PERCEPTIONS RELATING TO STUDENT PERFORMANCE IN SMALL BUSINESS MANAGEMENT AT FURTHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING COLLEGES

BY

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I dedicate this treatise to my late father, Johny Fleurs Kiewiets, for always supporting and encouraging me.

TO OUR LORD
FOR GIVING ME THE WISDOM
AND STRENGTH TO COMPLETE THIS STUDY.
DECLARATION

I declare that: “Perceptions relating to student performance in the Small Business Management at Further Education and Training colleges,” is my own work, that all the sources used and quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references, and that this treatise has not previously been submitted by me toward a degree at another university.

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W.M. KIEWIETS                         DATE
SUMMARY

PERCEPTIONS RELATING TO STUDENT PERFORMANCE IN SMALL BUSINESS MANAGEMENT AT FURTHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING COLLEGES

The perceptions of both students and teachers are vital to improve performance and to ensure a positive teaching and learning climate at a college. This study examines the perceptions of staff at three recently merged campuses and students regarding student performance. The research focuses specifically on the performance of students registered for the Small Business Management N3 and NSC (National Senior Certificate) curriculum. A combination of quantitative and qualitative research methods was employed to investigate the desired result. Staff teaching the subject (Small Business Management) were given semi-structured interviews, while students who are currently studying the subject were given questionnaires to complete. Data was collected and analysed.

This study reveals amongst other findings that management in FET institutions needs to take cognisance of the perceptions of staff and students regarding the improvement of student performance. Opinions, attitudes, insights and recommendations expressed concerning student performance can help institutions improve their culture of teaching and learning.
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CHAPTER 1 : INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

1.1 INTRODUCTION

This study examines the perceptions of staff and students regarding student performance in the Small Business Management Curriculum. It also considers the extent to which these perceptions can in turn influence the individual performances of the students in the Further Education and Training (FET) programme and even the teaching and learning climate of a college in general.

1.2 BACKGROUND

At present most students entering the South African FET N3 programme are from the General Education and Training sectors for “second-chance” opportunities, namely those who have failed grade twelve but passed grade eleven. These students come from diverse backgrounds and have a wide range of competency levels. Diversity has many meanings. “It includes differences in religions and cultures, different levels of physical and mental ability, different talents, different sexual orientations, different lifestyles and family norms and different languages” (Department of Education, 2000:1). Does the prescribed Small Business Management curriculum satisfy the needs of these students?

A learner cannot be excluded from enrolling at a FET institution, even if he/she was not successful in an admissions test. The admission test policy is contradictory to what some of the campuses are doing when enrolling students. Students (successful or unsuccessful) in an admission test can be enrolled for a N3 course, as long as they have met the entry requirements. These requirements are a certified copy of a student’s identity document and proof of their highest qualifications. All these issues have an effect on the performance of the student in the classroom.
For the past eleven years I have been a lecturer in the Small Business Management curriculum. From observations and discussions with my colleagues I initially concluded that students were performing poorly in this curriculum for the following reasons:

- A lack of the command of English
- The level of understanding required for the curriculum was too high
- Students had no business or mathematics background
- Students came from disadvantaged schools with no proper physical resources
- Students avoid seeking help in order to protect their self-worth
- There was limited constructive interaction between students and teachers at FET institutions
- Lack of trust relationship between learner and teacher
- Lack of communication between learner and teacher

The reasons indicated above lead to frustration among both the students who are studying and the teachers who are offering the Small Business Management curriculum. Campuses apply different enrolment criteria and this leads to a difference in the quality of students enrolled. This study aims to address the following question: **What are the perceptions of students and teachers on student performance in the Small Business Management curriculum?**

With the emphasis on performance, teachers tend to over-emphasize lower level recall skills and the ability of students to memorize when being assessed. When students take the external examination they are not equipped to handle the standard of the question paper. Some of the teachers are not trained in managing multi-cultural education and this leads to the following:

- bad student behaviour and poor achievement
- students dropping out academically
- poor concentration and underachievement
- students show low expectation regarding their success and
- negative attitude towards the course.
1.3 AIMS

As tertiary institutions in South Africa are becoming increasingly aware of the important role that quality assurance is playing in education, our FET institution needs to investigate which factors influence performance negatively and those that influence it positively. The positive factors that will be investigated in the treatise can be used as a marketing tool for the institution in adhering to the need of the students, parents, business and community. Perceptions need to be investigated so as to highlight what makes students progress in a curriculum.

The appropriateness and the facilitation of the curriculum can have an important influence on the management of a college’s student performance. It is important to investigate perceptions because it will give us an understanding of the beliefs and attitudes that teachers and students have with regard to student performance. At the very simplest, student performance refers to the ability of the teacher to perceive and see what makes students perform effectively. Therefore, it is important that teachers should observe students formally and informally so that they can gain information about students’ achievements (Goodwin, 1997:163).

1.4 OBJECTIVES

The primary objective of the study will be to identify:

What perceptions do students and teachers have regarding students’ performance in the Small Business Management curriculum?

The following secondary objectives will aim to focus on gaining a deeper understanding, as each objective will contribute to a fuller understanding of the main question.

- How have students been performing in the past?
- What was my initial perception about student performance?
- What is meant by the significance and meaning of student performance?
What do students perceive as indicators of poor performance?
What do teachers perceive as indicators of poor student performance?
How have my perceptions changed and developed?
How appropriate is the curriculum for the students and national needs?

1.5 CLARIFICATION OF TERMS AND ACRONYMS

The ways in which the following key terms are used in this treatise are explained particularly for the benefit of readers who may not be familiar with the recent levels in the FET sector of South Africa.

1.5.1 Curriculum

This is an interrelated set of plans and experiences, which a learner completes and undergoes under the guidance of the school (Marsh, 1997:5). Another way of looking at curriculum theory and practice is as a process, in the sense that curriculum is not a physical thing, but rather the interaction of teachers, students and knowledge (http://www.infed.org/biblio/b-curric.htm). In other words a curriculum is what actually happens in the classroom and what people do to prepare and evaluate.

The Department of Education’s FET curriculum framework (2001:1) cited that the curriculum is at the heart of the education process and has a crucial and strategic role to play in transforming Education and Training. This refers to all the teaching and learning opportunities and includes:

- The aims and objectives of the education system and the specific goals of the learning institution
- What is taught (values, content, subjects and programmes) and what skills and processes are included
- Teaching and learning strategies
- Assessment and evaluation processes
- Support and resourcing of the curriculum (scheduling materials)
- Adequately reflecting the values of society, students, the community, employers, the economy and the nation (Angelis et al., 2001:184).

1.5.2 FET

Further Education and Training – that is the area of learning which, in the past, provided qualifications like standard 8 to 10 (provided by schools and technical colleges) and the National Technical Certificates (NTC’s - usually provided by Technical Colleges). The FET band is now between levels 3 and 4 on the National Qualifications Framework (Cosatu, 2000:VIII).

1.5.3 Small Business Management

The general aim of this course is to ensure the effective functioning of a small business undertaking in South Africa with a view to the efficient management of the business undertaking.

This program emphasizes the following key competencies:

- Assessing the needs of other people. Will the entrepreneurial style suit you?
- Gaining business knowledge (this course will assist you)
- Generating business ideas that will suit you
- Compiling a business plan
- Implementing the business plan by starting a business
- Regularly evaluating results of your business and improving where necessary (Mayaba and Bowler, 2001:2).

1.5.4 Student performance

Performance describes how and at what level students must demonstrate particular subject knowledge, attitude and skills to meet the content outcomes or school’s program. Gibson et al. (1994:776) define performance as the desired result of behaviour. Newton and Tarrant (1992:44) state that the quality of learner’s perceptions of performance will help to inform the development of the school's policy and move towards it. The experiences and interpretations of these students are an essential source of performance indicators.
1.5.5 Perceptions
According to Hoy and Gregg (1994:65), perceptions and beliefs of an individual are shaped over time through personal experience. Perceptions indicate the observations, notices, beliefs and understanding of teachers and students about student performance. Perception is taking place in relationship to the “field” in which the object appears, involving the observer and then the background and thus the observer’s experience and objectives (Van den Aardweg, 1993:169).

1.5.6 FTE’s
Full-time equivalent is normally used to refer to the total number of students or teachers at an institution. This is often used as a basis for subsidy funding. So many rand per FTE is, for example, often distinguished from the simpler “head count” idea, which is the total enrolment at the institution. For example, an institution with a head count of 1000 students, would have an FTE enrolment of 500.

1.6 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY
Curriculum and related issues are at the centre of any attempts to transform the inherited education system. There is limited evidence that colleges are driven by their desire to serve and meet the needs of their clients and stakeholders, be they students, employers or the wider community. Often colleges know little about the needs of their students. There is also little evidence that, in addition to technical and vocational skills, students are being given the opportunities to develop their competencies in the core skills of communication, problem-solving or team working, or that the Small Business Management curriculum is being designed around these competencies (NBI Report on Gauteng Technical Colleges). This highlights that the content of a curriculum can contribute negatively to the performance of the student.

The Green Paper on FET indicates the following inefficiencies in South Africa’s FET system (Angelis et al, 2001:56), and these closely relate to the quality of programmes our Colleges offer:
Poorly articulated programmes:
Programmes differ widely with respect to quality, standards of provision, outcomes and curriculum.

Separate education and training tracks:
New entrants into the labour market generally lack appropriate knowledge and skills. Opportunities for the employed are limited, while the needs of those who do not have formal jobs, and those who hope to make a living in the informal sector and in small and medium enterprises, are largely neglected.

1.7 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

1.7.1 Literature review
We now examine the literature and documents relating specifically to the project we are investigating. According to Gay (1990:36), literature review involves the systematic identification, location, and analysis of documents containing information related to a research problem. These documents vary and include periodicals, newspaper articles, books, abstracts, and many other research reports. Warren and Fraenkel (1991:54) state that a literature review is helpful in two ways.

Firstly, it helps researchers gain some knowledge of the ideas of other researchers interested in a particular research question. Secondly, it lets researchers see the results of other (similar or related) studies of the question. In this investigation there will be utilisation of secondary sources as well as primary sources. Secondary sources are the publications from which I will describe the work of others (Warren and Fraenkel, 1991:55). The secondary sources that I will use include textbooks, dictionaries and internet searches.

Primary sources constitute firsthand knowledge, such as observations, findings and original documents, interviews and questionnaires. These primary sources are harder to acquire but are generally more original and therefore more accurate (Gay, 1990:10). In this study, I have made use of a few primary sources and more secondary sources
such as the educational journals, Department of Education’s FET publications, newspaper articles and academic records.

1.7.2 Reflection on experience
Scientific research is more reliable, and it should be a preferred approach at all times. However, in fields like qualitative educational research, the experience of the researcher can be very useful in evaluating and interacting with the relevant literature or the research methods employed in gathering information. Accordingly, in this investigation, I have used my experience as a post level 1 teacher in the Business Studies department and as a mentor to my colleagues in this subject field. These personal experiences will be drawn upon when illustrating particular points.

1.7.3 The quantitative and qualitative approaches
The quantitative approach will be one of the approaches that will be used in this study. The quantitative approach is formalized, explicitly controlled with a range that is more exactly defined (Veldsman, 1992:19). In a later chapter I shall look at the advantages as well as the disadvantages of the quantitative method. Preece (1994:41) states that the qualitative and quantitative methods of inquiry each have advantages and drawbacks, but they both find a place in most fields of study.

Quantitative approaches are those approaches in which procedures are most strictly formalized, while the scope is usually undefined and a more philosophical mode of operation adopted (Veldsman, 1992:20). Weiss (1998:82) also distinguishes between the qualitative and quantitative approaches. A quantitative approach deals more with measurable entities and a qualitative approach deals with words. So the quantitative approach on the one hand collects data that can be transformed into numerical form and the qualitative approach, on the other hand, tends to use unstructured interviewing and observational techniques, so that the reporting becomes a narrative (Weiss, 1998:82). In this research, both of these approaches will be employed. The two approaches help in bringing forth as much empirical evidence as possible when they are used in a complementary fashion.
A questionnaire will be used, because good questionnaires can elicit important information from the respondents. Preece (1994:106) points out that in a research project, information should not be sought merely to support a predetermined point of view, but as a genuine attempt to increase knowledge. The questionnaire to be given to the teachers will represent an attempt to investigate whether the answers from the respondents will provide possible solutions to problems relating to staff performance as well as those pertaining to learner achievement. A personal interview will form part of the qualitative research.

Time can be a constraint when one employs a qualitative approach in one’s study. However, Steffens (1992:59) states that the personal interview is probably the most reliable method, provided it is properly conducted, for it may be possible for the interviewers to influence the respondents so as to elicit a desired reply. Research methodology will be discussed in depth in Chapter 3, wherein the entire research design will be discussed.

1.8 OUTLINE OF THE STUDY

This investigation is made up of six chapters. The contents of each of these chapters are as follows:

CHAPTER: 1
This chapter looks at the general introduction, and the study is put into context. In this chapter there is also the stating of the research problem, research methodology and the clarification of concepts to avoid ambiguities.

CHAPTER: 2
Here, the literature review on perceptions is covered. A number of concepts are introduced and explained as well. Various important theories relevant to the study are also discussed.
CHAPTER: 3
In this chapter I will explain the methodology followed when dates were gathered. The design and distribution of questionnaires will also be discussed. I will also deal with any of the problems that may have been encountered during the distribution of questionnaires.

CHAPTER: 4
This is the first part of the analysis of the findings. Here I will analyse the results of the questionnaires returned, i.e. the quantitative analysis of the study. The interview findings will be dealt with in a later chapter.

CHAPTER: 5
Here I will analyse the interview sessions that I had with the different respondents from the campuses under study. This is the qualitative analysis chapter, and it will form the second part of the analysis of research findings.

CHAPTER: 6
This is the last chapter of the investigation. In it I will give a summary of the findings, draw conclusions and also make recommendations. The research process followed in this study will inform these recommendations.
CHAPTER 2 : LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 CURRICULUM ISSUES RELATING TO STUDENT PERFORMANCE

According to Marsh (1997:4), curriculum is quite often defined as a product – a document which includes details about goals, objectives, content, teaching techniques, evaluation and assessment. These details indicate that this document represents the ideal rather than what the actual curriculum represents. A curriculum is also that which is taught both inside and outside the school, directed by the school, which indicates that all kinds of activities that occur in the classroom, playground and community, comprise the curriculum (Marsh, 1997:4). Curriculum demonstrates that school learning is not just contained in the classroom situation. Too often students in the FET college are only assessed on their performance in the classroom environment with limited resources.

Curriculum issues do play a role in student performance, because the appropriateness of the level of the content for the acquired knowledge level of a student at the completion of the curriculum does affect the way in which a student will perform. As indicated in chapter 1, students that enter FET colleges for the N3 curriculum have a wide range of entry level skills and they come from diverse backgrounds. In my opinion, based on informal discussions with my colleagues, these differences put a tremendous task on the shoulders of the teacher to be able to close the gap between these two levels. For this reason it is important to determine the effect the curriculum has on the students’ performance.

West-Burnham (1994:158) enforces the issue of learning by stating that curriculum evaluation may be defined as an internal or external formative process designed to provide feedback on the total impact and value of a project or activity. The internal curriculum evaluation, which in itself comprises initiated processes and outcomes, is internal to the school or college. External curriculum evaluation is initiated externally, operated by bodies external to the institution and the outcomes are owned externally.
The school curriculum is a social artifact, conceived of and made for deliberate human purposes. It is therefore a supreme paradox that in many accounts of schooling the written curriculum, which is a manifest of social constructions, has been treated as a given (Godson, 1994:15). This highlights the problem that it is treated as a given that students will willingly love the Small Business Management curriculum in an otherwise complex situation. Most students are not naturally inclined to love working with calculations and business ethics.

A curriculum framework may be considered as input into an institution (Angelis et al., 2001:187). However the institution (within a school factor) may make decisions that influence the curriculum framework such as the subject choice and the selection of learning materials. A central point in this framework is about how the curriculum of Small Business Management impacts on aspects of the learning situation.

Curriculum is about support services as much as about learning content and pedagogy, and support includes counseling for the student as well as comprehensive management support (Angelis et al., 2001:187). This support stresses the curricula planning process and concerns such as budgets. Does the institution do proper planning to improve its student’s performance in this curriculum?

According to Angelis et al. (2001:200), the curriculum should be relevant and appropriate to current and anticipated future needs of the individual, society, commerce and industry. This means developing specific vocational skills and the ability to transfer skills between contexts. This highlights the need to:

- Analyze the needs of students, as well as these of receiving agencies, within a framework, which integrates education, training, work and other aspects of life, and places value on experience.
- Ensure institutions are sensitive to the requirements and needs of the students and local community
- Develop particular types of partnerships to ensure placements, as well as provide support for students who complete the programme and may wish to become self-employed.
School managers are supposed to deliver excellent quality learning to the students, so that they can achieve the outcomes of the Small Business Management curriculum. In order for them to present this quality learning, they must be able to interpret and adapt this curriculum to provide this learning experience. Lofthouse (1994:152) indicates that a number of state as well as private schools are already demonstrating an ability to interpret rather than to obey centrally prescribed legislation. This is wise because teachers can, on the basis of their own knowledge, experience and willingness, focus on how they can provide a quality learning experience to the students.

Lofthouse (1994:152) also suggests that teachers have to be sharply aware of curriculum content and process and be able to apply tools of analysis to establish appropriate curriculum mapping. According to Marsh (1997: 3-6), a curriculum is a document which includes details about goals, objectives, content, teaching techniques, evaluation and assessment resources. These are the official documents of the government prescribing “how” and “what” is to be taught and it represents the ideal rather than the actual curriculum. This highlights that a teacher may be unable to implement a prescribed curriculum due to a lack of training and understanding.

From my experience, virtually any teacher is instructed to teach Small Business Management at the college if it means that the module has to make up his workload hours. This also widens the gap between the intended and the actual curriculum implementation of the subject. A key priority for teachers in implementing curriculum is to unveil the hidden curriculum. This hidden curriculum has an impact upon students and learning in general. The knowledge area influences how students perceive themselves as well as the options available to them in terms of progression opportunities. This highlights the responsibilities that teachers have in delivering the curriculum successfully.
The success of implementing a curriculum successfully depends on teachers:

- Receiving appropriate training and support
- Having the ability to apply the available resources to implement the curriculum and having access to such resources
- Accessing development programmes through institutes
- Being willing to explore new styles of teaching
- Accepting the additional area of responsibility, for example assessing students’ practical sessions
- Being empowered to work collectively
- Developing the ability to draw on the experience of students and to mediate this experience so as to identify their learning (Angelis et al., 2001:203).

Preedy (2001:155) explains that a key leadership curriculum task is to provide a clear overview and sense of direction. This ensures that curriculum planning is related to the school’s values and that there is coherence in the received curriculum as it is experienced by pupils based on the diversity and background of the students at this college. Students are experiencing the curriculum differently. This brings out one of the weaknesses in planning the Small Business curriculum for multi-cultural students.

Dalin and Rolff (1993:2) indicate that, in order for a school to be effective, it must meet the real needs of the students. To reach this goal is a complex process of developing ownership and a shared vision of short-term goals within each school. This shows that a curriculum needs to be considered within the context of its values or purposes of the school. Why is it important that students need to be competent in a particular curriculum? Which values are transferred to students in this curriculum?

The importance of the mission statement is usually a brief statement of purpose. However, a well developed statement forces stakeholders to clarify exactly what it is they are all about. The performance standards of students in this curriculum are important to ensure that a college is successful in its instructional offerings to achieve the college’s mission.
Curriculum developers should recognize students as being active participants in the learning process. This would suggest the need to include pupil perspectives much more closely than is often the case in curriculum decision-making (Preedy, 2001:163). According to Brown et al. (1997:24), understanding work better in environments that provide some choice of what is studied, provides flexible approaches to teaching and learning, manageable formal workloads and a variety of forms of assessments. These environments state that the type of assessments used in a curriculum have influences on the style of learning.

Entwistle and Martin (1999:ib) in a most thorough review on research on teaching and learning conclude:

“Where there have been carefully planned and properly implemented curricula, attempts at encouraging active learning have been uniformly rated favourable by both students and teachers. There is also evidence that freedom in teaching or student autonomy together with good teaching encourages students to form their own conceptions that will lead to deeper approaches to learning which enhance personal conceptual understanding.”

As the college under research has very bureaucratic structures and policies, the prescribed curriculum for Small Business Management comes from the Director of Educational Service in this college. This allows no platform for student opinion when this curriculum has to be implemented. It also indicates that students’ perspectives are not even considered in the decision-making on the prescribed curriculum.

2.2 STUDENT PERFORMANCE IN FET

The focus of this study is to investigate the perceptions of teachers and students in respect of students’ performance in the Small Business Management curriculum. It is important that curriculum managers find ways of evaluating what learning has taken place and under what circumstances. The most common focus of monitoring is that of examining data on student’s progress and achievement. Most institutions where students take public examinations would consider their results year-on-year as part of
their internal evaluation process, and many are publicly judged according to the examination success of their students. This is what happens in the case of Further Education and Training colleges.

Entwistle and Martin (1999:10) suggest that in colleges in the United States some examination questions simply did not seem to require personal understanding, be merely required the reproduction of the teachers’ understanding. They point out that some students use visualization and structuring, but their understanding goes beyond these processes to perceiving the whole domain of knowledge. The success of their colleges is based on how their students perform in the national external examination. This implies that a student’s performance is here only based on quantitative data in order that a student be considered competent in the outcomes achieved, he or she should obtain a pass percentage of 40% in the curriculum.

Distribution of results per instructional offering (NSC courses - 6030093) shows that in the years 2002 to 2004 the pass percentage was lower than the national average for campus B and campus C (percentage passed was 44% versus a national average of 69% in 2002. In the year 2003 the national average was 59% and the percentage passed for campus B was 51% and for campus C was 53%. This clearly indicates a decrease in the students’ performance for the different campuses in comparison to the National pass percentage for the subject.

Annexure E illustrates that for the year 2004 the passed percentage of 41,35% for the College of Excellence was also lower than the national passed percentage of 43,35%. This strongly highlights that the students are not performing effectively according to the outcomes of the course.

Preedy (2001:157) also recognizes that evaluation is concerned with making judgements about the value or quality of curriculum provision of a college’s processes. Since evaluation involves judgements, which depends on values and beliefs about the purpose of education, which may differ among various stakeholders, it is likely to involve contention. It is therefore important to discuss and agree on the purpose of any evaluation:
Evaluation for accountability and justification purposes – proving quality of college activities.
Evaluation for improvement purposes – improving the quality of a college’s activities.

Angelis et al. (2001:217) state that a good assessment system should promote the following principles:

- **Validity**
  Reflecting the extent to which assessment measures that which it purports to measure.

- **Reliability**
  Demonstration of the consistency of the assessment task when administration is undertaken by different assessors, at different times at different places.

- **Cost effectiveness**
  The assessment system should be financially sustainable; thus, when being developed, resources should be taken into consideration, to avoid developing a good assessment system, but not being able to implement it due to insufficient resources or time constraints.

- **Fairness**
  The assessment system should not discriminate in any form including language and disability. This highlights that according to the responses the policy of the college under investigation does not adhere to these standards.

Murphy (1999:171) explains, while assessment of student performance has always been an item on the school education agenda, in recent times it has come into much sharper focus due to an increased emphasis on schools becoming more accountable for the outcomes of the education they offer. As Masters (1994:2) suggests, measures of student performance are central to any consideration of effectiveness or efficiency of educational provision. A major purpose of this present treatise is to focus on the perceptions that teachers and students have with a view to improving student performance and quality standards of the institution.
2.3 CASE STUDY STATISTICAL ANALYSIS

In FET colleges in South Africa, the Department of Education does adjustments to the external results in order to standardize the student's marks nationally. Table 2.2.1 illustrates the following results for the past three years (see Annexure E). In order to have a clearer picture of the facts and figures of student performance at the FET college, I shall be examining certain statistical data – or literature – documentary evidence are here examined and compiled in the form of Table (see Annexure E).

2.4 COMPARISONS WITH STUDENT PERFORMANCES ELSEWHERE

According to the Vermont Department of Education, students' performance refers to student performance at a particular grade level and provides information about the school program of instruction and learning opportunities for the grades assessed (http://crs.uvm.edu/schlrpt/perform.htm). When the curriculum manager evaluates or analyzes the performance of the student, he needs to establish a set of student performance standards, goals and outcomes. For this curriculum the manager can accelerate this process by referring to the existing standards of syllabus in the Small Business Management curriculum.

The Kentucky Department of Education states that standards are important because they define what we mean to say when a student has performed at the “novice”, “apprentice”, “proficient” or “distinguished” level (http://www.education.ky.gov). This clarifies to students’, parents and teachers how we evaluate students' work and explain to students' what to expect. These standards can also improve the academic achievements of all students. In the analysis I will focus on the perceptions students and teachers have on performance.

This analysis will also focus on helping teachers, students and parents to monitor the learning of their children. In FET colleges all assessment, performance, standards and certification are criterion-based. The assessment methods emphasize applied learning in relevant, real-life contexts.
FET has a huge role to play in preparing students to assume their rightful productive role within the economic sphere. Playing a productive role means more than just preparing the students to be wage earners. Skills towards self-employment is forming a critical part of the solution to the challenges that face teaching and learning in the FET sector. Small Business Management is one of the compulsory instructional offerings in the N3/NSC programs for students who want to obtain a matric certificate or continue their studies in one of our management instructional programs.

According to Xhulu (2001:146) there are two current deficiencies in FET, as cited by SAQA 2000:

- A separation of theory and practice, giving rise to irrelevant ETD programs that fail to meet the needs of students and the changing demands of the economy and society, hence contributing to high levels of unemployment.
- Poorly articulated FET programs and qualifications for technical college and high schools that inhibit a learner’s mobility across programs and providers.

These deficiencies are some of the core hindrances causing inability to offer effective Small Business Management and Entrepreneurship education. This offering must be located within the broader supportive institutional framework so as to result in effective delivery to result. As mentioned before there is a diverse mix of learner types that registers at FET institutions. These students must be earmarked for the relevant segments of the learner market. The treatise will investigate perceptions teachers and students have regarding student performance in the Small Business Management curriculum.

### 2.5 PERCEPTIONS AND BELIEFS OF TEACHERS AND STUDENTS

As the main research question of this study focuses on the perceptions of teachers and students, it is necessary to clarify the perceptions and beliefs concerning student performance.
According to Chalmers (1982:25), perception depends on a person’s past experiences and expectations and is related to a person’s cultural background. Since all learning takes place within a culture, students will reflect their unique learning experiences in the classroom through their performances during assessment in the classroom. From this it can be argued that although people have the same experiences, they may not have the same perceptions and beliefs concerning their experiences, because all people have perceptions and beliefs that shape their decisions and actions (Sacks, 1999:62).

Thus it seems that “people are the most frequent source of bias error in the assessment process” (Hoy & Gregg, 1994:65). This will have implications for education as learning, teaching and assessment cannot be separated and teachers are inextricably involved in the assessment process.

As South Africa is a heterogeneous and multi-cultural country, it is logical to assume that those who are involved in teaching will have dissimilar perceptions of student performance in the Small Business Management curriculum. Furthermore, because of cultural diversity, teachers who are involved in assessment processes “need to be aware that their beliefs and perceptions may not match those of the population they serve” (Hoy & Gregg, 1994:65). It is important that the perceptions of students and teachers need to be investigated to improve their performance in the Small Business Management curriculum.

According to Murphy (1999:125), feedback, which focuses on performance, has been described as “ego-involving”. By being comparative, it draws attention to learners’ self-esteem (Butler & Neuman, 1995). This indicates that students will perceive their lack of performance as their lack of ability and tend to avoid seeking help in order to hide their incapacity. Even the giving of praise to students can be harmful if it is not linked to objective feedback.

According to the following website (http://www.rwrel.org/scpd/sirs/10/co20.html) the Rosenthal/Jacobson study concluded that students’ intellectual development is largely a response to what teachers expect and how these expectations are communicated. This indicates that teachers’ perception of good results concerning their students’ performance does have a positive influence on their actual performance. Other articles
on the same website looked at the positive and negative sides by giving parents and teachers the message that they could improve children’s school performance dramatically by communicating high expectations to them. In general these articles agree that teachers’ perceptions of expectations of how students should perform do have an effect on them.

Comparative studies by several authors show that positive feedback enhances performance, but also enhances attitudes to work and self-esteem mainly through its effect on pupils’ beliefs about their own capacity to learn. This highlights the value of students to believing that effort is more important than their ability and that mistakes are part of learning.

The culture and beliefs concerning student’s ability and effort, within which the individual learner interprets feedback, can affect pupils’ beliefs about themselves for good or bad. For this reason the research focuses on the perceptions of students and teachers to improve the students' performance in the Small Business Management curriculum.
CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

In any research it is essential that an acceptable research methodology be followed. Failure to do so may impact negatively on the credibility of the research. The purpose of this chapter is to describe and clarify the methods employed in the investigation of the perceptions of staff and students with a view to improving student performance in the Small Business Management curriculum in the FET sector. A detailed description of the methods of data collection and procedure is given to enhance the trustworthiness of the research.

3.2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

A combination of quantitative and qualitative research methods was used in this study in order to provide descriptions and explanations of situational influences. This is to move away from a purely positivistic approach of behaviorism to include a more descriptive and naturalistic phenomenology (McMillan and Schumacher, 1993:266). This indicates that descriptive research is concerned with the current status of something. Qualitative research describes existing achievements, attitudes, behaviors or other characteristics of a group of subjects.

Landman (1988: 70) describes method as the Latin term 'methodus' and the Greek term methodos combined as 'meta + hodos' as the way by which the scientific researcher must select a method permitting access to the phenomenon. The method is largely determined by the nature of the phenomenon or by the sphere of investigation. The method also implies a systematic procedure in analyzing the phenomenon.

Quantitative research techniques emphasize a priori categories to collect data in the form of numbers. The goals are to provide statistical descriptions, relationships and explanations. Neuman (2000:7) holds that the quantitative or empirical analytical
research method relates to data being expressed as numbers, whereas the qualitative research method considers data in terms of words or objects. For this reason the researcher has chosen questionnaires, in which a set of appropriate questions related to the study under investigation was constructed. Wiersma (2000:175) states that the questionnaire format should be attractive and straightforward, with the items ordered in a logical sequence. Responding to the items should be convenient and without confusion. In order to apply this quantitative method, certain requirements have to be met.

These requirements are presented below:
• The problem has to be properly defined.
• Analysis of such a problem must be meticulous and comprehensive.
• Solutions must be generated consciously, rationally, logically, systematically and scientifically (Redelinghuys et al., 1996:5).

This self-administered questionnaire has advantages, which include the following:
• As all questionnaires are identical, it provides a homogeneous stimulus to the potential respondent and eliminates the possibility of the impersonal effect encountered in both the telephone survey and postal survey.
• In a relatively short time, data may be obtained from a large number of people.

The researcher can also offer the following rewards to the respondents:
• Being regarded positively by another person.
• Expressing appreciation to the respondent.
• Being consulted on an issue of importance to the respondent (Wiersma, 2000:176).

This indicates that this method has both advantages and value to the researcher as well as the respondents. According to Jacobs and Razavieh (1990:370), to understand the perceptions, the qualitative technique provides a detailed description, analysis and interpretation of the phenomenon. That is why qualitative research is defined by its extensive use of verbal information, its preference for developing full information on relatively few cases and its consideration of the unique features of each case. One central method of a semi-structured interview had been chosen in this research.
followed the recommendation made by Johnson (1994:51) that the semi-structured interview is the style that suits a small-scale search such as this one.

According to Bogdon and Beklin (2003:96), when administering semi-structured interviews you are confident of getting comparable data across subjects, but you lose the opportunity to understand how the subjects themselves structure the topics at hand. For this purpose a discussion was held about the subject under investigation before the interview was conducted. McMillan and Schumacher (1993:372) state that this research provides valuable data, particularly when first investigating an area. The purpose of this kind of research is to describe and analyze people’s individual and collective attitudes, beliefs, thoughts, and perceptions. This kind of research also provides flexibility and adaptability to the context in which the research will take place.

The idea of qualitative research is to purposefully select informants (or documents or visual material) that will best answer the research question. Qualitative research thus requires that the data to be collected must be rich in the descriptions of people and places. De Vos (1988:240) aptly describes qualitative research as “a multi-purpose approach (utilising different qualitative techniques and data collection methods) to social interaction, making sense of, interpreting or reconstructing this interaction in terms of the meanings that the subjects attach to it.”

3.3 POPULATION

The College of Excellence is made up of merger partners. There are currently three campuses and six sites of delivery. The college already has a diversity of programmes on offer, a standard it will seek to improve on within the new FET (Further Education and Training) era. The college is currently the provider of certified national courses in Business and Engineering studies.

The researcher has chosen the three campuses that offer the Small Business Management course in their programmes. Campus A has a student population of 134,88 FTE’s (full-time equivalents), Campus B 135,25 FTE’s and campus C 327,38
FTE’s. Two of the colleges are situated in disadvantaged areas (northern areas and townships of the Port Elizabeth area) and they are not as well resourced as the college that is situated in the central business district. Annexure D shows the distances between the three campuses in the Port Elizabeth area. The racial balance of the lecturing staff at these campuses is 40 white, 47 black, 42 coloureds and 4 Indians. The staff and student population at these campuses is multi-cultural and heterogeneous of nature with English as second language.

3.4 SAMPLE

Purposeful sampling was used to identify information-rich participants for the investigation. A criterion for selecting these participants was that they had to be knowledgeable about the Small Business Management curriculum and their students’ progress and performances (McMillan & Schumacher, 1993:378). I assumed that the teachers who offered the curriculum received training in this field and had experience in the subject content and evaluation policy of this curriculum. In order to achieve this, the researcher chose to contact teachers who have taught the course in the past and those who are currently offering it, at the three different campuses.

The researcher also chose to work with the students who enrolled for the National Senior Certificate and the N3 Accounting Administrative course and those who did Business Management. These students do Small Business Management as part of the programme of delivery to complete their course. They all come from different backgrounds and each one of them has his or her own level of expectation of how their performance can improve. The entry level to the course is also different. A sample of students from Campus A, B and C comprised the participants in the research. Since the study was done with the full co-operation of staff and students, a random selection was done of these individuals.
3.5 DATA COLLECTION STRATEGIES

To obtain the data, it was decided to use two types of instruments in this research. A semi-structured interview was used for staff since it was associated with gathering facts or attitudes, rather than analyzing them in great detail. According to Maykut and Morehouse (1994:46,82), the most useful method of data collection in qualitative research is an interview, especially when the researcher wants to gain perspectives about participants and their construction of meaning of a phenomenon. The interview is flexible and adaptable, thus involving direct interaction between the participants and the researcher (McMillan & Schumacher, 1993:254).

The interview method was selected for the following reasons:
- It reduces interview bias and leads to easier analysis (Hitchcock & Hughes, 1995:157).
- It is “context dependent” and free from the influence of the interviewer so that a more objective view of the social world of the respondent emerges.
- It is done individually.

Questionnaires were designed to gather information on how the students feel about indicators that can improve their performance. With regard to the design of the questionnaire, it was decided to have it fully structured with no use of open-ended questions. The response to open-ended questions is difficult to analyse, as the analysis cannot be planned in advance.

According to Rossi (1983: 84), it is important for the questionnaire to satisfy three objectives:
- It should meet the aims of the research
- It should reflect accurate information regarding the research study
- It should be executable within the time and resources available

In this study on perceptions of staff and students to improve student performance in the SBM (Small Business Management) curriculum of the FET sector, the questionnaire met all three of the above requirements. The students selected did not have a strong
command of English and they might not recall information. For this reason the closed-ended questions were used.

3.6 VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY

Critics of the qualitative approach argue that imprecise measurement, weak generalisation of findings, vulnerability to bias, overload of data and extreme labour intensity make the methods less desirable (Telford, 1996:35). However, if reliability of the research is such that it measures what it is expected to measure, then according to Anderson (1990:13) it must be deemed to be valid. McMillan & Schumacher (1993:390) state that validity of qualitative designs is the degree to which the interpretations and concepts have mutual meanings between the participants and researcher. For this reason the purpose of the treatise as well as the questions were clearly explained to the participants.

The study was structured from the start by using the format prescribed, which provided legitimate guidance and direction for the research design so that the data could be organised satisfactorily. Scott and Usher (1996:79) advocate that naturalistic enquiry can be structured to represent reality directly. For this reason a case-study approach was used in my study.

Qualitative researchers collect data by interacting with selected individuals in their settings and by obtaining relevant documents (McMillan and Schumacher, 1993:373.) This emphasizes why discussions had to take place between the researcher and selected participants. It is important to ensure that the research data is exactly what is researched. According to Van Dalen (1979:12), the scientific method does not lead to absolute certainties, but sometimes this method of obtaining information or knowledge is more reliable than some other methods claim to be. In other words there is no perfect method for searching for answers to the questions.

Tape-recorders, movie-cameras, mechanical-counters and similar devices are not subject to selective memory decay and may provide an investigator with first-hand
knowledge that is more richly detailed and more reliable than a human observer can record (Van Dalen, 1979:45). This recording device indicates why this form of evidence can be studied immediately or at a later stage.

The study strongly highlights the reason for current perceptions of staff and students on how to improve performance in the Small Business Management curriculum FET sector. According to McKerman (1996:7), the research allows the data to emerge on their own, without any preconceived theories or forced structures imposed on the study. It also looks for meanings in the events themselves. Scott and Usher (1996:7), contradict this view by arguing that although it is impossible for researchers to escape their pre-understanding.

3.7 PROCEDURE

Permission was requested to conduct research from the CEO (Chief Executive Officer) of the institution I researched. Permission was granted on the provision that the research essay is made available to the institution. Pseudonyms were used to protect the anonymity of the institution and staff members involved in this research. According to Hitchcock & Hughes (1995:51) confidentiality and anonymity are important, since the world of schools and classrooms is full of values and the perceived conflict of interests. For this reason the college at which I conducted my research is called College of Excellence.

A pilot study was done with the questions to determine whether the students understood what was expected of them. In the pilot study the level of difficulty was also highlighted with regard to certain questions and changes were made. This ensured that the questions would exactly get the response from the students that they were intended to obtain.

Forty-five minute sessions were held with the students during which questionnaires were distributed to all students in the N3 and NSC and N4 class groups (see Annexure A). The students were allowed to read through the questions to determine whether
they had difficulty in understanding the questions. The purpose of this exercise and how their involvement would make a positive contribution towards the study, were clearly explained to them. Some of the students had a problem in understanding the language and a clear explanation was given to them. For the sake of confidentiality, students were requested not to print their names on the forms. Each questionnaire was assigned a number according to the class lists. This gave the researcher an idea of who the respondent was.

The staff selected was quite eager to contribute their opinions and felt that it was time that their views regarding student performance be heard. Interviews for twenty minutes each were arranged with five members over weekends, because they were busy with examination preparation during working hours (see Annexure B).

Originally a group interview was arranged for a Wednesday morning between 08h00 and 09h00 as that is the time when staff had their divisional meetings. Staff could not avail themselves, due to official commitments. Fortunately they agreed to do the interviews after hours at their homes. This environment created a more relaxed atmosphere and interviewees were much more at ease.

After the initial contact with and consent of the staff to conduct the interviews, times and dates over weekends were confirmed with them. A programme (Table 3.1) was developed to avoid confusion and to ensure that each individual would know when to expect to be interviewed.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interview programme: 2005</th>
<th>Type of interview</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Campus</td>
<td>Interview date</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>27 August</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>28 August</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>28 August</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>3 September</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>4 September</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.1
3.8 LIMITATIONS AND DELIMITATIONS

3.8.1 Limitations
At the time when the research was conducted, students were preparing for the semester examinations. This led to the participants being under pressure with preparations and revision for the examinations and there was little time to gather sufficient information from students and staff. Stenhouse (1981:11) has noted that one of the most serious impediments to the development of teachers as researchers – and indeed the art in teaching – is quite simply the shortage of time. Some of the students have a language problem and cannot express themselves properly. Since I was one of the teachers offering the course, students also felt afraid to express themselves freely and this led to a limited scope of feedback.

3.8.2 Delimitations
Based on these limitations mentioned, the researcher had decided only to focus on the experience, aspirations and opinions of the Business Management students and staff offering this course. Students were requested to sacrifice one of their free periods to complete the questionnaire. To overcome the fear of the students I asked one of my senior students to supervise the completion of the questionnaires. This was done to prevent problems in using their formal lecturing time. Some staff were asked to do the interview at home where a session was arranged for the interview. This took place over weekends in their own time when they could feel more relaxed. An agreement was reached to give them at least a week to go through the interview questions before the session took place.
CHAPTER 4 : QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS: QUESTIONNAIRES

4.1 INTRODUCTION

In this study the focus is on the interpretation of data that was collected through the use of questionnaires. There are two main types of questionnaires: the structured or closed-ended, and the unstructured or open-ended form. A structured questionnaire contains the questions and alternative answers to them. Unstructured questionnaires on the other hand do not include suggested answers (Ary, Jacobs & Razavieh, 1972:170). Questionnaires may be used to learn about the attitudes of respondents, the activities they engage in, past experiences and their future plans.

A questionnaire may also be used to investigate the relationships amongst variables. Ary et al. (1972:170) state that the administration and scoring of a structured questionnaire is straightforward and the results lend themselves readily to analysis. The structured questionnaire has the advantage of forcing the respondents into choosing one of a number of pre-selected alternative answers to questions. In contrast an unstructured questionnaire has the advantage of giving the participants the freedom to reveal their opinions and attitudes. However, the disadvantage of the latter is that the information they generate is difficult to process and analyze.

In this study I used a closed-ended questionnaire (see Annexure A) to obtain certain quantifiable data. In addition, I used interviews for a more qualitative understanding of the perceptions and these findings are examined in chapter 5. This form of questionnaire was preferred because of the advantages stated above and in Chapter 3. It should be noted that the respondents generally could misinterpret the questionnaires. However as mentioned in the previous chapter, I tried to minimize the vagueness of the questionnaire by employing a pilot group. Consequently the vague questions were either omitted or rephrased.
4.2 ANALYSIS OF QUESTIONNAIRE FINDINGS ON STUDENTS

The main purpose of the questionnaire was to gather measurable information on the perceptions of students regarding their performance in the Small Business Management curriculum.

The following column chart shows the responses to every individual statement with an explanation of the significance of the response result to each statement.

**QUESTIONNAIRE RESULTS: 2005**

Statement 1

Lecturer addresses multi-cultural education needs.

From the chart it is clear that 10% of the students felt that teachers do not address multi-cultural education needs in the classroom. Learner’s perception indicates that teachers tend to be impatient with them, when they take longer to understand certain concepts than the other group of students in the class. This comes from the fact that they came from disadvantaged schools, where some teachers did not take the extra time or have patience to ensure that they are language-competent in their subject fields. According to Le Roux (1993:152), teachers in the multi-cultural classroom report that pupils experience difficulty with academic concepts and terminology because these
terms and ideas are more abstract and less understood and experienced than ideas and terms used in social interaction. This highlights that some students do not have the same skills and language ability as their peer students, in the class which comes from Model C schools. From my experience as a teacher in the Small Business Management field, a lack of multi-cultural education puts these students at high academic risk. Weismantel & Fradd (1989:5) reinforce this by stating that when pupils are not gaining academic and cognitive skills in their mother tongue, and are not able to understand English, they are at risk of delayed academic achievement and ultimately school failure.

The results do show from the chart that there are 70% of students that felt their teachers are actually addressing their multi-cultural needs and 20% of them felt very strongly about the effectiveness of their teachers in their class. These results show a significant tendency in favour of the issue.

**Statement 2**

**Availability of learning materials eg. Calculators, textbooks and computers**

The column chart reflects that 17% of students are dissatisfied with the availability of the resources to improve their performance. From observation when students were filling in the questionnaire they mentioned that the absence of a fully-fledged resource centre made it difficult for them to access textbooks that can help them to complete or study for assignments and tests. The remaining 58% and 25% felt that their resources are sufficient for them to improve their performance. These results confused me, because when I spoke to the teachers, they complained that most of the students do not have textbooks and calculators and that makes their task difficult in the class to teach and to complete the work on time.
Statement 3

Teaching performance

The students rated their teachers’ performance in the classroom very highly at 48%, whereas 17% of the students were not so enthusiastic about their teachers performance and mentioned that staff should be more open in their approach, so that students can be more comfortable when talking to them and encourage them to contribute in the classroom.

Statement 4

Description of format or activities of course

The response to this statement shows that 19% of the students were not really informed or knowledgeable about the activities in the course to be able to perform effectively. Most of the students (53%) felt they were thoroughly informed about the description or format of the course, whereas 28% felt very strongly about the manner in which their lecturer had explained the course to them. There seems to be a strong tendency in favour of the description of the course activities.

Statement 5

Procedure for evaluation

The response to this statement indicates that 49% rated the evaluation procedure as good and 23% as excellent. The remaining 28% portrayed that they could not cope with the external evaluation paper, because of the depth and scope of the questions and inability to grasp the skills for calculations. The procedure for the whole evaluation policy is also not fair to them, one student mentioned. Only 40% of the whole year’s evaluation counts and 60% of the external examination counts. Students felt that this is unfair to those that work very hard throughout the whole year. Continuous evaluation
has a very small role to play in this procedure. This is actually contradicting the whole outcomes based evaluation policy.

Statement 6

Discussion on course policy, for example late coming, absenteeism

The responses to this statement from the chart reflect that 47% students felt in favour of the course policy and 30% felt happy about the way the policy is communicated to them. This shows a significant tendency in favour of this policy, but 23% of the students viewed the policy as bias in its implementation.

Statement 7

Dealing with special needs, for example physical or learning disability

The chart reflects that 28% of the students felt that special needs are not being given the proper attention they need. The remaining 57% and 15% of the students reflect in favour of the manner in which students’ special needs are being dealt with in this college. This is due to delivery of a supplementary tuition programme, which is a world-wide trend designed specifically to address the academic needs of disadvantaged students (Matiso, 2004:10). The programme is called an SI (supplementary instruction) programme which is offered by their peers that have undergone training in the respective fields of study.
Statement 8

Counselling

The response from the chart to statement 8 shows that 25% of students felt that no proper counselling is being provided to them. From my observation during the completion of the questionnaires, a student mentioned that a counsellor is appointed at their college, but the individual is never available when needed. One student did not comment for personal reasons. The 62% felt good about the counseling services offered and 15% of the students reflect excellent in the counselling services offered by the college. Once again the result shows a significant tendency in favour of counselling being offered to poorly performing students.

4.3 CONCLUSION

In spite of the negativity mentioned above, the majority of responses indicated a positive attitude towards the factors that can improve their performance in the Small Business Management curriculum. It must be emphasized that the results of the survey done for this study do not represent the opinions of all students of all Further Education and Training colleges in South Africa. The analysis is regarded as valid only in respect of those who responded. These respondents being a large number, their responses could not be disregarded for the purpose of the research.

The findings of the survey have shown that the concept of improving student performance is supported and accepted by the respondents, as an overwhelming by positive response was found towards most of the statements of questions 1 to 8 of the questionnaire.
CHAPTER 5 : QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS: INTERVIEWS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

Qualitative data analysis involves breaking down the data and relating particular items of data to one or other category which the researcher has identified (Hitchcock & Hughes, 1995:97). De Vos (1998:334) is of the opinion that the analysis in qualitative research is "a challenging and highly creative" process as the researcher has to make sense of the data, as well as locating a description to illustrate the concept.

In this sense, data needs to be managed with the aim of achieving a systematic, coherent manner of data collection, storage and retrieval. This highlights that the information gathered about the feelings of the teachers needs to be managed effectively. The report of this research is descriptive in nature and contains little technical language (Wiersma, 2000:200). This explains why the emphasis is on describing the phenomenon in its context and, on that basis, interpreting the data.

In this study, I have used a semi-structured interview. Kvale (1996:6) states that an interview is a conversation that has structure and purpose. It transcends the spontaneous exchange of views and becomes a careful questioning and listening approach with the purpose of obtaining thoroughly tested knowledge. An interview represents a direct endeavor by the researcher to obtain reliable information in the form of verbal responses from one or more respondents (Sax, 1979:232).

The respondents in this study raised issues that complemented the information from the questionnaires. I used the advantage of flexibility of the interview, to adapt to the interviewee’s level of communication. Although the interview has both advantages and disadvantages, it does enable the interviewer to follow up on incomplete or unclear responses by asking additional probing questions (Gay, 1990:203). Gay (1990:203) also points out that the interview is the most appropriate method to ask the interviewees
personal questions. The interview also allowed me to obtain data that participants would not give on a questionnaire.

5.2 THE ANALYSIS OF THE INTERVIEW FINDINGS ON EDUCATORS

The interviews were conducted over two weekends. Each individual conversation was recorded. Conversations lasted for 20 minutes each. These conversations took place at the respondents' homes. This almost evoked a feeling of efficacy as the opportunity to reflect on their professional lives in the presence of a neutral participant instilled a sense of well-being and purpose. The presence of the tape recorder did not provide any disturbance as it was placed unobtrusively.

The following are the main questions that were posed to the participants and their responses. The responses clearly indicate that teachers are experiencing feelings of despondency. This is not very positive, as the perceptions of teachers have a direct bearing on their students' performance.

**Question 1: How do you view students’ attitude towards the course?**

The educators' perceptions of the attitude of students towards the course were very negative and de-motivating. They felt that the students had no interest in the course and that makes them have a "don't care attitude" towards the course.

Some of the responses were:

- “Don’t care, shows less interest”
- “Reluctant towards doing subject”
- “Perceived as irrelevant with no bearing on their future”
- “… endured and tolerated in order to qualify for certificate”

This negativity that teachers experience about the students' attitude towards the course is based on the knowledge that they are uncertain about the careers they wish to follow
and on their failure rate in matric. As there were a lot of changes in the timetable that took place at the college, these students had to deal with three different teachers in two terms. This created a lot of confusion for them, because they had to build a new relationship with the lecturer just as they got used to the previous one.

**Question 2: What is your view of the course?**

Most of the teachers felt that the curriculum is quite relevant to encourage self-sufficiency in students. Some did mention that the practical side of the course needs to be updated to be in line with industry requirements. They also reflect that the content of the curriculum is not carefully planned to be offered over a period of 52 weeks. This leads to students not being able to perform successfully as they are not able to cope with the workload.

Some responses were:

“Too much workload for a year”
“You have to cram all the work to get it done”
“Students lack general knowledge… backlog”

All these highlight that the teachers have a very difficult task to perform in order to present this course positively to students. From my experience most of the teachers that are offering the curriculum are forced to present it and it is sometimes not their field of expertise.

**Question 3: Do you enjoy teaching it, why?**

Teachers have a very important role to play in a student’s educational development. The National Curriculum Statement envisions teachers who are qualified, competent, dedicated, caring and who will be able to fulfil the various roles outlined in the Norms and Standards for Teachers 2000 (Government Gazette, no 20844).
These see teachers as mediators of learning, interpreters, designers of learning programme materials, leaders, administrators and managers, scholars, researchers and lifelong students, community members, citizens, pastors, assessors and learning area specialists (RSA, 2002:18).

Most of the teachers indicate that they enjoy teaching this curriculum, as they are part of the improvement in students’ lives. They indicated that they are in the profession, because they want to add value to students’ lives. One participant also stated that since it is her first time offering this curriculum, she enjoys becoming a researcher to become more familiar with the content to be a valuable interpreter to the students. They indicated that just being there for the students, when they need their advice or help with problematic areas, gives them a sense of purpose in their teaching career.

**Question 4: Why do you experience a lot of absenteeism amongst your students?**

The following is a list of factors that teachers view as factors that contribute towards poor attendance of the students:

- Lack of finance, for example taxi-fare
- Lack of discipline and commitment to their own future
- Lose concentration, because too much work is covered at a time
- Some have part-time jobs which interfere with class-time
- Some are mothers and sometimes they have to take care of their children.

**Question 5: What do you think contributes to this?**

Most of the teachers felt that those students’ lack of awareness of what it’s like in the real world and resistance to change in their lives contribute to these factors. One participant strongly commented that:

“Most of my students come from disadvantaged backgrounds and have to assist their families in making ends meet.”
This indicated that the socio-economic conditions of the students can have an impact on their performance in the curriculum.

**Question 6: How do you think do the necessary aids and support materials contribute towards making your teaching task more effective?**

The teachers mentioned that these aids make their teaching task effective and more interesting. Students’ perception of knowledge gained is much better if an educator can illustrate or make the work as practical as possible to them. Some of the teachers felt that they do not have sufficient support materials at their disposal. According to Le Vacic (1995:65) one of the criteria to evaluate effectiveness, is the judgement of efficiency with which resources, for example money, staff time and learning aids, are used. This produced evidence that adequate resources do play an important part in the performance of students.

**Question 7: Do you think that this has an impact on the performance of your students?**

Most of the teachers mentioned that resources and support materials are major catalysts that have an impact on their students’ performance. One lecturer stated:

"Without their calculators and textbooks it becomes difficult to teach students how to do their calculations in the syllabus."

**Question 8: What is your view with regard to the college’s evaluation policy?**

The college’s evaluation policy impacts negatively on the performance of the students. Some of the teachers’ responses were:

“A more continuous evaluation policy should be used”

“There could be an improvement"
According to Angelis et al. (2001:217), continuous assessment helps to develop an increasing, critical awareness of students’ own progress and empowers them to improve future performance. It also helps the teachers to equally develop a critical awareness of the needs of individual students and how they could be met.

**Question 9: Do you think that this policy does justice to the actual progress of the students’ performance?**

All the participants responded negatively towards the injustice of their college’s evaluation policy. Some felt, as indicated to the previous question, that evaluation should take place on a continuous basis. It was also noted that evaluation should be more than the mere tests and examinations they do in their classrooms. It should promote the principles that are highlighted in chapter 2 of the literature review.

**Question 10: Is there any relationship between your students’ performance and college climate?**

All the participants overwhelmingly mentioned that there is a direct relationship between these two variables. They also felt that the college climate has a negative impact on their students’ performance. Some of the responses were:

“*I do believe a more conducive real ‘college scene’ with proper facilities would create a more cohesive support system*”

“There is not enough infrastructure”

“Resource centres are not fully equipped; this leaves students with the option of sitting in the sun”

“Students might be prepared to stay longer over a cup of coffee”

“There really is nothing at this campus to make a student have any desire to stay”
This clearly expressed how important the college climate is to students' performance. Hoy and Forsyth (1986:147) state an organizational climate as the broad concept that refers to the teachers’ and students’ perceptions of the college’s work environment. This states that the climate is the college’s identity - these characteristics that make the college unique in terms of student activities, infrastructure, resources, decision-making style etcetera. The climate has an enormous bearing on how students perform.

5.3 CONCLUSION

In this chapter I analyzed the data gathered during the investigation of the perceptions of teachers on student performance in the Small Business Management curriculum. These responses were analysed and presented as summaries, while some reflected the direct words of the respondents.

These professionals shared the wide-ranging views on their experience at the college offering sometimes-personal experiences to illustrate their views. There was consensus amongst staff that good student performance is important. This reflects that changes to the current evaluation policy, college climate, staff development and all the issues referred to in the recommendations at their college, must take place if there is to be improvement.
CHAPTER 6 : RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

6.1 INTRODUCTION

This study examined the perceptions of students and staff with regard to student performance in the curriculum. The general success of a college refers firstly to high staff performance and secondly it includes student achievement. The entire report was initiated by what seems to be a problem in performance at all colleges in the Eastern Cape. Performance is more geared to achieving the outcomes of the curriculum. Negative perceptions can also damage the intake of students in FET colleges and this would imply a decline in the South African economy in the future. Poor results, especially in historically black colleges, send a message that there is something happening or not happening in these colleges.

Performance is not in itself a method of evaluating the educational institution. It does indicate how well the institution is moving towards achieving its goals. Colleges should be places where students should be able to achieve their maximum capability. Colleges must make sure that the education which students are getting is of the best possible quality. It is important that the principal knows where the college desires to go and where the college is in terms of quality education. Wood et al. (1985:268) state that information regarding the current level of achievement can provide beneficial input as to how much one yet has to achieve. For this reason the perception of the important stakeholders, like teachers and students, can provide valuable input as to what they view as indicators of student performance.

It is important to analyze those indicators that had been perceived as poor or good performance indicators.

This study has raised a number of crucial points that are important, as the perceptions of these students and teachers can improve student performance as well as related problems. Having looked carefully at my findings, I have made the following recommendations.
6.2 RECOMMENDATIONS

Arising out of the findings from both the quantitative and qualitative investigations (described in chapters 4 and 5), the following related recommendations and conclusions have been compiled:

6.2.1 Resources
From the student and staff responses, the issue of resources clearly has a major influence on the students’ perceptions of the FET programme. The need for more resources is vital for enhancing student performance. Teachers and students in historically disadvantaged colleges suffer because of inadequate resources. The historically white colleges continue to produce better and quality students, because apart from their efficient human resources, they have far superior material resources. The establishment of a positive learning climate, like the appearance of the physical plant and the sense of order and discipline, pervades both instructional and non-instructional areas. This improves the communication of high performance in an institution (http://www.wrel.org/scpd/sirs/10/co20.htm).

A lack of material resources affects the teachers’ as well as students' performance. I recommend the introduction of a fully fledged resource centre where textbooks, computers, newspapers, photocopy machines and internet facilities are available to support the student in his studies. These will ensure that staff has all the necessary physical resources to perform and plan the lessons successfully.

6.2.2 Positive attitude
The teacher should portray a positive attitude to improve student achievement. When the curriculum has been successfully delivered, students are supposed to demonstrate appropriate knowledge, skills and attitudes in this field. Student achievement occurs best in a positive climate. According to Wood et al. (1985:152) a positive attitude fosters the following:

- further helpful interaction among students.
- clarifying experiences between teacher and student and respect between people.
From my observation as a teacher in the classroom, it became quite evident that, in order for the students to portray the positive attitude, their teachers must be an example from which they can learn as a role model. Staff members who hold high expectations for themselves as leaders and teachers should take responsibility for student performance (http://www.wrel.org/scpd/sirs/10/co20.htm). This emphasizes the importance of portraying the qualities of a good educator as indicated in chapter 2.1.

### 6.2.3 Student tutoring

One must establish tutor groups to discuss student achievement and peer counseling, for example, language problems, study methods, calculations. This can be followed by referrals to subject specialists. Students in this academic field will need to be armed with the necessary tools to be successful in their studies. A lot of effort and patience should go into providing support to students so that they can firmly be on the road to success as explained in chapter 2.3. This stresses the importance of having a good student support system in place.

### 6.2.4 Staff development

Staff should be trained in multi-cultural education so as to address the different needs of students. Booth et al. (2003:92) indicate that all subjects from religion to mathematics need to be perceived from a multicultural perspective. Hopefully this will make teachers better prepared to teach both historically advantaged and disadvantaged students and all groups of students more culturally consciously and tolerantly. Management should also provide initiatives to retrain staff in methodology, so as to implement innovative teaching strategies.

### 6.2.5 Course curriculum

This should be well researched with aims and learning outcomes that are appropriate to the level of study. The content, teaching and learning development and evaluation of the course need to be evaluated. The weight of content in relation to the study period provided should also be revisited. All these should be brought in line with the criteria of a good curriculum as indicated in chapter 2.1.
6.2.6 Open-door policy
An attempt should be made to illuminate the “me” and “you” syndrome, which exists between students and educators. Opportunities need to be created where educators and students come together as a group, especially in team-building exercises like sport, games and fun days. This can eradicate the fear students have to consult lecturers about problematic areas in their subject field.

6.2.7 Continuous assessment
Continuous assessment has a major role to play in the learning process. What came out very clearly from the study is that student life revolves directly or indirectly around the final examination. It will probably remain that way, unless lecturers are prepared to place less emphasis on rote learning, and Outcomes Based Education becomes a reality that is implemented for NSC-grade 12 levels at college. The basic aim of educational institutions is to enhance students’ educational development. It is recommended that lecturers should make use of more continuous, more informal types of formative assessment. Students perform much better when the circumstances are not so “rigid in control” like the external examinations and when they are less pressurized by the whole process of national examinations.

6.2.8 Provision of a language support programme
One challenge that is being faced by students and teachers is the difficulty students have in using English as the language of instruction. An academic support programme has to be implemented to address the problem. Le Roux (1993:160) emphasized the importance of such programmes, but if maximum benefits are to be derived from them they should form part of an integrated school policy.

6.2.9 Students with special needs
The special needs of physically challenged students are an uncharted area at the college. An experienced individual or team has to be chosen to drive this issue of creating provision for these students and making the college more accessible to them. This has fast to become a priority, because colleges are discriminating against such students.
6.3 CONCLUSION

Recent developments in South African education policies and practices have emphasized that the student occupies the centre stage and all educational activities are aimed at enhancing the students’ chances of success. With reference to the Small Business Management curriculum, students and educators should be armed with all the necessary tools, such as proper resources and positive attitudes, to be successful in improving their performance. From the study it became evident that students and educators need to be supported, motivated and capacitated by management to ensure progress in this curriculum.

Teachers need to be more relaxed and portray a less dominating attitude when equipping students. They need to make students feel more at ease and to feel free to raise their fears and concerns about the curriculum content. Educators need to move towards more artistic judgements which support their summative assessments. If management wants to improve their students’ performance, they have to consider and attend to the perceptions of students and educators. Positive perceptions of staff will generally enhance the quality of their lecturing, whilst assessing and interacting with students will contribute positively towards enhancing quality assurance in education provided by the institution.

6.4 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY

This study has raised a number of issues that are critical in improving student performance. It has also shown that student achievement is dependent on aspects like climate, assessment policy and availability of resources. Within the college the study has also confirmed that student failure to perform effectively cannot simply be dismissed as “inability to perform.” The entire college environment affects the performance of the students. The findings from these and other studies will lead to a more comprehensive and accurate picture of what motivates FET students and teachers which in turn can lead to improvements in the FET curricula and the manner in which they are presented and assessed. The following areas are proposed as possibilities for further research:
(a) A similar study with a sample drawn from all FET colleges all over South Africa.

(b) Analysis of the data collected using variables such as college location, average age of students, qualifications of educators and years of experience in curriculum may lead to important additional information.

(c) The effects of teacher-student ratio on student performance.

6.5 CLOSING REMARK

The need to make improvements to the FET curricula and the way they are taught and assessed at colleges should be recognized and emphasized by educational departments, since it is the FET sector that will equip its students with the ability to make a difference to the economy and social well-being of the country.
REFERENCES


**Anonymous (undated) internet citings**


“Student performance: Indicator definitions” at [http://crs.uvm.edu/schlrpt/perform.htm]

ANNEXURE A: QUESTIONNAIRE

1. PURPOSE OF STUDY
The purpose of this questionnaire is to highlight students’ perceptions regarding indicators that could improve their performance in the Small Business Management N3 curriculum.

2. CONFIDENTIALITY AND ANONYMITY
This questionnaire is completely confidential. Your name and personal details will not be recorded or published on any document. In the event of quoting your exact words, your name will not be recorded. Please be advised that confidentiality is part of the ethics of research and the privacy of the participant will not be violated.

3. INSTRUCTION
Please answer the following questions by ticking the appropriate box.

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<th>Statements</th>
<th>Excellent</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Bad</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Availability of learning material e.g. calculators, textbooks, computers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Teaching performance</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Description of format or activities of course</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Procedure for evaluation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>6. Discussion on course policy, e.g. late coming, absenteeism</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>7. Dealing with special needs e.g. physical or learning disability</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>8. Counselling</td>
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Thank you for your participation.
ANNEXURE B: SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW

1. PURPOSE OF STUDY
The aim of this interview is to determine teachers’ perceptions with regard to improving student performance in the classroom.

2. CONFIDENTIALITY AND ANONYMITY
This questionnaire is completely confidential. Your name and personal details will not be recorded or published on any document. In the event of quoting your exact words, your name will not be recorded. Please be advised that confidentiality is part of the ethics of research and the privacy of the participant will not be violated.

3. TAPE RECORDING
The interview will be audio-taped since audio-taping allows me to capture the exact words and meanings of the participants’ responses that are conducive to the credibility of the research.

4. NOTE:
There are no wrong or right answers to the questions.

QUESTIONS:

1. How do you view students’ attitude towards the course?
________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________

2. What is your view of the course?
________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________
3. Do you enjoy teaching it, why?
________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________

4. Why do you experience a lot of absenteeism amongst your students?
________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________

5. What do you think contributes to this?
________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________

6. How do you think do the necessary aids and support materials contribute
towards making your teaching task more effective?
________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________

7. Do you think that this has an impact on the performance of your students?
   Motivate.
________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________

8. What is your view with regards to the college’s evaluation policy?
________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________
9. Do you think that this policy does justice to the actual progress of the students’ performance? Motivate.

________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________

10. Is there any relationship between your students’ performance and college climate?

________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________

Thank you for your support.
ANNEXURE C: CENTRE VERSUS NATIONAL

N3 EXAMINATION RESULTS
NOVEMBER 2004

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N3 EXAMINATION ANALYSIS

![Bar Chart showing average scores for various subjects, comparing Centre and National results.](chart.png)
ANNEXURE D: MAP

COLLEGE OF EXCELLENCE
## ANNEXURE E: RESULTS PER CAMPUS

### BUSINESS STUDIES: N3/NSC INSTITUTIONAL EXAMINATION RESULTS PER CAMPUS

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<th>NO WROTE</th>
<th>NO PASS</th>
<th>PASS %</th>
<th>NATIONAL PASS %</th>
<th>SUBJECT AVERAGE %</th>
<th>NATIONAL SUBJECT AVERAGE</th>
<th>% RETAINED</th>
<th>ABSENT</th>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
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Table 2.2.1: (Adapted from N3/NSC institutional results November 2002-2004)