grady & Rotgans 2011; Biggs 1987). They do not seek structural relationships between what is learnt, neither do they engage with what is learnt, leading to feelings of dissatisfaction, boredom and outright dislike. They are alienated and un-edified by what is learnt, leading to poor self-esteem (Biggs 1987). For the purpose of this study, students with this approach to learning shall be considered those most likely to fail.

Conceivably, many students employ surface approaches to learning in secondary schools. Choy, O'Grady and Rotgans (2011) identify a few studies (Zeegers 1999; Neilson *et al.* 1978; Astin 1970) which suggest that students become more deep learners as their years of studies advance. This assertion implies that the approaches to learning are not clear-cut, but a continuum that students advance on depending on personal, situational and social factors. The SPQ results of ECP students having less surface than deep and achieving learners could imply that the ECP has laid the foundation to facilitate the improvement of students'

approaches to learning as their years of studies advanced. This assumption is assessed next by considering the differences in motives and strategies of surface approaches to learning within the target population in their different levels of studies. Ideally, students' motives for learning ought to presuppose their learning strategies; students ought to develop learning strategies that correspond with their motives (Biggs 1987).

Table 13- ECP students' study motives by different educational levels

	Surface Motive (SM)	Surface Strategy (SM)
Educational Level 1	27.14	26.1
Educational Level 2	27.65	26.78
Educational Level 3	26.29	24.42

Findings from the SPQ in table 13 above indicated Surface learning ECP students exhibiting slightly stronger motives than strategies in all three levels of studies. This could be indicating the fact that although some students might still be adhering to surface motives, the ECP is introducing them to learning strategies that are either deep or achieving. The problem, however, arises with the second level of studies indicating higher surface motive and strategies than the first year. The explanation to this is that students would have admitted that these might still be approaches to learning that they have adopted, in spite of the fact that it might be changing based on the support of the ECP. However, this finding remains problematic. The significant reduction in both surface motive and strategies at the third level of studies would support the line of argument by an assertion that at this level, they have internalised deeper and achieving approaches to learning.

It could be argued that students continue to remain optimistic that the motives that ensured their successes in high school are still sufficient to ensure their success in tertiary studies (Sanders, Nolan & Provost nd). Besides, by the second level of studies, students were no longer receiving the ECP support. This might be demonstrated as some of them began to revert the familiar surface approach to learning. Those who experienced low personal control over specific academic outcomes (Haggins & LaPointe 2012) were also likely to face the same fate. The next sub-section gives more reasons why students engaged with surface approaches to learning based on students' attributions in interview data.

a. Concentration difficulty

This sub-section discusses an ECP students' inability to concentrate on studies, in spite of possessing the necessary potential. This is another psychological challenge which was demotivating for an ECP student as described in the response below:

MKHIRATHANDO: I started failing modules, I realised that I need to change. ...then I [sought academic advice and counselling because].... the minute I get to the library ...I get ...a serious and a terrible ... headache! ...when I try to study ...I feel... very sleepy! I end up sleeping on my books, so ...I just wake up, pick up my books and go back to my room. When I try to sleep in the room, I can't sleep. I say "ok, I have wasted maybe four hours doing nothing"... Then I take my books and I go to the library, then the same thing happens. That is probably why I have never performed very well... I know that I can do much better than ...I have ...since I came to varsity... I can study for hours, hours, and hours by force - yes I had a headache - but I forced myself and said to myself I have to study, but ... it is a waste of time in a way because I won't remember anything.

The above is indicative of a real personal struggle to focus and concentrate on one's study all leading to some frustrating end. The respondent persisted in spite of this challenge, acknowledging that he had greater potentials than his performance was indicating. This could be frustrating but indicates the value of resilience is in the midst of learning challenges; that student is now in post-graduate studies. Many other students with such struggles might have given up and quit university, but he explored different options to identify what worked for him as depicted in his words below:

MKHIRATHANDO: I tried because [Jack]... used to come to my room and say let's study! And I could study when he is there by the house. So yea... I did score very well in the module, 69%, I think is not that bad... yea I don't think it is that bad... we used to ...study, and afterwards, we ask each other questions. You tell me what you've learnt and I tell you what I have learnt from the module that we were studying.

Success for this student came through experimenting on different strategies to learning until he discovered one that enabled him to overcome the lack of concentration. This strategy was studying with another person and asking each other questions about what they had learnt to ensure understanding of what each of them had learnt, not just memorization. He adopted the successful strategy and used it to his advantage. Meanwhile, the student believed that he could have improved his performance as follows:

MKHIRATHANDO: ...give myself... more time to ...study after [every] lecture, what was done in class ...just to recap and see how much I was able to capture... that could have made a ...big difference.

Reflection on what works through the learning process is vital for students to develop their success strategies. Demotivating factors, when recognised can be explored to learn lessons from the experiences. There might be some means of working around them if the student involved is motivated and keen about resolving the problem. Students do not always react to issues in the same way, given the differences in their backgrounds, personalities and surrounding experiences. The following is a unique experience of how scoring high marks de-motivated a student from working hard:

MKHIRATHANDO: (laughing)... when I got like 69% I told myself that “yea... I don't have a reason to study because I can do it. So it motivated me more not to study. It gave me more reason not to study (laughs and retorts)... it is true.

This corroborates the views of Sanders, Nolan and Provost (nd) that such beliefs that previous determinants of success will always be present tend to be overly optimistic and unrealistic as such students tend to fail if they fail to optimise their efforts. This also indicates low personal control by the student and could lead them to give up if they do not realise that their intelligence is not static (Haggins & LaPointe 2012). Students who relax the amount of effort invested when they find that they have performed well early in their university experience often fail to realise that as they progress, university expectations also heighten. Some students tend to relax and fail to continuously put in the hard work, especially when their first experiences of marks exceed their expectations or effort. Such belief defines their attitudes and approach to studies. Without appropriate counselling, such students could be de-motivated. The next sub-section considers how students attributed their surface approaches to learning to the difficulty of a module.

b. Difficulty of a Module

One of the reasons offered by respondents for poor performances is the difficulty of the module. Choy, O'Grady and Rotgans (2011: 160) that ‘students that are surface learners are expected to perform less well in school as compared to deep learners. These students also tend to explain their failure with low ability attribution. This is dysfunctional, Haggins and LaPointe (2012) note, especially when accompanied by a belief that their intelligence is static and unchanging. It leads to avoidance of challenges in order not to appear as unintelligent. Attributions of poor performance to module difficulty were made as follows:

FRAY-1F: I got 64% ... I think it is because politics ... terms [and its] theories... [are] very difficult! It goes with how things work in the politics world.

FRAY-1M: I wrote a test in psychology and I scored 60% ...I think it was because I am new to psychology. I'm doing psychology for the first time this semester. I did not have that background... so I am still trying to get my feet in psychology. And there is a lot of work to be done.

FRAY-1F: I think that I had a **negative attitude towards** it based on what people said: "politics is hard". ...It was hard for me, but others found it easier for them. ...Maybe it's because I did not stay at the residence. Most people who do BSS4 stay at the residence and they talk about these things that they don't understand at any time in res. They chat with each other, they have discussion groups or they do some kind of debate or arguments. And that maybe would improve how they see politics as a subject.

RAGUCE: ... maybe it is because I am just doing this module, I don't really like it.

Subjective attributions of failures to module difficulties and lack of background are obvious from the above responses. For one the difficulties lie in the theories, the other attributes it to lack of background in the subject area, while the third considers it to be due to a negative attitude towards the subject as the reasons why a student modules were considered difficult.

The belief that politics is difficult derives from what she heard about the module. This affected her approach to the subject. She finds reasons to justify why others found it easy to excuse herself from passing. Reyes, Medrano and Carlson (2005) argued that when there is the majority of opinions about the difficulty of a module, some students tend to attribute their failure in such a module to these opinions especially if it is common among other students. Meanwhile, RAGUCE is quite clear about finding the module difficult because she does not like it. The next sub-section discusses how learning in a second language affected students' approaches to learning.

c. Learning in a Second Language

Some of the students from underprivileged and rural schools on the ECP face the challenge of adjusting from learning in their local dialects to learning in English. They are frustrated to be considered slow learners when they believe themselves to be intelligent. This dilemma is expressed by the following responses from a focus group interview.

RAY-13M 2: We have a problem in communication network... Studying in another language, which we are not often speaking is too difficult... [when] you have to consult, ...you have to use this language ... which you are not using every day... that can give us a little problem, because... when something happens, you are afraid because you know that you are not understanding, also you are not able to catch up things easily. So that is the main problem.

RAY-13M 1: Because most of us are from the disadvantaged schools, there are things that we don't have the foundation of; for example when it comes to English. ...most

of us don't have good grammar, so ... language is the problem because English is the main language [for] interacting with the lectures... that is one of the ... challenges....

RAY-13M 2: ...I think language is a big issue, and also reading skills ... so it is not easy to catch up ... but we are still moving, maybe we will do the better,

English as the second language is making learning difficult for these students; also serving as a barrier to their consultation with the tutors who could help them. The next sub-section discusses other reasons why students adopted the surface approaches to learning.

d. Underestimating the work requirement

Whether a module is considered difficult or not, underestimating the work required for success in a module can lead to failure. Some students presumed that having been high flyers in high school guarantees their success on the ECP modules without efforts. This affected the extent of time investment towards their academics as compared to other social factors. Others relaxed after a good performance in the first semester of the ECP because they thought it was easy. They under-estimated the programme because they believed they were intelligent. These affected their motivations and efforts, leading to poorer performance as noted below:

RAY-13M 1: AL... I didn't perform well compared to others. And I think the reason behind that is because I did not take it seriously like others. I thought it is easy, (so ... let's say we were given essays), and I thought I know this thing... but ...when I got the result, I found that I did not do very well. So I think that was the problem.

MKHIRATHANDO: ...In that module ELH... I could have done ...much better, but... in high school, I was considered as a smart person. So when I first came here and I got into access programme, I was like: "this is much easier, I don't have to spend much time studying". ...I never took books to ...the library to... study. I was positive in a way ...but I never studied, so when I got those marks on my semester, I was like: "ok, now! I can do this".

RAVERNS: ...I was more relaxed... in the second semester, ...I did not put more effort because I was comfortable... in high school I rarely got 70s and so when in Varsity I was getting 70s, I was like: "Ok, I'm fine here"... I can get comfortable very easily, and then when I get the result I wake up like: "things are coming!!!"

Haggins and LaPointe (2012) invokes Perry's (2003) notion of the "paradox of failure" to explain such situations where "bright" enthusiastic high schools students become demotivated and fail at college because they cannot adjust to the increased college demand for personal control. This, he argues may erode the sense of self-mastery and cause students to give up. This is especially so if they explain their failures as due to low ability. ECP students who undermined the programme as being below them could not invest hard work. Believing it to be easy overrode their interest in the subject matter and their efforts.

One student approached the programme from a high school experience of being considered an intelligent student. The last respondents' attitude emanated from prior high performance within the programme. She relaxed and invested less effort after what was a successful first-semester performance, only to be disillusioned by failure at the end of the second semester. Nolan, Sanders and Provost (nd: 4) support this in their assertion that 'there is evidence to suggest that poor performance might in fact be associated with overly optimistic attributions based on past success. This is even more validated by the respondents' belief that their perceived solution to such under-estimation effort should be putting in more effort and looking forward to a good overall average, instead of focusing on a few modules at the expense of others:

RAY-13M 1: ...if I can balance doing it with other modules, those I am performing well... I think that will be productive. Not only focusing on one thing.

RAY-13M 3: I think it is basically ...a matter of trying to prioritise... things that you have to do. I think I can prioritise other subjects that I didn't really do well in ... So that they can also get good marks which give me a good academic standing overall³³... There is no point giving something a 90% and giving another thing a 40%. You know you have to be able to have a certain standard or a certain average, which ... you're working towards...

The possible solutions to future poor performances raised above include: trying to retain a balance between the amount of work invested on different modules; prioritizing subjects that students performed poorly in for the sake of an overall good average, instead of scoring too high on one and very poorly on another because the focus was also skewed, and retaining a standard average to work towards in every module and working hard to reach that average.

While previous good performance could serve as a de-motivating factor, causing poor investment of time and effort, and leading to failure, there is no guarantee that having performed well, all students would continue performing well in the future. This is common when attributions are made to intelligence without efforts. These respondents were not motivated to work, believing that continuous scoring of high marks was an entitlement. They were unaware of the fact that efforts ought to be incremental. The efforts that guaranteed good results in the past cannot continue to sustain such results as the progress to higher levels. While some students can get a wake-up call from such experiences and readjust accordingly, other students can be persuaded by the failure to quit. Meanwhile, the next sub-

section presents a respondent's view that marks not always true representations of students' abilities.

e. Other reasons for adopting surface approaches to learning

Some of the reasons why ECP students adopted surface approaches included: many modules equally requiring time and effort, hence limited the extent of deep or achieving strategies; with the lack of intrinsic interest in the subject matter or no background knowledge, students tended to employ surface strategies or to struggle. One respondent took politics as a major despite acknowledging its apparent difficulty; the other took up French while admitting her struggles with languages:

RASPD: at the mainstream level, you do tend to do quite a number of modules. Four or five, but you want to do well in basically all of them, you don't want to focus on your major, and say I want to do well in my major because I think the outside world does not look at the percentage that you got on a specific subject. You also want to strive for a pass which starts from a 50%.

RAY-13M 2: Psychology! I scored exactly 50%.... because it was focusing too much on the brain... it is similar to life science, but I didn't study life science before...

RAGUCE: ... career wise, I couldn't stick with ethics, I did not know what I could [do]. Political science, I was advised that it would be a viable solution but.... The first year, I thought ... "I will do it", but now... "It's just not for me" (laughs) sorry.

RAVERNS: ...I performed so poorly in ... French 50%+. ...I'm really not good in languages ...in high school I did Afrikaans... grade 3 until matric, but I still can't say a proper sentence in Afrikaans... I did try for French, but I just wasn't going anywhere... I wanted to get extra help from the access course, I thought that they could offer or suggest someone who can actually help me in French, which they can't really do because I was the only one ... asking. That is another reason now.

Too many modules to focus on and too little time is one reason for adopting the surface approach, another reason is a lack of background on the subject matter, uncertainty about what to major in was another and admitted difficulty in languages was yet another. In spite of the history of struggle with languages, one of the respondents demonstrated a belief that with some help she would have succeeded in French. Although the ECP could not assist her due to financial constraints, there is apparent optimism of an achieving motive, that could be attributed to the kind of support she receives from the ECP.

The respondent who was confused about her career and unsure of what to major in also seemed to lack interest in their module. This is an indication of lack of personal control and motivation for learning as expressed below:

RAGUCE: Maybe it is the way that I'm studying.../approaching politics ...I really don't know... It makes me wanna dodge the lectures...! ...honestly Politics is just the one modules that really breaks me down. Seriously, even in the test, it is the same thing. I do feel de-motivated.

Reyes, Medrano and Carlson (2005) note that such dysfunctional attributions with a lack of personal control are likely to cast doubt on the students' ability. This is likely to lead to demotivation and then to withdrawal. The amount of time and effort invested into studying indicates the interested level of the student on a module, and also determined the possibilities of success. Pessimism about the possibility of improving on the marks breeds frustration by the difficulty of the module leading to a near breakdown and causing the skipping of lectures and de-motivation. These can deplete a students' self-worth since effort invested is not yielding fruits. The resulting effect on the student going forward is expressed as follows:

RAGUCE: ...when I am studying... I try to push myself. I really do study in such a way that when I write a test and then the results come back and it is a fail, I think to myself, ok... "Where did I go wrong?" "What happened?" The one mistake that I use to make is that I don't always go back to consult my lecturers about the test. If it is a fail for me, it is a fail, I am done. So when I fail that one module, the other modules will suffer because I will have that mentality that: Ok yes, I'm studying, it is fine, but what is the point, I'm still going to fail. So that is what happens most of the time.

It is quite possible that this student is employing surface strategies with achieving motives. The end result is frustration. The student seems to internalise the limitation as hers; making dysfunctional attributions to her ability and losing self-confidence. This leads to frustration, self-doubt and even hopelessness as her efforts in other modules begin to wane because she now believes that putting in the effort to study is not going to yield any positive result. Such de-motivating experience arising from doing the wrong module can lead to the student giving up anytime soon.

Meanwhile, the other respondent reacts differently because she had a reason in mind for choosing to do French, despite foreseeing its difficulty. She clearly is aware of her motivation for doing French and acknowledges her learning limitation in French as a language. She believes to have some motivation for doing it, but insufficient interest and requisite ability:

RAVERNS: I live around people who speak French, like Tony and Mario [not real names] but I find myself sitting and listening just how they speak French, hoping that something would stick. But ...it just goes out... yea I picked up some words that I learnt in class, but ...I don't know what I could have done! Maybe worked a little harder, I don't know, but I felt that I worked hard for it.

While there is some notable sense of disappointment for not meeting her learning expectations, but she handles the situation differently and the impact of failure in this module affected her studies in general, in a different way:

RAVERNS: it wasn't so negative, I don't know, maybe because I kept the excuse that "I'm not too good at languages, but at least I passed, which is a great achievement that I passed.

The difference between the two respondents is that RAVERNS gave herself positive reasons to justify her poor performance in this particular module. These justifications include: firstly, that she is not good in languages, and secondly, that she still got a pass mark. Both respondents worked very hard, but RAVERNS tried to seek support while RAGUCE just gave up. RAVERNS located the problem in the module, while RAGUCE located it in herself or ability. This is an indication of why some intelligent students would fail and drop-out because of pursuing the wrong qualification. Another respondent believes that failure in a module was due to not studying with a group and had different consequences as well.

RAY-13M 2: psychology... **I was not studying** ...I was **not studying with a group** and I was trying to do it alone, and ...[t]here was a lack of time management, so everything was too difficult... I was trying to adapt the lifestyle of the university and also trying to focus on this subject. And then eish, it was too difficult. And this issue that the subject was very biological, as I said, concentrating on the mind. ...So ...on the whole, I was not studying...

Going back to the bar graph in figure 9, many students enter the university with surface strategies and achieving motives to learning. Some are persuaded to adopt these motives in specific modules due to doing the wrong qualifications and some end up losing confidence in themselves when it leads to failure. Nonetheless, every student wants to pass. The next subsection discusses some of the reactions of surface learners, especially when after failure.

f. Some reaction of surface ECP learners

Many students perceive failure in some modules as an indication that they need to change their qualifications or quit their tertiary careers. Others perceived it as a wake-up call and a motivation to work hard, and these affected their reasons for making the kind of attributions that they made as detailed in the responses below:

RAY-13M 2: ...If you ...are failing, you see that - eish! - You ...know nothing... you won't put more enthusiasm in order to get ...more. ...it makes me feel that I'm not fitting... I am a failure. ...Maybe ...think about another course or degree that you want to achieve. ...

RAHLEMS: ...in 2011 ...I had failed ... 101 Sociology and 102 Politics ...then I was like: “let me just divert to something different”. Then I went to do Management 120 and EDDE 110... I gave it my all, and “O my God!” I failed so passionately. I didn’t even make it to the exam! ...EDDE, I ... appealed ... DP for it ...wrote the exams and I still failed. Management 120 ...I ...tried so hard to attend... lectures and do my assignments... I failed the supplementary exam as well... [after studying] hard for it ...I took a week off. ... [Missed] my cousin’s birthday party. I said, “No! Study for your exams”. I was studying day in and day out, but I still managed to fail.

The above attribution of failure to an internal stable cause (ability) raises doubt about suitability for the university, robs self-esteem and dissuades from a future attempt at investing more effort towards improving performance. This is an indication of low expectations for the future (Haggins & LaPointe 2012; Anderman & Anderman 2009). Both respondents consider the possibility of being in the wrong degree. One changes qualification but continued to fail and became frustrated and confused:

RAHLEMS: I had no idea, I don’t know what happened even till today. I don’t even know who I should blame for that. I don’t know, (chuckling while at the same time seeming to cry by the sound of her voice, with a smile on her face).

The frustration and impact of the inability to identify causal factor for an experience on students can affect continued university studies as expressed in the following responses to similar circumstances:

RAHLEMS: I felt like quitting! (Laughs) at that point, I felt like: “I’m not good enough for this...!” That ...think that is when I ... [went to the ADO] (laughs at herself) and I couldn’t even explain myself ...how I ended up in this condition.

RASIK: ...surprised because I am here now, but I thought - after obtaining my degree ...I will go look for a job [like] ...most South Africans ...because studying is not easy... It wasn’t easy at that time because we were still young and new to the place, [with] so many distractions, you are still finding yourself; ...you want to belong, ...then studies... and now facing a difficult module like that one, and it wasn’t the only module that I was doing, there were others... challenging as well; ...when you think of your leisure time, ...one needs to get a degree and leave this place!

The chances of failure with the implication of quitting university due to the challenges are real. The amount of unrewarded effort significantly discourages continuing effort at studies in the university. Such experiences prompt some students to discontinue their studies after their undergraduate degrees. Thus, the desire to quit is mainly attributed to the difficulty of a modules or inability to explain underperformance. This adds to other challenges of finding oneself in the new environment and other distractions within the university. In spite of the desire to quit, the popular trend of completing the first degree forges some resilience for its economic implications. Success is therefore premised by overcoming and making it to post-

graduate studies. It marks the ability to succeed in the midst of difficulties motivated a striving for a higher goal and stretching of potential. Such success furthers student's self-worth and ability. The next section focuses on the factors that lead to students' loss of confidence and their tendency to give up.

i. The tendency to give up

This section considers students wanting to give up because they failed a module that they invested so much effort in. Haggins and LaPointe (2012: 2) argue that 'explaining failure with low ability attributions is demotivating, and if accompanied by an implicit belief that one's intelligence is fixed or unchanging, will typically lead to avoidance of challenge/difficulty due to a greater concern with looking unintelligent'. Hard work creates expectations, and some students tend to give up if anticipated results are not achieved:

RAVERNS: it started getting me worried because ... it was a bridging course for [my major]... marketing, so I was like: "if this is like this, then it is going to get harder..." It was quite frustrating and I was just getting worn down ... the lecturer wasn't bad! ...I understood in class... It was interactive in class... I interact to keep me concentrated and ask questions. I record it, and I listen to my lectures all the time!

RAGUCE: I think I give up easily. That is the one thing that has been happening. If I fail whatever; I'm done.I have this thing about being way too anxious. I panic at the thought of failure, and when it happens, that's why I'm like: "it happened... I failed then I just give up".

Having worked really hard on respective modules, frustrations are expressed when failure arises. The thought that module is necessary for graduation prevents RAVERNS from giving up, but causes frustration and discouragement. Her tending to give up is based on a belief that time was wasted to invest effort on a module that does not yield proportional results. RAGUCE tends to give up on anything that she invests much effort and still fails. It prompts the belief that the module is either too difficult or beyond students' ability. These experiences impacted their future approaches to respective modules differently:

RAVERNS: I'm happy I passed... it is my major. Negative in [that] I started not looking forward to doing marketing and that is like what I want to do in the future! I want to be a marketing manager. I was like: "this is what you want to do and your marks just aren't reflecting!" So I started looking for other options. I said: "why did I leave Psychology?" But I did not see myself being a psychologist.... [Though] I was doing well in psychology.

RAGUCE: ...I always ...put way too much pressure on myself. Ok because I give up easily, I tend to think that I might not be able to continue with the university. ...there are those thoughts like "let me just quit". But then again, I say to myself that I am

half-way there, so why should I? ...that small voice tells me that you can actually do it... But ...I just wanted to quit [upon] finding out my result...

RAVERNS' worry about the future difficulty of marketing modules discouraged and frustrated her, causing her to question her career choice and sapping her enthusiasm. Both respondents relate failure to inability, given the amount of hard work invested. This develops a belief of not being good enough, which impeded her will to go forward. Depletion in self-esteem comes with such a failure mentality that is capable of causing a student to give up on modules at the University. This desire to quit indicates loss of self-confidence in the ability to handle pressure and a lack of persistent behaviour (Haggins & LaPointe 2012). Giving up becomes an option when hard work and pressure does not yield desired results. Nevertheless, the belief that maximum effort was invested does not imply that the best possible approach was utilised. Thus, respondents who believed they were incapable found more appropriate alternative means of persisting and improving as they tried harder. Considerations of past achievements also encourage further effort in moments of discouragement.

Attitudes sometimes need to change to ensure success. This is because attributions become beliefs and affect actions. Asserting that belief can sometimes be wrong, implies that they can be changed. Changing belief would imply changing action, which has the potential to evoke different outcome or impact on the students' future. Thus, ability is not a static phenomenon, it can change and it can be improved upon. Arguably, the higher number of achieving learners and almost equal numbers of both surface and deep learners could be an indication of how much the programme has affected students' integration into the university social community. This seems to explain the increasing trend of achieving learners as students move from one year of study to the next.

6.4.1.2 Deep ECP Students Approaches to Learning

The Deep approach to learning was the second highest frequency among respondents. These learners intend to look for meaning in the study materials. They generally have or develop an intrinsic interest in the subject matter and develop competence in that academic discipline. They examine the contents closely to sieve out the underlying concepts and relate these concepts to real life circumstances and their prior knowledge (Choy, O'Grady & Rotgans 2011). They also seek to discover meaning by reading widely and relating new knowledge to previous relevant knowledge (Biggs 1987).

This approach to learning is generally assumed to produce “higher quality learning outcomes” than the surface approach to learning (Gijbels *et al.* 2005 Cited in Choy, O’Grady & Rotgans 2011: 160). Students with this approach develop positive feelings about what is learnt and tend to continue beyond their first degree. Respondents who practised deep approaches to learning attributed them to either their background knowledge or passion developed on the module. This was either due to relevance or because they loved the subject matter. The following are some of the expressions of students’ deep approaches to learning:

RASP: ...much attention was put on the subject as a whole. ...the passion just came at the university but I knew nothing about [philosophy] until I came to the university. ...if you are passionate, in there is motivation. ... You ...put more effort. ...I had my own dreams.... majoring in philosophy, they would ask: where are you going to get hired, and I cared less about those comments.

RAY-13M 3: I really performed very high... [in] basic computer literacy. I got 94%... because I’ve got love for computers as well...

RAFENG: ...I think it was my commitment and love for the lecture because I had a background of loving poetry and it was all about language. ...I speak French and I wanted to improve my language.

RASIK: I think it was the drive to know, to master the skill. That is why I did well.

Although Biggs (1987) is of the opinions that deep learners can sometimes be low achievers, majority of the respondents who indicated some deep approaches to learning related it to high marks. This is in line with the assertion that deep learners tend to perform better than surface learners. Individual differences also determined deep approaches to learning for students. Some students were passionate about the subject matter, some who had more personal control applied deep approaches to difficult modules, while others used the approach to improve their performances in modules they had a good prior background in. Yet still, others used it because they were intrinsically interested in the subject matter. The graph below illustrates that deep approach to learning received the second largest response rate.

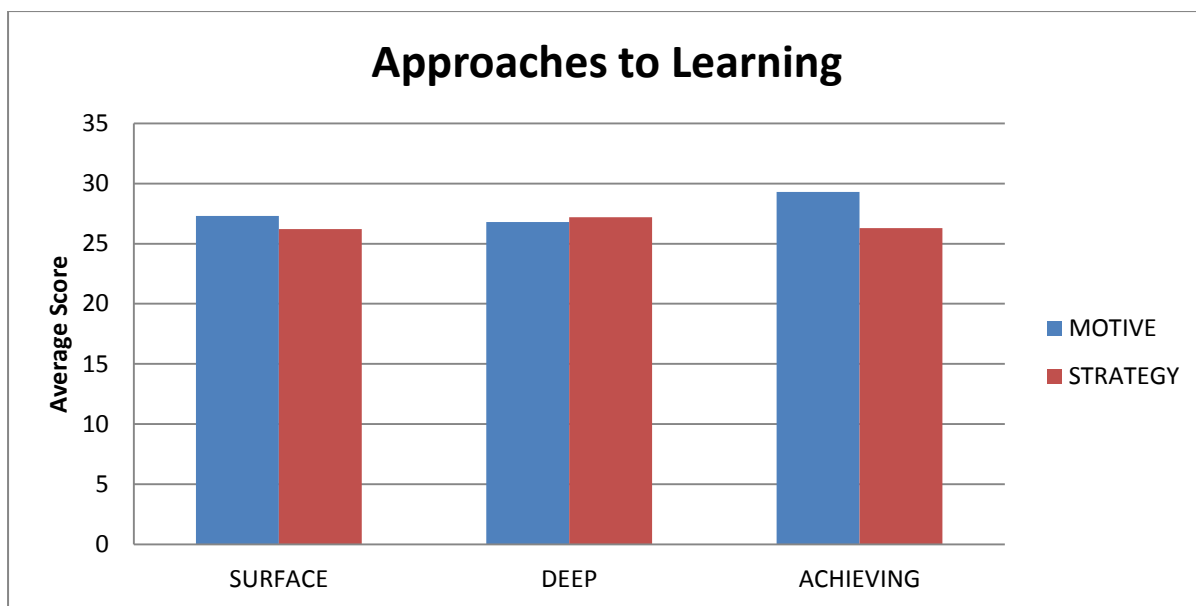


Figure 10- ECP students' surface, deep and achieving approaches to learning by motives and strategies

The graph above indicates that students with deep approaches to learning exhibited slightly higher strategies than their motives. At this point, comparing how students in different levels of studies exhibited the deep approach to learning might shed more light on the discussion.

Table 14- ECP students' deep approaches to learning motives and strategies on different Educational levels

	Deep Motive (DM)	Deep Strategy (DS)
Educational Level 1	26.41	26.65
Educational Level 2	27.53	27.6
Educational Level 3	25.58	27.21

It was observed in general that respondents exhibited stronger achieving strategies than motives in all three levels of studies. Again, as in the case with the surface approach, the second level of study demonstrated the highest prevalence of deep motives and strategies. In the third level of studies, although the deep motive dropped, the deep strategy was the strongest. Again, it can be asserted that at the second level of study, most respondents were on their own without the support of the ECP, hence the slightly higher deep motives and strategies at this level of study.

a. Class Participation

Moreover, it has been asserted that respondents generally adopt the deep strategy, in spite of not having the motive because the programme socialises students to learn these ideal

strategies, given their value in students' success. The development of deep strategies by first level ECP students were attributed to class participation in the augmented year as follows:

FRAY-1F: I could say that the teacher was very explanatory, very loud and clear. She made sure that **she did not move forward without everyone following**.

RAY-13M 2: Some people would say that it is not contributing because [they] **don't ask questions**. For me it is contributing ...so it is contributing... Maybe 20% or 15%.

RAY-13M 3: ...although I have not felt that environment of just being in mainstream and not having help from the other side. ...you can take ...questions ...from the mainstream ... to the augmented. You ask that question fully, and you know that you are not going to be answered only by your lecturer, but by your other fellow students as well. They will try and help you understand...

The above responses from students in their first ECP semester assert not just that class participation contributed to students' success; but also that the extent of the success from class participation is dependent on students' efforts and initiative to participate in class. Lecturer played an important role in facilitating class participation by creating a conducive environment for it, but students only benefit to the extent that they engaged actively in it. These factors, together with study groups and consultation with lecturers were related factors to participation that were considered as contributing to students' success.

b. Study groups and consultation with Lecturers

Besides class participation, study groups and personal consultation with the lecturers were other factors that were considered to have encouraged deep approaches as students engaged with lecturers, asked vital questions, and formed study groups.

RAY-13M 3: Another way we benefit is that in the mainstream, it is difficult to have one-on-one consultations...

AGUCE: ... They assisted us and divided us with people who were gonna help us with certain modules that we were doing.

RAY-13M 3: ...groups within the augmented programme also help us because ...you are able to know each other, and once you know each other, then you know ...who ...to go to for a particular help. For example, I know that he is good ...in English. So ...I'll go to him in English. ...I'm good ...in political science; they know within the group ...they will come to me for that particular subject. Whereas in the mainstream, it is not easy to identify ...what each individual is stronger in....

FRAY-1M: it helped because you are in a small group; you are able to interact with people ... as compared to the mainstream whereby you are even afraid of asking questions because the class is full and the lecturer always rushing. Here it is more focused, you are in a small group and you perform much better, you ask more relevant questions and you get the required knowledge.

One-on-one consultation with lecturers is considered lacking at the mainstream, raising serious concerns. The assurance that questions can be answered and challenges attended to indicate that consultation, asking questions in class and group participation enhance students' success. The support of being allocated to small groups is said to ensure support from fellow students of the ECP. The deliberate formation of groups to ensure that students of different strengths were together for the purpose of sharing and supporting each other is positive. The small groups allowed students to get to know each other and their strengths and to support each other on areas of weaknesses in the same areas.

As students get familiar with each other, the fear of asking question diminishes creating a sense of belonging and confidence. This is lacking in the mainstream due to the large numbers of students. Students from disadvantaged backgrounds feel shy and inferior to engage with most mainstream students, and lecturers always in haste increase their fear to ask questions in mainstream classes. Meanwhile having augmented modules and being in smaller groups had implications for the amount of work that students had to do.

c. Prior knowledge of subject area

Respondents identified that prior knowledge of the subject area or the lack thereof affected their motivation for learning. Some respondents attributed excellent performances to prior knowledge of subject matter. They assert the ease of learning in connecting new objects of knowledge to prior familiar knowledge. When objects of knowledge relate to nothing learnt in High School; at orientation; motivation for doing the module; contribution towards students' career it can adversely affect student success. Prior knowledge enhances students' learning and engagement in deep learning as well as settling into the university:

RASPD: I did exceptionally well in maths - ...90% [because] I did additional mathematics in high school. ...I used to picture myself as a future mathematician... but ...I did not do physical sciences in high school so that denied me entry. ...in fact the maths that we were doing was very simple to me.

RAVERNS: ...I got an 80% ...in computer literacy because I had a background ...I already knew about computers. ...other than that I would have been with everyone.

Instances where students' background knowledge was related to what they were learning at the university, it was easy to engage in deep learning and enjoy what is learnt or seek mastery in the subject matter. It makes sense, therefore that the ECP was trying to create such background knowledge through the foundational modules as discussed earlier. Students from different disciplinary backgrounds receive support that allowed them to adjust.

d. Linking knowledge and information

Some of the deep strategies applied can be explained by the following responses that asserted some of the factors that have been responsible for these deep approaches like linking new knowledge to prior knowledge and connecting these to the views of other scholars and transferring them to other disciplines was considered reported along with intrinsic interest in what was learnt as follows:

RAFENG: ...in ELDV, we were given a task to research.... And we ...collected data, analysed and put them in graphs. ...we could do power point presentations because of the basic computer literacy. So you find that there is a link between ELDV and computers. ...My first literature review was in [the ECP]. ...in post graduate study ...you had that background.

RAMNOTH: I came from a science background: ...I did digital science, geography... I didn't deal with writing essays and essay structure.... [In] the university I did Political Science... (writing essays)... The ECP... helped me... link the information: ...your own idea ...in relation to other scholars... The first semester ...We knew nothing about how to ...argue. [It] was challenging to change from what we knew... to construct academic essays.

RAMNOTH: From day one, I always attend. ...it is not easy to pursue IsiZulu, even if you are a Zulu speaking, but you should consult books, you should attend and then you should try to relate the information that you knew before and the information that you gather in lecture. ...that's how I think I managed to get +80%.

The above responses indicate a general adoption of deep strategies with minimal interest in the subject matter. Some difficult to understand modules required that students adopt deep learning strategies, despite not really having an intrinsic interest in the subject matter. This is one way of explaining why students' deep strategies are higher than their motives. A student coming from a different area of interest in the sciences need to develop an interest in what is learnt if success is to be reached. The perceived relevance of the module also affected the extent of deep strategies; given that the module was structured to relate its content to other modules. Although the ECP did not offer some of the majors that students were interested in, responses indicated that the programme elicited deep learning skills.

Students demonstrated how modules allowed them to adopt deep strategies of linking information and trying to read in depth and from different sources. Even a student who did not have intrinsic interest used deep learning strategies to understand materials. Interest can develop along the way, hence the higher deep strategies than the motives. Meanwhile, many deep learners also tended to be achieving learners.

6.4.1.3 Achieving ECP Learners

Biggs (1976) and Ramsden (1981) introduced the achieving (or strategic) approach to learning as a third approach, (Cited in Choy, O’Grady & Rotgans 2011: 160). This refers to learners who ‘aim to get high marks by optimising their efforts’. The motive here is to enhance their ego and self-esteem through competition for high grades, whether the material to be studied is interesting or not. They organising their time and working space; adjusting their study strategies and following up all suggested readings, and behaving like a model student in a bid to earn a good grade. Their focus on doing well on tests makes them better off than surface learners’ (Choy, O’Grady & Rotgans 2011; Biggs 1987).

According to Biggs (1987), surface and deep strategies describe ways in which students engage the actual task itself, while the achieving strategy describes the ways in which students organise temporal and spatial context in which the task is carried out. Hence, students are generally are either surface or deep learners, but they may adopt achieving strategies in order to achieve high grades. It is no doubt, therefore, the SPQ data indicated higher achieving approaches to learning amongst respondents. The deep-achieving is a powerful characteristic of many successful students.

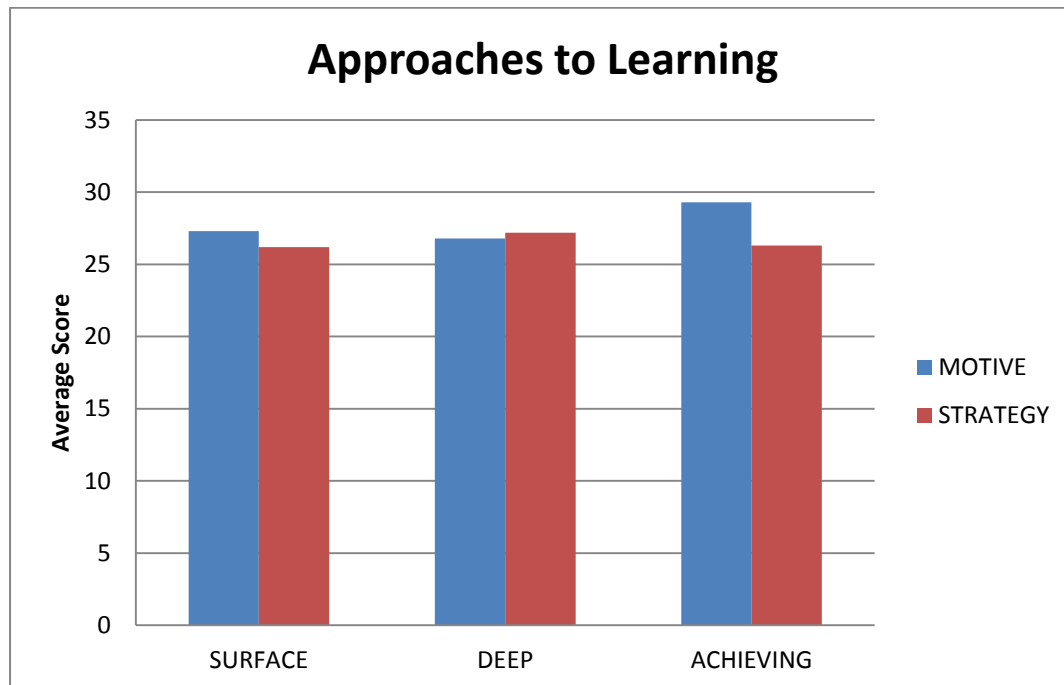


Figure 11- ECP students' surface, deep and achieving approaches to learning by motives and strategies

With the arguments of Biggs on surface-achieving versus deep achieving students, the statistics above are more encouraging. It implies the possibility that even the surface students

are desiring to achieve; which means that more students from the cohort are likely to succeed. The higher achieving approaches is therefore not a surprise among respondents. The fact that there were more achieving motives than strategies also indicates the possibility that the ECP was really motivating students to achieve as well as it was empowering them to succeed. Interview data from ECP students expressed more tendencies towards high achieving approach to learning as follows:

RAFENG: when we just arrived ...they brought in former ECP students to us...: some of them were doing masters, others were tutors, others were working... those statistics says that most of the ECP students graduate on time, ...so it developed that attitude ...that I don't wanna be one of those ECP students who doesn't finish their degrees on time. ... You find that they succeed in post-graduate studies.

This inspiration to be achieving learners was also affected by factors like their motivation to compete against mainstream students in order to prove themselves to other students and other members of the university that they are not misfits, hence, the higher motives of achieving learners than their strategies. It was one way of overcoming some of the following misrecognition perceived from the stigma attached to being on the ECP:

RASPD: ... [ECP students] are actually being thought of... as not being fit for the first year.... [D]oing the access programme is in itself a challenge ...you always think of yourself as not being good enough as the first year.... [I]t is detrimental to weaker minds... once that pressure in thought outweighs the vision, with which you are there, then that can be a serious challenge and can eventually mess you up.

FRAY-1F: because I am doing BSS4... I might consider myself low than mainstream students. I feel like I am in the bottom somehow because we do other lectures that are not in the mainstream... the people in the mainstream ...know what they are majoring in... we just have two subjects so we ...feel like we are on the low.

RAFENG: ...knowing that you are not in the mainstream. There is that feeling that you don't belong because there is the separation within this big community. They've got their own administration; you have certain modules that you are attending at certain places. So you find that like a stigma... I think for me it was that motivation that I don't wanna be here. ...I am intelligent; I was not supposed to be here....

Meyes, Medrano and Carlson (2005) assert that such socialised perceptions are capable of deterring students' performances and their perceptions. But the ECP seems to be able to counter such negative impacts in a unique way by motivating students to emulate previous students who demonstrated resilience and excelled in spite of the difficult circumstances in line with the thoughts of Haggins and LaPointe (2012). Most ECP students were prompted by such responses (like the stigma) to try to proof their worth, hence they developed achieving learning motives. This also supports the finding that their achieving motives were stronger than their strategies. Nevertheless, some 'intelligent' ECP students were prompted as a wake-

up call to adopt achieving approaches after they failed some of their modules as discussed in the following sub-section.

a. A wake-up call and a reality check

Some respondents' employed achieving strategies after experiencing poor performance in certain modules due to the insufficient effort. This realisation served as a wake-up call, motivating positive future performance. This tendency to invest more effort is an indication of a progression from the surface to the achieving strategies to learning among some ECP students. According to Haggins and LaPointe (2012), it might indicate these students' beliefs that intelligence is incremental and that they have some measure of personal control and persistent behaviours. Respondents attributed poor performances to insufficient effort as a reality check as follows:

RASIK: ...basic mathematics ...everyone was acing it. ...I scored 50%... a very... poor performance at that level ...an introduction to the university environment... Mathematics at any level ... [needs] practice... I didn't give time [for] ...my homework ...familiarising myself with the formula...

MKHIRATHANDO: when I got those marks, I saw...it's bad! ...I had to change and try to give myself time to study and focus more, because now if you are getting ... 15%... your parents, or someone else knows ...that you are much better and capable...

This investment of less time and effort that led to poor performance was attributed to lack of discipline. The embarrassment of such failures coerced re-adjustments and prompted a positive approach towards the future, with a determination to make amends. The respondents clearly believe that they can do better as obvious from following responses on their attitude towards the way forward:

RASIK: ...If only I consulted my classmates, and ...convinced myself that... [it] is doable and given it time, [done] homework in time ... [and] self-studied...

MKHIRATHANDO: ...those marks made me realise that I had to work harder, try to focus... I told myself "...I don't have to be afraid to ask somebody else, because ...if you don't ask, you'll never know". ...I realised that ...it is time that I changed for the better and stop not studying...

The values of some ECP provisions are highlighted here as the respondent asserts that this poor performance could have been averted if he had: discussed the subject matter with colleagues or inquired what their colleagues were doing to excel on the module. The value of group work and social capital is emphasised as the following response indicates:

RASIK: ...after access - ... not having enough attention. ...because I had passed the ... (first semester), I ...thought that it was going to be easy ... but it was not.... [Failing was] ...a reality check because it showed [that] ...university... - unlike high school where your teacher ...always ...ask you: “where is my work? Do this! Do that!!” - ...you take ownership of your work. So ...I need to fine-tune this attitude... facing different challenges..., lecturers and the number of students... it would be impossible for lecturers to give... individual attention unless you consult...

The respondent learns that reduced attention from lecturers affected some ECP students' performances when they got to the mainstream. The gap between secondary and tertiary studies and the challenge of transition also became obvious. This supports the belief that the initial year of the university requires the lecturer's attention to facilitate students' integration. The reality check was that readjustment is required for success after the access support. Attention should no longer be expected from the lecturer, but students should make efforts:

RASIK: ...if I had consulted with my lecturer, about ...not getting the higher marks ...because the DP was not bad; ... [Or] approached my tutors, maybe things would have been a bit different... the main reason for going for tutorial was to ...submit. ... [T]uts were like extra classes.... an extra ...two hours... [but] we ...didn't... use the support.

RAY-13M 3: Well it affects the way I learn in university. I would have scored higher marks as well, but small things robbed me ...for example going to tutorials. I lost almost 20% there. ...So ...it teaches me ...that I need to take care of the small things³⁴ and not focus only on the big things.

The above wake-up call was also a reality check for the respondents who undermined the value of the tutorials. A related factor to ignoring support services like tutorials is students' carelessness about certain requirements or rules that should have earned them better results as the following response indicates:

RAY-13M 1: ...I did a terrible mistake, using the USB of my friend... I e-mailed my friend's assignment [for submission]. ...I was given a message that I did plagiarism, and I was penalised, and I lost 50 marks. And I got a written warning. ...I worked very hard on it. Most of the students did not go to write the exams because there was no need, but I ...wrote the exams ...I put more effort because I knew that if I failed ...it was going to be terrible, so I tried to work very hard... then I got good marks.

Students who were optimistic about their abilities considered poor performance as a wake-up call; motivating them to work really hard and to redeem themselves. These experiences give students some ideas on how to adjust in order to succeed in the university. Awareness of the

³⁴ How is it that the student who scored the highest of marks is the one that notices these nitty-gritty? Interesting.

dangers of not following the rules or ignoring the “nitty-gritty” also affected students’ attitudes towards their future and provided valuable lessons for prospective first-years:

RAY-13M 1: ...they make us understand what ...is happening in university..., what we can do to help others who are still willing to come here, and tell them what is happening in university.

RAY-13M 3:it is time that I wake up and ...eradicate those issues that I have been failing to deal with because in varsity if you don’t deal with those issues ...you lose lots of marks. ...when you lose ...marks, you lose ...opportunities such as scholarships....

Awareness brought about from previous mistakes and carelessness urged students to find ways of dealing with those issues that they were undermining. What made such students’ efforts even more successful is the fact that the ECP is structured to enhance achieving approaches to learning from students as discussed in the next sub-section.

b. The ECP enhancing students’ achieving approaches to learning

The contents and approaches of the foundational ECP modules the augmented modules were also reported to evoke achieving strategies or skills. These factors developed students’ learning strategies towards achieving high grades. Strategies like class participation, group work are an indication that the programme prepared students to be achieving learners. Such rewards would primarily be good grades, a good sense of self and overcoming stigma in the programme. Some responses to support the ECP socialising students into achieving approaches to learning were expressed in students’ attitude toward their studies as follows:

RAMNOTH: ...From my undergraduate, even until now, I didn’t relax, I have not relaxed!! Every module ...Whether I have the perception that it is easy or it is not challenging... I always put effort. Because most of the time, students start to fail when they think that the module is ... easy ...not challenging, or ... lesser than others in terms of workload. Even if there is no workload, try to make sure, use that as an advantage to you, score more marks if it is not challenging to you.... If it is challenging, then I should work. If it is not challenging, then you should see at the end of the day by my results, I should score more marks.

The above response holds a general attitude of seriousness towards all his studies. He holds no biases or pre-emptions for a module but puts in the best effort in all modules. He believes that the results should determine whether or not a module is easy. This attitude is not likely to fail as it demonstrates a strong sense of personal control over outcomes, self-mastery and persistent behaviour which are important characteristics of positive attribution and their consequences (Haggins & LaPointe 2012). The respondent affirms how the ECP facilitated this achieving strategy thus:

RAMNOTH: ...in the ECP, per week, you ...have to submit like three academic pieces of work. Maybe it is just a page. Just go and write this then bring it back to us... so that ability to work on time and to submit timeously... made me the kind of student that ...I am now.... Always able to work on time; always... able to attempt academic papers. ... That's how they groomed me.... You ...don't need to relax, you always need to work. So even if there is no work, but I was programmed that I should always work ...it is very beneficial to me, because when the exams come, I don't have to cross nights or to study up until 1 o'clock.... At the beginning of the semester, it was like "study up until the exams come".

RAQIM: ...in the programme, they encouraged us to work hard in every module, so there was never a module where I did not work hard because I knew that the mark that I will get are determined by the work.

The value of hard work and developing that attitude is recognised as a positive mindset that is being nurtured by the ECP to facilitate students' learning experiences. It is functional to attribute achieving approaches to learning to personal, controllable and unstable factor like effort. It leads to higher expectations of future success in the domain (Haggins & LaPointe 2012). In sum, students had both the motive to be achieving learners and were supported to develop achieving strategies that prove that the ECP facilitated this approach to learning. The next sub-section engages with respondents persistent behaviours within the programme.

c. Persistent Engagement with difficult module

Achieving learning students are known to persist in the midst of difficult modules based on their passion for performing high and their competitiveness. The value of acknowledging that a module is difficult allows proper preparation to engage with the module, especially for a student with an achieving mentality. Respondents' views on their reactions to difficult modules are presented and discussed below:

RAMNOTH: ...I used to work hard in IsiZulu because I found that... harder than the other modules. ... If you don't attend ... you will fail because **they don't send us notes**. As the lecturer speaks ...you try to summarise whatever ...she says. In IsiZulu ...they just summarise the information that they have ...it is your responsibility to ...look for information. So it was very challenging and I put a lot of effort... In IsiZulu... I got ...69%... in political science 75% and in Sociology 85%. But in tests ... Sociology and Political Science used to drop and IsiZulu gets up. So I don't understand what was happening in my undergraduate, but IsiZulu was tough, and I used to work very hard.

RAY-13M 3: Computer literacy. I scored 94% I worked so hard trying to be ahead of the class. Because we had it once a week³⁵, I took some time, not only once a week to do that. ...most of the students... did that task right there in class. ...I made sure that

³⁵ A leader is a leader, irrespective of where he/she was brought up.

whenever I go to class ...other students are doing their tasks, I have finished it already at home and I am doing another task, so that gave me a positive result at the end.

According to RAMNOTH, attendance is considered invaluable for passing a difficult module, owed to the fact that notes are not given to students on the module except what is taken in class. The respondent does well in class works, tests and assignment than he does in IsiZulu exams, despite working very hard. The effort here is two-folds: firstly on understanding the difficult module content and secondly on getting personal notes. RAY-13M 3 cites working ahead of time as a secret to success on a hard module. His approach is in sync with the following view on the value of having high expectations:

RAMNOTH: I think... I had the higher expectations, because - many persons that I was with in undergraduate - whenever I showed them my marks, they were like: "wow bra! It is a great mark", but to me, considering the effort that I put, it was like this module is not appreciating the effort that I put.... I think it was just the higher expectations! Maybe the marks that I got there was equivalent to the effort that I put, but it was my expectations that were higher than the marks that I obtained.

The respondent was used to scoring high marks and had high expectations of what he should achieve based on the amount of work invested into studies. Although the module made so much demand on his effort, he did not meet his expectations. The module demanded effort and time not just in studying the content but also in gathering notes. This assertion is further collaborated by the respondent's view on what was done to improve upon the marks:

RAMNOTH: I was always ...feeling that (I got like 72%, in the exams) I would try to work harder than I did in the test. And I would get like 75% which is three marks more than what I did before, but ...the effort is higher than the mark that I got... Three marks more ... - it was always challenging.... It served as motivation ...in itself that ... Let me work hard! ...There was a change in terms of the mark, but to me, the change was not equivalent to what I expected or to the effort that I put in. So I was keeping on pushing, up until the time that I completed my degree!

RAY-13M 3: I think the other 6% ...went because of minor mistakes ...tiny nitty-gritty which I should have taken care of... I lose ...important marks ...up to 7% ... [because] ...my assignments ...were not named correctly... And there were marks for naming assignments correctly before handing in. ...I did not... learn after my first assignment...

With assessments of reasons for performance on modules, respondents were able to identify where the challenges lay. This realisation motivates more effort, which can as well entail correcting the petty mistakes that are capable of affecting one's marks. Nevertheless, the measure of success based on academic performance alone can undermine the value of hard work. This can contribute towards students' self-esteem depletion, as they try to internalise the problem:

RAMNOTH: ...Maybe I should have just changed the way that I was used to studying, ... that was going to gain me more marks than I did...

The response above indicated the subtle awareness that changing the approach to studying and learning might have improved marks. It is surmised that sometimes, poor performance is not just a result of laziness, but it might just be a misplaced priority or wrong investment of hard work. The continuous effort at improving performance, premised on increasing effort, might affect the students' self-esteem when it does not yield any significant difference in the outcome. In this light, Haggins and LaPointe (2012) assert something of the value of the ECP based on the foregoing responses in their argument that such persistent behaviour and resilience that prompt students to improve in spite of difficulty indicate that they have been successfully adapted to the university environment. They argue that such tendency indicates also students' perception that they are competent and have some amount of self-mastery.

Finally, a consideration of how ECP students at different levels of studies approached their studies is presented in the table below:

Table 15- ECP students' achieving approaches to learning by motives and strategies in different educational levels

	Achieving Motive (AM)	Achieving Strategy (AS)
Educational Level 1	29.29	27.11
Educational Level 2	29.87	26.28
Educational Level 3	27.63	23.92

Again, the achieving approaches as a whole received the highest responses and the motives were higher than the strategies as the discussion already highlights. The significant result is that this approach seemed to reduce among students at the third educational level. The explanation could be that as students' transition into post-graduate studies or find themselves in the work situation, they are disillusioned about competition for grades and trying to build a self-esteem. Some students also feared that ending the programme support was going to affect their performances as expressed below:

RAY-13M 3: ...sometimes I just feel like we are having it too easy... because they draft our timetables ...even the mainstream lectures they put ...into our time tables, they put us in groups... we are a bit too guided to be able to stand on our own. And for example, when we are writing essays, there are different processes ... They take us through all those processes, which is fine, but at times I just feel like ...some of us

will have problems next year when we try to do it on our own because we will be depending on having someone who will try to guide us on essays...

Such support might have affected why students who were achieving learners suddenly struggled when support was no longer there. Besides, the demands of the studies are also expected to have substantially changed by the level of difficulties as the years progress. The next section describes the plight of a surface achieving learner making attributions.

d. The surface achiever's difficulty with the examinations

Respondents with achieving mentalities also made attributions of their failures to external factors like the nature of assessment and the luck of having prepared for the section being examined, owning the prescribed textbooks and attending lectures. These challenges manifested in a variety of ways, including the modes of assessments – how questions were set and how the answers were assessed.

i. Negative marking

Some achieving students had poor results, not because of poor work ethic or module difficulty, but resulting from the negative marking mode of assessments in Economics:

MKHIRATHANDO: ...the worst mark was Economics 101. ...they were using negative marking... I would go and ask the lecturer when the scripts come. He would tell me: "...you wrote everything and you scored ...60% and you got incorrect 40%, so obviously, it cancelled all the mark that you got" (laughs)... without negative marking ...I got 60% but because I never skipped any question, I just took chances (laughs)... in the questions that I had no idea. ...and I got that wrong.... you end up getting 15% or 10%... That is why I performed so badly on that module.

The frustration from negative marking undermined his efforts. The students can see what his results was for the ones he got right; he is also aware that he scored low because he got some other questions wrong. The complaint is that it is unfair to be deprived of what one knows in order to be penalised for what one does not know. This did not affect his self-esteem because self-esteem is affected when the failure is understood to result from lack of the requisite ability to engage with the concepts of a particular module (Haggins & LaPointe 2012). The next sub-section discusses how owning the prescribed textbooks and attending lectures affected students' performance.

ii. Owning the prescribed texts and lecture attendance

In line with the characteristics of achieving learners (Choy, O'Grady & Rotgans 2011; Biggs 1987) some respondents believed that they performed better when they owned the relevant textbooks and attended lectures:

MKHIRATHANDO: ...So I realised when I started buying books that I get time to study... even if I get like 15 minutes to study. ...I get much more from them than I got from the lecture slides because most lecture slides are just bullet... and you don't get most information that you should especially if you weren't attending that lecture. ...I realised that if I just tell myself that I am here to study, then I will ...make my life better... I was relaxing and not taking varsity seriously...

Probing³⁶ the idea that slides were most useful to those who attended lectures revealed that the respondent had the following other challenges that could have affected his final results: missing some lectures, and learning in English:

MKHIRATHANDO: I was always attending, but then I had that problem... [of] not absorbing the information... when I get to a lecture, I get sleepy and [remember] nothing ...in my first year... not that English was too much of a problem because I could understand... what they were saying, but I couldn't capture it and understand when it was time.

The emphasis in needing to understand what was learnt indicates some characteristic of a deep learner in the student. Nevertheless, he would have attributed his failure to a cause that was personally uncontrollable and stable (low ability), based on his inability to grasp what was taught in class and this would have affected his expectation and hope for future success and lowered his persistence leading him to want to quit (Haggins & LaPointe 2012). The student began to miss lectures when he was no longer grasping what was being taught indicating that his persistence was dwindling. Even while in class, the respondent slept off or would remember nothing of what was learnt. When he started reading prescribed textbooks, he realised that the lecture slides were not contributions to his learning; he began to understand those concepts during his personal studies. His sense of personal control was revived and his hopes raised again as he retained his status as a deep achieving student.

This is just one indication of how circumstantial factors can cause students to be classified as surface learners whereas they are actually achieving learners. This makes the next sub-section which discusses marks as a matter of luck; not always true abilities of students.

iii. Marks: Luck versus true ability

Identifying what could have been done to improve poor performance on a difficult module, a respondent noted that scoring high marks are not necessary indications of ability; it could sometimes be a matter of luck:

³⁶ It is obvious that the reasons for students' performance or under-performance are multifaceted and have multiple and interrelated causes. Some of which students might not be aware of except upon reflection.

MKHIRATHANDO: If you got a 50% and someone else gets a 60% it doesn't mean that they are better! It is possible that the questions that were asked were the questions that they spent more time doing. So you find that marks ... aren't really really a true reflection of your capability ... one could argue that at the time when the information was needed, s/he was able to provide. But I ask myself the question that: "you remembered something four minutes earlier before me and I remember it five minutes late, does that make you smarter?"

The above claim is a functional attribution (Haggins & LaPointe 2012) that high academic performance may demonstrate either ability or the luck. The scorer was able to remember what was learnt on time or to have spotted and studied the aspect of the material that featured in the exams. Such attributions have the advantage that poor performance does not deplete the respondent's self-confidence. It also implies that one cannot be so well prepared that they are ready for any question. This is more a characteristic of a surface learner, going by the assertions of Kelly and Michela (1980: 469) that 'unexpected task outcomes are attributed less to ability and more to luck. There are no guarantees that such students would continue to be lucky in the future; which means it does not really build the students' confidence and self-esteem.

Nevertheless, a surface student who believes that he is not lucky is still likely to lose confidence in him/herself if and when required to engage deep understanding of what was learnt. They are thrown off balance when questions are twisted as expressed below:

MKHIRATHANDO: Sometimes the question is difficult. Sometimes it happens that the lecturer asks you questions, but you don't really understand what the question wants from you, then you write something which is wrong. Not because you did not understand. Yea! Sometimes the language that is used makes it even harder for us to understand and respond directly to the question and some lecturers want that.

This experience is a good example of how a student builds up the idea that he is not good enough; a failure; cumulatively from experiences of poor performance that are preceded by some hard work. However, attributing failure to poorly phrased questions deliberately planned by the lecturer is an indication of a surface learner with an achieving mentality. One reason why some students would pass in one semester and fail in another, or vice versa, is not necessarily a matter of how intelligent they are, but just a matter of luck. The next sub-section discusses students' attributions on how they could improve upon their performances.

e. Improving upon good performances

It is characteristic of achieving learners to desire to improve upon their performances, even when these performances were good (Choy, O'Grady & Rotgans 2011; Biggs 1987).

Respondents believed that their good marks could be improved through assessments of potentials, capacities and efforts invested to achieve the results. Distractions, inconsistency in hard work, working under pressure, doing it very late - a day before the submission were identified as major constraints to excellent performance:

RAY-13M 3: being... dedicated to my work... I had some distractions, for example: not studying, or studying the day before ...the discipline which I did not really... grasp in the first semester. ...I started very low when I came, and then I started building gradually... I only put my mind ...a little bit too late.

RAVERNS: ...I had to wake-up [that] if you don't put up the effort... a 70% student at the first semester will be sitting at the 60s and 50s at the end of the second semester. So you always have to be on your toes. ...Relax in one test and get 60 and that brings your DP down, even if you're doing well... The first semester was like: "Ok this is the life!" But then in the second semester, I realised that heh, I have to put efforts...

RAY-13M 1: ...I spent too much time in church and with my friends and less time with my books, but I made sure ...I was very dedicated. When I begin to study, I just forget about anything... So studying under pressure was the problem for me.

Performing below their expectations, the above respondents had a wake-up call early in the first year and were motivated to excel. In line with the arguments of Reyes, Medrano and Carlson (2005) these students attributed their past performances to low effort and were thus expectant that they can perform better in the future with more effort investment to their work. They were not discouraged by poor performance because they did not attribute it to a stable and unchanging factor like ability. They were motivated by it to excel based on the belief that slacking the amount of work that earned high marks drastically affected their results. They were disillusioned that an initial good performance in their first semesters or first essays implied that it was easy. They learnt that academic work gets incrementally challenging, and increasing effort is necessary for their success. Their experience also indicated clearly to them the assertions of Saunders, Nolan and Provost (nd) that students tend to fail when they become overly optimistic that the previous determinant of their success will always be present and that it will always ensure success. Extra-curricular activities like excessive socialising, if not managed constrain performance. The next section discusses why ECP students adopted achieving approaches to learning.

f. Motivation for adopting more achieving approaches to learning

Excellent performance improved respondents' confidence to proceed with their studies. Others develop a habit of hard work to ensure continued excellence. There was a general

belief that excellent performances would curb stigma and discrimination that accompanied being on the programme. Students also used excellent performance to prove their worth through competing with mainstream students. These follow the assertions of Haggins and LaPointe (2012) that students who consider themselves as capable of more than they performed because they did not put in sufficient effort in their studies (a controllable and stable attribution) made functional attributions that increased their expectations of success in the same domain. Such students had higher hopes and exhibited higher persistent behaviours.

i. Developing self-confidence

ECP students had an incentive for scoring high marks. It built their self-confidence necessary to resist the popular stigma on the programme that ECP students were not good enough to be in the university. Excellent performance endorsed a sense of integration as students developed a yardstick for determining the amount of effort required for continuous success in their expression of the impact of scoring high noted below:

RASPD: ...it was more like a kick start. When ...a car ...needs to be kick-started, if you put less effort ...it is likely not to start. But ...more energy ...and the motion is slightly quicker, it is more likely to start. So... these nice results ...gave me enough confidence... also to move forward.

RAVERNS: ...when my matric marks [could not get me] accepted into mainstream ...my confidence went down ...and when I got into access I wasn't too happy about it... I started getting good marks, my confidence levels went up... in my abilities. ...The second semester, I knew ...I needed to put in efforts to get good marks. ...I always try to aim as high as possible; ...to set goals ...and push forward.

RAHLEMS: ...One good pass gives you the self-esteem ...for other good passes.... it boosts your self-confidence as well; especially staying on the green.... You ...open your Student Central at the LAN when there is that huge green. But when there is orange or a red, you probably go... for a computer that is at the corner (laughs). You even turn the computer ...so that no one else ...sees.

RAFENG: It made me look at the university in a very positive way ...relate to ...programmes like counselling... You develop a vision and an image of what you are going to face ...before even you get into the university...

RAMNOTH: ...once you start to pass ...with higher marks, you get that confidence, that even in other modules, you can ...pursue ...higher mark.... it ...serves as the motivation ...that you can....

The above responses affirm that having good results early in ECP facilitated their integration into the university environment with the mentality to succeed. It serves as a kick-start for success and empowered students with confidence; creating a foundation for incremental effort at hard work. This mirrors the assertions that such experiences build self-mastery

among students as they believed that they could control the outcomes of their lives (Haggins & LaPointe 2012). The ECP promoted such attitudes through its extended tutorials as follows:

RAFENG: I scored 81% in a politics module - certificate of merit - in a class of 500+ students; ...English Language Development... 79%...if you take the extended tutorials in Political Science seriously ...you'll be the best students... You have your main lecturer, and ... the tutor, who does almost the same thing... So you can consult your tutors and you can consult your lecturers. ...We also discussed the tutorials that we submit in the mainstream during our Extended Curriculum classes.

RAFENG: the coordinator is tracking your performance... If you don't submit your work and you get called to say: "you did not submit your work". ...there are structures that force you to do the work.... [W]e behave when we know that we are being monitored.... they don't let you go; ...if there is any problem... you have a home there. ...that has been in my experience even while I was in Honours.

A certificate of merit is granted to the top three performers in any particular module. Thus, a great boost for an ECP student in a class of over 500 students. Having the extended tutorials and persuading students to take maximum advantage of it. Such continuous reflection on the subject matter leads to more deep and achieving approaches to learning. The monitoring element also proved to be an important contributor to ECP students' success. The need for some level of supervision early into one's tertiary career is vital because tertiary study is the first time that most students are away from home. This genuine and relevant support undermines stigma but it also explains why later in students' study, they tend to revert to previous approaches to learning when the support systems are relaxed. A supporting factor to ECP students' interest in developing self-confidence is the need to prove their worth to mainstream students who undermine them as incapable.

ii. The burden of proof to mainstream students

Another motivation for ECP students' improved performance on modules was to prove their worth and abilities to the mainstream students through hard work. This competitive motivation not only undermined laziness (Kalenga & Samukelisiwe 2015) but also encouraged persistent behaviours and resilience (Haggins & LaPointe 2012) while prompting ECP students to take responsibility for their success as illustrated below:

RAFENG: ...what I could do was to take everything seriously. ...Because I always wanted to prove the mainstream.... I just wanted to show them that ...even though I am an ECP student... I am smart.

RAHLEMS: Yes! Yes!! To prove a point to other mainstream students...

A desire to outperform mainstream students for the purpose of asserting self-esteem motivated some ECP students to work very hard towards success. This motivation was, however, unstable and unreliable in the long term. The implication is that once they prove themselves, they might lack the motivation to push forward. Moreover, if this is the only motivation for hard work, then the ECP might not have the same kind of success if opened to all students because there would be no motivation for such competitions. The same concern applies to ECP students motivated by the successes of previous ECP students:

RAFENG: Some of them were doing masters, others were tutors, others were working, and those statistics say that most of the ECP students graduate on time... so it developed that attitude within myself ...that I don't wanna (sic) be one of those ECP students who don't finish their degrees on time.

The ECP students' attempt to prove their worth to mainstream students had two motivations. The first is a direct competition against mainstream students, while the other aims to match the record time completion rate of previous ECP students. The fact that some past ECP students were doing their post-graduate studies; tutoring or working successfully in different fields motivate current students to do same. For some students, this burden of proof manifested itself as competition against mainstream students as the next sub-section presents.

iii. Competition and comparative results

The sense of competition and a go-getter attitude is developed by some ECP students because they want to prove a point to the mainstream students. They compete against mainstream students for best results as reported in the following responses:

RAFENG: ...I always wanted to proof to the mainstream.... that ...even though I am an ECP student... I am smart.... The programme takes students from ...those schools that don't have libraries, toilets.... [S]ome of them were intelligent... [but] didn't have resources in [their] high schools... the quality of the school is very low. Maybe they were taught English in Zulu. So Coming in, they... they want to proof to the mainstream that they are the best because of the stigma.

The inferiority complex deriving from the stigma on the programme caused some ECP students to prove their capabilities to the mainstream students through hard work and achieving behaviours. This retained positive competition between the ECP students and the mainstream students within modules. Such competitions boost the self-esteem of the well-performing ECP students. It might adversely affect the ECP students who continue to struggle. When competitions yielded good results, they justified ECP students' entitlement to

the rights to be in the university. ECP students noted in retrospection, the value of the programme as compared to the mainstream in the following terms:

RAFENG: some of what we did in Access programme... you don't take them seriously... but you will realise that they are very important when you are in your second year, outside the programme. ...because you have the stigma of saying I was not supposed to be here, you don't see the importance of them, but when you start now the mainstream, you realise: "oh! These people in the mainstream, they don't know this, but I did this when I was in access.

The ECP provisions actually facilitated their success in their competition. Mainstream students, against whom they compete do not receive the ECP support and could be making efforts without strategies. Some ECP students realise that they should have taken the programme support more seriously. The implications of both competition and the programme provisions must be equally considered to guarantee success. The next section determines to what extent students' approaches to learning changed in terms of motives and strategies as students' years of studies advanced.

6.4.2 Motives of ECP Students

Choy, O'Grady and Rotgans (2011) cites studies like Zeegers (1999); Astin (1970); and Neilson *et al.* (1998) that suggest that students' capacities to adopt deep approaches to learning grow as they advance in their years of study. This section tries to determine to what extent students' motives for learning improved as they advanced in their years of study. Students' motives allow them to set targets of what they would like to achieve and their strategies determine whether or not they actually meet their target. Sometimes, not meeting a target might be due to employing the wrong strategies. The means scores for the study motives across all three educational levels may be seen below in Table 16 and graphically in Figure 12 below:

Table 16- Means of ECP students' motives within the different approaches to levels at different educational levels

	Surface Motive (SM)	Deep Motive (DM)	Achieving Motive (AM)
Educational Level 1	27.14	26.41	29.29
Educational Level 2	27.65	27.53	29.87
Educational Level 3	26.29	25.58	27.63

The composite results for the three motives (surface, deep and achieving) were submitted to a two-way mixed analysis of variance (ANOVA) with educational level as the between factor

and the motives as the within (repeated measures) factor. The ANOVA did not yield a significant result for the year of study ($p > 0.05$) as this difference only approached significance ($F(2;167) = 2.948; p = 0.0552$). There was a significant result for the motive ($F(2;334) = 32.525; p < 0.00001$) but a non-significant educational level by motive interaction ($P > 0.05$). The source of the significant motive result was located in the achieving motive having a significantly higher overall mean compared to the surface and deep motives.

Mean scores indicate a slight increase in students' motives in the second levels of study with the deep motive recording the highest increase. This is interesting, given the earlier finding that the deep strategy was higher than the deep motives in general. This implies that majority of the deep strategies could not have been from the second level students. Semi-structured interview responses also supported the findings that the programme prepared students to apply achieving approaches to learning by encouraging them to attend lectures and be prepared beforehand to answer questions during lectures. It guided them through essay writing and reading skills and encouraged them to complete their assignments ahead of time. It is also indicative of the fact that students on the programme are more inclined to compete with mainstream students, not only to clear themselves of the stigma on the programme, but also to enhance their confidence and their self-esteem.

It was found that students' motives at the third year of study were generally lower than both first and second level motives as further illustrated by the graph in figure 12 below:

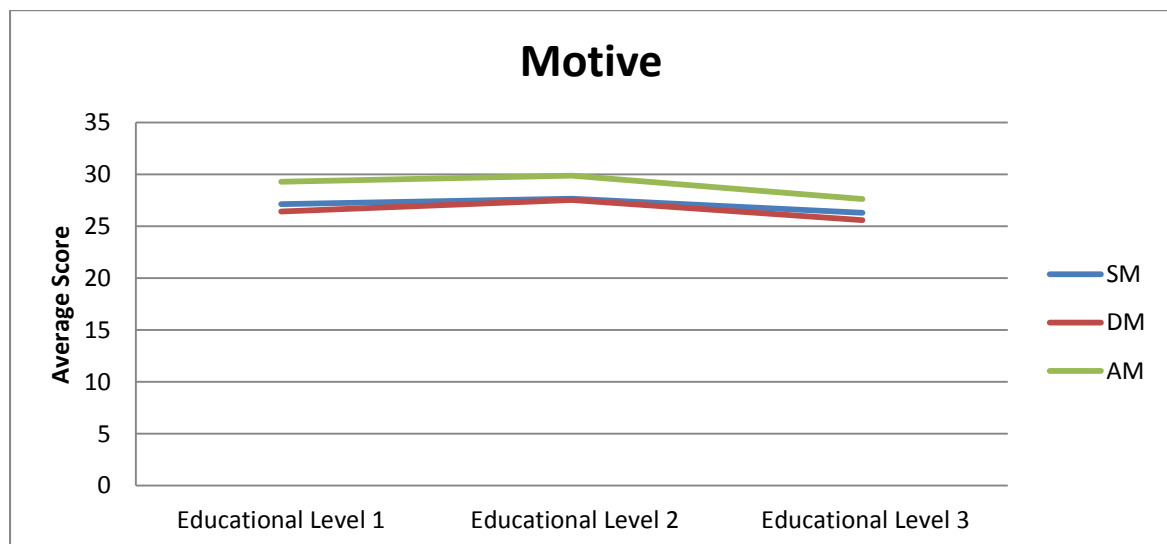


Figure 12- ECP students' surface, deep and achieving motives by different educational levels

It is puzzling why students' motives were higher at the second level of study and weakest at the third level of study. Data from the semi-structured interview explain that the ECP support is given during the first level of study and students' motives, especially their achieving motives rise because they find themselves out-performing mainstream students. During their second levels of studies, respondents find that the programme had empowered them in a way that gave them some advantage over mainstream students. This increased their motives to out-perform these mainstream students who previously looked down on them.

By the third level of study, which is mainly at honours or postgraduate levels, the approach to learning would have changed and students are realising that some of the skills learnt in undergraduate studies need to change. It is generally held that students struggle at transition points. Another explanation is that there is no more room for the competition which was a primary motivation at the second level of study, therefore their motivations begin to change. A careful observation indicates that the surface motive remains relatively constant over the years compared to the others. This might be a further indication of where students' original motives were. This assertion follows the idea that in moments of crisis, where there are no more motivations, people tend to revert to their traditional practices, in which case, the surface motive approach to learning.

There is an anomaly that students exhibited more deep motives in their second year than their third years. It is also noticed when surface motives are compared with deep motives over the three years of study, the surface motive is higher than the deep motive. This is a clear indication that students' motives for studies have been generally weak. It might also be an indication that the programme did not do enough to enhance students' learning motives.

Generally, ECP demonstrated higher motives than their strategies with a marginal exception for the deep approach where the strategy is more than the motive. The implication is that if these students are more highly motivated, they can be supported to adopt more rewarding strategies to enhance their academic successes. The high level of surface learners per year indicates that more students can still be successful since the surface approach to learning is the least preferable for ensuring students' success. The programme needs to support students to develop more intrinsic interests in what they learn, or register for majors that they are intrinsically interested in. This is likely to enhance the programme's success. This corroborates students' complaints in the interviews that the majoring options in the

programme were restrictive and the exit options were limited. Hence, some students' motives were constrained rather than enhanced.

6.4.3 Strategies of ECP students

Table 17 below indicates the distribution of respondent strategies through the SPQ. As expected, students' motives were higher than their strategies in general. Whether or not the programme was more directly affecting students' motives than their strategies still has to be uncovered.

Table 17- means of ECP students' motives and strategies within the different approaches to learning

	SURFACE	DEEP	ACHIEVING	TOTAL
MOTIVE	27.3	26.8	29.3	83.4
STRATEGY	26.2	27.2	26.3	79.7
Total	53.5	54.0	55.6	163.1

Although the differences between the learning strategies were not significant with regards to years of study, the most popular learning strategy exhibited by respondents was the deep strategy. This was followed by the achieving strategy and then the surface strategy. The reason can be inferred from the fact the programme's interventions aimed at socialising students into deep and achieving learning strategies. Most students enter the university with surface learning strategies. Some may have achieving strategies, but only a few come with deep strategies. This already indicates that the programme's provision had significant success since most respondents exhibited deep learning strategies.

Other programme elements like the historical record of successful ECP students, and their capacity to find suitable careers should affect their motives positively. While those who found their careers of interest would have strong likelihood towards deep approaches to learning, those who had to be socialised into one that they did not really like would straddle between the surface and achieving motives, depending on how much they appropriated the support of the programme on learning skills. If these assertions are correct, they would but challenge and build on Nel and Nel's (2009) argument that a reading programme that cuts across all years of study would be vital in ensuring students' success. The point here is that reading skills without intrinsic motive in what is learnt would still not evoke the best results from students. To further assess these assertions, the distribution strategies between the

respondents' years of studies should be insightful regarding the extent of the approaches to learning that the programme as students progressed and their significance. The table 18 below illustrates the distribution of study strategies among the different levels of study.

Table 18- Means of ECP students' surface deep and achieving strategies at different educational levels

	Surface Strategy (SS)	Deep Strategy (DS)	Achieving Strategy (AS)
Educational Level 1	26.1	26.65	27.11
Educational Level 2	26.78	27.6	26.28
Educational Level 3	24.42	27.21	23.92

Ideally, it would be expected that as students progressed to higher levels of studies, they developed more deep and achieving approaches to learning, but table 18 above indicates otherwise as indicated in figure 13 below:

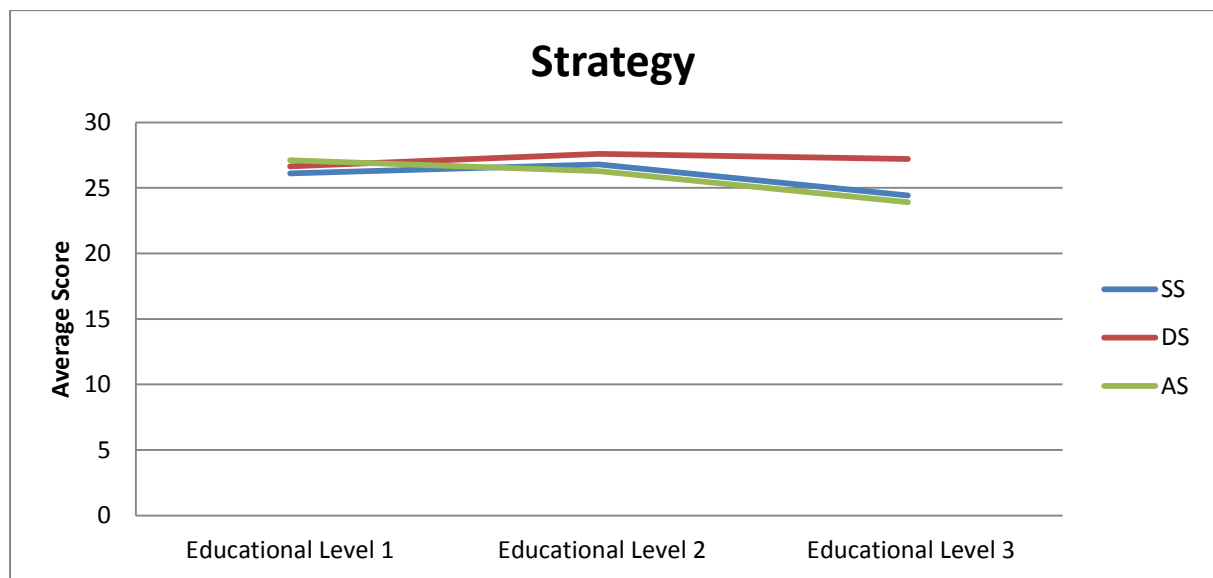


Figure 13- ECP students' surface, deep and achieving strategies by different educational levels

There are a few possible explanations to this. Firstly, the achieving strategy is highest among students in the first level of studies and decreases as students go into higher levels of study. The reasons for these could be that students are most motivated in the first level because they are still receiving support from the programme, have just heard about previous ECP students' successes. They are battling to overcome stigma, so they are employing more achieving strategies to learning which is what the foundational modules are equipping them with. Such

motivations and support actually decrease as students' progress and are evident in how their achieving strategies also decrease.

The deep approach is highest at students' second level of studies. At this stage, the support of the programme is over and they are in mainstream although doing fewer modules than their mainstream colleagues. Students are more concerned about whether or not they are doing the right qualifications. The deep approach might be an indication of how much they are enjoying whatever majors they have chosen. At this stage, they must have chosen their majors. Those with the right majors would read deeply because they are interested in the content. Moreover, they have the time to do further reading. The deep strategy reduces marginally at the third level of study because, at that stage, there is a lot more work to do. For those in honours, and masters, it is conceivable that they have to deal with the transition to another level of study which has its own challenges but a deep approach is what is required of them at all times. It is natural for the deep strategy to be lowest at first level because most first level students either do not know how to read deeply or have no skills. It is just not the skills that students learnt in High School.

Some possible explanations for why the surface strategy is highest amongst second level students include: because there were more respondents from this group of students. Also, the second year students might still be keen on achieving high marks, but using surface strategies. Nevertheless, Biggs indicated that the main comparisons should be between the deep and the surface learners since the achieving approach is just the way students organise their space to ensure success. Therefore when the deep and the surface strategies are compared, there is clearly a direct proportionality to the increase in the average of deep learners as respondents went into higher levels of study. The extent of the increase is also significantly increasing when compared to prior levels of study. This is a clear indication that the programme is making significant impact of students' strategies in a sustained and incremental way

According to Biggs (1987), the Deep-Achieving is the ideal approach to learning where students read widely with interest in what is learnt and relate what is being learnt to other knowledge, while at the same time arranging their surrounding and subject content in order to get high grades. ECP students with this approach took advantage of their training to prepare for their lectures beforehand by reading ahead of time so that they can attempt questions which will be raised in class. They arranged their environment for studies to ensure higher

grades. Their skills in computer literacies and academic writing give them an advantage as they compete against mainstream colleagues for grades, making them achieving learners. Their success in such competitions boosts their self-esteem. Nevertheless, most ECP students only discover and appreciate the value of the foundation that the programme gives them after being on the programme for one semester.

The ECP encourages students to engage with what they learn; an attribute that Astin upholds as very important for students' success. Biggs (1987) calls it a deep learning approach, where students relate what they learn to other background knowledge and develop an intrinsic interest in what is learnt.

6.5 Other factors affecting students' performances

Meanwhile, students also need to appreciate their success, outside of academic marks alone and appreciate the other values of working hard. The next section furthers the analysis of respondents' views on hard work and pro-activeness. Meanwhile, some of the modules that students performed poorly in were not necessarily difficult, but due to the difficulty of handling the examination situation.

6.5.1 Growth in Self-Confidence and realisation of potentials

Some attributions demonstrate students' beliefs in whether or not the programme facilitated growth in their sense of meaning or self-confidence. Respondents' assessments of their acceptability or ability to situate themselves as significant members of the new social environment were expressed as follows:

RASP: [The ECP]...was able to create an environment for one to ...learn self-confidence... a very important trait ...of ...interpersonal skills... You find yourself ...having to present something to a small group (an important preparation for ...greater things ahead). ...you find third-year students who could not stand in front of a group..., they can't express themselves because they ...environment did not permit them when they were in the first year.

RAHLEMS: ...the personal attention that they gave! It is better if the university would just make everyone start at the [ECP] just to get a basic understanding ... Humanities ...write more essays than tests.... it gives you an understanding on how to write essays, ...referencing, ...how to critique ...an article, paraphrasing. ...I had a personal mentor that I went to every time I had a problem.

RAY-13M 3: Life skills: ...we were learning ...how we manage our time ...different kinds of careers..., budgeting.... These play a vital role in ...your outcome, your output and productivity in your school work ...to be... advantaged than other students

RAY-13M 2: we were even given ...the good sites to get bursaries, and what we can do to get these scholarships ... so we have that advantage.

The ECP equips students with skills and support necessary for survival at tertiary institutions in their early months into the institution. Foundational skills for group presentation, essay writing, referencing, critiquing academic writing, paraphrasing, time management, and budgeting. They also received support in the forms of career advice, personal mentorship, and sources of funding. Having such skills and support in the beginning gives students a sense of confidence, acceptance and belonging. First-year students without such skills are likely to be overwhelmed by the new environment and might lose confidence in their abilities. It can leave a student feeling that tertiary requirements are beyond and difficult for them.

Meanwhile, the goal of the ECP is to enable targets to realise their potentials at the university. The realisation of potential is closely tied to growth in self-confidence. Good results in modules early on the programme and learning lessons from mistakes made affected students' self-confidence and motivation especially at first year ECP:

RAY-13M 1: ...now, I think that we have good results, and we have noticed our mistakes, so now, at least we have a little knowledge ...that we are doing good...

RAY-13M 3: ...it gives motivation ...to be able to try and excel in other subjects as well ...have... a good average overall ...reflect my true abilities from the subjects that I have passed well in, to the subjects that I really didn't pass well in, but obviously, because I want a good average, I will try as well ... [to] get good marks in the other subjects that I didn't really do well in.

Good results elicited assertiveness and a reassurance of being on the right track. This built a sense of confidence that allowed the acknowledgement of one's mistakes. Reflection on performance allowed respondents to see what they did right, what is approved, or what is expected of them in order to excel as well as mistakes that they made. Thence, they tried to control future outcomes of their studies by aiming at higher achievements to boost self-esteem in academic work. This good performance also motivated high performance in other modules to retain a high overall average; especially as some skills are transferred to other modules.

Some students try to determine their potentials by measuring past performances against their current performances. Others try to assert their competency for tertiary education, by working hard and benchmarking their potentials on their results. Results that students consider to be excellent inform and facilitate what they believe their capabilities to be:

RAY-13M 2: it helps you to understand the potential that you have.

Asserting himself as having the potentials to meet university demands developed a sense of confidence in the student motivating him to set a target against which to assess his performances. As this potential gets successfully realised targets get re-defined, enhancing self-esteem. When potentials are not considered to be static, it can be improved by developing relevant skills to enhance success since the realisation of potential evokes such enthusiasm:

RASIK: ...computer skills. I think I scored 80+. I performed better in that because ...when I first arrived, I had never touched a computer. I had no clue in terms of how to operate a computer. So when we were taught how to use a computer... it got interesting. So I would not spend a day without touching the computer and also ...I like games.... [And] I realise that “O there are games on this computer as well!” But besides the games, there are so many things that you can learn: There is the internet, Microsoft word, power point... So not knowing the computer was the drive that I had at that time wanting to know more about the computer.

Love for the subject matter and the realisation of potential are critical motivation for excellence even with no prior knowledge of the subject area. The motivation for excellent performance is attributed to intrinsic interest for the subject area, the relevance of the subject matter and continuous practice of what was learnt. This produced excellent results, enhanced self-confidence and also helped re-define the students’ potential. Nevertheless, the approach of the programme and the lecturers and the programme facilitated this success.

6.5.1.1 ECP amenity to students’ changing environment

Munroe (2009) like Piaget and Vygotsky argue that acute change is capable of causing shock and resistance, stifling potentials and creativity. Change should, therefore, be ushered in slowly and incrementally for optimum success. ECP was well suited and staffs were more conversant with this requirement than mainstream staff as the following responses indicate:

RASP: ...there is a little bit of **flexibility and leniency from the lecturer towards the students**, of course understanding the fact that most of them are from underprivileged schools. Which I really do not want to believe should be the case, the ECP should be for anyone. ...It’s the leniency and the time taken by the lecturers to do things with the understanding that they are from underprivileged high schools that then creates a good academic platform, especially for starters at the university level.

RAQIM: ...in the mainstream ...there are many people in the classes ...so the advantage in the ECP is ...that they grouped us into small groups of classes and then helped on that module that you are specialising on. They ...organize some tutors to ...help ...with the work that you are doing in the mainstream. ...anything that you

have not understood well in the class ... [augmented] tutorials helped ... understanding of what was discussed in the mainstream classes.

The gentle and incremental introduction of students into the university environment and style of learning develops an understanding of what is required of them. Once this is clear, students can grow in confidence and aim at producing quality work that will determine success. This prompts the assertion that the ECP be open to all students, but the challenge remains that a large number of mainstream students makes it impracticable. This contributes in some ways to the assertions by scholars that high schools are generally not preparing students for the university (Dhunpath & Vithal 2012). The ECP equips students with the requisite skills for succeeding in the mainstream, like providing them with extra tutorials, computer skills and other requisite support necessary to enhance students' success.

RAQIM: ...if I didn't get the opportunity to be in the ECP, it was going to be more difficult for me because I wouldn't be ...taught how to work with the computer... in the mainstream, there are many of us, so ...they can't just teach... individuals.... they just give you an essay topic, you must go and discuss it and then you submit. I still recall my first essay, it was: "Does democracy undermine state sovereignty?" ...in the ECP they don't just tell you to go and write the essay, ...they will sit down with you and check whether you are computer literate, ...provide the classes for computer literacy ...coming from poor backgrounds... the first time that I sat in front of the computer was in the [ECP]....

FRAY-1F: every time we have something to do, we do it before the mainstream because with the BSS4... they must finish marking, make sure that you see your results and make corrections... so that when the mainstream results come, you are already better than what you originally had...

As obvious from the kind of attributions that respondents made, there is also a downside to this leniency. The fact that being given so much support can lead to dependency and stifle initiative and creativity was also acknowledged as summed up in the following response:

RAY-13M 3: ...sometimes I just feel like we are having it too easy ...because they draft our timetables ...that even the mainstream lectures [are in] our time tables, they put us in groups... we are a bit too guided to be able to stand on our own. ...when we are writing essays, there are different processes... They take us through all those processes, which is fine, but ...some of us will have problems next year when we try to do it on our own because we will be depending on having someone who will try to guide us on essays and so I think that is one of the disadvantages with this programme

In the midst of the wide acclaim for the programme support, there was also some notes of caution about how this support might negatively affect students, once it is no longer there. The next sub-section focuses on the value of the attention that students receive within the programme and the value of the rapport within the small learning groups. A contrasting

example of a student whose hard work does not yield good results is discussed in the next sub-section.

6.5.2 Loss of confidence in one's ability

Loss of confidence in one's ability can arise from poor results, but also from a poor sense of self; believe that one knows nothing (Haggins & LaPointe 2012; Kelly & Michela). It can lead to loss of enthusiasm to achieve higher, with the feeling of not fitting into the university community and of being a failure as obvious from the following contrasting views:

MKHIRATHANDO: for me personally, getting low marks after spending more time, just de-motivates me and tells me that it is like I am a failure because I'm ...spending time studying the material... I think that I understand, but I don't perform to show that I have understood...

RAQIM: failure tends to de-motivate [from going] forward...

RAY-13M 3: I think it worked positively for me, because... I had the academic adviser for BSS4 advising me that "because of the marks that you get, we can see that you are a potential ...that is why I have put you in a certain group" ... our groups were swapped around, so ...I am ...in a group whereby I will ...easily learn the other subjects ... It has ... helped me to understand that at varsity ...you don't ...hand in a certain essay on the last minute. ...if I had passed well while I was doing it, I would not have learnt. But because I didn't pass well, I know ... [what] I shouldn't do in the future in order to pass well all my modules

The above experiences of poor performances have different impacts on the self-confidence of those involved. The first two had a negative impact, while the third had a positive impact. The first respondent exerted hard work without interest in what was being learnt. Hard work without intrinsic interest does not necessarily produce the same results. He most likely applied the same surface motives that worked in high school with some achieving motives, but realised that he had no personal control over the outcome of his endeavours, hence his de-motivation, self-doubt and loss of confidence in his potential. Haggins and LaPointe (2012) note that such experiences have led "intelligent" students to give up their university careers as they continuously internalised lack of ability (Kelly & Michela 1980).

The third respondent did not internalise poor performance as indicating her lack of ability. She used it as a motivation to adjust to change unhealthy studying habits and practices. She expressed some level of self-mastery (Haggins & LaPointe 2012), attributed to some extent to the ECP support. Her adjustment to the demands of increased personal control was owed to learning study skills relevant to success in tertiary education. She received advice from the counsellor and was transferred to another group which boosted her confidence and facilitated

a positive mindset towards success in the future. For instance, she realised that doing assignments in the last minutes does not guarantee success. Thus, failing early in his first year, and getting appropriate help allowed her to learn the valuable lessons going forward. This indicates an awareness that intelligence is not fixed but malleable (Haggins & LaPointe 2012). The next section discusses how respondents exercised control over the outcome of their endeavours.

6.5.3 Control over outcomes and development of self-esteem

When students become grounded enough, they seek to establish control over the outcome of their endeavours and to build their self-esteem (Anderman & Anderman 2009; Kelly & Michela 1980). Establishing their self-esteem within the programme entails a willfulness to overcome the negative effects of the programme stigma (Haggins & LaPointe 2012). Below is a summary of respondents' wilfulness to exert control over outcomes of endeavours:

RAFENG: You always want to proof something because your degree is BSS4 and your friends' is just BSS. ...to proof something to myself and to others ...convinced that I deserved to be in the mainstream, but I found myself in Access Programme. [I had to] heal myself ...through passing with good marks so that I can say... "I was not supposed to be here". So it encourages someone to work hard. But ...that was the [reason for some] ...students ...not performing very well in access programme. ...that attitude of saying: "I was not supposed to be here, I know more than this" ...not working hard ... not taking those modules seriously, then they ...fail.

The need to heal from being on the programme implies the impact of the stigma associated with being on the programme. Some ECP students wanted to prove that they are qualified to be in the university, against the presuppositions of the stigma. Two contrasting reactions were evoked: the one followed a determination to work hard and disprove the stigma while asserting their self-esteem. The other undermined the programme as being below them and invested little or no efforts. Those determined to overcome the stigma and to redeem their pride worked hard to pass with good marks. Those with this mentality were generally positive about the outcome of their performances; they wanted the good results to win them approval from other members of the university community. They believed that failing within ECP would endorse the prejudice that they are unqualified for the university. These students retained their self-esteem by working hard to develop competence and self-mastery (Haggins & LaPointe 2012; Saunders, Nolan & Provost nd).

Meanwhile, those who undermined the programme often ended up failing. A third reaction is conceivable for those who were overwhelmed by the negative perceptions and the burden of

proof. Such failures, according to Haggins and LaPointe (2012) may lead to a loss of personal control, leading to these students' failure and loss of self-esteem. Saunders, Nolan and Provost (n.d) are of the opinion that the very lack of optimism could have contributed to the failures. This raises questions about whether the ECP would have the same success if opened to all first-year students. Outcomes of effort exerted towards endeavour affect self-esteem, equally affecting how they progress academically, but it does not embolden them to publicise their programme backgrounds. The sub-section that follows illustrates this claim.

6.5.3.1 A threat to ECP students' Self-Esteem

Nevertheless, respondents indicated that there were factors that continued to militate against their self-esteem. These were mainly external and related to the stigma on the programme. Most ECP students could not publicly assert their backgrounds until completion of their first degrees. They constantly compared themselves to mainstream students, regarding their accomplishments. An Honours student describes the challenge as follows:

RAHLEMS: ...people embrace it ...in their [postgraduate studies] ...these guys... [who were] doing Masters last year [are] ...now lecturing political science in Howard. Their Facebook status read: "all the way from an Access student to a lecturer"- So now... embracing the fact that they come from an Access programme. [They] have progressed so much, whereas there are people who came in through the mainstream [in the same year as these] and are still doing their honours now, or probably they never finished their degree³⁷. They only get to embrace it once they have reached their success. When you're still an undergrad, you're a bit shy to say I'm an Access student.

RAHLEMS: ...Not all my friends knew that I was from the Access Programme. ...I had ...friends from Geography, and ENVS.... ENVS is like the degree to do... they praise the holy ground that you are walking if you do ENVS. So ...I just tell them "I'm doing my Politics and Sociology" until you guys finish your degree, then ...you can say: "I'm from Access" I think it is the way the programme has been put to ...other students. They think that you're in there because you had low matric point – ok yes! – Most of us probably from disadvantaged schools, but now it's like, it labels us for everyone else to see that - you don't come from a multi-racial school. You had a low point that is why you couldn't make it to mainstream.

ECP students do not reveal their programme background until they have obtained their degrees. This is one reason why ECP students' goals to succeed are always high and there is a fear of failure, which also works out as a motivating factor for some to reach their goals. They have a need to prove to others that they are capable. But the stigma is so strong that

³⁷ An interesting comparison between mainstream and Access students with implications that everyone has an equal opportunity of graduating – equal potential to learn, but some more strategically targeted support of ECP are suitable to helping students graduate timeously than others. The brain in some sense is elastic

they try to remain confident by hiding their ECP identity. Thus, ECP students' self-esteem and their attributions are influenced by their attempts to overcome programme stigma and to prove to others. The next section discusses the value of the student counselling services and how it affects students' attributions.

6.5.4 The value of the approach to student counselling

The approach to student counselling within the ECP is considered suitable to students' needs. ECP students are introduced to it as a necessity for their adjustment as reported below:

RAFENG: the programme prepares someone to be ready ...it does have more than academics. ...First years ...don't only need to be taught how to write essays [and] ...manage time...; there are other personal issues: life skills like how to live far away from home ... in high school you were staying with your parents and suddenly, you find yourself at the university ...in charge of your own life. Let's take ...this is the first time for you ...away from parents, you need certain support and the access programme provides that support through their psychologists...

RASIK: ...The counselling classes were ...more of a life-skills class that also assisted in terms of adapting ... into this environment.... The student counselling centres were there for students who were having any kind of difficulties... And even during that class period... if ever you had a problem, it could be solved there and then, because ...we were taught how to table our problems, and how to tackle challenges... we were made aware that university [has] challenges.... [T]hese are the strategies ...the things that you need to do to prevent such challenges. So the counselling module makes life easier ...

RAVERNS: ...So even [as a third-year student], we get... a lot of mainstream students who have never done ...career counselling and guidance. ...And I know that it is also helpful for those who look for financial support because ...the psychologist provides those forms that people can fill in if they need bursaries...

The student counselling support of the programme is considered to be relevant to every student within the university. The psychosocial and psychological aspects of the programme were also considered instrumental to ECP students' success over the mainstream. The above response does not suggest that the psychological services are not made available to mainstream students, but mainstream students hardly know that such programmes exist, albeit where they are located. Thus, they do not know how to take advantage of it the way ECP students are taught to. The following responses illustrate this assertion.

RAVERNS: ...there are a lot of things that ...mainstream students are offered that they don't know. ...I did not know that in different departments, they have psychologists to help you. ...but we have it in access, so I don't need to go to them.... But ...a lot of mainstream students ...don't know that they have psychologists ...that they can go for extra help... Departments that offer that ...normally only bring it out during exams times ...especially for first years.

RAY-13M 3: ...most students ...don't really know where the psychologists of schools are.... not exposed to those psychologists ...in person as their psychologist; whereas in BSS4, you know your psychologist.... The psychologist comes and teaches and you know him in person. You have a relationship with the psychologist as well. Interpersonal relationships between the two of you...

RAHLEMS: I'd advise [mainstream students] ...to go to as much student counselling as possible... now they have the Academic Development Officer (ADO) whom they come to for ...advice. But I don't think all of them know the ADO until they start failing, then they actually ...receive a letter for them to come.... we go constantly ...to check up whether we are on the right track... I don't know why mainstream students wait until they are in trouble because for me I went to (the ECP Coordinator) before the beginning of every semester – to tell him, this is what I passed and this is what I failed, what module should I take now? And he would advise us ... [he] advised me on my honours programme because I was very confused which honours programme to take. ...He'll go through your academic record and then ...see which modules are you good at ...and advise you from there. I think at mainstream it is because you think that you know everything... until they actually fail, they realise... then they can actually go ask for help.

A certain amount of pride, ignorance or reluctance to seek help is noted among mainstream students which make them only to seek help when they have failed. There are some indications that ECP students are well oriented to seek advice both academically and psychologically. Mainstream students, on the other hand, are not quick to seek such advice and often do not know where such advice could be sought. The awareness of these discrepancies affects why ECP students attribute their success or failure in the way that they do. The next section discusses the impact of social environment and associations on students' performances and their attributions.

6.5.5 The impact of social environments and associations

This section discusses how respondents attributed their successes or failures in academic performance to the social life and the kind of people they were associating with at the time. Kalenga and Samukelisiwe (2015) noted that the social environment can be constructed to ensure students from previously disadvantaged backgrounds in South Africa succeed through support systems like mentoring, excellent teaching and other forms of academic support and initiatives. Social factors like study groups, extra-curricular activities, and the impact of social stigma affected ECP students' performances in different ways.

6.5.5.1. Attention and Rapport within small learning groups

There are remarkable differences between the attention received by ECP students and what mainstream students receive. ECP students have the privilege of augmenting the mainstream modules with more support from learning within a **small group**. Students pay attention to the

lecturers, and the lecturers also give individual students qualitative attention. The value of having some attention from fellow students and working together with the aim of succeeding is also validated by the following responses:

RASPD: amongst others, small group learning is very important because the attention of students is not that much deflected... If you are in a small group you're much more able to get attention ...from the lecturer and attention from fellow students because that is important. You get to understand quite a number of different people's personalities within that small environment.

RASIK: ...it makes thing easier because you understand each other very well.... You attend same classes together, and at the same time, so it is easier to interact with... [and] get assistance from your ...class mates ...you get assistance from the lecturers as well ...and it makes things easier because you are mostly attending in a stipulated venue... So things are not much hectic for you if you are in that programme.

In as much as there is no room for babysitting, the above responses indicate that extra care for the students enables them to take advantage of available support services and resources. Such appropriate and friendly means of encouraging students to utilise the provisions of the programme is more preferred than going straight to mainstream:

RAGUCE: ...personally I don't think I would have done as well if I had gone straight to mainstream... I did qualify for that. ...I don't think I would have done as well in the mainstream. ...in the ECP, there are people ...to assist you; ... they give us special attention. But in mainstream, you are on your own....

RAHLEMS: In as much as... [in] the first year ...mentors ...were given ...during the orientation week, but then as soon as lectures start, they disappear into thin air unlike [the access tutors] ...when we had problems... They availed themselves to us.

The above responses indicate that going straight to mainstream could have deprived them of some vital support of the ECP. The following respondents provide some details of how the ECP actually pays attention to the students' needs and what the consequences of not being on the programme could have been:

RAQIM: ...in the ECP, the tutor caters for each and every individual and the class. So ... I think it is better in the Access programme because each and every individual gets [an] opportunity. ...in the mainstream, they don't take it into consideration that each ...learner learns differently.... they just presume that everyone is on track and there is understanding... the good part with the ECP is that they give each and every learner the opportunity to express his/herself and ...to monitor where he is failing.

RAHLEMS: We are always having extra special care, compared to the other students.... We were always on point! We were even given timetables... I think the most difficult thing when you're in the first year is how to draw your own timetable! Imagine the first day of your university lecture and you don't know what venue to go to or having to structure the whole thing. With us ...you're already given a form that

has been structured for you. ...all your timetables and your lecture slots and everything! ...and you constantly had meetings where they would be checking on us: ...if there was something that you don't understand in Politics, they'll bring in those Politics experts ...to come and answer those questions.

FRAY-1M: ... [ECP] gave me the opportunity to ...perform better and to interact with others, as compared to the mainstream.... [Where] they don't ...know each other....

ECP students are more likely to complete their degrees before mainstream students from similar backgrounds. The good orientation and foundation use well-trained staffs (academic and support) to enhance the growth and development of students on the programme. Students are able to progressively develop through their tertiary studies without waste of time; whereas those who did not have a good foundation continue to struggle, repeating the same mistakes over and over again. They cannot adjust to the change that confronts them and therefore fail to progress. The following section continues the discussion with a focus on how psychological and psychosocial support from the ECP affected students' attributions.

6.5.5.2 Learning alone versus group learning

ECP students are divided into groups constituting students with different capabilities, from different backgrounds and with different potentials. This fostered easy socialisation within the groups. It also curbed the general threat among most first-year students, who struggle to participate in class discussions. Small groups allowed students to develop a need to learn and enhanced diligent learning of everything presented before them leading to self-confidence.

RAQIM: They encourage... group work.... you get much of the knowledge from other ...classmates.The programme has taught me [how] to work with other people.

RASP: ...these huge lecture theatres with different people from different cultural background ...may not create a conducive environment for one to exercise certain capabilities ... [or] to prosper. So the ECP was a very good platform... for giving one presentation skills; ...not just to facilitate; but also develop one's capabilities ...and ...other inter-personal skills...

The safe haven for interactions at lectures, provided through small group participation in the ECP encouraged the familiarity that allows group members to support each other. As peers, they understand each other's difficulties and can relate with each other much better than the staff could. This emphasises the value of their co-construction of reality through peer to peer interactions as further illustrated in the response below:

RASPD: ...that attention is a determining factor for people's future careers and people's future lives.... [From] child-psychology, even though the ECP... [has] people at different ages) ...the mind at any age is very sensitive... and very receptive

to both the good and the bad, so attention ...is key because then you feel cared for ...that you are given an opportunity to unleash your potential in different spheres. It is more like a foundation ...that unfortunately, main-streamers miss a lot. If you are able to build your house on a solid foundation, you ...have a rigid structure that cannot be easily shaken. ...Attention is very important when you ... [are] in a new environment and where there is a lot of pressure ... [for] you to do well...

The value of the attention received from fellow students creates a sense of welcome necessary for students' realisation of their potentials. It is perceived as a solid foundation for proper integration and induction. It enhances success in academic pursuit. The small group, therefore, serves as a social capital for students' success (Nala 2010; Tyson 2010). Group attention is, therefore, an important determinant of students' success. Below is a comparison between two responses, one involving in group learning and the other mirroring the challenge of learning alone to demonstrate the value of social influence:

RASIK: ...We had to teach ourselves within a group of friends. ...it was a matter of going to the computer, there we had to type... we were new ...sitting together, chatting... During our conversation, one will say: "no, let's go and google that!" because we seemed not to be reaching a conclusion... that... assisted me.... I did not only score academic wise but even skills wise ...I am better with computers.

RASPD: You find yourself working with other students who are indeed coming from underprivileged backgrounds, slow to learn and to catch up.... Some students had never used a computer in their high schools... if you ...have been exposed to a computer... they can relate to you much easier than the lecturers...

MKHIRATHANDO: POLS 301. I really worked h-a-a-a-r-d on that module! ...I even started praying because I wanted to perform well on that module. That was ...when [I went to meet the ADO]... I was... getting 50%+ with the hours that I spend on that module ...but never got the marks that I deserved.

The above responses indicate the value of social capital compared to the lack thereof in affecting students' time commitment to their academic work, and their motivation to learn³⁸. The group referred to by the first response above motivated members to research issues that they could not agree upon in their casual discussion for the sake of accuracy and this was enhancing their deep learning skills (Choy, O'Grady & Rotgans 2011; Biggs 1987), and love for learning. The positive association also elicited a strong desire to master what was learnt and excel in it. Such positive approach to learning can foster the realisation of learning potentials and build confidence which is transferable to new areas of knowledge, thus,

³⁸ This is particularly critical as the first set of association and their attitude towards success can affect a student's academic life and approach to their studies.

enhancing self-esteem. The second response also indicates how struggling students were more comfortable approaching fellow students for help than they were approaching lecturers.

These contrast with a student who works alone on a difficult module. This student felt intense pressure and fear about learning module contents. Hence, social motivation challenged students to learn, while isolation was susceptible to constraint by module difficulty leading to alienation from module content and frustration by failure. The impressions of peers or previous students about a module's difficulty and the previous pass can also influence how difficult students perceive a module. Reyes, Medrano and Carlson (2005) describe this as how majority perceptions drive consensus information and affects the overall performance of a group on a module. Such socially constructed difficulty of a module tends to affect students' efforts. Hence, while it is easier to learn as a group than it is to exert personal control on a difficult module, especially if hard work continues to yield low performance. Group learning allowed for proactive resolution of challenges while isolated individual effort only sought help after failure with uncertainty about possible sources of challenges.

MKHIRATHANDO: I'm not quite sure... I myself worked harder!! ...All the tests on that module were hard. It is like the lecturer wanted us to fail (laughs) because even if you checked the previous years. People would tell you that in this module, you can't get 60% if you get 50 you are **lucky**. The module is the hardest in [Political Science], but I and my other friends who were doing the third year at that time ... worked very hard, studying the module, buying books (Laughs). That was the time when I started buying books, but it never paid, because I got like 50% +

Alderman *et al.* (1993 cited in Reyes, Medrano & Carlson 2005) noted that mystery attributions (not knowing the cause of their performance) are a common characteristic of low achievers. The respondent attributed failure to diverse factors: module difficulty, lecturer's attitude, a history of failure in the module and luck. These reasons for failure are all external and mostly uncontrollable. The efforts to study hard, and buying textbooks did not yield desired results. Consulting the lecturer was a necessary option that was not explored. Meanwhile, the social environment prompted students to deal with difficult modules by quitting, forming study groups, putting in more efforts, developing good study time-table:

FRAY-1F: I could have put more work into it, maybe get involved with group work, group discussion. I could have got some kind of info from my peers or get some old papers to see how the exams were set. I could have asked my colleagues questions.

FRAY-1M: Yea, before I went for the test, I just browsed through my work, but I think that if I had a consistent timetable to study my work, I would better perform.

RAY-13M 1: ... I got 60% but most of my fellow students got 80% or 90% ... because I worked alone, so I did not cooperate with other students, I didn't go to others to ask for information on how to do it.

FRAY-1M: Just that next year I do not want to have a-n-y-t-h-i-n-g to do with psychology (laughs). I'm not in a relationship with psychology next year!

All but the last responses above make internal and controllable attributions to their poor performances. The first two did not put enough effort, and the majority believe that working with a group would have improved their performances, while the last respondent makes an external attribution to the difficulty of the module and quitting that module is the way forward for him. The other respondents identify discussion groups, debates, and a consistent study time-table as some of the means through which they would have improved their performances on difficult modules. Working with other students allowed them to listen to the use of more familiar terms to describe the issues that they were trying to study, hence the value of the social environment in students' learning experiences. The next section outlines some of the challenges with using study group as a strategy.

6.5.5.3. Challenges with study groups

While study group receives high acclaim as the means of overcoming poor performance among ECP students - something they learnt during the Access year. This sub-section presents some challenges in creating and sustaining study groups in the mainstream. Below is a respondent's report of her challenges in using a study group to facilitate success:

RAVERNS: I always form study groups on whatsapp ...and I will label it as: study group for Management, study group for Media. I would talk to all of them at once ...like: "I'm free from this time to this time, what time do you want us to meet?" They would agree on the time, but then no one pitches up! ...we'll all synchronise our timetables, but that didn't work at all.

The respondent describes what she believe could have changed things as follows:

RAVERNS: ...When I start a study group, I usually just go to class ...the first week of lectures ...see who can interact. I don't ...include anyone who doesn't ...talk in class... But maybe I should try and get the ones who often don't talk that much ...maybe when they are in a smaller group, they are more comfortable to talk. Those are the ones whom actually I've realised ...have contribution to make, but they just don't share it...

In this case, the respondent believes that changing those who constitute her study group from those who are vocal in class to the quiet ones might be a useful strategy. What is clear from the above response is that while study groups are effective means of building an enhancing learning social environment, doing so in the mainstream can be quite challenging. It also

raises questions about whether or not supporting students to form study groups could serve as a means of ensuring their success. It is also observed that after the access year, many ECP students lose contact with their colleagues because they now take up different modules and major and quite possibly due to the stigma that comes with being on the programme. The next sub-section focuses on the psychosocial challenges affecting ECP students' learning experiences.

6.5.5.4. The impact of social stigma

It is prominent in the literature on the access programme that many students report being discriminated against and isolated in a way that negatively impacts their learning experiences (Johnson & Narsiah, 2015; Kalenga & Samukelisiwe 2015; Potgeiter *et al.*). Respondents identified a social construction of social stigma against the ECP students within the University. It is not just about their disadvantaged school backgrounds because mainstream students from similar backgrounds are immune. ECP students are teased as unintelligent, without recourse to their efforts and achievements; causing some of them shame. Some of them feed into the prejudices and develop low self-esteem, believing that they are failures, dumb or second class students. Others seek to rise above the malicious discrimination and misrecognitions which militate against their attempts to build the positive self-image necessary for success as articulated below:

RASPD: ... [ECP students] are actually being thought of... as not being fit for the first year... The fact that you're doing the access programme is in itself a challenge ...you always think of yourself as not being good enough as the first year.... [I]t is detrimental to weaker minds... once that pressure in thought outweighs the vision, with which you are there, then that can be a serious challenge and can eventually mess you up.

FRAY-1F: because I am doing BSS4... I might consider myself low than mainstream students. I feel like I am in the bottom somehow because we do other lectures that are not in the mainstream... the people in the mainstream ...know what they are majoring in... we just have two subjects so we ...feel like we are on the low.

RAFENG: ...knowing that you are not in the mainstream. There is that feeling that you don't belong because there is the separation within this big community. They've got their own administration; you have certain modules that you are attending at certain places. So you find that like a stigma... I think for me it was that motivation that I don't wanna be here. ...I am intelligent; I was not supposed to be here...

Personal or external undermining perceptions builds the belief among some ECP students that they are not good enough to be in the university. This impression is re-enforced when they compare themselves against first-year mainstream students. The differential treatment that

they receive echoes their inadequacy and affects the self-esteem of some of them. This adds to their uncertainties about their majors since they are only allowed one mainstream module in their first semester. These lead some students to deny associations with the ECP in attempts to assert their potentials and their readiness for the university. They try to boycott the impact of this socially constructed misrecognition on their approaches to their studies. Although some respondents believed that the stigma did not affect them immediately, its impact on their confidence was obvious from the following responses:

RAHLEMS: It didn't ...the problem came in when we were in social life... you can't share with others about where you're from. Other than that, it was not a problem. ...ashamed of it, because it has been labelled as this programme... that is for ...students who are from disadvantaged schools or students who are probably (sorry for me to use the word) "dumb" - ... and couldn't make it to the mainstream.

FRAY-1F: In my studies? Not really! - But when somebody asks me ...what I am doing, I am shy... I only say the mainstream subjects that I do without including the other ones.

The above responses indicate that the impact of stigma is not primarily on academic, where ECP students sometimes out-perform mainstream students, but a question of social cohesion. Nevertheless, it can affect students' confidence in their academics. Further probe into why ECP students conceal their identity elicited the following explanations:

MKHIRATHANDO: ... I have one friend.... people were always making fun of him, the students who are in mainstream programmes say: "eeeeee you're doing BN... what is that?": "You're doing ELH? (Laughs and laughs)... you can't be serious!"... That is what access students experience in Varsity.

The challenge is that the stigma does not only come from distant social groups but even close friends, as illustrated in an argument between a respondent and her boyfriend below:

RAHLEMS: I was telling him about the Facebook status of ...these guys [who] are embracing it [the ECP status] now that they are lecturers... but [he said]...: "it is because you guys were too dumb to do your matric". ...the debate is that he's from a day school and I am from a boarding school... yet he still managed to make it to mainstream and I didn't. And I felt offended ... (raising her voice). He was like: "ooh... how did you end up in the Access Programme if you had all the time in the world?" ...I felt offended because it was like he was saying: "You're there because you're dumb". Now I couldn't explain to him.... I just felt offended ...and I just forgot about it. Because..., I have told him the story before! ...

The stigma, both personal and social, was primarily on all students on the ECP; their backgrounds or matric performance was secondary. Their peers teased them, insinuating their inferiority and un-qualification for the mainstream. The impact of this discrimination was

more on students from disadvantaged backgrounds; undermining their fitness and depleting the confidence. The difference between their rural backgrounds and the computerized, modernised and multicultural university environment added to their woes. The lower number of subjects and the extra support that they receive compared to first-year mainstream students contributed to ECP students' feeling unqualified. Uncertainties about what majors to take in future added to these challenges. These explain ECP students' detestation of the stigmatising social identity and their efforts to conceal any associations with the ECP. Moreover, public appraisals of the ECP students only come when they get good jobs. The next section discusses the psychological challenges that some ECP students faced.

6.5.5.5 Social Life and extra-curricular activities

Poor performances were sometimes attributed to students' inability to maintain a good balance between their academic work and their social lives. Some students spend more time socialising at the detriment of their academic work. The following responses illustrate the value of social life, and the need to balance between academic work and social life.

RASPD: while I was studying, I was also enjoying myself at the university. The social aspect of it contributed... towards creating a stable and conducive environment that would ...see me through.... A human being... needs to relax. Relaxing takes many forms: ...the gym ...pool ...a few drinks with friends... I was able to mingle with people that could eventually assist with my studies; ...you get to have a relaxed kind of life... Even if you have financial stress.... you are able to relate to a friend, that also goes through the same and then you try to make ends meet in one way or the other.

RASPD: I did softball..., I started an Anglican society. ...if you link all these things, they ...help in ...practising personal and interpersonal skills (confidence). Small things like chairing a meeting (public speaking), these are very powerful tools that are easily attained when your mind is still fresh. It is way different from being over-dedicated... You are at university to study, it is true, but it doesn't mean be in the library from 6 AM to 6PM... Social life also includes going to church, because you meet different people there, you also feed your spiritual side of being.

The above respondent elaborates on different values of the social life to life in the university on the one hand and cites how it goes on to enhance one's academic performance on the other. He relates that social life entails the games, the outings, the leadership roles in the organization and the spiritual activities that one undertakes and counts their values all as social benefits of being at the university.

6.5.6 Relationships with the Lecturer

This section engages with how the relationships between student and their lecturers affected students' performances and their approaches to learning. Students believed that the quality of

their performance was also affected by the kind of relationship that they had with their lecturers or their modules. The first sub-section focuses on how the personality, approach and attitude of the lecturers towards the students/the module and the kind of rapport that they retained affected students' engagement, learning and success on these modules.

6.5.6.1. Approach and rapport with the lecturer

The attitude, personality and approach of the lecturers were reported to affect students' performances. Reasons why students disliked their academic staff in two different modules and how these impacted their performances on those modules are presented below:

RAFENG: ...Academic Literacy, I did not reach my normal 70%, I was in the 60%. I think it was the lecturer. This man was a very complicated man, not in a bad way. He was a white guy. It was the first time in my life to be taught by a white man. He was very authoritative, talking loudly. I think I did not relate very well with the lecturer.

RAQIM: I have tried much and ... I failed [psychology]... it was also the tutor.... I submitted my work to the tutor... [He] said: "you did not submit, please submit again" and when I submitted again, he says: "you have submitted late now, so I have to deduct marks from you" (shows amazement).... Then I wasn't happy following the classes with somebody that [I'm]... not happy with...

The subjective reasons why both respondents disliked their lecturers led to their poor performance in relevant modules. Racial undertones surround RAFENG's case of a black student from a disadvantaged background reacting to his first experience of having a white lecturer. A trace of culture baggage raises tensions that seem to be rooted in the legacies of apartheid; a reality that affects daily life in South Africa. RAQIM dislikes his tutor for being unfair to him in what was the tutor's carelessness. Infuriated for getting punished for a tutor's mistake affected his relationship with the tutor and his engagement with the module. The main indication here is that poor relationship with lecturers affected students' enthusiasm and commitment to a module leading to poor performances in such modules.

RAFENG: I didn't like the module because of the lecturer. Sometimes, even in class, I couldn't engage, and I'm a kind of student who talks much in class. But in this class I was not talking, I was just sitting quietly.... [The lecturer] did not have ways of sympathising. ...he ...would come and... explain something, and tell you to do this.... you do it, then he'll come and say, submit at 12: 30pm. You submit later, he comes in class [and] shouts: "you guys are so dumb".

The respondents' view of what could be done to facilitate better performance included:

RAFENG: to understand the teaching style and [develop] the personal relationship with the lecturer. For instance, it was only after the ECP that I realised that [the lecturer] is a nice guy - such a person who wants you to submit the work on time.

RAQIM: Eish! If there was someone helping me, I think that I could have done better. In RAFENG's scenario proves that students' perception of the lecturer negatively affected performances on the modules. The respondent asserts that his performance on the module would have improved had he understood the lecturer's style earlier. As such, students' perception about how lecturers treat them (with or without respect) can seriously impact on their performances. This re-echoes the findings of Kalenga and Samukelisiwe (2015) that first-year students, especially expect their lecturers to be as vigilant as their high school teachers and principals. They expect lecturers to push them to work, force them to do their assignments or studies and motivate them for success. RAQIM disliked his tutor for unjustly punishing him and this affected his capacity to learn from that tutor such that only an intervention from another person could help him pass this module. The point is that students' unhappiness with the lecturing staff adversely affected their performances. The experience affected the students' future with studying in the university negatively, as expressed in the following responses:

RAFENG: it de-motivated me. ...that class was the only class that was reminding me that I was in the access programme, that I was not supposed to be here, but I was given a chance.

RAQIM: Ei! It de-motivated me a lot, psychology... it was the first module that ... completely dealt with me. Because I studied it very much... only to find out that I failed (emphasis with a tone of disbelief) so I was thinking that for somebody who has been in Access. Who has spent a year doing academic writing and then failing psychology, so I thought, eish! Maybe I have wasted much time in the Access.

These experiences negatively impacted on respondents' self-confidence. Their motivations were depleted because of the reminder that they were not qualified for the university in the first place. Considerations on whether the Access year was a waste received considerations as both students doubted their abilities based on these experiences. In a related example, the fear of failure was attributed to a specific lecturer, affecting students' beliefs about the future performance on that lecturer's module.

MKHIRATHANDO: on my second year, going to third year, I was a bit motivated, and I told myself, yea, I need to work hard, but ...you know that this person ...teaching you, you had a course with him the previous ...semester, and you already know that even if you work hard, you will still get the same kind of marks like a 50%.... And it really did happen! Three of us got ...50% on the first-semester module that that guy was teaching ...the second-semester module we got the same marks.... ...getting a 50% when you worked hard de-motivates you. It tells you that there is something that ...maybe you did not understand the lecture notes. ...There is

something ...that you could have done much better. Maybe I should have consulted more, I don't know... [how] to make this situation better.

Meeting a lecturer whose module students failed in the past raised fears that the current module might also be failed. Such belief led to future failure, in spite of their hard work. The respondent admitted being de-motivated by working hard and scoring less. This is a clear indication of how attributions made for previous performance affects the outcome of future performance and how such experiences can deplete students' self-esteem. The next section considers issues to lecturers' availability for consultations.

6.5.6.2 The value of lecturers' availability for consultation

This section presents some evidence to a popular assertion in the analysis that students would have done better if they had been able to consult their lecturers on the modules that they struggled with. Below are respondents' admissions of the value of consultation with the lecturer over modules that they find to be difficult:

MKHIRATHANDO: ...it is very unfortunate that I realised ...on my final semester ...final year modules ...that if you consult, you get much more information than the one that the lecturer was giving during the lecture period. Yea! If you consult, the lecturer gets the time to see that ...other people really want to find out more and learn about the module because it is not really about getting good marks for me. It is about, if you are learning something, you know it.

RAVERNS: Management 120... was just a pain... my first test ...I didn't do well. ...with my ...friend... we went to the lecturer and we said: "can we have a time slot where we can come see you every week after our lecture ...so that we ... come and ask [questions]..." The lecturer said "yes" but ...was never there. ...in access [ECP]... the tutors e-mail and ...organize a time and they are there, whereas, lecturers ...you don't really expect them to be at the office. It was quite challenging. ...we'll look... at what other friends... [who] got really good marks and were like: "What happened?" We would try ...study groups, but people just didn't pitch up....

The first respondent expressed a late realisation of the usefulness of consulting the lecturer over clarity with a difficult module. The second respondent expressed an early realisation of its value and the struggles of using it to address underperformance. A good experience of successful consultation within the ECP instilled the belief of its value. It was, however, found very frustrating that a mainstream lecturer was not available to assist. The next section focuses on the ECP-related challenges.

6.6 Lessons for Policy Reform

This section discusses respondents' views about how the ECP policy could be reformed to better serve students in the future. It discusses responses on how the ECP could be improved or expanded; its relationship with the mainstream, some marketing strategies for the programme and issues of staffing within the ECP. The first sub-section discusses ideas of whether the programme should be cancelled.

6.6.1 Cancellation of the ECP

It was unanimous among respondents that the ECP should not be cancelled; rather, it should be expanded to support even less qualified students or at least other mainstream students. Besides the valuable lessons from the ECP already discussed, for example, reveals that most students come into the university unprepared, and that university as practised in the mainstream is not ready to receive the quality of students coming from high schools (Dhunpath, Nakabugo & Amin 2013). It is arguable that the ECP has valuable lessons from supporting students that mainstream can learn from to improve the extent of students' success even through its other academic development programme

RASPD: the university ...closing the access programme... is a bad move, because ... you are less likely to have people who have moved from zero to heroes. Those, as a matter of fact, can do much better than those who got A(s) ... It should open hands more to students that have lesser points ...compared to those with higher grades... Because there is potential here ... [which might] end up not being unleashed because... they do not have enough credits.

RAGUCE: ...the university cannot just ...discontinue the programme because... [it grants] opportunity for people like us who did not come from advantaged schools. ...I struggled to get into the university when I matriculated... But then I applied for this programme which took me in... if this programme closes, then a lot of people... won't be able to study.... this programme helps a lot of learners that struggle. I know that **fund...** is [a] problems, but it shouldn't [be discontinued].

The overriding assertions from the above respondents who are postgraduate students are that students from disadvantaged school backgrounds who do not meet the admission requirements are given a chance to develop their potentials through the programme. Some of these students are hungrier for success than many High School high achievers. As such, they contribute something positive to the dynamics of students within the university and justify why the programme should not be discontinued. Their potentials should be enhanced in spite of the prevailing challenges of funding such programmes. This supports the goal of this study in line with the views of Dhunpath, Nakabugo and Amin (2013) that 'higher education can no longer defend the perpetuation of a system that is structurally designed to fail the majority of

students. Lessons from these worst-off students would be valuable in addressing the prevailing challenge.

Some respondents in their post-graduate studies believed that if they had been admitted into the mainstream, they would have struggled like some of their mainstream colleagues who were currently struggling, or had been excluded.

RAQIM: ...the programme is really good and helpful. Stopping ... [it] would be stopping people like me [from] a better future one day. ...If the programme did not consider me, I don't think that I would be where I am today. If I was accepted in the mainstream, maybe I could be counted among those who dropped out from the university because of academic exclusion.... I have seen some of my friends from the mainstream; their robot system keeps on changing... mine still remains constant.

RAFENG: I think to me: for students to perform well, using my own experience in ECP, students need support - the same or equal support.

RASPD: Most people who do well in universities are often people who have (I don't want to say struggled) ...appreciated opportunities, and have not interpreted those opportunities as rights, but more as privileges. You are being given a privilege, an opportunity by the university. If you don't have enough points, but you can start at the ECP... [such] usually do well. So they should really strengthen it, open it up more. Take, for instance, the module **Africa in the world** was open to both ECP and mainstream students... Mainstream students [were] repeating the modules three to four times, whereas the top performers were ECP students. [If] it is formalized and given enough staffing... it becomes part of the university's policy or structures. It ...is more than just not qualifying for the university; ...there is ...a lot of benefit for those students who have done this programme.

These students play a vital role in inspiring hard work and competition among themselves and from mainstream students who soon begin to notice that students from disadvantaged backgrounds are scoring better marks than they are. This has motivated hard work at a larger scale in the university. Besides, some students from the ECP have graduated with **Suma Cum Laude**. The reason, it is believed is that those students who did not really meet the matric point acknowledge that they have been offered an opportunity, a privilege, not a right to be in the university. This mentality motivates them to work hard and do their best to show their appreciation for this privilege. Their hard work, in turn, motivates and challenges many other students in the mainstream who tend to relax because they believed that they were qualified but are now struggling.

Haggins and LaPointe (2012) talk about "bright" enthusiastic high school students who become demotivated and fail at the university because they are unable to adjust to the demands of increasing personal control. Such students are positively challenged when they

notice ECP students from disadvantaged backgrounds (who are generally considered not qualified enough for the university) outperforming them and prospering. They are forced to think that it is not about their abilities, but their efforts and to seek requisite skills as is the case with mainstream students seeking help from ECP students. This sparks some competition between ECP students and their mainstream counterparts.

The foregoing discussion responds in some sense to the concerns of Dhunpath and Vithal (2012: 10) that ‘recent cohort analysis of mainstream qualifications have not isolated this group of students to establish the effectiveness and efficacy of the foundation programmes directly funded by the state’. It provides some justification of the value for money of the ECP raised by Scott (2012 cited in Dhunpath & Vithal 2012: 12). The qualitative finding indicates how a favourable landscape can be created through lessons from students experiences of the ECP for systematic change. It is obvious from these findings, why investment of resources into the ECP is not wastage of scarce resources as the programme’s value go beyond benefiting its students to creating a more competitive university environment for increased graduate outputs.

It is for similar reasons that, some respondents believed that that the programme should not be made open to all students because the vital element of competition that motivates the ECP students, which in turn affects their performances and efforts, while at the same time challenging of non-ECP students could be lost. This directs the discussion to the question of whether or not the programme should be open to all students. Before engaging with responses in that regard, it seems pertinent to discuss responses on how the ECP can be improved. This serves as the topic for the next sub-section.

6.6.2 Improvement of the ECP

Respondents’ suggested the following areas for improvements: the quality and number of students and staff on the programme; ensuring structural programme changes to match the changing quality of students; incorporating other first-year students. The prevailing views on whether the programme should be improved were assertions that the programme is great on its own. Students just need to apply themselves to its provisions:

FRAY-1M: All is done, there is nothing else. It all depends on us students because you get all the help that is needed.

RAMNOTH: Lecturers... [understood our]... different backgrounds. ...they were like social workers or counsellors, not lecturers per se; ...very paternalistic towards us.

...the workload was very high to us because we were ...at the university for the first time... some of us were not even able to login to the system, but they've helped us to have all those skills... relevant for students ...from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Most respondents believed that the programme was perfect as it was; having undergone changes in the past. Staff understanding the backgrounds of the students was vital in meeting their needs. This is a sensitive matter that requires lecturers to be well trained (Haggins & LaPointe 2012; Reyes, Medrano & Carlson 2005). The paternalism of some lecturers noted by one of the respondents generated mixed reactions from students, but mainly positive. This relates to the concern that the appropriate choice of tutors for the programme, can affect programme success.

6.6.2.1 Choosing the right tutors with the right approach for the job

Successful students support was identified as requiring skilled tutors with the right mentality. This factor is widely cited in studies like (Kalenga & Samukelisiwe 2015; Haggins & LaPointe 2013; Reyes, Carlson & Medrano 2005). Thus, respondents identified that recruiting appropriate and quality tutors would affect the overall success of the programme:

MKHIRANTHANDO: ...selecting the right people for the job, because sometimes ... the person was a waste of our time... [Some] tutorials ...we really paid attention; the others: "we had to attend" ... [One] tutor was always telling jokes and we were ...laughing, and ...never paid attention. The Psychology tutor tried, but many students never even bothered to attend. ...they need to select people who are committed to helping ...students, not to serve their own purposes or ...look for girlfriends...

RAVERNS: ...they bring in their expertise... like a... big study group with someone who actually knows ...probably an access course student... so we can relate. ...One girl... [visited] our ...tutorial ...for Psychology, because she was free at the time..., and... found it very helpful. She asked ...and was allowed to join us. ...we focus on what we don't understand. ...Quizzes... [were] harder than our main... MCQ. ...The day before our ...first psychology test, he gave us his own little test and I failed badly. ...I ...got my study group so fast. We studied till late..., spoke about what we knew in different topics... we built on each other's ideas and ...I passed very well.

Above are examples each of a bad tutor and of a good tutor respectively, indicating the characteristics of tutors that ECP students preferred to ensure their success. There is need of understanding and commitment by academics to the purpose of effectively supporting students. Haggins and LaPointe (2012) assert that academics need to take control of those conditions that are within their capacity to change. Meanwhile, the reactions, responses and approaches of staff can have tremendous implications for students' success. Excessive paternalism can make students dependent or erode their confidence or commitment. Graham (1999 cited in Reyes, Medrano and Carlson (2005) identify three categories of teachers

reaction in achievement related situation which indirectly affect students attributions of their success or failures to include: pity versus blame, sympathy versus anger and help versus neglect. Each of these has divergent influences on students' beliefs and their attributions. The next sub-section presents the need to change the negative perception of the ECP by both staff and students within the university in order to improve the programme.

6.6.2.2 Changing negative perceptions through increasing visibility of the Programme

Most lecturers' and students' unfamiliar with the ECP's goals and objectives were considered as perpetuating stigma on the programme, and hampering positive staff/students relationships. Reyes, Carlson and Medrano (2005) identify some teachers' reactions and feedback as a powerful tool that can enhance or constrain students' attributions of success or failures if not properly used. Respondents' gave the following reasons why negative perceptions by staff that are sometimes stigmatising must change:

RAQIM: ...I think the programme should be more visible also to the lecturers ... [who] don't know the programme. [An instance] ...Access students wanted to register for ethics and then they said: "you know, it is gonna be different for you who are coming from the Access". ...It makes you feel bad... the programme should be given classes ...[outside] the ...isolated Old Main Building (OMB)... people ...in Law Building, know nothing about the programme. ...people should not look down on ... [us] because it is also demotivating... Sitting in class with ...mainstream, they ...think ...you are dumb... [or] unfit....

RAHLEMS: [other students should] want to be part of the programme too. ...it pisses (sic) us off when they think that we're dumb ...in as much as you are from disadvantaged school... This guy ...from Boys College ...the most expensive High Schools in KZN ...got excluded. [A] mentality that the programme is ...there because you're dumb ...makes us not want to say that we are from the ECP until we have become successful and they are still ...undergraduate, then we can say hey, we're from the ECP and we're good enough, you know!?

There is a belief that greater visibility, would expose other members of the university to appreciate the goals and objectives of the ECP and not look down on its students. Reyes, Medrano and Carlson (2005) argued that when lecturers express pity or sympathy for students as obvious in the first response above, they are recognising the students as lacking the ability or that they have no faith in the students' success. Students can easily buy into this social construction by the lecturers and accept that they are failures. But students assert the value of the programme in enhancing their confidence in their suggestions that mainstream staff and students should be made to focus on using the programme to support equally struggling mainstream students.

Students resist such treatments by hiding their ECP identity until they are in post-graduate studies. They highlight that students from prestigious High Schools also get excluded for poor performance, hence, academic backgrounds should not be the only basis for ECP support or misrecognition as all students tend to need such support. The programme should be marketed positively enough for mainstream students to desire it. These assertions align with other suggestions that more students be admitted into the university through the ECP or that the ECP be broadened to support all first-year students are discussed in the next section.

6.6.3 Opening the ECP to Every First Year Student

The literature review demonstrated the extensive debate on whether to cancel ECP programmes to open it up to all students. This was surmised by the assertions Schalkwyk, Leibowitz and Van Der Merwe (2009), that a student-centred approach to this remediation with particular attention to the voices of the students is needed. The particular focus on students' attributions of their success or failures within the programme was aimed at meeting this end. Hence, without recourse to the financial implications, respondents suggested that the ECP be opened to other first-year students entering the University for the Following Reasons:

RAQIM: ...some mainstream [colleagues] ...used to be better than us, [but now] they ...ask us: "how do you do this thing?" ... [ECP is] a good foundation... [It] adapts you slowly... your facilitator is a lecturer. ... [It should be for] every student ...especially from poor rural school. ...The majority of the ECP students complete their degrees in record time [while] ...some mainstream... [mates] are still doing their undergraduate studies ... [in 2015]. Yet I have accomplished two certificates [currently doing PGCE]... during these years. ...Others ...dropped out because ...they couldn't match themselves with the pace [of mainstream]. ... [T]he ECP... gave us the foundation and the pace... taught us to start it slowly, but at the end, then you do it faster...

RASPD: first-year students... could start with the access programme to see the value... at university [and] in life as a whole. We used to ...do exceptionally well in modules done by first years, while ...still in ECP.

RAGUCE: ...I get that the programme is for students who come from disadvantaged high schools, but it shouldn't be limited because even in mainstream, we struggle...

Expanding the programme to all students coming into the university was supported by the following reasons: Firstly, the programme facilitates both academic and social foundation and integration. Secondly, the throughput rate of ECP students and the time taken to complete their degree is also identified as an advantage of the ECP. Thirdly, the programme prepares students for life beyond the university as well; and finally, the quality of students coming into the university is generally poor and distracted by technology and the ECP kind support is needful for all. Moreover, ECP is well-suited to assist the quality of students now coming

into the university, given their underpreparedness for the university discourses. The next section discusses assertions that the programme should be restricted to students from underprivileged backgrounds.

6.6.3.1 Restricting the ECP to students from underprivileged schools

This section discusses the views of respondents who favoured limiting the ECP to students from underprivileged backgrounds. Their reasons were as follows:

RAGUCE: ...struggling matriculants are finding it difficult to get into the university. I really struggled... I didn't do so well in my matric in 2009, so I could not get into the university... Matric ...in 2010 ...was better... But still, I struggled to get into the university... So... the [ECP] actually ... [give] students... [like me] an opportunity to study... from disadvantaged schools. ...It would be a grave mistake for this university to stop this programme.

RAFENG: ...It does not have many students... [or] staff members. ...it is easy for students to know the staff and ...to know each other. Changing it into a programme that would support everyone in the university... [will not produce] the outcome ...because ... [of] big classes; ...those ...from previously disadvantaged backgrounds will not engage. ...ECP classes are for 25-30 students. You know each other, you help each other. But if ...all first years [Humanities students] go through ECP... classes of 50-100 ...how will the monitoring [be done]? ...It is productive because the coordinator can ...check the profiles one by one. He can send e-mails... or call everyone. But if you have 500 students, then it will become a school, and the coordinator, the dean...

RAFENG: I have... [heard] about the changes of policy, but ...the success of former ECP students is not 100% attributed to the modules. I can attribute the success 50% to the modules and another 50% to the commitment of the students on the programme.

The above post-graduate respondent attributes his undergraduate success to the ECP support. Judging from their experiences and results, they believe that it is worthwhile offering more students with potentials from underprivileged schools, who do not meet the admission requirements the opportunity to study in the university through the ECP. The belief is that keeping the ECP small allows students to have a good rapport with each other and with the programme staff. This affects students' engagement with course content and support for each other. Large classes constrain proper monitoring and early identification of struggling students for timely feedback and support. Added to this is the burden of financing the programmes for all students. The next section focuses on funding challenges.

6.6.3.2 Funding challenges

The issue of funding arose as one of the factors that negatively affected the success rates of students on the programme. The literature review indicated serious implications of the lack of

funding for students from the previously disadvantaged background and the negative implications it had on their studies (Kalenga & Samukelisiwe 2015; Smit 2012; Firfirey & Carolissen 2010; Sennett *et al.* 2003).

The point is that not all the students on the programme were funded. While some could fund themselves, there were still students from under-privileged schools and backgrounds who were not funded and this adversely affected their performance as obvious from the following response:

RASIK: there used to be full funding, and I believe even now, they are funded, yes. When you apply... I am not sure about now because I have not seen the CAO booklet, but it used to be there... when you are applying. It had a code as well. We didn't know anything about it, we only found out about it on the CAO handbook.

RAY-13M 1: the programme is not fully supported by the government. ...For example, there are students who are doing part-time jobs within the programme. During the weekends, they go and do small business in order to have the money to buy books and also have something to eat and also have money to rent where they are staying. So I think... there is nothing that you can do without money. So I think if it can be funded by the government.

It appears that at some point, all students on the programme were fully funded, but as at the time of data collection, not all ECP students were funded. Previously, application to the ECP made provisions for applying for funding. The challenge of doing one extra year without funding for students from disadvantaged background must be quite a challenge which would only worsen if the ECP is opened to all students.

The danger with the lack of funds for students has been described as putting more pressure on already struggling students. Students have in the past adopted strategies like seeking grants and scholarships, sex work and other part-time jobs which affect their performances (Firfirey & Carolissen 2010). The recent spate of violence protest following the #FeesMustFall campaign is an indication of just another avenue for students' expression of their frustration with exorbitant fees. Lack of funding to support students through tertiary education appears as an obstacle to their only hope of escape from poverty. This might justify the extent of their frustration and destruction to property.

It has been argued that the National Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS) has made five times more loans available to students between 1995 and 2005. Nevertheless, the award only covers a fraction of students' need (Goastellec 2008). It contributes to the high drop-out rates of poor

students. They experience anxiety, hunger and stigma added to the pressure of the university which causes them to try to conceal their plight (Kalenga & Samukelisiwe 2010).

6.6.3.3 Fostering stronger career advice and appropriate transitions

The assertion is that the ECP could be improved by fostering stronger academic and social ties and networks among its students. This interpersonal support allows them to learn from those who are better in certain modules and enhances better class participation. The concern remains that isolating ECP students can perpetuate negative experiences as well. Meeting and relating with mainstream students could be vital for overcoming and breaking the prevailing barrier of stigma against ECP students. Nevertheless, having more professionals come in and motivate them was suggested as having favourable outcomes as the follows:

RAFENG: having a professional once in a while, address... BSS4 students on career opportunities. ...it would be better if ...someone from a particular field ...comes and tells everyone about the opportunities within the social sciences; ...the opportunities of the outside world ...of the study... because at the end of the day ...we are in this programme to try and find a job one day. ...but I don't ...know ...those jobs that we are going to get from BSS4.

It is believed that motivation from professionals in the fields of interest can strongly improve students' interests and performances, thus enhancing their success. This is in line with suggestions by Akooje and Nkomo (2007) that such support be recommended for foundation students since the apartheid days. Moreover, some highly motivated students performed well and wanted to be transferred into the mainstream where they can complete their studies in a shorter time. Nevertheless, another respondent emphasised the value of allowing the ECP to facilitate students' adjustment into the university from High School with an incremental pace that is ideal for making the transition:

RAQIM: ... when ...running the comrade ...those who run fast in the beginning... [are met] on the half way line... in the Access Programme... They told us ...to start it slow... it is only the body which will tell ... [when to] increase your pace... So the Access Programme ...introduces some of the things that we learnt from school. So it ...reminds us that: ... this is where they end [in high school]. ... so from here, we are going this direction, while in the mainstream, you know for yourself, I was doing science in school... so can you imagine a science student ...[in] social science? It is completely different. ... Imagine if I had started from the mainstream, I wouldn't know anything because of the pace. ...I am a slow learner in pace... but along the way, my pace started to increase, so that is why I am scoring better now... for everything that I have learnt, I don't forget... [O]thers do much with the pace; ...the content, they know nothing... [yet] they majored and ...are progressing, but when you go deep with their understanding...: [In] an essay... you ask them: "show me a topic sentence from this essay", they ask: what is that?

The support of the ECP allows students the privilege of learning how to learn. The incremental pace that the programme uses to introduce students to the university discourse and the reduced workload develops confidence in them to engage their studies with a deep approach to learning. With a deep approach to learning, more ECP students go on to do post-graduate studies. The next section discusses how students perceived the criteria of ECP students' transition into the mainstream.

6.6.3.4 Criteria for transition into mainstream

Concerns were raised regarding how ECP students can transfer to mainstream. Some students underwent this transfer, but there were claims that the process for being transferred was unclear. Some interested students who wanted, but failed to be transferred expressed frustrations. Below are some controversies regarding ECP students' transfer to mainstream:

RASIK: ...there were some people who did not finish with us. By the second semester, they went straight to mainstream.... the other guy, was very dedicated to his work though we were still in the Access Programme... he ended up doing finance... so I'm not sure why he was promoted.

MKHIRATHANDO: I think that if you are performing, you should be allowed to finish your degree in three years' time if... you're getting good marks... constantly ...dedicated to your work. ... They shouldn't say: "no you can't do four modules or five modules" if you know that you can.... They need to start allowing students to take those modules that they feel that they can perform much better on.

FRAY-1M: the ECP would enable the performing students from the second semester to go into the mainstream and do whatever modules or careers that they want to do. For now, we are only ordered to follow certain modules, and somehow, we are limiting ourselves ...it is time wasting because if now, performing students were able to choose their own degrees that would be ...a step forward into their degrees. It is very limited now, for example, we are only supposed to do three modules. It could have been better to start with our own degree early ...

Lack of clarity for the reasons and the process for transition to mainstream was identified as a challenge for students. This implies that either there are no formalised criteria, or that students are unaware. This has the capacity of creating distrust for the programme or raise unhealthy suspicions that re-enforce the impact of programme stigma. Therefore policy reform in this regard would be a very welcome initiative. It would also avert the perception that being on the programme limits some students from reaching their potentials or studying their degree of choice. Meanwhile, the programme is limited by resources from accommodating all the possible majors. Many respondents were unaware that the programme allows students who perform excellently after their first semester to proceed into the

mainstream in order to pursue a degree of their choice. This limitation is something that might need urgent attention.

6.7 Conclusion

The main finding from the data is that students in the programme have an orientation and foundational background which allows them to continuously reflect on their experiences of learning through their moments of successes and of failures. They learn how to adjust to these different pressures from different perspectives. These reflective processes are very important in students' lives as they proceed towards graduation and as they mature as human beings. The fact that the programme allows them to reflect and learn from both positive experiences of success and the negative experience of failure indicate that they do not only have the capacity to succeed, but the resilience to continue reinventing themselves in the events of failure.

Success is not only attributable to the programme support but also to students' attitudes. It appears that for ECP students the definition of success continues to change as they define themselves in the university. Their initial definition of success is closely tied to the extent of their adjustment and integration into the university both socially and academically. Once this sense of security is achieved, students begin to assess their success against the stigma that prevails against being on the programme as though they were not intelligent and not qualified to be in the university. They attempt to assert themselves and their potential and to prove that being given an opportunity at tertiary education is justified by outperforming mainstream students who presume an entitlement to tertiary education. Many of them succeed in outperforming mainstream students in modules that they both offer. This proves the point that they are intelligent and capable, and their schooling background experience was the only barrier to better Matric results, and as such to direct entry to the mainstream.

With an understanding of why students think they performed poorly, lessons can be learnt on how to support students or what they should avoid in their approaches to learning.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

7.0 Introduction

This study, titled: Success or failure? Student experiences of the Extended Curriculum Programme (ECP) in the College of Humanities, University of KwaZulu-Natal used two separate tools to gather data. A semi-structured interview guide based on the attribution theory and the Study Process Questionnaire (SPQ). Data collected through these instruments were qualitatively analysed and the findings from one were used to complemented and justify the findings from the other. Within the social constructivist paradigm, the study set out to answer the following questions:

1. What are the students' experiences of learning within the Extended Curriculum Programme?
2. What do students within the programme attribute their success and failure to?
3. Why do they attribute their success and failures in learning in the way that they do?
4. What lessons can be learnt from the findings for the Extended Curriculum policy reform?

Responding to the first questions regarding how students experience their learning within the ECP, it was found that students' learning was affected by factors that preceded their university experiences and construction of meaning. These factors were manifested in the form of their fears and their expectations identified under several themes, including pre-programme factors and preliminary programme factors; leading towards their answers to the second research question on how they attributed their successes and failures.

7.1 Summary and Conclusion

The pre-programme factors that affected students' experiences within the ECP included factors deriving from their backgrounds, their beliefs about their reasons for being on the programme, their excitement over the privilege of having access to the university, their fears and expectations about whether or not the programme could help them, their concerns about the duration of the programme and its difference from other Bachelor's degrees. Respondents expressed serious concerns about whether their BSS4 degrees had the same weight as the normal bachelor's degrees for mainstream students within the College of Humanities.

Related to these concerns was the fact that ECP students felt an early pinch of discrimination and isolation by the cold and undermining treatment that they received from mainstream

students and from some mainstream staff. They perceived themselves stigmatised by the socially constructed prejudices that they were dumb, lazy, lacking tertiary capacity and unqualified. These misrecognizing social constructions served as early challenges to these students, putting a hedge on their excitement for being in the university. The wrong labelling also heightened the fears of the ECP students and made it difficult for them to adjust into the university milieu. These challenges are only additional to what every other student making the transition from high school to the university face. This added to their anxiety about their future challenges in the university and set a tone that being on the programme required that students either sink or swim. The majority of the respondents demonstrated resilience in resisting such discrimination as much as they could.

Moreover, student attributions indicate that the ECP seemed to have been well-structured to anticipate and support them. The ECP was able to buffer this challenging environment by providing students with psychosocial support through encouraging positive group activities and associations. They received psychological support from a resident student counsellor who not only attended to individual queries but met students as a group to teach them life and survival skills for the university. The support was not only targeted at their survival with the external pressures but also with the pressures and skills necessary for their success in their studies. Hence, student attributions indicated that foundational and augmented modules were eye-opening, facilitating high achievement, and giving them direction along with the student counselling programme.

While the strength and resilience of ECP students who succeeded must be admitted, the role of the ECP in this success was also emphasised in students' attributions. The programme has demonstrably facilitated students' growth. It was structured to meet students' needs by facilitating their career path-finding, study skills, and previous ECP students who have succeeded were also brought in to address and motivate new students. Albeit some students' interest were not accommodated by the programme's limited provisions of funding. Other students found limited exit options from the programme when they performed well or needed to take up qualifications that the programme does not support. The programme has also evolved over time, as the ECP provisions and modules were continuously changed over time. However, financial and funding restraints continue to determine the programme's capacity to provide every available major in the College within the Programme.

Meanwhile, in spite of these support structures and students' strength of character most ECP students were only able to resist negative recognition by concealing their ECP identity from their colleagues and friends in the mainstream to avoid programme stigma. In fact, most of them only revealed their ECP status after completion of their undergraduate degrees; when they were in post-graduate studies or even working.

Nevertheless, the challenging experiences also had some positive effects on many ECP students' lives as it evoked resilience and a sense of competitiveness in many aspects of their lives, but especially in their academic work. They perceived a need to prove to the entire university community and to themselves that they were indeed capable and good enough and that the prejudices were misrecognition. These motivations prompted them to employ achieving approaches to learning. The support from the programme, coupled with early experiences of good results developed a strong sense of confidence and good self-esteem regarding their academic abilities. There was evidence of a growing realisation among them that their capacities were incremental.

They engaged in small group learning and developed social capital among themselves, while supporting each other's interest in success and working hard to ensure it. The impact was such that even students coming from different backgrounds like the sciences were able to succeed through the support received in the ECP. This was facilitated by the excellence and professionalism of the lecturers within the programme.

Hence, as students' confidence grew, their hope of performing well in future also improved according to their performances and they were prompted to continue working hard. This belief about future success increased their sense of personal control over circumstances of their studies leading to realisation of personal worth and potential. Success in one module motivated some students' future performance in other modules. Although some students held this motivation, they still failed to excel because they did not retain an achievement orientated mentality in their studies.

Students' personalities were found to be crucial in determining their reaction to poor results. Besides admitting that there were different reasons for students' poor performances, the majority of respondents were demotivated by such experiences; especially when they believed that they had worked very hard. Such students' confidence was negatively affected by poor performance. Those who attributed poor performance to poor effort investment were

motivated to work harder in the future. Others who attributed it to the difficulty of the module sought a means of discontinuing those modules. These were generally functional attributions.

The ECP however, supported affected students who experienced failure by counselling them individually and in small groups. They were also encouraged to make better use of study groups where they took part in debates. They also encouraged and taught the discipline of utilising their study timetable. Equally valuable to the entire process is that they were made aware that these strategies and skills were meant to enable them to maximise their potential. Students' confidence was restored as they began to learn from their mistakes. They engaged more decisively to correct such mistakes and maximise their potentials.

The sense of competition common among respondents was prompted by the stigma surrounding being on the programme. This prompted students to prove themselves by working hard. It motivated them to be achieving students and also propagated their predominantly positive mentality towards the programme, in spite of challenges. However, the idea of forming and maintaining study groups proved to be a serious challenge for students in mainstream, but the foundation always gave them an option of what was possible and a hope for improvement.

As ECP students constantly compared themselves to mainstream students, they find that the programme support equipped them better with requisite skills for approaching their studies. This increased their confidence as they began to assist mainstream students with some aspects of academic work. They are also assured that their ECP staff are always ready and happy to assist them with their learning needs. The professionalism of these lecturers and their understanding of how to deal with students on the programme were additional boosts.

It was therefore suggested that to improve the ECP policy, the programme should not be opened to all students, in spite of the potential that such a move promises for the vast majority of students. A reason to support this assertion was that opening it up will remove the sense of competition that pervades not just the programme but also serves to spur mainstream students to action. Without such competition, it was feared that the programme might not have as much success as it is currently having.

Efforts to ensure suitable staff on the programme were emphasised. This was only secondary to the need for an institutional change towards the stigma that is attached to the programme; given its negative impact on the majority of the students. The issue of funding students on the

programme was also emphasised as a necessity for students who have come from disadvantaged backgrounds. The programme module offerings of majors were also considered as an important determinant of students' success. This emphasised the need to increase such programme offerings and give students a wider scope of majors to choose something that they are intrinsically interested in pursuing. Transparent exit-options for students who are performing well to take up mainstream courses and to complete their degrees earlier than the required four years was also suggested.

7.2. Recommendation

This section discusses recommendation in three regards. Firstly, what respondents suggestion on how the programme can be improved, secondly, the observation of the researcher from being involved in the study, and finally on recommendations for policy change and future research. Respondents made a few valuable suggestions for how the programme should be improved.

7.2.1 Implementation

The finding of this study indicates that support and skills that ECP students receive from academic literacy and computer literacy are highly valuable. After these support, the ECP students assist mainstream students on these cognate areas. This illustrates that academic literacy and computer literacy support are required by all students, irrespective of their educational backgrounds. It supports the assertion that high schooling in South Africa does not directly and sufficiently prepare matriculants for the literacy requirements of tertiary studies. This is further emphasized by the inconsistent essay structure requirements between the ECP and mainstream. Respondents noted that some mainstream lecturers are lenient on academic literacy requirements on students' assignment. This can adversely affect the quality of education in the College as a whole. It also seems unfair that some students do not receive such valuable and much needed support on the basis of their higher matric points or because they come from private high schools. This raises question about how the admission criteria for being on the ECP needs some review.

7.2.1.1 Admission Criteria

Globally the access criteria has been evolving, therefore the concern here is not so much to speculate on who should be on the programme as it suggests the need for the programme to specify the criteria for admitting students on the programme.

The study revealed that students are confused by the access criteria of the ECP because it lacks transparency. It is obvious from literature and the case study chapter that the College of Humanities in UKZN does not use the National Benchmark Test (NBT) as used by other universities to determine which students to admit onto the ECP. This seems to leave the admission criteria arbitrary to some extent; a concern re-echoed by students on the programme. Globally the access criteria into universities has been evolving, therefore the focus here is not to speculate on who should be admitted to the programme but to suggest the need for the programme to become transparent about the ECP admission criteria.

The current criterion considers previous schooling background, matric points and the potential to succeed. ECP respondents in the study noted that there are students who wanted to be in the programme but were denied access based on their schooling background. Rankins et al (2012) found that the NBT should be used not as an alternative to NSC, but to complement admission and correct placement of lower performing applicants. Their suggestions that reliance on NSC alone for admitting students may exclude some students with academic potential needs to be seriously considered.

Another concern that requires consideration in admitting students onto the programme is the fact that there are some students from private schools who could not be admitted into the ECP whereas they come from poor backgrounds. Some of these students were probably in private high schools for a year or two, during which they struggled. As such, despite having potentials they could not get the required credit to grant them direct entry, and the ECP could not consider them either. This adds to the lack of information about the ECP (a view that receive an overwhelming consensus amongst respondents). In describing how they got admitted to the ECP, students gave a variety of reasons, including through a recommendation by friends, or in search of some means of funding. Others had no idea of the distinction between the ECP and mainstream and they felt trapped when already on the programme. Some students on the ECP who had qualified to be on the mainstream counted themselves lucky while others were unhappy that they were un-informed and had ended up on the programme by mistake.

The ECP needs to be creatively advertised to inform potential students about entry requirements, opportunities and possible exit routes. Some students were not aware of the available exit options; whilst others thought it was reserved for a select few with unknown

criteria for identification. Others claimed to have made some inquiries but were unsuccessful in their attempt to exit the programme, despite their good academic performances.

To address this, it is suggested that every student accepted into the university takes a test to assess their Academic and Computer Literacy, and Basic Mathematics capacity, where relevant to the students' degree (based on the requirements of the degrees). Based on the results of these tests, students should be enrolled into relevant foundational modules like Academic Literacy, a Computer Literacy or Basic Mathematics that meets their learning needs and addresses their inefficiencies. While these courses are based in the ECP, mainstream students should take courses relevant to their needs and to bridge their skills gap. This would allow a robust criterion for admitting students into the ECP. Students from previously disadvantaged backgrounds and those who matriculated from disadvantaged schools, but have potentials, can also be admitted into the ECP based on the same test results. Others who are also from previously disadvantaged backgrounds and were fortunate to attend a private school for a few years yet are still struggling can also be considered for admission on the ECP.

Mainstream students who are lacking in any specific foundational areas as demonstrated by the test-results can take up their compulsory bridging course from the ECP. This compulsory foundation course should be credited as elective courses towards their qualification and must be completed and passed to guarantee graduation. These modules should be open to other students as well. The benefits for mainstream students registering on the ECP foundational modules include: integration with ECP students, studying a module that is relevant to their need, gaining credits from a module that helps them, generating funds and ensuring that the educational level is not compromised and above all, reconstructing a positive view or being on the programme.

Firstly, mainstream students would be engaging on the ECP and interacting more with ECP students and thus bridging the gap that perpetuates the stigma against students studying for the BSS4 qualification. It would change the misrecognition of the ECP and its students. It would also facilitate the process of rebranding the notion of underpreparedness associated with students on the programme and respond to the fierce resistance against such misrecognition by some of the respondents of the study. It would gradually socially reconstruct a notion that every student is in the university for the purpose of gaining and increasing knowledge.

Secondly, registration would generate funds for expanding these courses to other mainstream students. This resolves the popular funding constraints concerns against the expansion of the ECP to mainstream students. Funds raised from registering for the modules should supplement the limited external funding that sustains the ECP and create more confidence towards sustaining the programme in case external funding runs out. Nevertheless, this still leaves the challenge that high number of students on the programme would prevent the one-on-one touch that the programme affords. On this note, the ECP students doing the modules can be offered extra augmented kind of support that would still generate all the extra benefits that comes with offering them extra support.

Thirdly, opening it up to mainstream students would ensure that the academic standard is not lowered in order to condone students' ability and skills or the lack thereof. One of the respondents indicated that some mainstream lecturers undermine the value of students' academic literacy skills in their assessments because majority of the mainstream students had poor academic literacy skills. This was considered unfair, and undermining of the time and efforts that the ECP students invested in learning academic literacy skills as a foundational provision. This is a clear indication of how such lack of skills by students and undermining its value in staff assessments of students' work can contribute towards undermining the quality of education for all. It caused some ECP students to questions the value of the extra year invested into learning these foundational skills. It mitigates the need for foundational students to assist other mainstream students with academic literacy and computer literacy skills so that they can focus on their studies.

7.2.1.2 Programme Marketing

Given the general level of ignorance about what is acceptable and unacceptable practice in the programme and the apparent lack of transparency about the programme, it is suggested that the programme be properly advertised within and outside the university throughout the year. The programme's values and challenges should be made known to both students and the public. It must also be made known to High Schools around the nation and be advertised on the university websites and on Newspapers. Before enrolling on the programme students need information about its duration, exit options, and what majors one can or cannot study within the ECP.

An important means of marketing the programme could be during the orientation period when students are being introduced to the university at the start of a new academic year. There should be an awareness creation about programmes like the ECP to sensitize new

through skits, short plays and words of counsels about why it is unethical to undermine any students and the dangers of stigma. This serves to create a university cultural expectation and present expectations for both staff and students. It also allows people to reflect on their own lives and learn lessons about the lives of other people from different backgrounds. An institutional culture that respects all students can be fostered. Students who have passed through the programme should be involved in mentoring motivating new students and promoting the programme and its values. Their suggestions should also be considered as presented in this study. Stigma, as conceptualized by this study is a social construction and through the orientation, the negative social construction can be reconstructed into a more desirable culture and perception thereof by the university. A new culture is urgently needed regarding the way the entire university understands and relates with the ECP and its students.

Staff need to be informed about the challenges that ECP students experience and how staff at different levels in the university must adjust to mitigate the gap and not further compound the challenges of ECP students. The university community must be sensitized on the need not to stigmatize or discriminate against any student for whatever reasons. All these initiatives would also contribute towards addressing the stigma on the programme.

A clear procedure on how well a student can perform in order to be allowed to exit the BSS4 degree entirely and be enrolled as a mainstream student is also imperative. Such information would allow students some sense of autonomy which is necessary and empowering when they pursue their degrees of choice and interest. It could enhance students' motivation for studying, especially for the students who believed they did not deserve to be on the programme.

7.2.2 Observations

The study evokes a recommendation from the Attribution Theory perspective that emphasizes the value for student's being able to reflect on their learning experiences and their university journeys. On this ground, the universities should put measures in place that would enable students to understand the way they attribute their success and failure. Knowledge of the values of attributions are important for both students and university staff. It is even more important for student counsellors to guide students if they are making unhealthy attributions. Knowledge of how learning strategies can be properly aligned to students' motives are also valuable for both students and staff in the universities. Staff and counsellors involved in the ECP should put more effort into making surface learners adopt some deep and achieving approaches to learning in both their motives and their learning strategies characteristics.

7.2.3 Policy Change

The question of funding emerges as an important policy-related concern. Students on the programme are identified as being financially needy because they come from previously disadvantaged backgrounds. The disadvantage entails funding amongst other factors. The question that arises then concerning the ECP with its BSS4 qualification is: who is responsible for funding the extra year? Granted that these students are being assisted by being given an access opportunity, but some of the respondents complained that they were not even receiving the NSFAS. It can therefore be deduced that one of the reasons why ECP students would drop-out would be due to financial difficulties, especially for those students who did not receive NSFAS early. Moreover, even if the ECP students are on NSFAS, they would have more to pay back when they are employed, yet most of these students from predominantly poor backgrounds tend to have a lot of responsibilities. The question for the ECP policy is how this situation can be resolved. One of the factors that respondents attributed their failures to was to financial challenges.

The current structure of the programme does not allow students the autonomy to choose their majors, or to do more than the required three modules per semester even when they are performing well. This constraint of meritocracy can have a serious negative effect on some students' motivation especially when it does not reward their efforts accordingly. The attribution theory demonstrates the value of autonomy if students can be supported on the reflective side to identify where they are making correct and healthy attributions.

7.2.4 Future Research

This study has demonstrated a credible methodology especially from the Social Constructivist Paradigm. No other previous study was found that combines the Attribution Theory for qualitative data and the Study Process Questionnaire for the quantitative data within the Social Constructivist paradigm. The findings from this case study of the ECP in the College of Humanities, University of KwaZulu-Natal presents quite a limited scope of generalization. Meanwhile, the case study was chosen because preliminary literature indicated that different universities have different approaches for implementing their ECP within the same College. It would be worthwhile repeating a much larger study population that compares the findings of students' experiences of the ECP in different Colleges and among several institutions for learning broader and more inclusive lessons.

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Appendix

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

1. How can you describe your experience as an extended curriculum student in the college of humanities?
2. What have been the main advantages/opportunities of the programme to you?
3. What do you consider the disadvantages of the programme to you?
4. What are the challenges of going through the extended curriculum programme?

5. Think of a module that you performed excellently in. What was your percentage score?
6. Why did you score this mark? Give three reasons why you scored this mark?
Which of this was the main reason why you performed so well?
7. Is there anything that you could have done to improve this mark?
8. What is the likelihood that you will continue to perform this way in the future?
9. How does this affect the way you learn in the university?

10. Think of a module where you performed very poorly in. What was your percentage score?
11. Why did you score this mark? Give three reasons why you scored this mark?
Which of this was the main reason why you performed so poorly?
12. Is there anything that you could have done to improve on this mark?
13. How does this affect the way that you learn in the university?

14. Think of a module that you worked so hard but did not perform so well in your result. What was your percentage score?
15. Why do you think you scored this mark? Give three reasons why you think so.
Which of this reason was the main reason for your score?
16. Is there anything that you could have done to improve this mark or change things?
17. How does this affect the way that you learn in the university?

18. Think of a module that you did not work very hard on but you scored very high marks
19. What was your percentage score?

20. Why do you think you scored this mark? Give three reasons why you scored this mark? Which of this is the main reason why you think you performed so well?
21. Is there anything that you could have done to improve this mark?
22. What is the likelihood that you will continue to perform that way in the future?
23. How does this affect the way that you learn in the university?
24. How do you think the Extended Curriculum Programme contributed to/did not contribute your scores?

25. Based on your experience, how do you think the extended curriculum programme can be changed to better support students like yourself now and in the future?

SPQ

STUDY PROCESS QUESTIONNAIRE

What the SPQ is about

One the following pages are a number of questions about your attitude towards your studies and your usual ways of studying.

There is no right way of studying. It all depends on what suits your style and the courses you are studying. The following questions have been carefully selected to cover the more important aspects of studying. It is accordingly important that you answer each question as honestly as you can. If you think that your answer to a question would depend on the subject being studied, give the answer that would apply to the subjects most important to you.

How to Answer

For each item there is a row of boxes for a five-point scale on the Answer Sheet:

5 4 3 2 1

A response is shown by marking one of the five boxes for an item to underline the desired number.

The numbers stand for the following responses:

5 – This item is always or almost always true of me

4 – This item is frequently true of me

3 – This item is true of me about half of the time

2 – This item is sometimes true of me

1 – This item is never or only rarely true of me.

Example

I study best with the radio on

If this was almost always true of you. You would underline 5 thus:

5 4 3 2 1

If you only sometimes studied well with the radio on, you would underline 2 thus

5 4 3 2 1

Choose the number that best fits your immediate reaction. Don not spend a long time on each item: your first reaction is probably the best one. Please answer each item. Do not worry about projecting a good image. Your answers are confidential. Thank you for your co-operation.

Underline one number for each item.

1. I chose my present courses largely with a view to the job situation when I graduate rather than out of their intrinsic interest to me.

5 4 3 2 1

2. I find that at times studying gives me a feeling of deep personal satisfaction.

5 4 3 2 1

3. I want top grades in most or all of my courses so that I will be able to select from among the best positions available when I graduate.

5 4 3 2 1

4. I think browsing around is a waste of time. So I only study seriously what is given out in the class or in the course outlines.

5 4 3 2 1

5. While I am studying, I often think of real life situations to which the material that I am learning would be useful.

5 4 3 2 1

6. I summarize suggested readings and include these as part of my notes on a topic.

5 4 3 2 1

7. I am discouraged by a poor mark on a test and worry about how I will do on the next test

5 4 3 2 1

8. While I realize that truth is forever changing as knowledge is increasing, I feel compelled to discover what appears to me to be the truth at this time.

5 4 3 2 1

9. I have a strong desire to excel in all my studies.

5 4 3 2 1

10. I learn some things by rote, going over and over them until I know them by heart.

5 4 3 2 1

11. In reading new material I often find that I'm continually reminded of material I already know and see the latter in a new light.

5 4 3 2 1

12. I try to work consistently throughout the term and review regularly when the exams are close.

5 4 3 2 1

13. Whether I like it or not, I can see that further education is for me a good way to get a well-paid or secure job.

5 4 3 2 1

14. I feel that virtually any topic can be highly interesting once I get into it.

5 4 3 2 1

15. I would see myself basically as an ambitious person and want to get to the top, whatever I do.

5 4 3 2 1

16. I tend to choose subjects with a lot of factual content rather than theoretical kind of subjects.

5 4 3 2 1

17. I find that I have to do enough work on a topic so that I can form my own point of view before I am satisfied.

5 4 3 2 1

18. I try to do all of my assignments as soon as possible after they are given out.

5 4 3 2 1

19. Even when I have studied hard for a test, I worry that I may not be able to do well in it.

5 4 3 2 1

20. I find that studying academic topics can at times be as exciting as a good novel or movie.

5 4 3 2 1

21. If it came to the point, I would be prepared to sacrifice immediate popularity with my fellow students for success in my studies and subsequent career.

5 4 3 2 1

22. I generally restrict my study to what is specifically set as I think it is unnecessary to do anything extra.

5 4 3 2 1

23. I try to relate what I have learned in one subject to that in another.

5 4 3 2 1

24. After a lecture or lab I reread my notes to make sure they are legible and that I understand them.

5 4 3 2 1

25. Lecturers shouldn't expect students to spend significant amounts of time studying material everyone know won't be examined.

5 4 3 2 1

26. I usually become increasingly absorbed in my work the more I do

5 4 3 2 1

27. One of the most important considerations in choosing a course is whether or not I will be able to get top marks in it.

5 4 3 2 1

28. I learn best from lecturers who work from carefully prepared notes and outline major points neatly on the blackboard.

5 4 3 2 1

29. I find most new topics interesting and often spend extra time trying to obtain more information about them.

5 4 3 2 1

30. I test myself on important topics until I understand them completely.

5 4 3 2 1

31. I almost resent having to spend a further three or four years studying after leaving school, but feel that the end result will make it all worthwhile.

5 4 3 2 1

32. I believe strongly that my main aim in life is to discover my own philosophy and belief system and to act strictly in accordance with it.

5 4 3 2 1

33. I see getting high grades as a kind of competitive game, and I play to win.

5 4 3 2 1

34. I find it best to accept the statements and ideas of my lecturers and question them only under special circumstances.

5 4 3 2 1

35. I spend a lot of my free time finding out more about interesting topics which have been discussed in different classes.

5 4 3 2 1

36. I make it a point of looking at most of the suggested readings that go with the lecturers

5 4 3 2 1

37. I am at college/university mainly because I feel that I will be able to obtain a better job if I have a tertiary qualification.

5 4 3 2 1

38. My studies have changed my view about such things as politics, my religion, and my philosophy of life.

5 4 3 2 1

39. I believe that society is based on competition and school and universities should reflect this

5 4 3 2 1

40. I am aware that lecturers know a lot more than I do and so I concentrate on what they say is important rather than rely on my own judgment.

5 4 3 2 1

41. I try to relate new material, as I am reading it, to what I already know on that topic.

5 4 3 2 1

42. I keep neat, well-organized notes for my subjects.

5 4 3 2 1