Implementation of student retention programmes by two South African universities:

towards a comprehensive student retention model

By

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Abstract

Using Tinto's (1993) interactionalist theory of student retention and Beatty Guenter's (1994) students retention strategy as guiding lenses, this study investigated the implementation of five student retention programmes in two universities in South Africa. Specifically the study sought to interrogate a) the mechanisms used to select students and peer facilitators who participate in each of the programmes, b) the delivery strategies that are in place and c) the programme monitoring and/or evaluation mechanisms in place to ensure that programme goals are achieved.

The study adopted a concurrent mixed design embedded in the post positivist paradigm. The study revealed minimal student participation in all programmes, including those that were compulsory, owing to inconsistent enforcement of policies, stigmatisation, and poor perceptions about these programmes. In addition, the study found challenges in selection, support and monitoring of peer facilitators in almost all the programmes. This was linked to limited qualified staff, high dependence on borrowed delivery models and poor co-ordination among stakeholders. The study through a proposed Comprehensive Model for Student Retention, suggested collaborated and intensive and ongoing training of all facilitators in functional literacies, basic counselling and handling diversity, as well as co-ordinated selection and monitoring of the five programmes.

Keywords

Retention programmes, implementation, universities, orientation, supplemental instruction, tracking and monitoring, tutoring, counselling

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Contents

ACRONYMS

ADC	Academic Development Centre
CHE	Council on Higher Education
CWPT	Class Wide Peer Tutoring
HDI	Historically Disadvantaged Universities
DoE	Department of Education
HE	Higher Education
HEMIS	Higher Education Management Information Systems
HEQC	Higher Education Quality Committee
HSRC	Human Sciences Research Council
FF	Pseudonym for first institution under study
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
LMS	Learning Management System
PAL	Peer Assisted Learning
NBT	National Benchmark Tests
NSFAS	National Financial Aid
OBE	Outcome Based Education
OECD	Organisation of Economic and Community Development
PAL	Peer Assisted Learning programmes
REAP	Rural Economic Programme
RPL	Recognition of Prior Learning
SAQA	South African Qualifications Authority
SI	Supplemental Instruction
SATAP	Standardised Assessment Tests for Access and Placement

SPSS	Statistical Package for Social Sciences
UNESCO	United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation
WW	Pseudonym for second university under study

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF FIGURES

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

1.0   Introduction

This chapter provides the introduction and background of the study that investigated the implementation of five student retention programmes in two universities in South Africa. The chapter also outlines the statement of the problem for the study, the objectives rationale assumptions and delimitation of the study. The chapter also provides synopsis of the topics that make up this study.

1.1   Background of the Study

Globally, there is a shift from elite to open access to higher education. Open access is a phenomenon where students from various backgrounds are allowed to participate in education irrespective of their political, social, and economic backgrounds. To this end, many countries have put in place policies that allow for open access to higher education, in response to the World Declaration on Higher Education, whose Article three spells out the need for 'equity of access' (UNESCO, 1998). Equity of access ensures that all people regardless of gender, age, socio-economic background, culture or social class can enter higher education if they meet the entry requirements stipulated by a particular government (UNESCO, 1998). This ensures that previously excluded social groups are provided with opportunity to participate in higher education. This declaration was made in light of many people who are denied access due to disability, age, economic standing, language, social class and even race and culture (UNESCO, 1998).

Hence, open access policy has resulted in the rapid growth of students in higher education (Baldwin, 2009). These students are diverse in terms of socio economic standing, prior knowledge, experiences, age, culture and motivation (Baldwin, 2009; Fraser and Killen, 2005). According to Morrow (2007), the diverse students have gained physical access but are still lagging behind in terms of understanding the particular forms of disciplinary knowledge acceptable in the higher education context. This has led to the persisting challenge of high student dropout (CHE, 2004; Braxton, 2000; Longden, 2004). This challenge has also been noted in South Africa.

Student dropout refers to a situation where a student who has registered for higher education fails to complete their studies (Martinez, 2003). Student drop out is a challenge to individuals, institutions and society. Student non-completion limits individual opportunities for getting well-paying jobs to finance personal basic needs (Crossling, Heagney & Thomas, 2009). At an individual level, non completion or drop out results in loss of self-esteem and confidence (Maree & Molepo, 2002). Individuals with low self-esteem and confidence cannot develop creative ways to sustain themselves. People who cannot sustain themselves cannot uplift their economic and social status. This also puts a burden on the society to provide social welfare for such individuals. The challenge of student drop out has spurred a need to find ways to enhance student retention.

Student retention is a pivotal aspect of higher education quality(CHE 2009). This quality is reflected in public perception about higher education and depends on graduates who are contributing meaningfully to society. Definedly, high performing institutions are associated with individuals who influence social, technological, economic

as well as developmental issues of the society. Therefore student drop out imply loss of potential skills and knowledge required to solve societal needs (Quinn, Thomas, Slack, Casey,Thexton& Noble, 2005). In a developing country like South Africa where government funding to public higher education is largely determined by the number of students who graduate (Pillay, 2008), student non completion implies loss of revenue for institutions. More so, student retention also has an economic dimension for states because it expands the human resource base which contributes to the economy (DoE, 1997). In view of the above, efforts to minimise student dropout has become an essential target for higher education institutions globally (Reason, 2009:659). Therefore, higher education institutions are looking for plausible and sustainable student retention strategies.

On another angle, student retention refers to the proportion of the admitted students that successfully progress from one academic level to another until completion of the registered course or programme in the same institution (Angelino, 2007; Reason, 2009). Although retention does not accurately account for students who transfer and complete their academic programmes in other higher education institutions, it still provides an overall measure of the higher education performance. It is the above contention and argument that have contributed to making the phenomenon of student retention a key aspect of concern for higher education in South Africa (CHE, 2009; Subotsky, 2011).

1.2   The South African Context

South Africa is one of the many countries battling with the challenge of student retention and success. According to statistics reported by the Council on Higher Education , by

2010, 892 936 students were enrolled in public higher education institutions but about 15% of those who had commenced studies graduated with a bachelor's degree (Maile, 2008; Scott,Hendry & Yeld, 2007). Meanwhile, the South African higher education policies give institutions of higher learning a mandate to select students with potential to succeed and support them throughout their careers (Department of Education (DoE), 1997).

In South Africa, economic and political factors have largely driven the promulgation of policies and initiatives to increase equity of access to higher education. The economic wellbeing of the country was believed to be nourished by qualified personnel who would compete in technological aspects on the global market. Therefore, more students were supposed to be enrolled in various disciplines and supported to complete studies. Politically, the country needed to redress inequalities in educational provision among the social groups in a bid to bring a transformed social justice. This is because prior to the democratic dispensation of 1994, education provision was along racial lines. Hence, this caused serious inequalities in terms of access to resources among South Africa's four main racial groups namely: Africans, Indians, Coloureds and Whites (Cloete, 2004; Department of Education(DoE), 1997). For instance, the 1983 Universities Amendment Act stipulated that students of one racial group could not enroll in Higher Education institutions (HEI) which catered for another racial group without permission from the government (Cloete, 2004; Badat, 2009). As a result, there were huge differences in the quality of teaching and learning and research between the South African Higher Education Institutions (HEI) which served the various social groups described above (Cloete, 2004). In this vein, Strydom, Basson, & Mentz (2010) argue that the effects of the apartheid system in South Africa are still prominent in that most of the students from

Black and Coloured social groups are disadvantaged. The majority of these students belong to the first generation and come from low socio economic backgrounds where they have been exposed to limited learning opportunities. The same students are prone to the high risk of dropping out.

Cognisant of the damaging apartheid policies, the New South African Government that came into power in 1994 put in place policies to enhance equity and redress past imbalances (Department of Education, 1997; Department of Education, 2001). These policies were aimed at enabling social justice by empowering those from previously marginalised groups to participate in the education system (Hlalele & Alexander , 2012). This empowerment was reflected in the reorganisation of the functions of the education system in relation to funding, curricula, student admission and support (DoE, 2004).

The process of transforming the education system entailed amalgamation and reorganisation of the system to form one National Department for higher education and nine provincial Departments of Education for pre-tertiary institutions. Universities, technikons and teachers' colleges were amalgamated to form three types of institutions currently known as universities of technology, traditional universities and comprehensive universities. The merging of the higher education sector envisaged the creation of a co-ordinated and integrated higher education system under the control of Higher Education Quality Committee (HEQC) which ensures that the education system meets international standards and addresses national needs. However, the integration has not been easy to enact, as it requires co-operation of stakeholders, training of staff and restructuring of curricula. In order to facilitate the integration of curricular, the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) was formed to take charge of registering all academic

programmes offered in higher education institutions. This meant that curricula for the different education sectors had to be redesigned to meet the needs of diverse students entering higher education. This redesign included diversifying modes of curriculum delivery and updating content to meet contemporary developments and providing support. This redesign was aimed at ensuring that the education systems produce well rounded graduates with competencies to address the social, technological, and scientific needs of society (DoE, 1997, SAQA, 2001). In this vein, it was important that students be retained so as to improve individual standards of living through improved personal development that in turn boosts self esteem (Martinez, 1997).

1.2.1 Students Admission to South African Higher Education

In order to facilitate open access, a policy on student admission to Higher Education in South Africa follows a succinct policy environment. To this end, article thirty seven of the Higher Education Act of 1997 asserts that institutions ought to use diverse routes for admitting students into higher education applying the principles of equality and equity. There was also a call to increase enrollment of students in science, engineering and technology disciplines where the country is experiencing severe shortage of skilled personnel (DoE, 1997: Section 2.25). Specifically, women were fewer in these disciplines than their male counterparts. Student routes to higher education involved the use of the high school certificate, recognition of prior learning (RPL) for mature students and any additional method that would identify students with potential to succeed (DoE, 1997:29). Higher education institutions in South Africa have the responsibility of selecting students who have the potential to succeed (DoE, 2001; DoE, 2005). This

implies that students admitted to higher education adhere to the minimum admission criteria for the higher certificate, Diploma and Bachelor's Degrees as set by Higher Education South Africa (HESA) (DoE, 2005). Currently, the minimum entry requirement for a bachelor's degree must be a pass mark in the language of learning, and a minimum of 4 points in four subjects at high school (DoE, 2005). However, this minimum does not guarantee a student admission since higher education institutions have a prerogative to use other mechanisms such as subject combinations to determine further categorization of students for various academic majors (DoE, 2005). This has led to differences in the number of points required by different institutions to enroll first time students to higher education.

The admission policy has led to an increase in student enrollment from 744 489 in 2004 to 49 463 775 by 2009 (DoE, 2009). However, the anticipated equity of access has not tallied with equity of outcomes because completion and retention are skewed along race and social class (DoE, 2009; Letseka and Maile, 2008). The overall completion or graduation rates for undergraduate students at contact universities are 15% (Letseka and Maile, 2008). Historically marginalised groups have the lowest completion rates (CHE, 2009). In fact, statistics hold that one in every three students entering higher education in South Africa will have dropped out by the end of their first year of study (Van Schalkwyk, 2007; Badat, 2009; Subotsky, 2010). Of those who manage to graduate, Black and Coloured student graduates constitute 5% of the cohort (CHE, 2009; Letseka & Maile, 2008). This is a serious challenge to the accomplishment of equity for South Africa given that black students make up more than seventy percent of students enrolled in higher education (Adams, 2006; CHE, 2009). In fact, low graduation rates have also been noted in science and commercial disciplines where the country is

experiencing high skills shortage (CHE, 2009 OECD, 2008; Scott, Yield & Hendry; 2007). Low graduation is also noted among women who constitute 70% of the dropouts. Thus, high dropout and delayed completion of registered programmes constitute the main concerns compromising the state of educational equity in South Africa (Fisher & Scott, 2013;CHE, 2009;Letseka & Maile, 2008)

Tinto (2002) argues that while pre entry attributes may be useful to detect student potential for retention, the student level of engagement with the academic and social settings have a greater influence on student success and retention. In tandem with this view, other scholars also argued that the support structures inside the institution are crucial for enhancing student retention (Strydom et al., 2010; Kuh et al, 2007; Pascarella & Terrenzini, 2005). Therefore, higher education institutions in South Africa have a responsibility to support students to succeed through various programmes and services (DoE, 1997). These programmes are structured mechanisms to enhance equity by allowing students to be supported in specific facets of their life. This support deals with social, psychological, and academic life of the student. To this end, the Higher Education Quality Committee (2004) emphasizes that students support must focus on improving the whole student experience. Below is a summary of the most common services and retention programmes provided by most public higher education institutions in South Africa. These services include health care provision, accommodation, financial aid and libraries, academic support and psychological support.

1.2.2   National Financial Aid Scheme

The National Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS) is a loan facility or service aimed at assisting students coming from low socio economic backgrounds whose families cannot

afford to finance their higher education (DoE, 2004; CHE, 2009). Pillay (2008) describes NSFAS as a well co-ordinated student funding strategy among the Southern African Development Community countries. Funding cover tuition, accommodation and other basic learning needs (DoE, 2009). Apart from NFSAS, non-governmental organisations also assist most students who show potential for success to pursue higher education. However, despite the provision of this funding for almost a decade, very few students who receive funding are retained in higher education (Timmey & Chapman, 2010). The low retention of students receiving financial support may be pointing to other challenges beyond the implementation of this support service. It could be possible that the funds are not sufficient, hence some students continue to struggle financially despite being funded. Another service provided to students to enhance their retention is accommodation.

1.2.3   Accommodation

Some researchers have documented that students who stay on campus are more likely to succeed than commuter students (Robbins et al.,2007). This is because on-campus students have more opportunities to engage in their studies (Pascarella and Terrenzini, 2005). However, the present researchers' informal conversations with academic staff at two of the institutions under study show that even students living on campus sometimes do not attend classes, or use campus services and programmes that could enhance their success and retention. While it could be that students who are in residence are not serious with their studies, it is also possible that the conditions in these residential areas do not promote learning. Therefore an empirical study can help in unearthing the issues impeding student retention.

In view of the need to monitor student participation in higher education and support those who do not meet the expected standard, some institutions have introduced tracking and monitoring programmes.

1.2.4   Student Tracking and Monitoring Programme

Student tracking is a process of monitoring student progress using various indicators so as to channel them to the appropriate support (Tampke, 2012; Ewell, 1995). Student tracking is a retention programme in that monitors student engagement in various activities of the institution (Kuh et al., 2007; Hudson, 2005; Siedman 2005). Monitoring entails flagging students who are not performing to the expected standard, and contacting them to institute an intervention (Du Plessis, 2012; Crossling et al., 2009,Kinzie et al., 2008).

Although tracking can be done manually, it can be a cumbersome administrative process which is very unpopular among academics. Of late, specialized statistical procedures or software programmes are used to extract student details from management information databases .These may include Learning Management Systems that record all students' engagement in the course that is registered online (Mazza, & Botturi, 2007). Basically, a good tracking system captures student participation in social, psychological and academic activities (Cuseo, 2006 ; Fusch, 2009). Advisors and counselors take the responsibility of contacting students identified as potentially at risk. Advisors and counselors use their professional experience in psychological issues to help students define the problem. At times advisors and counselors draw student data from various sources such as class schedules, finance

details, extramural activities and students' home characteristics to get a holistic understanding of student characteristics and challenges (.

However, the challenge is that most tracking software is imported and may be too expensive for institutions that are not financially strong. This has implications on the viability of the institution to buy a robust software system that achieves the student tracking goals. Also, given that the software is usually imported, few staff and students may be well versed with using the software programmes.   This also implies that experienced and specialist staff have to be appointed to assist in training the staff on how to use the software. If such support is not readily provided there is likelihood for staff apathy and low buy in to the programme.

The implementation of the tracking and monitoring systems also uses a multi-tiered approach that includes the three processes of identification of student characteristics, providing counseling and advisory support and intervention. This requires a high level of co-ordination among the various stakeholders spearheading this programme, particularly those who identify the student's problem and those who implement the intervention (Ewell,1995). The tracking programme largely uses the process of referral, thus a weak communication process among the stakeholders can cause some students to abscond the programme. In this study, it would be important to find out best practice in the South African context with regards to encouraging positive response to counseling among students. This will entail the processes followed in assessing the at risk potential, devising an intervention and assessing the goals achieved.

1.2.5   Student Orientation

Student transition programmes enhance student adaptation to the new environment (Crossling et al., 2009; Mullendore & Maclahan, 2004). Orientation is a transition programme aimed at getting new entrants to familiarise themselves with the services available in the institution as well as providing them an opportunity to interact with peers and staff (Thomas, 2002). Students who have a greater understanding of the institutional environment are more likely to be retained because of the sense of belonging they establish through interaction with fellow students and staff. This interaction during the early days is believed to shape student goals and aspirations (Pascarella and Terrenzini, 2005). Pivotally, student interaction with the university community is believed to break the anxiety and isolation associated with students entering a new environment for the first time (Tinto, 1998). However, the increased dropout of students during the first year of study in most higher education institutions (Scott et al., 2007; CHE, 2010) raises concerns as to whether orientation programmes are really achieving their purpose. Media reports on student stampede for places way into the term imply that some students are **admitted too** late. Such students may fail to get information on how to access resources that could enhance their experience.

To this end, Thomas (2002) asserts that student orientation can be successful if students are provided with sufficient time to internalise small chunks of information as opposed to bombarding them with a lot of information in a short space of time. Corroborating Thomas' contention, Crossling et al (2009) stressed that student orientation must be conducted at a time when students have completed sorting out other administrative aspects such as funding and accommodation. This enables all of them to fully concentrate on the activities. If orientation programmes clash with other institutional

activities, students' attendance can be erratic and this can affect their disposal to improve their social and academic engagement (Jama et al., 2006). Markedly, orientation programmes should be well marketed to raise awareness of their importance to university entrants and to the retention of students in the whole institution. Linked to orientation is student advising services.

1.2.6 Student Advising

In all educational contexts, student advising is central to assist students set realistic goals for their lives and careers. This advising programme minimizes the confusion and stress students may encounter (Mullendore & Mclahanan, 2004). Student advising is also a student transition programme in which an advisor offers professional support on goal setting, careers development, relationships and conflicts and equip students with skills to monitor their own progress (McClahan ,2004; Venit, 2008). The advising services can be done face to face or using technology or a combination of approaches (Venit, 2008; De Villiers & Peterson, 2005). Advising is best achieved if there is continual contact between advisor and student, commencing in the early weeks of the year up to career completion (Reinks and Taylor, 2008). Advising follows the same processes as counseling, although counseling requires a deeper level of professional skills than advising.

Advising uses different models and the model used depend on unique institutional conditions. Advising models are traditional advising and developmental approaches (Crookston, 2004), intrusive (Upcraft et al, 2005), learning centred (Loweston, 1995), strength based (Schreiner & Anderson, 2005) and comprehensive advising (Venit,

2008). Each of the models differ in the relationship between the advisor and the student. Research shows that irrespective of the model adopted in advising, professional competences and attitudes of the advisor enhances the success of the advising relationship.

However, research has noted that the benefits of advising are not always well understood by students. Due to overconfidence or sometimes low self esteem, some students view student advising as an extra burden and are reluctant to use the programme (Smith & Van de Walt, 2003). While researchers agree that proactive and intrusive advising are some of the best ways to nudge those students who are not willing to seek support, Venit (2008) reports that the universities could use various approaches such as mandatory advising and counselling for all first the year students, using technology to identify and follow up on students who are identified as at risk and engaging stakeholders outside the university. What is therefore not clear is which approaches are being used in the institutions to ensure that students' needs are addressed.

This researcher is of the opinion that there could still be gaps in current strategies because there are still large numbers of first year students who drop out due to poor career choice and little commitment to their studies in higher education (Longden, 2004). The researcher's informal conversations with admission staff reveal that there are some students who constantly request to change courses or qualifications. While students should be afforded a chance to experience academic work for some weeks and change courses later, consistent changing over two or three years may be a sign of indecision and poor choices (Prebble et al, 2008). This raises the question as to how advising programmes are implemented if a large number of students are placed in academic

programmes that do not match their interest or ability. This retards student progression and national human capital development (CHE, 2007).

Academic support programmes are central to making students easily adapt and get motivated to achieve their educational goals. To this end, academic support programmes are put in place to lend support to students in making meaning of hidden codes and rules of disciplines (Boughey, 2007; Boughey & Mackenna, 2011). These support services are usually embedded in the discipline to enhance student understanding of subject matter as well as provide social and emotional support (Scott, 2009; Topping, 1996). This is in line with Vygotsky's theory that spells that students learn best from their peers (Vygotsky, 1978). These include tutorial programmes (Lemens, & Maitlad, 2008; Topping, 1996), supplemental instruction (Vorster, 1999) and foundation programmes (Scott et al., 2007). The section below provides a brief description of the purpose of academic programmes as well as concerns raised by higher education stakeholders.

1.2.7   Tutoring

Tutoring is a structured student support programme where a professional, or cross age individual provides a safe environment to address various academic problems of students individually or in small groups (Forster, 1992;). In South Africa there are isolated studies on the implementation of tutorials which point to various challenges. (Underhill, 2010; Adams, 2006). For instance, Adams (2006) noted the problem of erratic attendance to tutorial sessions even though the programme was compulsory. This erratic attendance could be signaling negative attitudes towards the programme or

flaws in the delivery of the tutorial programmes. Felder (2007) assumes that students' non attendance to tutorials is a reflection of students' resistance to innovative learning strategies adopted in tutorials, which may be different from what they already practiced at high school.

On another angle, studies have found that tutor professional and personal characteristics also influence the success of the tutorial programmes. In this vein Du Plessis (2012) found that most of the tutors , though being well performing students, lacked the optimal qualities and personalities that promote students learning. These qualities include being motivational, embracing the qualities of being non judgemental, patience, empathy and of higher understanding. Since these qualities are not innate, tutor training is important to assist tutors in gaining the required skills and professional knowledge. This implies that tutor training should address the key issues tutors are likely to grapple with. A study by Underhill (2010) explored the effectiveness of decentralized tutor training at the University of Johannesburg and found that inconsistencies in the topics covered during the training led to discrepancies in the quality of tutors. Given the above studies, it is apparent that there are still gaps in the implementation of tutorial programmes in higher education institutions in South Africa. Yet there are also various benefits to successful implementation of tutorials in a diverse setting. For instance, the structured nature of the programme allows for systematic learning that is beneficial to low performing students to catch up with their studies (Carr et al., 2006). There is also reinforcement of learning materials done in tutorials to enhance clearer understanding of the content (Topping, 1996; Adams, 2006).   This study therefore seeks to understand how institutions have designed tutorials and put mechanisms in place to ensure that

programme goals are achieved. Another academic support programme is Supplemental Instruction (SI).

1.2.8   Supplemental Instruction (SI)

Supplemental instruction (SI) is also another version of tutorials which is confined to all students registered in high risk courses (Arendale, 1993). High risk courses are those subjects which traditionally have a record of high student failure due to abstract content or large class sizes. SI also uses advocacy, modelling and coaching as teaching strategies, where senior students who have performed well in the course are recommended by course lecturers to assist other students in meeting the course requirements (Alfassi, 2003; Martin, Blanc, & DeBuhr, 1983). SI is slightly different from tutorials in that the model student called an SI leader must attend classes together with students so as to know exactly how the lecturer delivers the content. The SI leader's role modelling must be achieved through empowering the students to think about their learning by identifying their own learning needs. The SI leader also develops appropriate learning strategies through collaborative learning. SI aims to develop higher order learning competencies directly related to the subject because it focuses more on learning processes.

The activities done in the SI sessions are not structured as in tutorials, instead discussions carried out in a particular session depend on the needs of the students that attend the session on a particular day (Arendale, 2005). SI leaders are supposed to receive preservice training and in-service training in the use of co-operative learning approaches and active learning strategies as well as how to handle diverse students. The inservice training is supposed to be conducted frequently and takes the form of

shared learning activities among all SI leaders from the various disciplines to allow them to share best practice (Arendale, 1993). SI programme is also supposed to be constantly monitored by the SI coordinator who should solicit the lecturer's feedback on the students conduct. SI has the potential to increase student academic competencies if students attend the sessions (Gonyea et al., 2008). However, an undocumented observation in South African higher education institutions shows that the implementation of SI has been fraught with challenges relating to buy in from academics and students alike. Subjective observations by this researcher show a decrease in the participation of students in SI as students' progress to higher academic levels. This signals a problem in students' perceptions about the programme. This is because academic difficulty increases as one progress in higher education and thus it is expected that students seek more support from those who have succeeded. Some of the studies on the implementation of SI speculate that the voluntary nature of the programme contributes to low student participation. It appears as if students who are extrinsically motivated have not found the programme to be attractive because unlike tutorials where marks are sometimes awarded for attending, there are no direct rewards attached to the SI programme. Furthermore, it is probably possible that the programmes are not well supported and monitored and this may be compromising the programme delivery. In this light, it may be necessary to explore factors that may be contributing to limited students' participation in SI programmes.

1.2.9 Foundation Provisioning Extended Programmes

A foundation programme is a student retention programme infused in the academic qualification by allowing an extra year of tuition (Scott, Hendry & Yeld, 2007;DoE, 2012). Foundation programmes were introduced in South Africa to replace bridging courses

and are designed in such a way that the first year curriculum is spread over two years (DoE, 2012). This support programme was introduced in South Africa as a means to provide access, success and retention for students from previously disadvantaged backgrounds (DoE, 2012). The rationale was that the extra year of tuition would provide opportunities for students to develop a firm grounding in higher education discourse and literacies through pastoral support. According to Scott et al. (2007) three different models can be adopted when implementing the programme.The programme can make use of three model variations, but each institution has a prerogative to select a model suiting its context. Irrespective of the model adopted, Foundation provisioning aims to support students in the form of value added courses, extra tuition time and social support (Scott et al, 2009). While isolated studies have empirically shown the benefit of foundation provisioning in enhancing success of students from marginalized backgrounds (Mabila et al , 2006, Favish, 2005; Kloot, 2005), one of the main flaws of the programme is that it caters for a very small number of students, thus it has not managed to address the systemic problem of student dropout (Scott, 2009).

The stretching of the learning period implies need for curriculum redesign to infuse the content and other activities that address perceived students' learning gaps. This requires that staff who teach i foundation programmes be well equipped to deal with students' academic, social, emotional and learning needs, as all these affect student retention. In cases where staff feels less equipped to handle students' needs, they make referrals to other sections of the university for specialist services. Social support has to be provided through coaching, role modelling, peer mentoring and collaborative learning. Studies have shown that well implemented foundation programmes improve students' performance. However, getting students to enroll in foundation programme is a

mammoth task for admission personnel due to the stigma attached to being in a support programme. This sometimes calls for counselling to be embedded in the implementation of foundation provisioning. Observations in most South Africa institutions suggest that there is advising sessions are conducted with students who are enrolled in foundation programmes during the initial student registration. However since these are once off sessions some students do not fully understand the rationale behind foundation programmes.

1.2.10   Student Counselling Programmes

Counselling is a one- to- one relationship between a counsellor and the client with a problem or concern (Means & Thorne, 2007; Dryden & Reeves, 2008; Krumei & Newton, 2009). Institutions of higher learning grapple with assisting students experiencing psychological problemsm such as stress, depression, mental health, motivation and anxiety which negatively affect students' academic progress and retention (Bean and Mertz, 1985, Tinto, 1993; Jeffera & Altbach, 2004). It is apparent that personal attributes such as dispositions attached to experiences encountered in early years of a person's life affect student adjustment (Letseka et al., 2010). Student counselling is one of the retention programmes aimed at addressing psychological aspects of the student such as career selection and placement, mental health and psychological issues that may hinder retention (Nicholas, 2002). In the same vein, counselling is believed to modify thoughts, behaviour, and attitudes and facilitates self-insight. Counsellors offer clients opportunities for self-disclosure, help them make interpretations and reflections of causes of their emotional states and provide reassurance (Morrison et al., 2006;Sue, 2013). Various counselling approaches can also be employed while assisting people experiencing various learning challenges, and the choice of an approach depends on the counsellor inclination and the client characteristics (Sue, 2013). Apparently, studies in South Africa seem to indicate that counseling centres are not widely used by many people due to reasons such as stigma, negative perceptions, cultural aspects and ignorance (Nicholas, 1996; North, 2002; Shreiber, 2007). Counselling is perceived to be a perspective of western cultures therefore people from non western origins may not clearly understand how the talking therapy works. Carl

Roger (1951) argues that irrespective of the counselling approach adopted all counsellors should possess attributes of being able to listen, be attentive and non-judgemental; and have motivational skills to assure the clients that the challenges they are undergoing are normal and they will soon disappear. Despite the benefits of counselling mentioned above, observations from South African institutions and counselling centres have noted limited use of the service by most students, particularly those from black communities (Juma, 2011). Some studies have highlighted that the counselling approaches being used do not meet the needs of the clients, especially given that South Africa's higher education is composed of diverse students. Beck & Maree (2002) highlights the need to alter counselling approaches to serve people or clients from disadvantaged communities. It is against this background that an indepth study may be necessary to ascertain issues hindering the implementation of student retention programmes.

Despite the existence of programmes that support student retention, studies in South Africa show a blurred picture on student retention. The overall completion or graduation rates for undergraduate students at contact universities are 15% (Letseka and Maile, 2008). Historically marginalised groups have the lowest completion rates (CHE, 2009). In fact, statistics hold that one in every three students entering higher education in South Africa will have dropped out by the end of their first year of study (Van Schalkwyk, 2007; Badat, 2009; Subotsky, 2011). Of those who manage to graduate, Black and Coloured student graduates constitute 5% of the cohort (CHE, 2009; Letseka & Maile, 2008). This is a serious challenge to the accomplishment of equity for South Africa given the fact that black students make up more than seventy percent of students enrolled in higher education (Adams, 2006; CHE, 2009). In fact, low graduation rates have also been noted in science and commercial disciplines where the country is experiencing high skills shortage (CHE, 2009; Scott, Yield & Hendry; 2007). Low graduation is also noted among women who contribute up to 70% of the dropouts. Thus, high dropout and delayed completion of registered programmes constitute the main concerns

compromising the state of educational equity in South Africa (CHE, 2011;Letseka & Maile, 2010; Mail and Guardian, 2008).

The above picture may be pointing to serious challenges in the implementation of the current student retention programmes. The current study investigates the implementation of five student retention programmes in two institutions of higher learning in South Africa. Most studies on the implementation of student retention programmes have focused on individual programmes. However there has not been any attempt to ascertain how these different programmes are integrated and co-ordinated so that they provide holistic support to the student experience. Hence, this study investigated how five selected student retention programmes are implemented in the two universities in South Africa.

1.3   The Statement of the Problem

South African government through the Higher Education Act of 1997 and other related education policies provided guidelines for increased participation of students from the various social groups to ensure equity and equality in the provision of higher education. Higher education institutions have autonomy to set criteria for student enrollment in the various academic programmes and are accountable for the success and retention of these students (DoE, 2005). Apparently, student retention programmes have potential to enhance student learning, improve performance and enhance success and retention. The phenomenon of student retention is of interest due to its potential to uplift human standards of living through improved personal development that in turn boosts self esteem (Martinez, 1997).   Most institutions view student retention as important for

improving the status of the institutions as well increase funding from government and donor agencies (Pillay, 2008). At national level, student retention increases the number of skilled personnel to solve the challenges that society is facing (DoE, 1997). In the case of South Africa there is currently a big shortage of professionals to meet the needs of society, hence retaining those who are already enrolled in higher education is of paramount importance . Thus, it is pivotal that institutions find plausible ways of enhancing student retention.

In light of the above-described policies, higher education institutions have put in place academic and non-academic strategies to select students, assist them in their transition and provide academic and social support. Despite the existence of these programmes , students' success and retention is not yet good. Of perceptible concern is that high student drop out and poor performance are particularly high in the first year of study across the higher education continuum (DoE, 2004, OECD, 2008, CHE, 2009). Poor performance has been evidenced by the phenomenon of students taking longer to complete their registered programmes and courses especially among students from marginalized groups (Cloete, 2004; Scott, 2007). Also, of notable concern is the fact that female Black students experience a huge drop out than their male counterparts (Scott, 2007, Badat, 2009; CHE, 2009). The problem of student retention has also been apparent in the universities in the Eastern Cape Province (Matomela, 2006). Although research shows a wide array of factors that inhibit student retention, the current study questions whether programmes to address student drop out are being implemented as initially planned. To this end, Siedman (2005) argues that student development programmes have to be tailored to meet the current student needs. Hence the study

investigates the implementation of five programmes aimed at enhancing student retention in the science disciplines in two South African universities. These programmes were chosen because of their potential to complement the academic , social and psychological needs of students.

1.4   Research Questions

Main Research Question: How are student retention programmes implemented by the two universities in order to enhance student retention?

The study had the following sub questions.

How are students who participate in the five programmes selected?

What strategies are used in delivering the five programmes to enhance student retention?

What strategies are in place to monitor the implementation of these five programmes?

1.5 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to examine the implementation of five student retention programmes in the science faculties of two South African Universities. In order to achieve this purpose this study sought to answer the following research objectives:

1.6   Research Objectives

The specific objectives of the study were:

To examine the selection strategies used for students participating in the five programmes

To examine the strategies used in delivering the five programmes

To examine the mechanisms for monitoring the implementation of these five programmes?

To develop a comprehensive model for student retention based on findings of the study

1.7   Assumptions of the Study

This study was based on the assumption that:

The mechanisms used to select students into programmes limit achievement of the intended goals

The delivery strategies that are being used do not take into account the students' diverse characteristics

The programmes are being implemented in isolation and this is limiting their retention goals.

Lack of proper monitoring of programmes results in poor achievement of original goals.

1.8   Rationale and Significance of Study:

The study is preoccupied with the increased shortage of critical skills in key professional fields. Given that student retention programmes are aimed at enhancing student success and throughput in order to increase the national human resource base, the study questions whether the implementation of the programmes are comprehensive enough to improve the internal efficiency of student learning and addressing disparities. Comprehensive programmes are those that holistically address all the facetes of the student experience that hinders them from performing according to expectations. An in-depth study of the implementation of the programmes is therefore necessary in order to inform improvements in current and future retention programmes in the different

institutions. The findings will assist the relevant institutions in formulating relevant policies that will improve student retention.

1.9   Delimitation of the Study

The study was confined to five programmes in the Science faculties of two universities in South Africa. Participants were drawn from managers, co-ordinators, staff and students assistants involved in the five programmes.

1.10   Definition of terms

Retention programme is a special course or intervention that is aimed at increasing students academic proficiencies (Angelino et al, 2007).

Implementation- in this study this term refers to the process of putting into practice a concept, strategy, policy or model.

Integration is the " extent to which the individual shares the normative attitudes and values of peers and faculty in the institution and abides by the formal structural membership in that community or in the subgroup of which the individual is part" (Pascarella and Terrenzini, 1991:51).

Retention- the number of students that progress form one level to another until completion of the registered course or programmeme (Angelino, Willliams & Natvig., 2007).

Attrition in this study refers to a student's failure to continue with studies in a course or programme (Martinez, 1997). This term will be used interchangibly with the term student drop out.

1.11   Chapter Outline

Chapter 1: Introduction and Background

This chapter discusses the background of the study in relation to student retention in South Africa's higher education. This section further discusses the statement of the problem, the purpose of the study, and also presents the research questions. Objectives, assumptions, significance and limitations of the study are also discussed in this section.

Chapter 2   Theoretical Framework and Review of Related Literature

The chapter discusses the two main models applied in this study to understand the issue of student retention. These models are Tinto's interactionalist theory and Beatty-Guenter's Student Retention Strategy Model. The chapter also highlights literature linked to the implementation of various retention programmes.

Chapter 3: Methodology

This chapter addresses the philosophical underpinning of the research methodology that inform this study in terms of its ontology, epistemology, research design, population, sample and sampling, instrumentation, validity and reliability/trustworthiness, data collection and analysis methods, and ethical considerations.

Chapter 4: Data Presentation

In this chapter, data gathered are presented, analysed and interpreted in order to provide answers to the sub-research questions.

Chapter 5: Discussion

Chapter 5 discusses the information collected. It uses the theoretical frameworks to discuss data. It also compares literature reviewed with the data collected. The discussion in this section includes the comparison of the findings with data found in the literature. The objective of this chapter is to bring the findings into the fold of the existing knowledge in the implementation of student retention strategies in two South African Universities.

Chapter 6: Summary, conclusions, and recommendations

This chapter gives the summary of the findings in relation to the problem under investigation, the methods used to establish the findings, and how they relate to the research questions. Implications for theory, conclusions, limitations, and recommendations are addressed in this chapter.

1.12 Summary

This chapter has presented the introduction and background of the study in terms of how student retention programmes are being implemented in a bid to curb attrition in institutions of higher learning. The chapter has emphasised the challenge of student retention in South Africa in light of the educational aspects contributing to the phenomenon. In addition, the chapter has stressed the statement of the problem, the purpose of the study, research questions, objectives / aims guiding the study, the assumptions, rationale / significance of the study; and the delimitations for the study in

addition to defining the key terms as used in the study. The next chapter focuses on the

theoretical framework and reviews related literature.

CHAPTER 2: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2.0   Introduction

This chapter is divided into two parts, that is, theoretical framework and the review of related literature on the implementation of student retention programmes. The first part of the chapter justifies the theoretical framework that was used in the study.

According to Eisenhart, 1991:205), a theoretical framework is "a structure that guides research by relying on a formal theory …constructed by using an established, coherent explanation of certain phenomena and relationships". Since the problem under investigation is related to implementation of student retention programmes, two models were adopted to guide the study. These are Tinto's interactionalist model and Beatty-Guenter's student retention strategy model. Tinto's model will be used to understand how the interaction between staff and students, as well as the interaction among students themselves enhance students learning, socialisation, satisfaction and adaptation to higher education. On the other hand, Beatty -Guenter's model mainly focuses on how student and staff selection strategies influence program delivery. Furthermore, Beatty Guenter's model also elaborates on how the strategies used in delivering student retention are interconnected to enhance holistic student development. Reason (2009) argues that effective student retention occurs when practices address all issues related to the student life cycle.

2.1   Theoretical Framework

2.0   Concept of Student Retention

Retention of students is a complex issue. This arises from the fact that several factors can determine retention and there is no one way which is perceived to be the best (Archinewhu-Nworgu, 2007; Swail, 2006). Retention may be measured with reference to student, course or program (Archinewhu-Nworgu, 2007). Chang et al., (2009:6) explain that "Program retention measures whether or not a student graduated in the major intended at entrance. Student retention evaluates whether or not students attained their personal or academic goals upon exiting college and is usually measured through questionnaires administered to the respective people. Program retention measures the number of students completing registered programmes/courses with a pass grade and is sometimes called course retention, or number of students who graduate in relation to those who have registered or accomplishment of personal goals (Lassibille and Gomez, 2004). In South African literature, most retention measures use the graduation rates or throughput as a measure of institutional effectiveness (Scott et al 2007, CHE, 2009). This study is mainly concerned with student progression from on academic level to another. The section below will highlight how the aspect of retention is explained in Tinto's (1993) interactionalist model.

2.1.1 Tinto's Interactionalist Model

 The aspect of student retention can be explained based on ideas from sociology, psychology, education and economics (Kuh et al., 2006). Tinto's theory is one of the various sociological impact theories. Sociological theories focus on explaining how

individual circumstances such a socio economic level, culture, interpersonal relationships contribute to student drop out or persistence (Jensen, 2011). Sociological theorists also view student persistence as interplay between institutional and student aspects (Kinzie, Gonyea, Shup & Kuh , 2005; Bean, 2002). Tinto argues that student background characteristics such as home language, prior academic preparation and socio economic aspects and personalities are relevant attributes when designing strategies to retains students. These sometimes shape goals, commitment and aspirations. For instance, Murray (2006) opines that students with a high self-concept and self-determination tend to be more committed to the institution and to the achievement of educational goals. Therefore when considering activities that enhance student retention, it is also important to understand student attributes.

2.1.1.1   Student Attributes

According to Tinto students attributes are not constant, instead, they are altered during the students lifecycle as they interact with other members of the university community academically and socially (Bean, 2002; Siedman, 2005). Thus persistence depends on meanings that students ascribe to their experiences as they interact with the various academic and social settings of the higher education institution (Tinto 1975:94). The institution enhances congruence between student goals and the institutional setting through policies and programs (Tinto, 1975, 1993).

Tinto's theory outlines several principles on how institutions should assist new students to attain academic, social and personal skills that enhance student success through early identification, providing personalized support and systematic support programs (Jones, 2001).

Tinto's theory is relevant to the study because varied socio-economic and academic backgrounds of students influence levels of adaption to higher education. For instance, students' academic rigour may depend on previously acquired study skills, learning approaches and conceptual development (Davis, 2010; Du Plessis, 2012; Blitzer, 2004). Similarly ability to read and write in the language of instruction, managing time for the various academic and social demands and even finances to meet the higher education needs depends on personal and socio-economic aspects (Scott, 2007; Letseka et al., 2010;Jones et al., 2008;Du Perez & Fossey, 2012). Hence, strategies to identify those students' characteristics are likely to inhibit retention are important if higher education is to promote student success. Programmes and services specifically designed to identify those student characteristics may be a necessary proactive step that institutions have to adopt to improve the student experience. The institutional environment shapes the decisions that students make as they continuously assess the value of continuing with their studies. Student attributes shaped by institutional experiences are stronger in determining persistence than pre entry attributes (Pascarella and Terrenzini, 2005). Student experiences are usually shaped by the quantity and quality of interaction with members of the university community. This interaction is what Tinto calls social and academic integration.

2.1.1.2   Academic and Social Integration

Students who develop positive relationships with staff and peers tend to quickly integrate socially and academically in the institution than those who do not make friends (Valentine,Hirshy,Bremer,Novillo,Castella & Banister, 2011). Interactions on academic related matters tend to have a greater influence on retention than social relationships. Social integration is measured by the friendships the student makes within the institution

and having someone in their life that encourages them to learn. Academic integration is measured by the student's satisfaction with academic performance as well as the amount of time the student devotes to educationally purposeful learning (Kinzie et al, 2005; Pascarella and Terrenzini, 2005). This active participation is reflected not only in the attendance but also in active involvement in such activities. A student who actively participates in academic activities and co-curricular programs and services, develops positive academic and social relationships with students and staff in the institution and positive views about the institution (Kuh et al., 2005). This active participation in turn influences knowledge goal commitment (Valentine et al., 2011;).

Thus student personal circumstances and preentry attributes, as well as college environment are major determinants of student persistence (Pascarella and Terrenzini, 2005). Institutional culture reflected through student and staff daily practices determine the level of student and staff interaction inside and outside the classroom (Thomas, 2002, Crossling et al., 2009, Quinn et al., 2005, Sennet et al., 2003) . This in turn impacts on the student's academic and social experience on campus (Thomas, 2002; Tinto 2002). Tinto (2002) argues that the classroom should be the primary place to foster student integration. However it appears some classroom settings are not favorable for student learning. For instance Jensen (2011) highlights that orvercrowded classrooms in South African higher education limit opportunities for interaction, causing some students to feel isolated.

Martins (2006) recommends academic integration through actively involving students in the course activities through discussion, writing, and intensive reading. This is in line with the active learning pedagogy where it is believed that the students are able to

understand and recall material if what they have opportunities to engage with the content (Chaney, Muraskin, Cahalan & Rak, 1997) . Successful strategies to enhance student retention should show institutional commitment. Institutional commitment is reflected in the extent to which institutions prioritize student welfare in comparison to other goals. One common way to achieve this is to ensure that students receive quality education and supportive learning environment (Reason, 2009). Various programmes and services that are believed to enhance student retention include assisting students during enrolment, transition programs, ensuring early contact between staff , students and peers, academic involvement of students and provision of support, devising of early warning monitoring systems and provision of advisory and counseling services (Nimmons, 2002; Cuseo & Barefoot, 2005).

Among these programmes are learning communities in the form of seminars or extended orientation programmes aimed to increase staff student contact.   Tutorials, supplemental programmes student advising, career counseling, residential student support services and healthcare facilities also enhance academic integration.

2.1.1.3   Criticisms of Tinto's theory

Tinto's original theory has undergone wide modifications amid criticisms from other scholars in the field of student retention (Braxton & Hirshy, 2005). For instance, Rendon, Jalomo & Nora (2004) disregarded the acculturation perspective in Tinto's theory and adopted the concept of dual socialization (Jensen, 2011). They argued that instead of assuming that students are responsible for incorporating into higher education, institutions should also take the responsibility of integrating their students culturally and

socially (Jensen , 2011:1). Tierney (1992) opined that Tinto's theory was not catering for students of mature age. Karp (2004) criticized Tinto's original model for not taking into account the experiences of commuter students who rely on external communities such as family, employers and associates for success in higher education, thus there was need to include relationships students form with people external to the institution such as family members, employers and funders. Astin concurred with Tinto on the need for academic and social integration but proposed that various forms of financial aid and college sponsored activities increase student involvement (Metz 2002 as cited by Hald, 2002). Hurtado and Carter (1997) as cited by Valentine et al.(2011), were concerned about how to interpret academic and social integration and when to measure it in the student career. Similar concerns were reiterated by Ishitani and Desjardines (2002) who observed that factors affecting student retention vary from year to year, yet Tinto's model assumed these factors to be the same at each educational level. Laura et al. (1998), and Rendon (2006) questioned the applicability of Tinto's original model to the current diverse student populations with high enrollment of students from previously marginalized communities and low socio economic backgrounds. This is where Tinto's view of acculturation to dominant institutional culture is problematic. Empirical studies on academic and social integrations by Braxton and Leigh (2000) concluded that the influence of academic integration on commitment and persistence varied between multi–institutional studies compared to single institutional studies.

Despite criticisms, Tinto's (1993; 2005) revised theory caters for almost all the concerns and this is reflected in empirical studies where the model was tested in different settings. Tinto (1987;1993) included economic support as an important aspect of student retention so as to cater for students from low socio economic backgrounds. Empirical

studies using Tinto's theory in other settings produced credible results on the applicability of the model to various contexts (Thomas, 2000; Longden, 2004; Letseka Koen, 2007, Hall, 2011). For example, Lassibile,G., Gomez, M., Navarro, L., (2009) carried out a seven year longitudinal study aiming at determining the probability of student dropout, transfer or graduation in Spanish universities . They found out that the variations in student persistence varied by pre-enrolment academic ability, age, involvement, family characteristics and the educational experiences. Similarly, a South African study by Letseka et al (2010) found pre-entry attributes and financial aspects to be the main reason for student persistence in a pathway study on student career destinations.

Valentine et al., (2011) argue that Tinto's theory has resulted in the creation of various support programs and services such as extended orientation programs that cater for both resident and nonresident students from various academic backgrounds. it also provides strategies to enhance career decisions those from low socio-economic backgrounds.

The current study adopted Tinto's (1993) revised theory despite its weaknesses because most of the constructs in the model can be applied to universities in South Africa. Although the two institutions under study are public institutions which use open access enrollment strategies. Hence the first year student characteristics are almost similar because the majority of the first year students are drawn from the same pool. Except for a few international students, the majority of the first year students write the local matric examinations and the same national benchmark tests.

The study also notes that even researchers arguing for other theoretical perspectives on retention also reiterate the importance of institutional environment when understanding student retention. For instance, studies using the cultural capital and social capital perspective originating from the work of Bourdiue and Passeron (1977), highlight the role of institutional habitus (Thomas, 2002); Longden ,2004) and McInnis (2000) Thomas argue for policies and programs that are inclusive of students from different backgrounds. Thomas (2002) highlighted that an inclusive institutional culture leads to increased student integration. Inclusive institutional cultures provide opportunities for social and academic engagement within and outside the classroom through 1) use of active and collaborative teaching methodologies, 2), emphasise on the development of higher cognitive skills and ensuring there is healthy student staff interactions (Tinto, 2005, Upcraft et al., 2005;Karp, 2011, Reason, Evensen and Heller, 2009). Meagre resources are also tailored to services and programs that match students needs and characteristics (Kuh et al., 2005). For instance showing, students that they are valued by explaining institutional expectations and modifying classroom settings to provide personal and academic support. Providing learner support develops cognitive, affective and systemic capabilities. Systemic capabilities help students to manage institutional rules and systems, affective support deals with students' emotional well being while cognitive support develops he requisite knowledge and skills to successfully progress in higher education. This is in addition to institutional and social integration within the institution (Tait, 2000).

2.1.2   Beatty-Guenter Student Retention Strategy Model

While there are various programmes and services that institutions have already designed to enhance student retention, at times these are implemented separately and

hence their effectiveness is not easily visible. According to Swail (2006), the silos in the implementation of programmes make it difficult to achieve the student retention goals. Beatty-Guenter Student Retention Strategy was specifically designed to deal with the missing connection among various institutional programmes and services aimed at enhancing student retention (Beatty-Guenter, 1994). Thus, the model shows how different programmes and services can be integrated to ensure holistic student learning and support. This aligns to the view that student retention is about providing optimum learning opportunities (Tinto, 2013). Beatty-Guenter's model is ideal for individual institutions to tailor their student retention plans, policies and programmes to meet the unique needs of their students rather than implementing a one-size fit all approach. The one size fit all approach in the implementation of student retention stifle student progress and success (Kuh et al., 2005). This model could also be useful for institutions with limited resources.

2.2.1　　　　Beatty-Guenter Student Retention Strategy Model
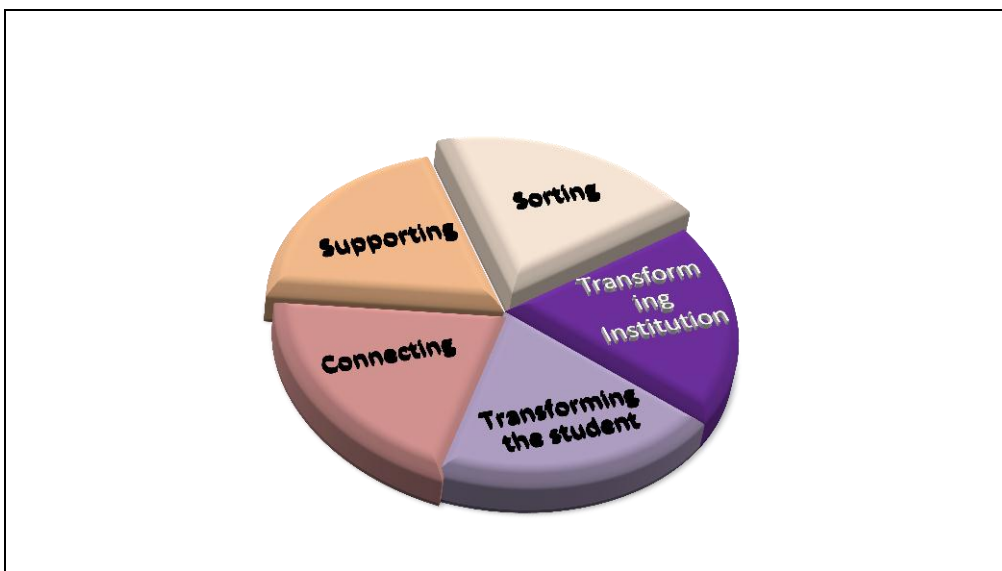
Source: Beatty-Guenter (1994): The Beatty-Guenter Retention Strategy Model

Beatty-Guenter describes a typology with five categories of institutional services and programmes broadly classified as sorting, supporting, connecting, transforming students and transforming institutions. Below is a detailed of each category and its relevance to student retention.

2.1.2.1   Sorting

Sorting:- these strategies are mainly concerned with assembling students in subsets so as to clearly delineate characteristics that contribute to limited retention (Johnson, 2001: 4). The rationale behind having sorting strategies is to ensure that resources are strategically channeled to those subsets of students who are most likely to drop out. For instance tracking and monitoring programmes are a typical example of such strategies because students who are potentially at risk are identifies using specific indicators so as to ensure implementation of an early intervention (Siedman, 2005). Since resources may not be sufficient to cater for all the students, targeted interventions may be ideal way to ensure optimal use of such resources. In the sorting strategy, it is important that both cognitive and non cognitive aspects be used when designing profiles for identifying student characteristics which may enable or inhibit retention (Fusch & Fusch, 2012, These may also include the various forms of student diagnostic assessments which determine student motivation, levels of resilience, learning styles, dispositions to learn and academic preparation. Beatty-Guenter highlights that sorting strategies are reactive in nature. This implies that these strategies aim to delineate students into categories based on a deficiency. Examples of strategies that make use of sorting are monitoring and tracking programmes where students are selected based on a defined set of indicators such as non attendance and low academic progress, being non resident or passive participation in learning activities. However, Fusch (2012) contends that non

cognitive data can also be gathered through enrolment data so as to use predictive modelling to extract specific student characteristics that may require outreach before the term begins. Sorting can also be used by institutional planners to forecast student retention by using data of those students who have graduated and compare with those who have not graduated to identify patterns of participation (Hoffman, & Lowitzki, 2005; Fusch, 2012). This researcher notes that pre-entry advising , standardized access tests and early alert and monitoring systems may fall in this category of strategies that make use of sorting.

2.1.2.2 Supporting

Supporting Strategies:-These strategies aim to support the social students needs (Johnson, 2001:4). These may include provision of accommodation, organising transport facilities, counseling and health care, sporting facilities, clubs and other extracurricular services. These strategies seem to align to the view by Schlossberg (1989) and Crossling et al. (2009) who contend that students are likely to be retained when they their non academic needs are also taken care of. Supporting strategies are therefore a way of showing the students that their other social and emotional needs are equally important as the academic needs. Supporting strategies are based on the view that students are likely to flourish in conducive and welcoming educational environments where they feel that they matter (Kuh et al., 2010). Such supporting strategies align to best practice noted in previous studies on student retention. For instance a national study by Kuh et al (2005) which sought features of institutions which were performing excellently in student retention found some of the supporting principles to be prominent. According to Kuh et al (2010:24) the twenty selected institutions had an unwavering focus on student learning, ensuring such that the institutional environment was bespoke

to enhance educational improvement. Also Kuh et al., (2010) further asserted that staff had shared responsibility for educational quality and everyone strived to be goal oriented.

2.1.2.3 Connecting

Connecting:- These are programmes and services that are mainly aimed at ensuring effective communication between students and institutional staff academically and socially in order to improve their institutional experiences (Johnson, 2001:4). In other words, these are specifically strategies that develop the requisite literacies required for one to smoothly progress in higher education. These may include effective learning strategies, study skills, self regulated learning, self efficacy, reading and writing skills and problems solving skills. Thus student mentoring programmes such as tutoring, supplemental instruction and intrusive advising may fall in this category.

2.1.2.4   Transforming the Student

Transforming the Student:-Stimulating the student to improve the attainment level – these are strategies mainly aimed at shifting the student goals and motivation to align with higher education requirements. In the researcher's view these may include extended student orientation or first year freshmen seminars.

2.1.2.5 Transforming the Institution

Transforming the Institution- these are systematic strategies that the institution adopts to ensure that the climate is conducive for learning (Johnson, 2001: 4). This may also include the institutional retention plan or policy, the recruitment and staff development , frontloading of resources to enhance retention efforts of all students, using data from

students evaluations of programmes to inform policy change, altering the institutional culture, curriculum redesign and assessment of programmes to gauge effectiveness.

Beatty-Guenter contends that there is need to balance strategies implemented in each of the five categories to ensure that these complement each other in terms of enhancing the students' personal, academic and social experience within and outside the institution. The Student Retention Strategy Model provides an opportunity for practitioners to evaluate the extent to which institutional strategies address all the areas that are believed to contribute to increased student retention. The dimensions of typology are ideal for assessing student identification strategies, as well as monitoring mechanisms in place to ensure that the programme goals are achieved.   Typology also includes strategies to ensure that students are integrated into the institution socially and academically are implemented .

Programme co-ordinators and institutional leaders may also find these tools helpful in determining whether the strategies in place are reactive, integrative, or proactive. It also helps in ascertaining the effectiveness of existing programmes in light of the initial goals and institutional mission. Research has shown that proactive strategies sustain student retention and academic success than the reactive approaches. According to Johnston (2001) sorting and supporting strategies are reactive approaches to student retention because their implementation takes into account the students characteristics and attempt to address those needs at a particular instance. On the contrary, connecting strategies are proactive in that their role is to bridge the gap between the student and the institution. Transformative approaches reflect the institutional culture in that they bring about profound change in the way the institution is run and how students behave.

2.2.   Review of Literature on the Five Programmes

This section reviews literature on the implementation of tutoring, Supplemental Instruction (SI), also called Peer Assisted learning (PAL), counselling, student tracking and monitoring programmes student orientation programmes. The first part of the review deals with conceptualisation and rationale for the five programmes. The review identifies models of implementing each of the programmes, taking into account the benefits and flaws embedded in each model with respect to improving student retention. Furthermore, the review also highlights how students and facilitators who participate in these programmes are selected, trained and monitored to ensure that program goals are achieved. Researchers such as Tinto (2000); Thomas (2002) and Cuseo & Barefoot (2005) have indicated that the implementation of student retention programmes is fraught with a number of challenges such as poor selection strategies, delivery models that do not match the clientele, tight time-frames, shortage of qualified personalia, poor monitoring and limited skills among the personnel spearheading the programmes. This has negatively impacted on the delivery of the programmes and consequently their ability to enhance student retention.

2.2.1   Purpose of the five Retention Programmes

2.2.1.1   Purpose of Tutorial Programmes

Tutoring originated as a compulsory tuition strategy in formal education settings, with a view of providing equal and structured support to all students entering higher education (Topping, 1996). This was after studies had noted that traditional classroom teaching had limited opportunities for individualized attention and student interaction (Forster,

1992). The value of tutorial programmes lies in their ability to foster active participation through raising points, seeking clarification, reading, writing and critiquing.

Undeniably, tutorials have been found to positively influence self-esteem and higher grades for students who frequently participate as opposed to students only taught in traditional classes (Volgelwiesche; Topping, 1996). For instance, studies have noted benefits such as improved writing proficiency (Cheng & Ku, 2009) and Maths literacy (Topping, 1998). Given that most students sometimes struggle with aspects of literacy and numeracy at high school (Blitzer, 2004; du Perrez & Fossey, 2012), if well implemented, tutoring offers an opportunity to fill the prior learning gaps for most of the first year students.

Certainly, good tutoring is one of the many proven pinnacles of student support (Carella, 2010;Chin, Rabow & Estada, 2011, Falchikov, 2001). Tutorials embrace all the benefits of collaborative learning (Carella,2010). Tutoring entails one person with more knowledge or experience, the tutor, imparting knowledge to the others, the tutees (Vogelwiesche, Crob & Winkler, 2006). A tutor is not a professional teacher, but learns through teaching others (Horn & Jansen, 2008; Topping, 1996). The tutor who leads the learning process may be same age (peer) or different age (cross age) with those she/he tutors (Chin, Rabow & Estrada, 2011). If well implemented, both same age and cross age tutoring have immense benefits for student learning (Murray, 2006).

Since they are not professionals, tutors base all learning content on what has already been taught by the course lecturer (Adams, 2006; Topping, 2001). In fact, tutors are not supposed to teach new content, but to reinforce and complement

academic staffs' contribution to students support on disciplinary conventions, through exploration of ideas in intensive discussions (Underhill, 2010).

To this end, the tutorial process entails a student preparing a document that responds to class or home exercises based on their personal understanding of what the teacher has taught. The tutor, then, provides formative assessment feedback. The feedback, which is normally provided in the form of verbal discussions, helps to clarify learning expectations. Importantly, tutoring provides a social as well as academic supportive climate. This climate is created through the triad relationship between the content, the student and the tutor (Ender & Newton, 2000) Similarly, it can be argued that tutoring also adheres to best practice that that increase student engagement in the classroom. These include enhancing collaborative learning, fostering student ownership of learning, connecting academic ideas with other disciplines and the real world, sharing the experience in the discipline and self evaluation as well as peer learning and active learning All these align with Chickering and Gamson's (1987) principles of good practice in undergraduate learning.

Dale (1969), devised a cone of learning and emphasised that students learn best if they are actively involved. In this cone, activities that involve talking, writing and acting enhance deeper retention of knowledge than listening passively. Similarly tutoring ought to involve active participation so as to enhance the development of competencies in logical arguments, independent thinking and communication (Topping, 1996). Similarly, the inclusion of peers in the feedback discussions enhances "academic achievement and increases social relations among students who participate in such activities" (Bar Eli, Bar-Eli, Tenenbaumn & Forlin, 1998). These skills also form part of the graduate attributes required for South African professionals (SAQA, 2001). According to the South

African qualifications framework a well rounded graduate ought to possess the key attributes that enable them to work in a team, problem solve, and communicate effectively. Thus, tutoring programs form important learning strategies that bolster academic and social integration.

Theoretically, tutoring is based on tenets of both cognitive and social constructivist learning perspectives (Vogelwiesche, Crob & Winkler , 2006). Social cognitivists contend that learning occurs when a student, is when confronted with information that contradicts own assumptions. This makes the students use discussions in the tutorial as a platform to "question their own beliefs to seek additional information in order to reconcile conflicting view points and try out new ideas" (Webb, 2010:3). A lot of mental processing takes place while the student engages with others replacing the old information with new meanings based on insights from the tutor and other students.

At another angle, the social constructivist perspective of tutoring relates to enhancement of the zone of proximal development. The zone of proximal development is the level of understanding beyond the student's capacity that a student can only attain with guidance from those who are more knowledgeable (Vygotsky, 1978). Scaffolding (guidance) is critical to ensure that the student construct clearer meaning of the content. In a typical tutorial session, varying the types of scaffolds ensure that students engage in deep knowledge building and high level reasoning (Topping, 1996). High level reasoning and deep knowledge building occurs when students seek to make logical connections between various concepts in order to construct new meanings. This is also in tandem with Entwistle (2000) idea of deep learning which allows students to relate interlinked concepts to apply the knowledge to authentic and novel situations. Tutor

professional skills are important in ensuring that the various scaffolds are provided through the use of various questioning techniques that guide students to think for themselves how to solve problems related to the content already taught.

2.2.1.2   Purpose of Supplemental Instruction Programmes

Supplemental Instruction (SI) is a type of academic programme which targets high risk modules. It is also a proactive academic support program designed to provide informal and optimal peer mentored support to students in traditionally high risk courses (Arendale, 1993; Bowles & Jones, 2004). High risk modules imply those where large numbers of students enroll, or where the overall pass rate and retention rates are less than thirty percent of the registered students (Arendale, 1993; Hensen & Shelly, 2003). SI is a retention program where peers support each other in learning. SI is regarded as a proactive program because, unlike other support programs which are offered way into the semester, SI is usually offered during the first two weeks of commencing classes. This means that students are provided with academic assistance and basic learning strategies before they engage in summative assessments. This has potential to increase pass rates since summative module assessments determine students' retention. SI is also known for developing soft skills and learning strategies that students may use in other disciplines. SI is not structured like tutorials. The learning aspects to be discussed on a particular day are not prearranged, but decided by the students who attend a specific session. This has an advantage of ensuring that students' unique learning needs are addressed at a specific moment. SI can be challenging if students are unable to quickly determine their learning goals.

However critics have reservations about the voluntary nature of the program, which means that there are limited opportunities to enforce the program to low performing students. SI is based on developing self regulated and autonomous learners who are able to identify their learning needs and seek assistance from the SI leaders through individual or group consultations.

2.2.1.3   Purpose of Student Tracking Programmes

Student tracking is a process of monitoring student progress in terms of their academic performance or social conduct to channel the underperforming student to appropriate support.   Student tracking is a retention programme in that it monitors student engagement in various activities of the institution (Kuh & Barefoot 2005; Siedman 2005). Monitoring entails flagging students who are not performing up to the expected standard, or who do not attend important activities by using specific indicators (Du Plessis, 2012; Crosling et al., 2009, Shinn, 2009). This behavior may include illicit behaviours that may threaten the welfare of the student and others around them, health risk, psychological wellbeing, academic support or social wellbeing. Given the various dimensions of potential risk, an accurate record of student participation in various institutional activities such as extra mural activities, health issues, student societies, study groups, advising, counseling, library usage, participation in class activities and even support programs is essential (Hale, 2006;Hudson,2005;Nimmons, 2003). Indicators of performance that may be identified as potential risk vary from one setting to another, but basically a good tracking system captures student participation in social, psychological and academic activities that impede academic success (Hudson, 2009; Fusch, 2011). Different flags may be used depending on the intensity of the identified

challenge. The process of identifying student needs is also alluded to as a key component of student retention in Beatty-Guenter's Model. This ensures that resources are chanelled appropriately. Once a student has been categorized as not performing according to the expected standard, the student must be alerted of the potential risk either verbally or electronically (Fusch, 2006). Regrettably, the practice of student tracking has largely remained a theoretical practice. Subjective concerns from various staff and students suggest students who exhibit various indicators of risk based on background characteristics as well as performance are not adequately supported by the programme.

2.2.1.4   Purpose of Orientation Programmes

The place and role of an orientation programme at all levels of learning in providing information on expectations , logistics and socialisation into new contexts cannot be overemphasized. Inducting people or orientation is as old as human race has existed. According to Rait (1969), student orientation in the midieval era in France commenced informally with senior citizen students called magisters initiating the foreign new students into higher education settings. Such initiation, though discouraged by the formal authorities was characterised with torturing of the new entrants as a rites to passage to test resilence, then followed by a feast to officially welcome them to the education setting. Even after the feast, the new students continued to get guidance from the magisters who would enforce residence rules, dress codes and other norms. However, teachers in charge of residences took the primary responsibility of formally explaining the norms and rules to the new students. Thus orientation dispensation is a continuum of learning that has been passed down generations.

Orientation programmes refer to various efforts used by higher education insitutions to acquaint students to the new experiences that they are likely to encounter during their life cycle (Upcraft & Gardiner & Barefoot, 2005;Newmnan-Gonchar, 2000). The objective of the orientation programme is to allay the mental picture of difficulties of an unknown untrodden ground. Student orientation is also a mechanism to developing insitutional intergration because of its emphasis on acclamatising students to the higher education setting (Upcraft & Gardiner & Barefoot, 2005) . This acclamatisation occurs when students understand the different institutional structures such as the important sites to get assistance, and the administrative organs of the institution .Students who understand the structures and processes are confident and have high possibilities to have academic, social and emotional satisfaction that develop their sense of belonging (Honkimäki & Kálmán, 2012). Moreso, the orientation programme t underpins Tinto's theory academic and social integration which focus on the use sof ocial networks in improving student retention. It is also a support strategy which enhances the student wellbeing as alluded by Beatty- Guenter's model on student retention strategy.

The original aim of orientation was based on the view that students in higher education experience personal, social, psychological, and emotional challenges that may impede their academic adjustment throughout their higher education life cycle (Honkimaki & Kalman, 2012). By virtue of being in a new environment, first year students especiallly may get overwhelmed with the demands of the higher education (Tinto & Pusser, 2006; Newman-Gonchar,2000). This is because, as a new terrain, the higher education environment has norms, cultures and expectations that sometimes conflict with students prior experiences in high school and in their home communities (du Plessis, 2012). In fact, the first three weeks are critical for new students because this is a period to make critical decisions (Pascarella &Terrenzini, 2005). During this period students have to

adapt to the new environment and this poses emotional, academic and social adjustments. Perhaps this is why the orintentation programme has withstood the test of times. Orientation can however serve student need sonly as far as acclamatising , but may not assist students in finding a solution to the emotional challenges that they may be expeornceing during the priod of transition. This is why most insitutions have set up inhouse counselling centres as structured services to address the psychological challenges students face in their learning.

2.2.1.5   Purpose of Student Counseling Programs

Counseling is a formal arrangement where a professional counselor meets with a client experiencing some form of distress. The distress may be linked to past or present emotionally stressful experiences. In educational settings, students experience challenges in career selection, mental health, and social problems that may hinder retention (Nicholas, 2002).   Thus, programs such as career counseling, selection and placement, mental health, stress management are pivotal student retention strategies. This is because the being of a person enhances academic success. Institutions of higher learning continually grapple with supporting students experiencing psychological challenges such as stress, depression, mental health, motivation and anxiety that negatively affect students' academic progress and retention (Tinto, 1993; Jeffera & Altbach, 2004). Personal attributes such as dispositions attached to experiences encountered in early years of the person's life can affect student adjustment particularly during the first year of study (Letseka et al., 2010). This is why many institutions have set up on site counseling programs.

Counseling originated from various disciplines such as social welfare, psychology, sociology, education, and community development (Beekerman, 2007). In most cases, role of the counselor is to provide emotional support by assisting the client to interpret the causes of emotional concern, to make reflections on best ways to solve the challenge, motivate and reassure the client that the challenge can be solved (Morrison et al., 2006;Sue, 2013). This implies that a lot of time should be dedicated for contact between the counselor and the client to develop rapport as well as to collaboratively deal with the issues the client is facing. However, high counselor staff ratios can hinder adequate individualized support of clients. In the South African context, Beekerman (2007) provides guidelines that one counselor should serve at most 1500 clients in a given setting. However, Chireshe (2012) found that in one former black university four counselors were serving 26000 students. Such findings may imply that there could be serious staffing challenges in some of the institutions of higher learning in South Africa. The current study seeks to find out whether the counseling centres in the universities under study are adhering to this policy recommendation when implementing counseling programs.

Notably, counseling programs are underpinned by principles of trust and genuinity between the client and the counselor (Sue & Sue, 2013;Dryden & Reeves, 2008). Most of the students experiencing distressful experiences may have low self esteem, low motivation and distrust. This social and supportive interaction from the counselor provides a platform to discuss and modify thoughts, behaviour, and attitudes of the client and facilitates self-insight. Skillful response toclient's initial counseling needs helps the client to commit and engage in the counseling tasks (Means & Thorne, 2007). Most of the individuals seeking counselling may have very vague goals; therefore the counsellor

must assist the client in defining achievable goals within themselves. In this way, the counsellor enhances self-actualisation and makes clients remove the cause of psychological problems (Sue, 2013: 815). However, it is apparent that the relationship is not easy to develop, as the clients' perceptions, attitudes (Means & Thorne, 2007) and behaviour usually shape the success of the counseling encounter. In the case of higher education students literature abounds highlighting that few students participate in counseling programs. Literature point to issues of stigma associated with help seeking (Nicholas, 2002; Seitawan, 2006). For instance in some societies it is culturally unacceptable to seek advice and direction from anyone outside the nuclear family or from a stranger (Juma, 2011;Dryden & Reeves, 2008). In this study, it was important to find out whether students seek counseling when experiencing challenges. If so it is important to find out how the relationships are nurtured in the existing counseling programs. Counselling goals are achieved when the client and the counselor are willing to set aside time to meet and discuss milestones in dealing with the challenge to be solved.

2.2.2   Student Selection in five Student Retention Programs

South African policies on student selection point out the need to ensure open access to students from varied backgrounds so as to ensure equitable access to education for all (DoE, 1997). Specifically section thirty-seven of the Higher Education Act of 1997 asserts the need for using diverse routes for admitting students into higher education. These routes include use of the high school certificate, recognition of prior learning (RPL) for mature students and any additional method that would identify students with potential to succeed (DoE, 1997:29). This policy has resulted in a high number of students with varied characteristics. In view of the above, institutions in South Africa have set up

programs that seek to address the various needs of students they enroll. It has been observed that even though the students enrolled in higher education institutions in South Africa meet the minimum requirements, they still require academic, phychological and social support in order for them to flourish and succeed. The following section will review how students make use of the various programs that address their needs.

2.2.2.1 Student Selection to Tutorial Programmes

As noted earlier, tutoring originated as a compulsory tuition strategy in most contexts (Topping, 1996). This implies that all tutees admitted into a specific program are automatically expected to be participating in tutorial programs irrespective of background, discipline, gender or culture. Lecturers subdivide students into small tutorial groups using their own discretion.

However, the criteria used to subdivide students in the tutorial program may vary from one context to another. For instance same sex tutor and tutees may be preferred for comfort and modeling and gender . Some studies especially in primary and high school education settings found that same sex pairing of tutor-tutee are more effective in tutorials delivery (Maxwell, 1991). Although the current study is being conducted in a higher education setting where tutors and tutees are more mature, it is possible that the issue of gender could influence the delivery of tutorial programs as well as student learning and retention. In South Africa, the educational policy also point to the need of the education delivery to ensure non sexist society (DOE, 1997). Thus the study may also contribute to knowledge on how this is enhanced during the selection of students for various learning programs, including tutoring.

Combining students from various gender orientations in tutorials could contribute to inclusivity, tolerance, and development social skills among students. However, diverse

students cultural barriers, personal and previous learning experiences may make it difficult for tutees to embrace one another (Marike De Sert, 2010; Ber Eli et al.,1998). The current study explores whether the criteria used to select students is embraced by the tutees themselves. This is important because there is no consensus as to which method is ideal to ensure that all students really benefit from the program. Therefore, the current study may contribute to the body of knowledge in this matter.

In peer tutoring, the academic staff selects tutors. However, this selection process can be daunting as it takes into account personality, ability and other cultural and contextual aspects. For instance, in contexts where gender roles are still highly prominent, there is likely to be conflict between the tutor and tutee (Robbinson, Schoefield & Steers-Wentzell, 2005). Similarly, in contexts where an issue of student academic ability is viewed from a deficient rather than strength based perspective, there is likelihood that the less able tutor may not feel confident to perform their duties effectively.

Tutors who support students must have the requisite dispositions to support others. Specifically tutors ought to be approachable, friendly and willing to help others. These qualities align with the qualities of a good teacher outlined by Chickering and Gamson (1991). This implies the need for tutors to undergo a selection process to determine suitability for the tutoring roles (Underhill, 2010, Chin, Rabow & Estrada, 2011). Ideally, any screening strategy may be necessary to ensure the tutors with most desirable attributes to support learners are selected.

 Apparently, there are undocumented concerns that some tutors exhibit personalities that are contrary to the key attributes of a good teacher outlined by Chickering Gamson

(1991). Meanwhile, most research on tutoring programs do not provide sufficient detail on how tutors are selected (Robbinson, Schoefield & Steers-Wentzell, 2005). Yet, the tutor adopts various roles while carrying out duties (Bedow, 2008), therefore determining tutor selection strategies that take into account the attributes that align to tutor role is very important in this study.

Tutor qualities used as selection criteria may differ depending on which tutoring model is implemented in the institution. Tutors involved in online tutoring need to have technical skills and online data management skills, which are different from face to face tutorials. They also should have online communication skills for them to be able to guide online interaction and moderate tutee discussions. Overall, all tutors require the tutor facilitation skills that diffuse the tutor-tutee power relations in order to enhance tutee participation. Moreover, they should be role models and be able to coach others into the desired learning behaviours (Gordon, 2009 ;Ender & Newton, 2000 ;Topping, 1996). Peer tutoring programs using reciprocal tutoring methods rely on the academic staff members or teacher s to select randomly who becomes a tutor (Robbinson, Schoefield & Steers -Wentzell, 2005). Since students swap tutor roles, the issue of tutor selection may not be as important as in fixed peer tutoring and cross age tutoring programs.

2.2.2.2 Student Selection to SI programs

SI caters for underachievers and achievers because it is always offered to all the students registered in the module. Arendale (1993) argue that combining students of mixed academic abilities eliminates the stigma associated with remediation. The other benefit of combining students with mixed academic ability is that students have an

opportunity to interact and support each other on issues related to study skills, problem solving, critical thinking, sharing ideas and conceptual development and procedural issues related to the specific module (Bowles & Jones, 2008). This platform to communicate enables students to reflect, refine and remember what they will have discussed (Falchikov, 2001).

2.2.2.3   Student Selection to Tracking Programs

It is apparent that there are many indicators for students at risk. Therefore it is important that an accurate record of student participation in various institutional activities such as extra mural activities, health issues, student societies, study groups, advising, counseling, library usage, participation in class activities and even support programmes is essential (Hudson, 2005). Indicators of performance that may be identified as potential risk vary from one setting to another, but basically a good tracking system captures student participation in social, psychological and academic activities that impede academic success (Ewell et al., 1995; Fusch, 2012). Different flags may be used depending on the intensity of the identified challenge. The process of identifying student needs is also alluded to as a key component of student retention in Beatty Guenter's sorting stage of the student retention strategy. This ensures that resources are chanelled appropriately. Regrettably, the practice of student tracking has largely remained a theoretical practice. Subjective concerns from various staff and students suggest that at times there is over reliance on academic risks while ignoring other aspects which may potentially affect student retention. Therefore the current study explored the ways in which student risk was identified.

2.2.2.4   Student Selection to Orientation Programmes

Student orientation programmes are meant to assist transition of students who are coming to higher education for the first time. Therefore, all first year students are eligible for student orientation programmes. Depending on institutional policies, orientation may be compulsory or voluntary. Cuseo & Barefoot (2005) argues that programmes that ensure that students are actually active in the programmes have long term impact on retention. However at times the challenge is how to ensure that all students actively participate in orientation. Levitz (2009) reports on a strategy where students are allowed to register after orientation. Only those who attend orientationare given registration pins. This strategy ensures that every student take part in the orientation. In this study, it was imperative to find out how institutions practically ensure that students participate in student orientation programmes.

2.2.2.5   Student Selection to Counseling Programmes

Ideally, people should seek counseling on their own volition whenever they experience social educational problems beyond their control (Rogers, 1951,Sue & Sue,2013). Having the courage to seek a counselor to discuss problems depends on individual personalities. Even with students, seeking counseling is not something everyone can do. Therefore, in some cases students are referred by lecturers or other staff for counseling services. Students usually participate in counseling programs through referral or personal help seeking initiatives. A person should be referred for counseling when their concerns affect their relationships, responsibilities, health and performance and when the emotional well being is at risk (Morrison et al.,2006).   Given that counseling is sometimes linked to stigma, the current study is interested in finding out strategies used to convince students to make use of counseling services.

2.2.3   Delivery of the Five Student Retention Programmes

2.2.3.1   Delivery of Tutorial Programmes

South African open access policies have led to the phenomenon of massification. Massification is a process of increasing students admission to higher education (Fraser & Killen, 2005). Massification manifests in the form of very high student staff ratios. The high student numbers also hamper provision of individualized attention to students who have varying learning needs, especially during first year of study. Northedge (2003:18) emphasise how students vary in what they bring to the course and what they need from it". High student staff ratios seem to be more prevalent in historically black universities due to resource constraints which is a direct result of the legacy of apartheid. A meta-analysis conducted by Boughey and McKenna (2011) on hindrances to teaching and learning in five Historically Disadvantaged Institutions (HDIs) in South Africa, found that high student to staff ratios influences staff morale and commitment to teaching. The high ratios are also exacerbated by varying student home languages, most of which are not necessarily the language of instruction, thus making it difficult for most students to communicate their concerns in large classes (DoE, 2004).

Tutoring provides a promising solution to the above challenges given that students are provided support in small groups and that content delivery is systematic to ensure that the key course aspects are mastered. This could possibly address the conceptual gaps, poor motivation, limited reading, writing skills and study skills, all of which are key to higher education success (Du Perez & Fossey, 2012). Empirically, students who exhibit poor conceptual knowldege due to limited prior knowledge benefit when the tutors combine explanations and appropriate questioning techniques (Roscoe &, Chi, 2007;

The peers with whom the student interacts inside the classroom form the social network the student uses when experiencing academic challenges (Tinto, 1993). Empirically, evidence shows that students who frequently participate in tutorials develop psychologically through increased self esteem, locus of control and self regulation (Beck, 2007; Chen & Ku;2009).

The structured characteristic of a tutorial is meant to enable students with various learning abilities to be systematically taken through the course material to develop the requisite competencies in a supportive climate (Colvin, 2010). Studies have shown that students who exhibit poor conceptual knowldege due to limited prior knowledge benefit when the tutors combine explanations and appropriate questioning techniques (Roscoe &, Chi, 2007). In fact, Mastopieri et al. (2007) recomend that learning materials used in peer tutoring needs to be differentiated in order to adress abilities of the diverse students in the contemporary classroom.   This implies that the content may include simple aspects to motivate the learner without much prior knowledge as well as challenging aspects. Most importantly, the content must link to authentic experiences so that students see the applicability and relevance of what they are learning.   There seems to be various models of implementing tutoriasl as will be discussed below.

2.2.3.1.1   Tutorial Models

Tutoring programmes delivery depends on the type and the goal of tutoring (Topping & Bryce, 2004). The goals of tutoring may be academic, attitudinal, or socio–emotional. These goals may in turn influence the delivery strategies used including the types of tutors employed who may be voluntary recruitees. The goal of tutoring used sometimes influences the tutoring model adopted. The main models of delivering tutorial programs

are one on one tutoring (Graeser, Person & Magliano, 1995), peer tutoring (Roscoe & Chi, 2007; online tutoring (Jobbling, 2012), cross age tutoring (Topping, 2001), and professional tutoring (Underhill, 2010; Topping, 2001). A brief description of the key characteristics of each model is provided in the next sections.

2.2.3.1.1.1   Cross Age Tutoring

Cross age tutoring involves having asymmetrical individuals, usually an older, more experienced and knowledgeable person taking the responsibility of academically supporting the younger person who is usually at a lower academic grade level (Topping, 1996; Greenwood et al.,1988).   The older person called a tutor provides guidance, modeling and coaching to the less experienced person called a tutee. To this end, Cohen, Kulik & Kulik's (1982) review of tutor training programs in primary and high schools in America revealed that students are mainly tutored by paraprofessionals and older students rather than by regular academics and professional tutors. This implies that academics seem to favor cross age tutoring. This implies that there is need for constant communication between the tutor and the staff member to ensure that the same concepts are taught systematically. This is in line with the social constructive learning theories which advocate for use of more a knowledgeable person in scaffolding others in the "zone of proximal development" (Vygotsky, 1978).

In order to enhance a holistic tutee development, the tutor roles shift depending on the levels of the tutees' understanding of the content during discussions. In cases where tutor understanding of the content is low, the tutor adopts a modeling role by rephrasing the problem and pointing out similarity and differences in concepts. However, a facilitative role is most favored, which entail a shift from role modeling to coach by fading

assistance and eliciting responses from tutees so as to encourage them to think for themselves (De Smet et al., 2010)

Studies on cross age tutoring across various subjects and settings show that both tutors and tutees improve academic performance, self confidence and attitudes towards learning (Le Roux, 2009; Topping, 2001). Strength based tutoring approach refers to a situation whereby the low achieving students are given a responsibility to teach other students at lower academic levels so that they can also improve their attitudes as well as develop cognitive competencies (Patterson & Elliot, 2006; Robbinson et al., 2005). In fact, Patterson & Elliot (2006) reported academic and attitudinal improvement by low performing grade nine students who were given a responsibility to support reading for low performing second and third grade students. Even though the study by Patterson and Elliot was based on high schools students, its tenets could be legitimate if adopted to higher education, especially to those students who may be at risk of dropping out. This could possibly be a different strategy to motivate them to learn. Horn & Jansen (2008) emphasise the need to modify education program delivery and support strategies in order to ensure effective and efficient achievement of educational outcomes. A case in point is South Africa which has a challenge of students who are taking longer to complete their studies due to inadequate preparation (Scott, 2009). However, cross age tutoring has not been successfully implemented in all contexts. The common flaw to delivery relate to student perceptions about each other during the implementation of the program. In most cases, tutees who are accustomed to transmitive learning models still view the tutor as the fountain of knowledge, and as such become too dependent on the tutor, thus inhibiting independent thinking and creativity that are important habits in higher education tutoring (Gisbert and Font, 2008). This manifests in expectations to be given direct answers to problems rather than to be guided to think for themselves.

Roscoe & Chi (2007) cited that future research may have to consider how tutee behavior influences tutorial program delivery. The other challenge is that, due to the remarkable age and ability differences between the tutor and the tutees, the tutor may become authoritarian and thus inhibit tutee confidence, trust and openness (De Smet et al.,2008). This inhibits collaborative and active learning which is advocated in tutorials. Tutees that have had previous negative experiences with authority figures tend to dislike authoritarian approaches. Another challenge could be that younger tutees, though having more learning experince, may take a responsibility to tutor relatively more mature adults. This may cause the tutees to be uncomfortable especially those coming from communities where more mature students are beileved to be more knowldegeable. Conversely, tutees may mistrust and even undermine the tutor when they realise that they are much older than the tutee. This implies that cultural aspects may also contribute to the kind of relationship that is formed between the tutor and the tutees. The flaws of cross age tutoring therefore have led some scholars to advocate for peer tutoring (Greenwood, Delquadri & Hall, 1989).

2.2.3.1.2   Peer Tutoring

In the strictest sense, peer tutoring involves tutoring function conducted by people who are not professional teachers, but possess the same social characteristics of helping one another to learn (Heron, Welsh & Goddard, 2003; Topping & Bruce, 2004; Greenwood, Delquadri & Hall,1989). It is based on the view that students can build interpersonal competencies, by jointly constructing knowledge through dialogue and interaction. Advocates of peer tutoring contend that students at the same level communicate and understand each other more closely than those of different age. (Horn & Jansen, 2008) further argue that peers are likely to have mutual interests, which

enable discussion and use of relevant analogy, level of detail and language, or avoid cultural barriers that may exist between the teacher and the student. Thus the small age difference allows a student to express himself or herself without fear of being judged on intimidated (Chin, Jerome & Estrada, 2011). Similarly, Topping assert the benefit of peer tutoring to be that "peers can speak to each other in vernacular , directly , with the credibility of participants in the same culture and without overtones of social control and authoritanism " (Topping, 1996: 24). Peer relationships in tutoring can be enhanced through same sex paring of structured tutoring programs (Bar Eli, N.Bar-Eli, Tenenbaumn & Forlin, 1998). This enhances role modelling. Conversely, critics of peer tutoring question tutor expertise in giving valid feedback and reinforcement. Thus peer tutoring has limited evidence of reliability and dependability. Some educators, parents and students seem to mistrust peer tutoring, even after the tutors have undergone training (Colvin, 2010; Mastopieri et al., 2008). Sometimes students are indisposed to be taught by same age peers (Vogelwiesche, Crob & Winkler, 2006). Given that the tutor and tutee are of the same age, the likelihood of loss of respect and misbehavior on the part of the tutee is high. These criticisms are valid in that if proper guidelines are not given to the tutor on how to support the peer, it may result in a scenario where a "blind person leads another blind". Reasearch has proved that tutors can experience a lot of strain in their roles due to preconceived role expectations (Roscoe & Chi, 2007). None the less, peer tutoring is still a very useful learning strategy for the development of low order skills, development of social connections and socio-emotional outcomes (Robbinson et al.,2005).

There are three variations of peer tutoring (Topping, 2001). These are class wide peer tutoring (CWPT) (Greenwood.,Delquadri & Hall, 1989), same age different ability peer tutoring, same age same ability tutoring (Mastopieri, et al 2008; Topping, 1998).

2.2.3.1.2.1   Class Wide Peer Tutoring (CWPT)

Initially, Class Wide Peer Tutoring (CWPT) was conceptualized in primary and high schools in Kansas City in the USA (Greenwood, Delquadri & Hall, 1989). Class wide peer tutoring involves pairing the whole class such that one student assumes the tutor responsibilities while the other counterpart becomes a tutee for a specific period. The tutoring model uses reciprocity, a technique where students swap tutor roles after some time. Therefore, everyone has a chance to take leadership roles (Gisbert & Font, 2008). The one student taking the role of the tutor leads the discussion or activity, provides guidelines, feedback and reinforcement as provided in the guidelines given by the teacher. The approach makes use of extrinsic and intrinsic rewards for the tutor to increase student motivation. Proponents of this model argue that the main goal of class wide peer tutoring is to develop social skills among diverse students, even though it can also develop other academic outcomes (Topping, 1996). In most cases, the matching of high ability and low ability students help the students to stay on task. Monitoring of the students progress involves providing reinforcement of ongoing good behavior. CWPT was researched in a variety of specialized subjects and found to be good at improving students' grades, self concept and confidence and student relationships (Gisbert & Font, 2008; Heron, Welsh & Goddard, 2003).

None the less, CWPT is highly involving on the part of the academic staff that guides and closely monitors every activity that takes place (Maheady & Gard, 2010). The same principles of class peer tutoring can be used in higher education especially in peer assessment. It is ideal for students of varied needs and is usually applied in primary and high school settings.

2.2.3.1.2.2   Different Ability Peer Tutoring

Different ability peer tutoring of students is used in cases where the goal is to develop specific attitudes and academic competencies. The more knowledgeable student provides modeling and coaching of the required competencies (Alsup, 2008; Topping., 2001). This approach uses a fixed tutor approach in that the tutor and the tutee maintain their roles for the duration of the program (Mastopieri et al, 2007). In addition, some scholars argue that selecting tutors based only on academic merit may ignore other personality traits that are crucial for one to serve as a tutor. Peer tutoring has to be implemented by individuals who embrace patience, persistence and are proactive (Chin & Jerome & Estrada, 2011). However this approach requires that tutors receive intensive training and support.

2.2.3.1.2.3   Same ability peer tutoring

The model entails same ability students being paired and reciprocates the tutoring and tutee roles (Mastopieri et al, 2007;Topping, 2001). In most cases, this approach to peer tutoring is used when the goal of tutoring is to develop certain attitudes, social and psychological skills among the students serving as tutors (Robbinson et al., 2005). In fact a review of literature by Robbinson et al., (2005) in high schools found that some

tutoring programs were successful when low achieving students were used as tutors. However, it is logical that when low performing students serve as tutors, they may have low cognitive capacity to effectively support other students. In such a case, the tutoring activities may be compromised.

2.3.1.3 Online Tutoring

Online tutoring is a form of personalized learning mediated by the use of various technologies and the internet (Jobbling, 2012). Just like conventional tutoring, online learning also uses dialogue, debate and discussions among geographically separated individuals. Online learning is becoming a popular strategy to develop students information literacy skills required for them to function in contemporary information society. Information and communication technologies allow synchronous (immediate and real time or simultaneous conversation) as well as asynchronous (time delayed) communication using text, audio and video technologies such as email, audio conferencing and video conferencing (Barker, 2002). In synchronous learning dialogue, the tutor and the tutees communicate as if they are in a conventional face-to-face dialogue. This allows immediate clarification of concepts and understanding of content. In asynchronous communication, the time delay in communication provide the tutees time to reflect on the content.

However online tutoring requires robust technological infrastructure such as bandwidth to allow effective communication. Connectively of varying computer devices normally crop up as a communication challenge due to differences in bandwidth. Therefore online tutoring programmes require tutors who have technological skills to support students facing such challenges.

Another important consideration for online tutoring is to ensure that both the tutor and the tutees have basic digital literacies so that they can communicate online effectively. Digital skills such as word processing, use of email, chat and discussion forums and typing skills are important for tutees involved in online learning tutoring. On the part of the tutor, there is need for setting up conferences, moderating discussions and checking the relevance of conversations. In fact, roles of the tutors are much more complex because of the need to not only provide subject expertise, but also provide technical support. It also requires a different set of pedagogical skills (Barker, 2002). To this end, Salmon (2000) highlight that an online tutor need to fulfill the role of a manager, a technician, social actor and a professional. In addition, the tutor is a professional in that he/she must have subject knowledge to properly guide the tutees. Most importantly, the tutor must have been trained on social skills in online environment so as to be able to guide discussions, control misbehavior, manage conflict and encourage participation by all the students. Just like in other tutoring approach, the online tutor monitors student work. Colvin (2010), highlights that a tutor has to have personal attributes such as patience, persistence and proactiveness. However, there are dilemnas associated with online learning such as technical access problems (Salmom, 2000)

Since most South African universities have adopted e-learning technologies, the study would like to understand how the tutoring component of the programmes was being implemented and supportive. This is in line with the view that online learning enhances digital literacy, authentic learning experiences and develops social relationships (Barker, 2002).

2.3.1.4   Compulsory versus Voluntary Participation In Tutorials

In some contexts, participation in tutorial programmes is attached to credits. This is aimed at motivating students (Brophy, 2004). For instance, students may not be allowed to write final examinations if they have not participated in a certain number of tutorial sessions per semester or a tutorial participation mark is assigned to each student. It appears that students who are extrinsically motivated find no value of participating in tutorial sessions where there are no credits attached (Forster,1992; Adams, 2006). However, some studies in South Africa show that making tutoring compulsory policy has not succeeded in improving participation. Adams (2006) reports on erratic tutorial participation at the University of Zululand. Related findings in other universities in South Africa also showed that students increased time on task was concentrated during preparation for major tests and examinations (Underhill, 2010; Van Schalkwyk, Menkeveld & Ruiters, 2010). This implies that the majority of the students tend to use tutorials as a quick fix of their academic learning gaps. Yet effective learning takes place through continuous practice.

On the other hand, tutorial participation is voluntary due to the assumption that students are self-regulated and autonomous learners who are in the motion of seeking learning support. In this study, the aim is to explore how institutions ensure that students attend tutorials in terms of reward mechanisms in place to motivate students. To this end, Tinto (2013) asserts that institutional policies and practices influence how retention programs are actually implemented in various contexts. Importantly, consistency in the enforcement of learning policies influences how students engage in tutorial

programmes. It is also important that the tutors acquire professional skills to carry out their roles through training (Gordon, 2009) .

2.3.1.5   Tutor Training

Tutor training is important because the assumption that tutors possess content and pedagogical knowledge maybe a fallacy. Similar views have led to advocacy for tutor training before they can start working (Gordon, 2009;Barker, 2002). According to Gordon (2009), tutors must have pedagogical competencies to apply collaborative and co-cooperative teaching strategies to handle diverse students. Highly successful tutoring programs train tutors in interpersonal skills, leadership skills and how to prepare learning activities for tutees. Colvin (2010) emphasise that trained tutors can support other students better than those who are not trained. In tandem with this view, Roscoe & Chi (2007) noted that untrained tutors tend to use unproductive approaches such as asking short questions, requiring factual recall of information as opposed to long explanatory questions that enable link of concepts. This limits opportunities for tutees to develop deep thinking and reasoning skills.

In addition, there are specific tutor qualities that enhance learning. For instance, a tutor must be a source of encouragement, and must embrace the qualities of being nonjudgmental, must be patient, empathetic and of higher understanding (Le Roux, 2009). Perhaps tutors ought to adopt a package of qualities outlined by Carl Rogers. Such qualities include being passionate, non judgemental, and being empathetic (Davies, 2010). The tutor must have skills to rekindle, motivate those being tutored. These qualities develop improved tutee self-esteem, locus of control, self-regulation and independence (Topping, 1996). At times, these qualities are not innate. Thus, there is

need for extensive training and retraining of tutors. The training materials ought to have practical examples of how tutors ask questions, provide encouragement, provide feedback and reinforcement and even how to deal with difficult, unco-operative and passive tutees (Weissman & Bonning, 2003). The training must also provide guidelines on how to respond and reward systems for desired behaviour (Colvin, 2010). It is also important to train tutees. This training should be ongoing coupled with extensive reinforcement and coaching to ensure that students master the correct procedures. However, this may imply an increased workload demand on the programme trainers because of the need to constantly monitor progress on training and program outcomes. It is important that an adequate number of trainers are in place to ensure tutor professional development. To this end, some institutions use a decentralized tutor training strategy where departments take responsibility for training of tutors. This ensures that the details about teaching specific disciplines are fully integrated into the training (Underhill, 2010). This study, therefore, examined how tutor training is enacted. This was important because the quality of a tutor influences the achievement of tutorial program goals in higher education institutions as well.

2.3.1.6   Length of tutorial programmes

There are mixed views about whether the length of tutoring programmes influences delivery outcomes. As a result, literature on the implementation of tutorial programs show varying durations ranging from 2 weeks to several years, with most averaging 12 weeks (Robinson et al., 2005). Surprisingly, review of tutorial literature on length of tutorial programmes does not reveal comparably improved academic, attitudinal or socio-emotional outcomes for longer tutorial programmes as compared to shorter ones . Although there is little empirical evidence to confirm, it is believed that longer tutoring

programmes can be monotonous (Robinson et al.,2005). The researcher concurs with the view that monotony can occur if diverse tutorial approaches are not used, and this reduces student engagement. Also programme duration has to be examined in tandem with student participation approaches used in the programme.

2.3.1.7 Challenges associated with the Implementation of tutorial programmes

Despite the theoretical benefits of tutoring, Gisbert & Font (2008) warn that learning through tutoring does not occur spontaneously; rather it goes through a well-structured and organised curriculum design and interactions. A well structured tutorial programme use pragmatic tutorial delivery approaches that take into account tutors style, students' capabilities, students prior knowledge and the content being taught (Topping, 2001).

Most students may enter into the tutorial sessions expecting to be given all the answers, and may initially resist any efforts to be active learners. This resistance is particularly prevalent among students who have been accustomed to expository teaching methods. To this end, Felder (2005) asserts that tutorial non attendance is a reflection of students' resistance to innovative learning strategies adopted in tutorials, which may be different from what they already practiced at high school. Such students may have different expectations. In practice, however, getting the students to be fully involved in their learning and to commit themselves to their learning goals is difficult (Chin, Jerome & Estrada, 2011). This commitment is demonstrated by student willingness to fully participate in the designed activities. Students benefit when they consistently attend sessions (Chin & Jerome, 2011; Gordon, 2009). Therefore, in cases where there is inconsistent attendance, there is likelihood of little gains in student learning outcomes.

Actually differing expectations between students and the tutor on how tutorials should be conducted can cause frustrations on the duo (Colvin, 2010).

Different questioning techniques may be used to guide students to think for themselves how to solve problems related to the content already taught. Studies have also noted ineffective learning may occur in tutorial programs due to the strategies that tutors use to assist students. Actual tutor behavior enhance tutorial goals (Roscoe & Chi, 2007). For instance, excessive use of directive tutorial strategies inhibits students' creative thinking (Fuchs, Fuchs, Karns, Hamlet, Dutka, & Katzaroff, 1996). Directive tutoring is usually characterized by supplying hints and detailed explanations of the learning processes required to master the content. Alternatively, facilitative tutoring strategies are favoured in the higher education content because it enhances metacognitive abilities (Ornstein, 2009; Roscoe & Chi, 2007). Facilitative tutoring focuses on motivating the student to take the responsibility of their own learning by attempting to respond to probing questions. However, facilitative strategies may require highly skilled tutors.

It is not enough to assume that best academic performing students can be best tutors, as there are also other personality and pedagogical dispositions which make them effective facilitators. In fact, in South Africa it is important that tutors, as higher education practitioners, also gain pedagogical skills, as this is currently a big gap in the higher education system which contributes to poor learning and high dropout (Scott et al., 2007).

Despite variations in approach, tutoring programmes complement academic staffs' contribution to students support on disciplinary conventions, through exploration of ideas

in intensive discussions (Underhill, 2010). The value of tutorial programmes lie in their ability to foster active participation through raising points, seeking reading clarification, writing and critiquing. Even though both the tutor and academic staff provide direction to students, the teaching approach to be used by tutors is different. In fact, tutors are not supposed to teach new content, but to reinforce the content that the academic staff has already taught (Adams, 2006; Topping, 2001). The tutor ought to use various questioning techniques that guide students to think for themselves how to solve problems related to the content already taught. This active involvement of students in the learning process enhances the development of competencies in logical arguments, independently thinking and communications (Topping,1996).

The structured characteristic of a tutorial is meant to enable students with various learning abilities to be systematically taken through the course material to develop the requisite competencies in a supportive climate (Calder, 2004; Carini, 2006). Studies have shown that students who exhibit poor conceptual knowldege due to limited prior knowledge benefit when the tutors combine explanations and appropriate questioning techniques (Roscoe &, Chi, 2007). In fact, Mastopieri et al., (2007) recomend that learning materials used in peer tutoring be differenciated in order to adress abilities of the diverse students in the contemporary classroom. This implies that the content may include simple aspects to motivate the learner without much prior knowledge as well as challenging aspects. Importantly, the content must link to authentic experiences so that students see the appicability and relevance of what they are learning.

2.3.1.8   Support for Tutorial Programmes

Staff responsible for the courses linked to tutorial programmes play a pivotal role in supporting tutors as well as planning and designing tutoring programme activities. Due to their expert knowledge in the discipline, academic staff are best able to guide tutors on the most appropriate pedagogical strategies to deal with disciplinary discourses (Perez & Fossey, 2012). The level of support can also contribute to tutor morale and affect how they deliver tutorials. Disgruntled tutors are unlikely to perform well in their duties. Therefore, it is important to make the tutors feel that they are esteemed as professionals. This will make them provide the best services to the students. One way to support tutors is to provide tutorial handbooks and other written guidelines on how to handle diverse students' needs. This will ensure that tutors have reference when they get stuck (Colving,2010). However, the provision of materials may have to be complemented with motivation and social support for tutors through frequent planning meetings and troubleshooting meetings to address the challenges currently experienced in the tutorial sessions (Lemmens & Maitlad, 2008;Rekrut, 1994) This is to allow new tutors to gain confidence in their new roles (Gordon, 2009). The current study also explored how tutors were supported in carrying out their daily roles.

2.2.3.2   Delivery of Supplemental Instruction and Peer Assisted Learning programmes

In this section, Supplemental Instruction (SI) and Peer Assisted Learning (PAL) programmes are reviewed concurrently since there are many similarities in the way they are conceptualised in literature. Both SI and PAL programme sessions are led by a senior student who has performed well in the course he/she is modeling to others. In the case of the SI programme the student is called an SI leader and when facilitating a PAL programme the senior student is called a PAL leader. The topics discussed in the SI and

PAL programmes directly related to the course content, and the students attending the session decide on the content to be covered (Arendale, 2006). The assumption is that students should be afforded an opportunity to discuss issues of the module that are of concern to them. SI and PAL models are based on the idea of developing lifelong and autonomous learning. The discussions are intended to provide a high degree of student interaction and shared support. This enables the students to develop the academic literacies in the related discipline. SI programme adopts the socialization approach in terms of academic language acquisition, reading and writing skills which are all embedded in the module. This assists students in retaining the skills, knowledge and values for a longer time. The SI and PAL models were developed basing on constructivist learning theory on learning.

SI and PAL programmes' principles align to contemporary constructivist learning theory which stresses the importance of social learning as alluded by theorists such Piaget (1968) and Vygotsky (1978). These theorists argue that education must provide opportunities for communication, conversation and scaffolding among students in order to advance construction of new knowledge (Hensen & Shelly, 2003). The ability to scaffold and provide opportunities for engagement depends on the skills of the facilitators running the programme. The next session elaborates how the effectiveness the SI programme is affected by the quality of the SI leaders and the attitudes of the academic staff members responsible for the respective module where SI is offered.

The leaders who participate in SI and PAL facilitation ought to receive extensive training in group facilitation strategies such as group facilitation skills, questioning techniques, note taking, and problem solving skills (Topping, 1998; Arendale, 1993). On the

contrary, Bowles & Jones (2004) argued that the unstructured nature of SI and PAL can cause some important topics to be missed out. Therefore it is important to ensure that SI and PAL co-ordinators take responsibility of monitoring the SI and PAL leaders. The monitoring entails holding class observations to ensure that they attend class at least once a week.

Since there are many SI programmes in South African universities, it would be interesting to also establish the kind of students who are frequent participants in these programmes. This would assist in assessing whether the program structure offered in each institution has been able to attract those students who are in need of this type of support but usually do not realize it or are not willing to accept the fact that they need the extra support in their academic work. Also, there could be a gap between rhetoric and reality as regards the actual implementation of this programme in various contexts. Therefore examining how all these principles are implemented in practice is of central importance.

However one flaw noted by many critics in the SI and PAL programmes is volunteerism. Student participation solely depends on their level and nature of motivation towards the course (Brophy,2004). For instance, studies noted that students with low and extrinsic motivation tend to attend support programs where no external reward is available (Davies, 2010). Such students are least likely to attend such SI program because there are no credits attached to attending the program. This implies that students may view SI as one of the "those" bridging courses. It appears students with low motivation who are likely to be weak performers may not attend if they are not encouraged to do so by the academic staff.

The success of SI also depends on how the academic staff supports the incorporation of the programme in their modules. Drew(2001) and Umbarch (2002) highlight that staff behavior help students to succeed in college, and this also includes participation in support programmes. Also the attitude of the academic staff has a lot of effect on motivation to use the programme . These are small but very important aspects that also have an impact on how the SI and PAL programmes are perceived by students.

Also the fact that the program is not well structured implies that students who struggle to determine basic concepts may struggle because some of the important topics may not be covered (Arendale, 2006). SI is designed to provide general guidelines for studying and at sometimes does not address subject content knowledge as the tutorial programs and therefore this may discourage those who enjoy being "spoon fed". Another argument was that the voluntary nature of SI makes it difficult for students who do not have clear goals to attend.

Therefore in order for SI and PAL to be successful, the academic staff in charge of the course has a very important role of regularly encouraging the students to attend the programmes. Umbarch(2002) highlights that staff behavior help students to succeed in college, and this also includes participation in support programmes.

2.2.3.2.1   Challenges in assessing SI and PAL impact

If everything else is held constant, SI and PAL attendance increases the probability of graduation. However, an analysis of the impact of SI programmes is problematic due to

self selection bias (Bowles et al., 2008). In their review of literature on effectiveness of SI programmes, Bowles et al. (2008) noted that a deep understanding of the impact of SI becomes problematic due to the voluntary nature of the SI and PAL programmes. By virtue of the programmes being voluntary, self selection becomes inevitable. Therefore, this presents a statistical problem relative to testing programme . In order to avert this, qualitative measures have to be considered when assessing the effectiveness of such a programme. These qualitative measures include the long term programme impact on academic performance, development of deep learning studying skills and increased motivation. For instance in 1994, McCarthy sought to assess the effectiveness of Supplemental instruction program on 228 first year students registered for the second semester course in Circuits in the faculty of engineering at the University of Witwatersand. The author wanted to ascertain whether the incorporation of the SI program in the module which had high attrition rate could improve study skills and academic performance of all students, including those who are regarded as underprepared. The study focused on the academic performance and perceptions of those first year students who had attended five sessions or more. This was based on the assumption that regular attendance to SI was a sign of motivation towards the course. Also it was assumed that regular attendance would develop the essential conceptual knowledge and study skills attributed to the SI programmes and would henceforth improve the students' performance in the module. They also assessed students' perceptions of the programme by checking whether non attendance was as a result of timetable clashes or perceived irrelevance of the program. The results of the study showed that SI greatly benefited disadvantaged students as compared to advantaged students. This is because the performance of students from disadvantaged backgrounds

who attended the programme was far better than their counterparts who had not attended.

Similarly, Hensen & Shelly (2003) studied the knowledge gains resulting from participating in SI at a Midwstern university in the united states of America. In this study students who attended SI were retested in the following spring and the results revealed that those who had participated in SI Sessions during fall scored better in the exam given in spring. This is an indication of the longer term positive outcomes based on SI participation.

2.2.3.3 Delivery Of Tracking Programmes

2.2.3.3.1 Identifying student risk factors

Rice (2010) argues that the value of tracking lies in how well it supports student learning. Effective support also depends on the time the outreach is initiated to students identified as potentially in danger of dropping out. There seems to be consensus among many scholars that early identification is key (Siedman, 2005; Madiny, 2005; Longden, 2004). The first three weeks of the term are crucial for student engagement and learning (Pascarella and Terrenzini, 2005), therefore the fourth week is an ideal time to implement tracking so as to determine whether students learning goals are being realised.

2.2.3.3.2 Intervention

Identifying students' performance is of no use if there is no strategy to intervene and assist students realize their goals. In a United States (US) study Noel (2009) found that despite abundance of institutional data on student needing support, there was little

evidence on how the data was used to enhance student retention. Ideally a student who is identified as being potentially at risk must be intrusively approached by a helping professional (advisors or counselors) to devise strategies to resolve the identified challenge (Cuseo & Barefoot, 2005; Glyn & Miller, 2002;Ewell et al., 1995). This intrusive method is aimed at reaching out to students who would never seek advisory and counseling support on their volition (Maree, 2009; Venit, 2008;). Even so, research shows that not all students respond immediately to face-to-face contact with advisor (Govalias, 2008; Venit, 2008; Nicholas, 1996). In fact, studies show that some helping professionals may require up to four communication attempts using various modes to persuade the student to make the initial contact (Nicholas, Damianova &, Ntantiso, 2011;Fethham & Horton, 2006). In South Africa, similar concerns about negative response to request for counseling and advisory meetings have been noted (Hartung, 2009;Nicholas , 2002) Negative emotions linked to being associated with unacceptable performance is the main reason for student resistance to contact staff (Nicholas, 2002;Cilliers et al.,2010). Such students can be vulnerable, aggressive, develop low self esteem, experience depression and anxiety (Govazolias, Leontopoulou, &Trivia, 2010). In this study, it would be important to find out best practice in the South African context with regards to encouraging positive response to such requests in tracking programmes.

When a student responds positively to the contact request, the helping professional assesses the student challenges. The method that helping professionals use to assess student needs vary depending on the personal theoretical orientation of the helping professional or the student attributes (Upcraft, Gardner & Barefoot 2005; Siedman, 2005). The three common approaches are targeted questions linked to the challenge, psychometric tests or non directive questions around the topic of concern (Maree, 2009).

Irrespective of the assessment strategy the helping professional adopts, research shows that a trusting relationship between the student and the helping professional is crucial for the success of the advisory and counseling services (Williams, 2007).

Apparently, skillful communication and effective handling of student concerns can enhance trust, thus allowing the student to open up to talk about issues they would otherwise be unwilling to disclose (Williams, 2007). Furthermore, a trusting relationship between the helping professional and the student increases commitment on the part of the student. Literature recommends that the student jointly negotiate goals with the helping professional to ensure responsibility and ownership of the decisions (Cuseo, 2007; McClahan, 2004). Research also shows that a trusting relationship improves the development of shared goals to solve the identified challenge At times the student may be required to show evidence of commitment to the goals and intervention strategy to be implemented. The intervention may entail developing specific skills in the student to deal with the challenge, or attending a course, seminars or other retention programmes within the institution. This support is aligned to Beatty-Guenter's model which views supporting students as an important strategy for students to feel socially welcome into the institutional environment.

2.2.3.3.3   Constant professional training and encouragement

Decentralised models involve each staff member being responsible for monitoring the performance of the students in a specific area of operation. For instance, the lecturer determines what kind of activities the students has to get involved in, including how much time should be dedicated to the activity. The lecturer also determines the quality of the engagement and communicates with the respective students about the progress

being made. The model is based on the assumption that the staff member interact more frequently with students, so they are likely to understand their learning needs. The monitoring of student progress in the classroom is an implicit characteristic of good teaching (Falchikov, 2001; Chickering and Gamson, 1991). Course based tracking uses indicators such as class attendance, participation in learning activities and performance in formative and summative curriculum activities to determine whether a student is performing below or above the optimum level. Decentralised tracking can make use of the Leaning Management System (LMS) to minimise staff workload. A Learning Management System is a web based database which has a component to automatically capture teaching and learning activities in online learning platform (Ewell et al.,1995; Mazza, & Botturi, 2007). Most Web based LMSs such as Moodle, Learn + have an embedded student progress monitoring component that record the time of logging to the system, the activities done and the duration.

A course based tracking and monitoring programme may imply instituting diverse forms of assessment as frequently as possible so as to identify student performance gaps (Falchikov, 2007). In cases where assessment is based on written work only, tracking systems only identify a portion of the student needs. Gardiner (1999) asserts students have different intelligences and it is important that these be taken into account when developing the curriculum, including in assessment. Contrary to Gardiner's assertion, most academics in higher education still rely heavily on written assessments such as tests and exams and use these as indicators of performance. This is reflected on the increased use of standardized tests which mainly focus on numeracy and literacy (Scholtze & Allen, 2007). However these do not provide a holistic picture of a student's capabilities. This ignores the other intelligences that the students possess.

2.2.2.4 Challenges in implementing Tracking Programmes

Despite these theoretical views on how assessment and support processes must be handled when dealing with students, practical challenges have been noted. For instance, the process of developing shared goals may fail if the students' goals are not congruent with those of the helping professional. This could be attributed to helping professional's inexperience or personality clashes. Also, students may insist on goals that need change in other people other than self or propose goals that are vague and not achievable (Dryden & Reeves, 2008).

 The student progress ought to be constantly monitored until the challenge is completely solved. In light of the above, the helping professional have to collaborate with other staff to ensure that the strategy works well. Davies (2010) and assert that the institutional strategy on support should ensure that there is clear communication between those who detect students' needs and those who implement the relevant support mechanisms. The helping professional may refer the student to other services on campus that enhance the accomplishment of the specified goals. In light of the above, it would be important to find strategies being used to encouraging positive response to counseling requests. If there is poor institutional co-ordination and poor feedback loop, there is a danger that students who are identified as at risk are not fully supported by the tracking programme.

2.3.3.5   Tracking Models

Tracking programmes may be implemented centrally or can be decentralized (Madiny, 2005; Du Plessis, 2005; De Villiers & Peterson, 2005). Centralised models are ideal for big institutions serving various types of students. It may be necessary to increase the staff involved in identifying students to ensure that various types of student performance

indicators are captured. Simons, (2011) assert that a centralised student tracking model requires a lot of co-ordination to ensure that everyone is aware of the programme goals to ensure buy in. Tinto (2013) noted the lack of coherent goals and intention in student retention hinder effort for effective retention practices. In a centralised model, there should also be a clear plan of action which is marketed to all the stakeholders. It is also important that those championing the programme implementation have the requisite skills and experience to mobilise others to accept the plan.

Leadership has a role to play in enabling the success of centralised tracking such as institution wide approaches. However, this model requires visionary leadership to spearhead the process. Jones et al. (2008) report that institutional leaders are instrumental in ensuring that there is a shared understanding of the institutional goals. There is also need for constant marketing of the programmes to raise awareness among various stakeholders and ensure buy in.

In a decentralized model, one person takes the responsibility of all the processes required in tracking such as identifying the student at risk indicators, initiating contact and devising an intervention. Decentralised models are ideal in course based tracking programs where the staff member use Learning Management Systems to aid the identification and communication (Simons, 2011). Decentralised models can be effective where the staff member is skilled enough to try out various intervention strategies to support the student. However, the decentralized model may fail if staff handles a large number of students as they may get overwhelmed with the work. The challenge comes at the moment of counseling students and devising interventions.

2.3.3.6   Challenges in the implementation of interventions in tracking programmes

However, in practice, studies have shown that the implementation of the tracking program is fraught with challenges. One of the main challenges relate to infrastructure because the development of an automated ICT enhanced student tracking programme is very costly when initially setting up the system. Most of the hardware and software resources are still imported from developed countries. In fact, the cost of setting up a robust computer enhanced student tracking system is relatively high in developing countries compared to the developed countries. Since South Africa is a developing country most of its higher education institutions undoubtedly fork out large sums of money when setting up computer enhanced student tracking. While the South African government has funding for infrastructure development for many higher education institutions , it is not clear whether the institutions under study have found this funding to be adequate for their teaching and learning initiatives using ICT.   Naidu (2002) reported that most South African institutions were spending more on ICT resources for teaching and learning than initially budgeted. The institutional budgetary constraints in turn affect maintenance of the computer systems (De Bruin, 2006). In most cases, institutions supplement the government funds with donor funds to purchase ICT teaching and learning software. Even so, institutions implementing tracking systems have to devise a way to sustain the programme even when donor funding has been withdrawn. Another challenge related to the use of tracking systems is technical skill of staff.

All the staff making use of computer enhanced tracking programmes require both the professional knowledge of their disciplines as well and technical skills to specify relevant indicators for tracking students as well as to interpret what the information that

is extracted by the computer system means. Laurillard (2003) and Johnson et al., 2006) found that adoption of technological tools for teaching and learning are hampered by lack of training and expertise

In view of the above gaps, the current study sought to find out the how tracking being implemented in two institutions taking into account the diverse student needs, particularly those unwilling to seek support through their own initiatives. It is also important to find out how follow up of referrals is done as there is not always a guarantee that the "at risk" student complies with the advise provided by the counselor or advisor. The implementation of tracking is futile if no frequent follow up is done to ascertain whether the student obtained adequate assistance that would improve learning.

2.2.3.4 Delivery of Orientation Programmes

An orientation programme allows students to interact with the key members of the university community so as to break the anxiety and isolation associated with students entering a new environment (Tinto, 1998). The interaction during the early days significantly shape student personal goals and aspirations as well as make them acquire a laconic sense of belonging and build social networks (Pascarella and Terrenzini, 2005). Social networks assist in developing self perception and self esteem which improves adaptation capacity. Reasonably, students who develop strong social networks usually have higher chances of experiencing better academic preparedness, assertiveness and integration irrespective of gender, social, economic or ethnic background (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005).

The benefits of orientation may be critical to a large number of students from historically disadvantaged communities who need to acclamatise to the higher education environment. Even so, all students entering higher education have to establish new identities, acquire new academic literacies (Martinez, 1997;Du Perez & Fossey, 2012) and develop academic and social networks (Tinto, 1993). This is considered very pertinent in that literature abounds that those students who fail to adapt to the new demands are likey to drop out within the first year of study (Letseka & Maile ,2008 Scott, Yeld and Hendry, 2007; Yorke,2004). This therefore calls for mechanisms for higher education institutions to assist students in developing interpersonal relations,develop identity and to acquire the requisite literacies (Upcraft, Gardner and Associates, 2005). Essentially, orientation programmes should familiarise students into the university environment through explaining expectations and establishing social and academic networks so as to ease adjustment challenges to higher education (Newman-Gonchar, 2000).

However, the level of difficulty that students encounter may differ from one individual to another depending on their level of preparedness and their socialization in asserting to new environments (Bridges, 2003). Apparently, the level of challenge could also be influenced by students' demographic attributes, culture and prior educatonal experiences. To this end Rendon, et al., (2004) observed that non traditional students are mostly affected because they encounter cultural, social and academic transition problems. To be more precise, non traditional students in the South African context comprise students from low socio-economic communitiesordisadvantaged communities, mainly mature age students . These students encounter transition challenges due to the wide differences between their prior experiences and what is demanded by higher

education instituions. In the South African context, disadvantaged groups comprise of those social groups who were deprived of adequate opportunities to access learning resources during the past political dispensation of apartheid. Even though apartheid has been eradicated, scholars have observed that the majority of students from the marginalised groups still experience the effects of the past political dispensation (Badat, 2009). For instance most of such students struggle to understand the language of instruction in higher education because they have not been properly taught how to master the use of the English language. Undoubtedly, the limited opportunties for optimum learning prior entering higher education influence academic preparedness(Chireshe, 2012;Letseka & Maile, 2008, Blitzer, 2004). Socially, some of the students come from poor communities and this affects their emotional and social readiness for the demands of higher euducation (DoE, 2009). This therefore could explain the dichotomy of social class and among racial gropus in higher education students in South Africa (Scott et al.,2007; Cloete, 2004).

This therefore makes it imperative that any orientation programme be designed to accommodate all kinds of students (Hlalele & Alexander, 2012) This is to ensure that such a programme is all encompassing and diversity-friendly to satisfy the different cadres of the student community. Therefore, all institutions of learning should embrace orientation programmes which should be informed by the mission and vision of a particular institution (Kinzie et al., 2005; Tinto, 2013)

2.2.3.4.0 Attributes of an orientation programme

Despite variations in the activities of the orientation programmes, Kramer & Wasburn (1983) outline the following six attributes of a successful orientation programme: 1)

acquanting students to higher education through interaction with various education fraternity members. This presents an invaluable opportunity for new students to meet with various members for the purpose of building social networks. 2) addressing students individual needs. An orientation programme is supposed to be tailored to meet the expectations of the various student groups enrolling in higher education. For instance, students who are shy and reserved are guided on how to develop interpersonal relationships. Those who need to develop self regulation and independence may require assistance on how to set realistic goals and career path, manage time and how to adapt to new environments (Newman-Gonchar, 2000). 3) enhancing collaborative activities. Students are taught on how to develop team skills through working with others. This also include aspects of conflict resolutuon and emotional intelligences when working with others 4) putting primary emphasis on academic transition. Orientation programmes should raise students awareness of the acdemic demands of higher education. When student orientation staff adress the academic side of transition, they may focus on information literacy skills, study skills, reading and writing conventions and effective study strategies. Addressing the academic side of student transition improves success and retention of the first year. 5) careful preparation of learning materials 6) and addressing successful transition experiences. The perspectives above finds support from other authors who believe that these attributes enhance positive student academic and social outcomes that promote student success and retention (Crossling et al., 2009). Put in another way, this means that an orientation must provide functional competencies for new students to operate in higher education (Millem & Berger, 2000). In order to achieve this, the activities should not only clarify expectations, procedures and processes that need to be followed within

the institution (Longden, 2004), but also provide opportunities to practically experience new ways of doing things.

Furthermore, orientation programmes that include all sectors of the university in developing students' academic and social wellbeing are more sustainable (Kinzie et al.,2005). This provides opportunities for members of the institution to develop communities of practice. In addition to collaborative efforts, the researcher is of the view that orientation leaders and staff ought to have other qualities such as being good communicators, being good listeners and being able to be approachable. Therefore, it is important that they have to receive adequate professional training in order for them to successfully carry out their duties.

2.2.3.4.1 Models of implementing orientation programmes

Notably, student orientation programmes are conceputailsed in various ways. This influences how they areimplemented (Newman-Gonschear, 2000; Mullendore & Bahanan, 2005; Gale & Parker, 2012). These different modes of conceptualisation mirror the mode of delivery, professional development of staff and whether the programme is credit bearing or not (Shupp, 2009). On the mode of delivery, an orientation programme may take the form of short academic, psychological and social activities, workshops, seminars or direct instruction (Honkimäki & Kálmán, 2012). Kinzie et al (2005) found that explicitly teaching students what to do to succeed and how to take advantage of available resources enhanced student success and retention. Such activities may be a once off process or may extend over a long period of time.

2.3.4.1.1   Traditional Orientation Programmes

Orientation programmes can be viewed as mechanisms of familiarising students into the higher education enviroment (Honkimäki & Kálmán, 2012; Upcraft et al, 2005). This view influences the activities that are carried out. In the traditional mode, usually the orientation programmes last for a few days. In most cases, such an orientation programme is spearheaded by the student affairs division of the university (UNESCO, 2002). However, this approach has limitations in that most staff spearheading the programe have limited contact with the students after the first intial days.

Traditional orientation programmes have a tendency to implement the same activities year after year. Gale (2006) identifies this characteristic as a flaw, arguing that this ignores the complexities of meeting diverse students needs. When an orientation program aims to meet the needs of diverse students, there should be mechanisms to solicit information on students' expectations, gauge their emotional academic and psychological levels. This ensures that orientation programme can be tailored for the current students. Miller & Brown (2003) recommends psychometric tests such as student readiness survey as a basis for identifying student needs before implementing orientation. Arguably, a student readiness survey determines students psychological aspects such as amount of effort a student puts to academic work, self-efficacy, academic self confidence, commitment to college, emotional control and social connections (Miller & Brown, 2003) In this study, the researcher is interested in finding out how South African institutions determine the diverse needs of students before and during the implementation of student orientation programs. This is because studies that

have reported positive contribution of orientation to student success made use of the data gathered at orientation to improve the student experience.

Traditional orientation programmes are implemented in one week. Due to the limited time span, there is a tendency for information overload.   This information overload occurs because staff from different sections of the insitution present a lot of infomation in a short space of time. This usually results in confusion rather than assisting students to adjust quickly to the insitution (Shupp, 2009). Furthermore, orientation programmes that are offered in less than a week fail to provide sufficient opportunties for students and staff to connect as initially intended (Thomas, 2002; Krause, 2006). Thomas (2002) asserts that student orientation can be successful if students are provided with sufficient time to internalise small chunks of information as opposed to bombarding them with a lot of information in a short space of time. In the same vein, Crossling et al. (2009) stressed that student orientation must be conducted at a time when students have completed sorting out other administrative aspects such as funding and accommodation. This enables all of them to fully concentrate on the activities. If orientation programmes clash with other institutional activities, students attendance can be erratic and this could influence the understanding of institutional services at their disposal to improve their social and academic engagement (Jama et al., 2008).   Thus, traditional orientation programmes are criticised for providing limited opportunties for academic integration.

In most cases, traditional orientation programmes do not accrue credits. This impacts on students attendance to such a programme because there is little room for enforcing attendance. Logically, students do not usually attend programmes that are not linked to any credits or marks (Honkimäki & Kálmán, 2012). This poses a challenge to the

94

orientation programme staff to find ways of motivating students to attend such activities. This researcher is of the opinion that even though traditional orientation programmes are non credit bearing, there should be mechanisms to nudge all students to be part of this initial transition experience. For instance, attending student orientation can be made a pre-requisite for students to register for programmes during the first year of study.   In this strategy orientation staff is responsible for providing access pins to students to allow them to register. This implies that no student can register until they have participated in orientation (Levitz, 2009). Another model of implementing student orientation is through first year seminars.

2.3.4.1.2   First Year Seminars

First year seminars are orientation programme activities embedded into the curriculum (Cuseo, & Barefoot, 2005; Robbinson, 1996). In some contexts, such orientation programmes are contextualised extended orientation programmes. In this approach students typically meet weekly to discuss various topics directly related to transition; such as study skills,reading and writting, social aspects such as conflict management, goal setting, time management and relationships as well as psychological aspects of the student life. These seminars may extend several months or a semester (Mullendore & Bahanan, 2005; Honkimäki & Kálmán, 2012). The seminars have many opportunities for sharing of experiences so as to develop sense of communiity and social integration. Orientation seminars may be credit bearing in order to motivate students to attend the seminars (Robbinson, 1996). Given that extended orientation programmes are embedded in the curriculum, they offer opportunities for prolonged participation of staff from various sections of the institution.   In this case, there are opportunities for connectedness because students have sufficient time to acquire the requisite skills.

According to Beatty Guenter, connectedness is achieved through ensuring that the students acquire the requisite skills, values and knowledge. This is in line with Tinto's retention Interactionalist model on social and academic engagement , that add that increased postivie interaction also increase learning gains to students.

There is empirical evidence of positive gains of using first year seminars. To this end, Wonsoek (2007) analysed self reported data gathered from 590 first year students who had attended freshman seminar in Fall 2004 in the College of Bussiness at the Pennyslvania State university. The study examined the three most influential aspects that cause students to continue studying after attending first year seminars. The results of the study showed that perceptions of academic experience, classroom climate and collaborative learning experiences were the most critical aspects contributing to motivation to soldier on in their schooling. As can be noted from the findings, the benefits of first year seminars are enormous for all students. Although the above study was conducted in the United States, there seem to be similarities with the South African context in that the students who participated in the study were drawn from various ethnic backgrounds and gender, had differing prior academic experiences and social, economic and academic backgrounds. However, the study did not consider how these diverse students' characteristics could influence their perception and experience of the implementation of student orientation programmes. The current study, therefore, aims to fill this gap by checking whether the students' views in the implementation of student orientation programmes   could be affected by gender, age and racial differences.

Despite the popularity of extended orientation programmes or first year seminars, there are mixed views on their enhancement of student retention and success. For instance, Robbins et al., (2006) found that low participation in first year seminars by most of the first year students resulted in the programme delivery not making much positive gain in terms of academic performance, adjustment and retention. However, as already been alluded in previous sections, first year seminars are significant in developing social networks. Robbins et al. concluded that future studies on the implementation of first year seminars should consider student readiness and monitoring participation as some of the important aspects that ensure that program goals are accomplished. The idea of implementing student readiness surveys is also supported by Brown (2012) who argues that the topics and activities that are done during seminars should directly address the needs of a particular cohort. Besides student readiness surveys, student tracking can also assist in identifying those students who do not participate in the orientation programme or any other institutional activity.

From the above review, it can be observed that there are many ways of delivering student orientation. Krause, Hartley and McInnis (2005) contend that while many spontaneous interventions appear to respond to students' needs, only comprehensive strategies are sustainable in terms of improving student success (Siedman, 2005). The section below discusses the attributes of an orientation programme that is sustainable

2.2.2.3.4   Best Practice in offering Orientation programmes

Orientation should help students adaption to the social component of university life as well as the academic component. Empirically, Honkimäki & Kálmán (2012) observed that developing academic competencies and a sense of belonging are longitudinal. In

support of the view above, Krause et al. (2006) contend that academic staff ought to be instrumental in enhancing student retention in the classroom long after the first three weeks that orientation is usually implemented. This is because increased interaction opportunities between the students allow prolonged active participation to build learning capacity. A study by Derby & Smith (2004) sought the possible influence of orientation programmes offered by academic staff through course delivery in improving academic success and retention of 7466 diverse matriculants attending a Midwestern College in the United States from 1999 to 2002. Data were gathered through a survey questionnaire from students of diverse ethnic backgrounds, with the majority of students being White (85%), Hispanic (9%), Black (3%), Asians (1%) and other (2%). More than half of the students (53%) were women. The study conceptualised student orientation as a developmental programme where students met in small groups under the guidance of a more knowldegable peer and professional staff to discuss various topics relating to personal educational development, such as career interests, academic abilities in relation to interests and abilities and how to improve them.

Unilke most programmes which are usually run by student services and academic development sections of the universities, this programme was unique in that it was offered by academic staff. Krause et al (2006) argue that academic staff have a higher frequency of interaction with students more than any other staff within the university. Therefore, their relationship with students is very impotant in enhancing student retention. However, in some cases academics do not think that its their core responsibility to support students in transition issues. In this study, it is important to also interogate the role of different staff members in the implementation of student orientation. However, it is not clear whether academic staff is willing to take this

responsibility. Ideally, prolonged transition support is only possible if there are comprehensive ways by all staff to continually develop the required skills, values and knowledge that enhance student retention.

2.3.4.2   Timing of Implementing Student Orientation

With all forms of orientation, it is important that planning of the orientation be carefully done. Of particular importance is the time which orientation is conducted (Thomas, 2002). If orientation programmes clash with other institutional activities, students' attendance can be erratic and this could influence the understanding of institutional services at their disposal to improve their social and academic engagement (Jama et al., 2006).

2.2.3.5   Delivery of Counselling Programmes

Approaches used in counseling may vary according to the counselor's theoretical orientation and client's learning style and culture (Bryden & Reeves, 2008;Hartung, 2007). For instance, counselors working in the person centered perspective believe that counselors attitude is necessary and sufficient for the success .They emphasize empathy, genuineity and unconditional acceptance of the client in order to build the trust, feelings of safely and faithfulness of the client in the counselor (Dryden & Reeves, 2008:2). However studies have shown that the personality of the counselor, such as being friendly, empathetic, upholding integrity, is of genuine concern for the client. Professionally the counselor must have active listening skills and use relevant counseling strategies to deal with different clients (Sue & Sue, 2013). None the less, several gaps have been identified in counselling centres identified in South Africa.

One outstanding flaw is the alignment of the counseling approach to the client characteristics (Maree & Molepo, 2002). According to Maree & Molepo (2002) most of the counsellors operating in South African counselling centres heavily rely on psychometric tests to determine student needs. However, in their view, this traditional assessment strategy has several flaws which make it unsuitable to the South African contexts due to the multicultural and multilingustic environment. Psychometric testing instruments seem to largely cater for communities speaking Afrikaans and English, who make up less than 20% of the South African higher education population. This implies a serious gap in the implementation of counseling and development programmes to the majority of the South African students who might not understand the questions asked during the psychometric testing exercise. This implies that there is a high possibility for unreliable results. This makes it important for the current study to find out the approaches used by counselors to identify students' current needs, so as to ascertain whether these approaches are appropriate to the characteristics of the students. The misalignment of the counseling approach has devastating effects on counseling programmes. It can also lead to negative attitudes towards counseling services and programmes.

In a related study on students perceptions of counseling in higher education, Juma (2011) found that the majority of the African students at one South African institution considered it unethical to seek help from someone of the opposite sex and someone younger. Instead, support was mainly solicited from family members and trusted elders in the community. This causes a dilemma to counselors because such individuals tend to shun any attempts to be counseled, even with aspects of their carreers and wellbeing.

The dilemma occurs when such students are not able to obtain constructive support from their trusted social networks.

The other challenge relates to the shortage of psychologists. Apparently, there is a high shortage of counselors working in higher education today. This is because there is a demand for psychologists in other sectors of society; therefore competition for these professionals is very high. A study by Chireshe (2012) on the staff complement of trained psychologists showed a counselor student ratio of   6000, which is against the stipulated norm of one counseling to 1500 clients (Beekerman, 2007) . Staff shortages not only put strain on the counselors and the advisors, but also limit the frequency of one on one interaction between the counselor and the student, thus lessening the opportunities for trust and rapport. This result in counseling sessions not being as beneficial as initially intended.

Since counseling largely depends on personal help seeking, perceptions of potential clients is also a perennial challenge to the delivery of counseling (Govalias et al., 2010). In instances where students perceive counseling to be linked to deficiency and stigma, it may take very long to find a workable solution to the problem identified in student's performance (Giovazolias et al., 2010). Student resistance to counseling manifests in several ways such as not honoring   scheduled appointments and not going to referral support.

2.2.4.   Monitoring of the five Programmes

Monitoring is an important function of educational delivery because it helps educational providers to account for the efficiency of education delivery by measuring the quantity of implemented activities, the processes inherent in the programme, and the effects that

occur as a result of the intervention (CHE, 2004). It is an integral component of evaluation and is usually conducted by those people directly internal to the programme. Monitoring is systematic gathering of data from programmes for the purpose of improving practice , provide accountability of resources used and results obtained, make informed decisions on future initiatives and to empower the beneficiaries

(Saunders, 2012). In South Africa guidelines on monitoring of education South African Higher education is provided by the Higher Education quality committee which emphasise the need for institutions to constantly develop self improvement plans guided by ongoing monitoring of their programmes. Specifically the Council on Higher education, conceptualise monitoring as "a type of evaluation that relies on routine management information in order to establish whether a programme is achieving its targets or outcomes..." (CHE:2004:18). To this end this study will also use the above purposes as guidelines for understanding the monitoring strategies currently being the various programmes. Helinger (2003) argues that monitoring must be aimed at providing support to the educational practitioners. This support ought to be given by the programme leaders who are the custodians of the various programmes. The challenge however is that at times the monitoring strategies that are put in programmes are weakly enacted, and this results in frustrations among the different internal stakeholders running the programmes. The section below briefly reviews how monitoring of the five programmes under study is conducted in many other contexts.

2.2.4.1   Monitoring of Tutorial Programme

According to (Corbin, 2010) tutors experience stress if they are unable to meet tutee expectations. It is therefore important that tutors be constantly duided and monitored. A study by (Gordon, 2009) found that one of the challenges hindering the institutionalised

success of peer tutoring among universities was the decentralized poor monitoring of the programme outcomes. The section below highlights literature on the monitoring strategies used in the various programmes.

Similarly Jobbling (2012) noted that there are various ways to monitor the achievement of tutorial programmes. The review showed that the most popular approaches were content analysis of conversations, tutor observations and pretest and post test surveys of students. Falchikov (2007) also advocates for peer continuous assessment is a monitoring strategy that also empowers the tutors to assess programne progress.

2.2.4.2   Monitoring of Supplemental Instruction

Monitoring is a very crucial component of Supplemental instruction programmes (Arendale, 1992). The principles of supplemental instruction emphasise on developing and independent learner who is able to monitor his/her learning progress. Therefore the supplemental leader who serves as a role model in the programme implements self monitoring strategies such as writing self reflections of the sessions. These reflections are used for personal development as well as for the improvement o course delivery. According to Martin and Arendale (1993) SI requires intensive monitoring strategies. Similarly Latino (2008) stress the use of multiple assessment strategies in various aspects of the programme. Specifically the monitoring should check the extend to when goals are influencing the students, the peer facilitators and the programme at large when monitoring programme also recommends that programme administrators should look for evidence of success in three areas. Students perceptions emmensely contribute to evidence of programme progress. Also, the SI leader must be observed by a peer

who provided feedback on the delivery of the sessions. The observation must be put on record and used to improve the following sessions (Calder, 2004). Also the above SI advocates emphasise on the implementation of weekly debriefing sessions to discuss any challenges encountered during the sessions as well as plan for the following week. Ideally the shared learning sessions are expected to be conducted by the programme directors in consultation with the course lecturers. This approach ensured shared understanding of the goals. Students also participate actively in them monitoring process by giving feedback on their class experiences. Many empirical studies that monitored SI programmes reported many learning gains for who participated (Gisbert & Font, 2008). This implies that the monitoring strategies used in SI programmes enhance programme delivery and student success.

2.2.4.3   Monitoring of Student Tracking Programs

In tracking programmes it is pivotal monitoring programme on the delivery education. Tracking programmes are monitored through ongoing meetings by the stakeholders to ascertain the improved performance in the specific area where the student was struggling . Tracking usually requires more quantitave measures of achievement such as retention rates, pass rates. It may also include qualitative measures (Ewell & al. , 1995). In this study the focus is on how institutions account for their successes in the implementation of the tracking and monitoring programmes.

2.2.4.4   Monitoring of Orientation Programmes

Orientation programme as a transitional programme which assists students to adapt to higher education needs to be monitored to ensure the goals of retention are achieved (

(Mullendore & , 2005). Like any other programme in an educational setting presentation programme depends on the reflections form the stakeholders, that is the students, the orientation leaders and the programme co-ordinators. Studies that have attempted to monitor the delivery of orientation programs mainly employed satisfaction surveys through questionnaire of the various students who participated in the programme (Cuseo & Barefoot, 2005). However overreliance on satisfaction surveys does not provide objective results on programme efficiency (Yorke, 2001). Instead they suggest that there is need to move from anecdotal evidence to measuring efficacy of orientation programmes. However since orientation is only concerned with familiarizing students to the environment, its influence on retention is long term and indirect.

2.2.4.5   Monitoring of Counselling Programmes

Just like any other programme offered in higher education student counselling programmes should offer opportunities for clients to reflect on the counselling goals and provide feedback on improving the programme. This aligns to HEQC (2004) guidelines on the evaluation of educational programmes. Ideally the monitoring entails use of various evaluation tools such as satisfaction surveys, reflections in journals and focus group discussions (Krueger & Casey, 2009). The use of varied tools ensures triangulation because at times one tool is not fully effective in gauging the desired goals (Brookfield, 1995). During the closure of the counselling sessions clients ought to be given an opportunity to reflect on the counselling process so as to gauge the achievement of the initial goals agreed between the counselor and the client. This helps the counselor to ascertain whether the approaches adopted were relevant to client needs (Means & Thorne, 2007). The monitoring of the counselling process also assist the client in making an introspection of how their actions, attitudes and behaviours

contribute to their emotional growth during the counselling process. Therefore in view of the above, it is very important that periodic monitoring tools be implemented so as to improve the programme. This is an aspect that was explored further in this study.

2.2.5 Summary

In this chapter, this researcher discussed the theoretical framework for the study. These are Beatty Guenter's Student Retention Strategy Model and Tinto's Interationalist Theory. The chapter also reviewed relevant literature on the implementation of five selected student retention programmes namely tutoring, supplemental instruction , tracking and monitoring, counselling and student orientation. Each programme was reviewed taking into account its purpose in enhancing student retention, models of implementation, challenges as well as best practice in various contexts. The next chapter addresses the research methodology that was adopted for the study.

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1   Introduction

This chapter explains the research methodology that was used in the study. The chapter provides details of the paradigms as well as approaches used to collect and analyse data in the study. The chapter also outlines the population and sampling procedures that were used in the study to achieve the research goals. It also includes procedures undertaken to ensure validity of the data in the study. The chapter ends with ethical considerations and limitations of the study.

3. 2   Research Paradigms in Social Sciences

In the social sciences, there are various research traditions or paradigms and the main ones are positivist, interpretive and critical theory (Mackenzie & Knipe, 2006; Kiguwa,2006). The next section explains ontological, epistemological, axiological and methodological aspects of the main paradigms used in the study.

3.2.1 Positivism

Positivism is based on the idea that true knowledge can only be acquired through use of the senses, i.e. through observation and experiment. The use of the scientific method stems from the assumption that knowledge or truth is external to the researcher therefore the phenomenon can be studied objectively (Nieuwenhuis, 2007). There is also emphasis on the application of logical methodological principles dealing with facts and not values (Babbie, 2010). Positivists believe in objectivity where the researcher's beliefs views, values, feelings and positions should not interfere with the data as a way of reducing researcher bias (Maree, 2010). Blanche, Durrheim & Painter (2006:6) point out that researchers who adopt an objective and detached epistemological stance towards researching reality employ a methodology that relies on control and

manipulation of reality. In other words, positivists are determinist since they believe social research can be used to predict and control if researchers apply strict causal laws (Drew,Hardman,& Hoop,2008). They assume that human behaviour is predictable and explainable, thus all events are determined by one or more causes (Johnson, & Christensen, 2012:33).

Positivists make use of quantitavism, an assumption that all the aspects of a phenomenon must have precise dimensions. There is heavy reliance on numerical representation of data through graphs, statistical data or tables(Bryman, 2012).

3.2.1.1   Advantages of Positivism

The main advantage of using numbers is that they are more economical than words, as one can have a quick look of the general drift of data by looking at graphs and charts(Maree, 2007;. Positivists believe in generalisation and argue for research results that can be applied beyond the confines of the particular context in which the research was conducted (Babbie, 2010).

3.2.1.2.   Limitations of Positivism

Positivist paradigm is criticised for its stance on value free and objective view of reality which is questionable in social phenomenon. Anti positivists assert that reality cannot be detached from values and personal experience and thus view positivist views as flawed when studying about people and how they "...live, how they view the world, how they cope with it, how they change ..." (Ryan, 2006). Some of the aspects in education such as experiences, feelings, and attitudes may not be directly observable but still are important to research (Drew, Hardman & Hoop, 2008). Another flaw is the idea of

controlling and predicting relationships within and between variables which ignores the existence of phenomenon where the variables or attributes cannot be clearly defined (Babbie & Mouton, 2005). Associated with the above criticism is the notion that all phenomena can be measured numerically which leaves out those aspects where variables are not quantifiable (Leedy & Omroid, 2005).

3.2.2 Interpretive Paradigm

Interpretivism was established as a viable alternative to positivism based on the ideas of German philosophers Wilhelm Dilthey and Husserl (Mertens, 2010). Researchers in the interpretive tradition realise that the social science is different from natural sciences and thus argue that reality cannot be investigated in the same way. Interpretive researchers believe that there exist multiple truths (Cohen & Manion, 2005). Interpretivists stress that social reality is interpreted by the individual based on the ideological inclination that the individual possesses. Therefore, reality is influenced by personal experiences of the actors in relation to the political and social climate at the time the research is done (Muijis, 2004). Reality is socially constructed , implying that truths differ across contexts and places and time for participants in a particular setting (Babbie, 2005) Interpretive researchers often favor meaning as opposed to measurement oriented methods of inquiry, because they argue that it is difficult to generalise how one experiences a phenomenon (Cresswell, 2007;Mertens, 2010).

Interpretivism emphasizes on the subjective understanding and interpretation of phenomena as opposed to objective measurability, predictability, controllability and constructs laws and rules of human behaviours. The subjective stance in interpretive research allows for the use of an array of qualitative research techniques such as

document analysis, interviews and focus group discussions and any form of personal narratives. The gathering of data in interpretive research mainly consist of thick descriptions of a phenomenon mainly collected in a natural setting (Babbie, 2010).

Interpretive researchers assess reality using different methods from those used by positivists. Interpretivists emphasise on data quality based on trustworthiness using criteria of transferability, credibility, confirmability and dependability. On the other hand, positivists use statistical procedures and emphasise on reliability and validity to evaluate the quality of quantitative findings (Silverman, 2011).

The strength of interpretivism lies in the depth of explorations and thick descriptions of a phenomenon it yields through its qualitative approach to research. However, its main flaw is subjectivity and inability to generalize its findings beyond the situation studied (Maree, 2007).

3.2.2.1   Strengths of Interpretive paradigms

Van Rensburg (2001) argues that qualitative research has an advantage of producing practical knowledge of interest. The participant's interest, it is argued, increases likelihood that the same person is able to change the status quo.

Another advantage of the interpretive paradigm is the socially constructed meaning which limits external imposition of reality. The researcher relies upon participants' views of the situation being studied and recognises the impact of the research in terms of their own background and experiences (Creswell, 2009; Nieuwenhuis, 2007) Also the knowledge is time bound and thus provides opportunities for the participants to review their beliefs

3.2.2.2   Limitations of interpretive paradigm

Despite the benefits of interpretive research in providing contextual depth, results are often criticised in terms of validity, reliability and generalisability, referred to collectively as research legitimisation (Osborne, 2008). Interpretivist research paradigm is largely criticised for subjectivity and the failure of the approach to generalise its findings beyond the situation studied (Nieuwenhuis, 2007). However, critics argue that the subjective stance adopted in this approach makes it difficult to ascertain whether researchers gain a true account of the respondents views. Cohen et al. (2000:120) concede that "qualitative research methodologies are criticised for being impressionistic (based on reaction or opinions, rather than on specific facts or details), biased, insignificant, ungeneralisable and idiosyncratic, subjective and short sighted". Interpretive paradigm also fails to justify factors and conditions that lead to specific interpretations of actions, rules and beliefs.

3.2.4   Post positivist Paradigm

Post positivism provided an opportunity to interrogate phenomena using various perspectives. Trochim (2006) argues that post positivism reflects dismissal of the central tenets of positivism. The Post positivist paradigm was founded by Karl Proper (1902-1994) who argued that reality is a function of inspiration, talent and innovation rather than observation and evidence (Morris et al., 2009). The Post-positivist paradigm follows pluralist ontology (Johnson & Christensen, 2012). The social world is complex and constitutes multiple truths which depend on human construction (O'Leary 2004; Teddlie & Tashakori, 2009). Human behaviour is viewed as dynamic , complex and partially predictable. This implies that postpositivism argue that subjective and objective reality exist and there are various interrelations. Post positivism rejects the idea that people

with different cultural experiences cannot understand each other. The post positivist researchers are interested in employing multiple perspectives when studying a phenomenon, thus there is emphasis on collecting multiple kinds of data as well. The data can be a mixture of variables, words, categories and images (Johnson & Christensen, 2012).

Postpositivists contend that while objectivity exist, it is practically difficult and impossible to be achieved in social research. This researcher acknowledges that the implementation of student support programs may be experienced differently by diverse students in different institutions, thus giving rise to varied interpretations of a successful student retention strategy. These multiple perspectives about retention strategies in this study concur with other researchers' view that knowledge is theory laden because of people's biases and cultural experiences (Trochim, 2006). Thus in this study the view that the implementation of student retention strategies may vary accoring to insitutitions, is comensurate with the view that reality is open to change therefore the method used should also depend on the context. Postpositivists also argue that the cause and effect is difficult to achieve because the two coexist thus a relationship is unachievable (Lincoln & Guba, 2005).

Postpositivists believe that multiple sources of knowleldge and methods used to produce knowldege of the social world is fallible (Cresswell, 2007). Thus, in order to ensure credible data the researcher must use several data sources and triangulate methods (Maree, 2007; Teddlie & Tashakori, 2009). Hence, post-positivistic acknowledge that each research method and instrument may possess different types of error, thus a combination of varied fallible instruments can lead to a better understanding of the phenomenon under study (Trochim, 2006). Hence, postpostivism is

seen as a flexible research practice (Bryman, 2012). Post positivist ideas are ideal for those researchers who are interested in combining qualitative and quantitative data in a single study (Nieuwenhuis, 2007). In particular, the mixed method research design which is a typical approach used by post positivists is beneficial in that the best from both qualitative and quantitative methods are combined in answering a single research objective (Bergman, 2008). These benefits are what prompted the current research to adopt this paradigm in understanding the phenomenon of student retention strategies in higher education.

3.2.4.0   Paradigm used in this study

The study employed a post positivist paradigm. Post positivists are interested in connecting theory and practice, and in understanding multiple causalities so as to be able to connect national and local interests and policy (Johnson & Christensen, 2012:34). Post-positivist research assumes that various knowledge sources are ideal when investigating a phenomenon. This study viewed assessing the implementation of student retention strategies as a complex phenomenon open to multiple interpretations by the various stakeholders, hence a multiple method approach was ideal to ensure that the results would be credible. Pragmatic epistemological stance was adopted in this study in that the research questions dictated the research approach to be used when making an inquiry into the phenomenon (Cresswell, 2009). According to Maree (2007), in the pragmatic approach, the focus is on what works best based on researchers intuition as well as the research objectives to be accomplished.

The mixed research approach enabled use of confirmatory and exploratory methods in the inquiry of the phenomenon. In this approach reality and human behaviour are

113

viewed as complex, dynamic and partially predictable. There are multiple influences of the environment, viewed as multiple counteracted weaknesses and biases of the respective quantitative and qualitative methods. This also increased validity and reliability of the research findings.

The researcher has experience in both qualitative and quantitative data collection and analysis techniques; hence there was tolerance for ambiguity prevalent in mixed methods designs. The audience for the research are policy makers and implementers in the respective institutions, hence their contribution to the knowledge base was important so that they see the relevance of the research for practical application. In this study, students and staff involved in the retention programmes gave insights to the value of the programs based on their thoughts thereby aligning to the assumption that the human mind is the origin of meaning is social research (Gibbons & Sanderson, 2002). Also, most of the research questions in this study required detailed explanations of how and why they participated in retention programmes, hence multiple interpretations could be derived from each participant. Van Rensburg (2001) further argues that, interpretivist methodology complements quantitative data and broad sweeping overviews. The data are presented through thick descriptions of people's "words" and data are represented through verbatim narrations. The thick descriptions of words are then analysed to produce themes which are further categorised to form the new findings.

Also knowledge and understanding of the implementation of student retention strategies were bound by policies and practices within each institution, hence the study relied on socially constructed knowledge of the participants in a natural setting. This led to the use of interviews, documents analysis, and focus group discussions to ensure an indepth understanding of the phenomenon.

3.4   Research Approach

In social research there are three main approaches that are used to ensure an indepth study of a phenomenon. These are different quantitative, qualitative and mixed method approaches.   In this study, the mixed methods approach was adopted in a bid understand how student retention programmes are implemented in two universities. The section below will discuss various research approaches , including a justification of the approach adopted for this study.

3.2.4.1   Quantitative Approach

The quantitative approach comes from the traditional, experimental and positivist paradigms where there is emphasis on empiricist views. Quantitative research approach views social reality as external, static and value neutral to the researcher. As a result scientific models are used when investigating social phenomenon (Mertens, 2010;Descombe, 2008; Johnson & Christensen, 2008).   Quantitative researchers assume social and natural sciences phenomenon can be investigated the same way. Thus, the phenomenon to be studied must have an operational definition. Also relationships between various dependentS and independent aspects/variables in a phenomenon must be predetermined. Qualitative research is mainly concerned with control, description, prediction, and test of phenomena (Leedy & Omroid, 2005:94). Quantitative researchers therefore value use of standard procedures, objectivity, validity, reliability, prediction, causality, and generalisation (Bryman, 2012). The use of standard procedures ensures that the same measure is used across contexts.   Objectivity ensures that the researcher has minimal or no influence on the data and is achieved through use of scientific and standard measurements across the population. Reliability is concerned with ensuring that similar results are produced if the research is applied to a

population with the same characteristics. Quantitative researchers ensure reliability of data through pilot testing. Pilot testing selects a small section of the population so as to assess suitability of the research methodology, sampling techniques, research instruments and data analysis techniques. Reliability is also ensured through triangulation of research instruments and data, that is various research instruments and sources are used to collect data to curb the weaknesses on one instrument (Bryan, 2004:75). The data gathered in quantitative research is collected on a wide population and there is minimal opportunity to verify the data. The strategies used to gather the data can be experiments, quasi experiments or surveys (Morgan,2007). The data is measured numerically and analysed using statistical models (Bryman, 2004). In this study one of the research objectives was to find characteristics of students most associated with retention across a number of higher education institutions. Data obtained from such an objective involved observable personal characteristics of individuals which can be measured objectively because they do not depend on researcher perceptions, but rather on the facts. A quantitative approach was used through the use of a questionnaire to be administered to academic staff members directly involved in student retention programs. Such an objective could be applied beyond the two universities studied hence the data can be generalised to many other higher education institutions (Babbie, 2005). The same instruments and standard measurements can be applied to other contexts and produce similar results, which is a typical characteristic of quantitative research .This has an advantage of reducing researcher bias. However, there are also criticisms against quantitative methodologies.

3.4.1.1.1   Criticisms of Quantitative Approaches

The quantitative paradigm has been under great criticism from postpositivists or interpretivists. They dispute the positivist stance of employing a scientific method when investigating social phenomenon and argue that quantitative researchers ignore the differences between the natural and social world (Denscombe, 2002; Muijs, 2004). Quantitative research is criticized for its structured nature which impedes opportunities for considering unique cases. Some of the critics also argue that social research which involves human beings can never be treated the same way as objects. Muijis (2004) argues that findings in social research are influenced by the beliefs of the people doing research and the political and social climate at the time the research is done. There are doubts against the positivist idea that reality out there can be measured objectively in social research since researchers are all part of the world they are observing, and cannot detach themselves completely. Also, post-positivistic and interpretivist philosophers accept the belief that the researcher has to interact with the phenomenon under study.

3.2.4.2   Qualitative Approach

Qualitative research approach is associated with interpretivist and constructivist philosophies. Qualitative research approaches align with rationalism. Qualitative approach regards social reality as constantly shifting based on individuals' creation and deductive interpretation of the phenomenon (Bryman, 2004:19). Interpretivist researchers adopt a subjective view during data collection and in data analysis, and the researcher is also a key instrument in the data collection (Denscombe, 2002; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). The qualitative researchers therefore go to the natural setting to collect data and employ subjective judgments of the phenomenon. Qualitative researchers

value participants' words, reports based on participants' perspectives on experiences, values and assumptions. (Creswell, 2007). This implies that interpretation of the same phenomenon may differ from one context to another in spite of using the same research instruments (Babbie, 2010). In this study, subjective interpretation of the implementation of retention strategies through student support programs prompted the use of this aspect of qualitative approach. Qualitative researchers also believe that every phenomenon is unique to the context, thus they seek an indepth understanding of a culturally relevant phenomenon (Ryan, 2006). The strategies or research designs used in qualitative studies include ethnographies, case studies and phenomenological research. In this light, the research findings are unique to that particular context and thus may not be replicated. Qualitative data mainly comprise detailed verbatim transcriptions of interviews and discussions, extracts from documents or artifacts. Mpofu (2010) citing Ryan (2006) asserts that qualitative research is appropriate when participants cannot give precise answers to the questions, when the research aims to elucidate aspects of people's everyday values, words and perspectives of their experiences.

The data is analysed through clustering of themes from the thick descriptions. Credibility and trustworthiness of the data are ensured through triangulation of research instruments and data (Bryan, 2004:75). Triangulation is a process of confirming evidence gathered through different data collection methods in an attempt to get a true fix on the situation (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Silverman, 2010).

3.4.2.1   Criticism of Qualitative Research Approach

One of the major criticisms of qualitative research is the issue of relativism. Given that there are multiple perspectives of the same phenomenon; it is difficult to come up with well defined and valid accounts of the same phenomena (Creswell, 2009). Furthermore, qualitative research methodologies based on interpretivism are criticized for being based on idiosyncratic conclusions, making them ungeneralisable to other contexts (Babbie & Mouton, 2005; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). The subjectivity of the researcher also allows for a lot of bias and therefore the validity of the data is also questioned.(Babbie, 2010) Given that both quantitative and qualitative paradigms have their own strengths and weaknesses, a combination of these two methods cancels biases inherent in any single method while taking advantage of the strengths from each of the methods. The current study, therefore, used the mixed method approach. In mixed method approaches, the debate between quantitative and qualitative is disregarded and researchers opt for a combination of the two approaches. Thus quantitative and qualitative research approaches are viewed as a continuum and complementary.

3.4.3 The research design

A research design is "as a strategic framework for action that serves as a bridge between research questions and implementation of research questions" (Terre' Blanche et al., 2007:34). It encompasses the data collection and analysis, and interpretations of the results (Johnson and Christensen, 2008). Maree (2010) emphasises that the design takes into account philosophical assumptions underpinning the selection of respondents, the data gathering techniques to be used and the data analysis procedure to be done. Seale (2004) highlights three key principles of any research design. (1) The need for a

clearly conceived question. (2) The methods proposed should produce robust data which address the research problem. (3) The approach taken should be in line with the ethical research practice. Considering the above view, this study adopted a mixed method research design.

3.4.3.1 Triangulation Mixed Method Design

Triangulation mixed method design combine qualitative and quantitative data at some stage of the research process within a single study to understand a research problem more holistically (Maree, 2007; Bergman, 2008, Teddlie and Tashakorri, 2009). The mixing can occur during the data collection, during data presentation or during data analysis. At times, there is combination of data at two stages such as both during data collection and analysis (Bergman, 2008).

In concurrent design or parallel design, quantitative data and qualitative data are collected at the same time and presented separately, then integrated at the time of analysis of each research question (Mertens, 2010).

On the other hand, another strategy in mixed method triangulation is to use sequential triangulation. Sequential triangulation allows for sequential timing when collecting and analysing data. This may imply collecting quantitative data first followed by the qualitative data collection, then analysis (exploratory design), or vise versa (explanatory design)(Maree, 2007) Sequential procedures imply that both the quantitative and qualitative data are collected and analysed in phases (one after   another).   (Mertens, 2010). Integration of two types of data can occur at data collection such as combining closed and open research questions, presentation or interpretation. An example is when themes or codes are converted to numeric presentations such as tables and graphs and

comparing that information with quantitative results. Sequential mixed procedures consist of explanatory and exploratory designs.

In the mixed method approach, the pragmatic or transformative epistemologies are employed (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009). Pragmatists use commonsense and researcher values to decide on the nature of reality to be investigated (Teddlie & Tashakkori 2009 as cited in Mertens 2010).

3.4.3.2.1   Explanatory Designs

Explanatory design allows for quantitative data to provide a general overview of the phenomenon in the first phase while it illuminates the quantitative results (Cresswell et al , 2007;Maree, 2007). This design has a disadvantage of taking too long to collect and analyse the data, thus it was not adopted in this study.

3.4.3.2.2   Exploratory Designs

The exploratory design is a complementary method to the explanatory design. In this design, qualitative data is collected and analysed in the first phase so as to discover the phenomenon, then the data collected and analysed quantitatively in the second phase (Maree, 2007). Exploratory design is ideal for generating theory, thus is ideal for studies the researcher does not know how to measure variables and where no clear constructs and no framework for analysing data are available. Theory is generated from the quantitative and qualitative data findings (Ivankova et al, 2007:265; Creswell et.al, 2009).

3.4. 3.2.3   Concurrent Mixed Method Designs

In concurrent mixed method design, data from the qualitative and quantitative sources are collected at the same time. This has an advantage of reducing the data collection and presentation time of the study (Maree, 2007). Concurrent mixed method designs also have varied dimensions of triangulation and embedded designs.

The embedded mixed method allows the researcher to obtain data for a secondary research question which is relevant but different from the primary research question. The limitation of this approach is researcher bias.

3.4.3.4   Research design that guided the study

In this study, a triangulation mixed method design was adopted in order to gain full details of the implementation of four student retention programmes in two universities located in South Africa. The method entails collecting both quantitative and qualitative data at the same time (Creswell, 2003; Maree, 2007). This procedure is favored for time saving compared to the sequential design (Creswell, 2009; Maree, 2007). The main reason for combining data from various sources is to seek convergence in the data at the time of making inferences so as to validate findings (Mertens, 2010). This validation can be achieved by searching for   convergence across qualitative and quantitative methods (Mertens ,2010; Johnson and Christensen, 2012;Bryman, 2012). According to Cresswell Plano & Clark (2007), it is possible to integrate qualitative and quantitative data. This means that amalgamation can occur during data collection, data analysis and interpretation. In the case of the current study, mixing of data occurred at the data analysis stage. This entailed deriving themes that come out of both quantitative and qualitative data.

Specifically, the study enlisted the use of case studies and mini surveys. The case study saw the use of interviews of staff, and focus discussions with peer facilitators involved in the different programmes and document analysis; while the mini survey data was collected using the questionnaire method. Since a pragmatic approach was adopted, both quantitative and qualitative data was obtained in each research objective.

The researcher was also cognisant of two main flaws associated with using a triangulated mixed method design with regard to effort in collecting and analysing data , skills in interpreting both quantitative data and the need to integrate data from various sources (Ivankova et al., 2007). In order to address the abovementioned flaws, data collection and analysis spanned over two years to allow the researcher to reach all the key participants in the study. A highly structured way of comparing the different data sets was devised where relevant data from each of the three research instruments were compared when answering a specific sub-research question.

The researcher is cognisant of the fact that there are six types of research designs in mixed methods approach. These are sequential exploratory design, sequential exploratory model, sequential transformative design, concurrent triangulation design, concurrent nested design and concurrent transformative design (Creswell, 2009. Ivankova et al. (2007) concede that the most commonly used designs are: the explanatory design, the exploratory design, the triangulation design and the embedded design. Maree (2007) noted that the concurrent triangulation design is probably the most familiar of the six major mixed method designs. Since the triangulation design has already been described above, the section below summarizes the characteristics of other designs

3.4 Research Site, Population, Sample Sampling Procedures

3.4.1 Research Site

The research site comprised of two South African public universities of South Africa . The sites were conveniently sampled due to its proximity to the researcher. The following section discusses the target population and how the participants were sampled.

3.4.2 Target Population

The target population refers to a group of individuals that has one or more universal features of concern to the researcher for the purpose of gaining information and drawing conclusions (Khan, 2011; Briggs & Coleman, 2007). The population provides aggregate of elements from which the sample is chosen (Babbie, 2010). The population for this study was first year students enrolled in two universities in South Africa and full time academic staff involved in student support programs. The staff members included faculty managers, student affairs staff working as coordinators for counselling and student orientation programmes and Academic Development Centre (ADC) staff working as tutor trainers, monitoring and tracking staff ,SI,PAL and tutoring , and student assistants whom the researcher believed to be most relevant to provide data on the phenomenon under study.

In order to ensure reliability of the findings, a representative sample of the population is required (Seal, 2004). Sampling involves deciding the place or site and the respondent

or person from who the data will be collected (Punch, 2006). The sample comprises a subset of the population considered for actual inclusion in the study (Denscombe, 2001; Cohen, et al., 2000, De Vos et al., 2011). There were approximately 250 facilitators based in the Faculty of Science serving in different programmes at WW (Masha, 2013: personal communication) and about 60 at FF (FF HEMIS Database, 2013).

3.4.3 Sampling procedures for Participants

A sample is a group of people drawn from the population who will actually provide the data to be analysed in the study (Babbie, 2010). In this study stratified random sampling was used. Stratified random sampling has the advantage of guaranteeing equal representation of each identified strata . A Sampling frame is a list of all the elements in the population. In this study the institutional databases consisting of student numbers were used as a sampling frame. Since the number of students in the population was known, therefore it was possible to precisely determine the sampling frame. Given the large size of the population, student enrollment information from a computer program was used to generate the sample of respondents to participate in the study. Sampling frames for students and staff records were derived from the lists since they had clear indications of staff identity codes, teaching departments and campuses. The sample in this study comprised first year students (part time, full time) drawn from science related departments of the selected universities. The sample initially had equal representation of participants in terms of gender. The sample also included students assistants involved in the various programmes as facilitators. The two subgroups comprising students, assistants and first year students provided the first strata and these were proportionally

selected using the ratio of 5:1.This was because student assistants are fewer than undergraduate students.

In probability theory, standard error decreases as the sample size increases (Babbie, 2007). The elements in each stratum were then selected using simple random method. As already highlighted, two sets of 300 first year students, and 100 student assistants were assigned unique and sequential identities. A computer program was used to randomise the numbers. A 95% confidence level, a 5% error margin and a 50% response distribution to overcome deficiencies was allowed for. However the current study also employed purposive sampling.

Purposive sampling is a non-probability form of sampling (Bryman, 2012). In this method, the researcher selects the participants he or she believes to be representative of the population of interest. The researcher picks the cases to be included on the basis of their judgement of their typicality (Cohen et al., (2006). Participants are deliberately selected for important information they could provide with answering research questions of the study (Teddlie & Yu, 2007). The benefit is reduced costs and time to select the sample (De Vos et al., 2011). Very small samples are also selected as a way to avoid fluctuations in the characteristics of the sample and the population. However, there are limitations attached to purposive sampling in that the method is highly subjective. In addition, it may fail to represent the wider population (Khan, 2011). This method is ideal for exploratory studies ad research involving interviewing of participants (Maree & Pietersen, 2007), hence was used to select all the staff members who participated in the study. Fifteen staff members participated in the study ad these comprised of programme

co-ordinators for the various programmes drawn from the Academic Development Centre and Student Affairs, and quality assurance sections of the universities.

Since the objective is to get indepth information form a small sample, this study viewed the purposively sampled participants as suitable for providing detailed information on the implementation of student retention strategies in the institutions under study. These participants have a role to play in the formulation and implementation as well as monitoring of these institutional strategies hence could provide useful data on their daily practices. These staff members have first hand information on the successes and challenges of the different strategies currently in place in their respective contexts.

3.5   Data collection procedures and techniques

3.5.1   Initial consultations

The researcher sought permission to conduct research in the two universities. This permission was sought as part of a project involving other researchers as well. The data collection instruments were designed in several phases and part of the data was extracted from the institutional databases. The promoter provided the validation of the research instruments before conducting of a pilot study.

3.5.2   Pilot study.

In this study, a pilot study was conducted one of the institutions, specifically FF so as to unearth possible inadequacies, ambiguity, and problems in all aspects of the research, so that they can be corrected before actual data collection takes place. This pilot test, was deliberately conducted at one institution where the later research data was

collected , but the participants who participated in the pilot did not take part in the final study. Pilot testing served several purposes such as : (1) practising using the research instruments before the main study begins so as to test the appropriateness of the research methods and instruments 2) to ensure that the sampling frame is adequate for the purpose of estimating the duration and cost of the study; (3) determining the degree of homogeneity of the survey population and (4) using the response of the participants to judge the overall research design (Buckingham & Saunders, 2004; Babbie & Mouton, 2005; Briggs, Coleman & Morrison, 2012). In this study, the first stage of piloting involved asking other expects in the field to provide feedback on the design of the instruments. The survey questionnaire was administered to a group of first year students in March 2011 so as to test the research instruments. The findings enabled necessary modifications to be made on the data collection instruments. For instance, it was discovered that participants were unwilling to reveal their ages; hence this aspect was removed as it did not affect the study. Briggs, et al. (2012) advised that all most respondednts are uncomfortabe in revealing demograhic information, hence this aspect was completely removed from the questionnaires and interviews. Instead the researcher managed to gather this information from the programme records. Modifications were also made in the structuring of questions in the focus groups after discovering that some of the participants were dominating the discussions, a strategy was devised to structure questions such that each member would respond to some of the questions. Pilot-testing provided the researcher with an estimate time that was required to conduct each interview.

3.6. Research instruments

In this study several research instruments were used during the data collection stage. The following section provides details of the instruments used as well as justification for their use in this study.

3.6.1 Interviews

Interviewing is one of the most common methods of data collection because it provides facts about the specific phenomenon through conversation (Silverman, 2007). Cohen and Manion (2005:155) define an interview as "a two person conversation initiated by the interviewer for the purpose of obtaining research relevant data focused on specified objectives". This communication can also be conducted between a researcher and a group of respondents (Maree, 2007; Creswell, 2009). An interview can take many forms ranging from face to face interaction, telephone conversation and email (Babbie, 2010; Bryman, 2012). The way the questions are asked and followed up vary and this depends on the kind of information the researcher wants to obtain and the time available. This leads to another classification of interview types.

Three major categories of interviews are structured/closed interviews, semi-structured and unstructured/open ended (Bryman, 2004:171). A structured interview is usually preplanned and prepares a set of questions following a specific sequence and usually requiring short answers. Interviewer cannot change the way the original questions are sequenced on the structure guide. In a semi-structured interview, the researcher has an interview guide or a list of formal questions to be asked on specific topics. The interviewer/researcher may vary the sequence of questions and may ask the same question in various ways to clarify ambiguous responses by the interviewee (Seale, 2004). This helps to understand complex issues (Cohen and Manion, 2005; Bryman,

2012). Semi-structured interviews can gauge the participant's knowledge, preferances and thoughts (Cohen and Manion, 2005). Unstructured interviews involve a researcher having no predetermined questions, rather probing is based on how the participant has responds (Maree, 2007).

In this study interviews were carried out with program co-ordinators, faculty managers, and institutional planning representatives. Interviews were limited to these professionals because the researcher felt that these participants were privileged to know the strategic objectives of the institutions in terms of retention strategies as well as give facts on the extent these were put in action in their respective institutions. The benefit of using semi-structured interviews was that participants had a chance to express themselves in their own words; therefore, the researcher was able to seek precise information as well as elaborations on information essential for the study. This helps to understand complex issues (Bryman, 2012; Cohen and Manion, 2005). Probing is important when the researcher is dealing with respondents who have special status and knowledge (Henning et al., 2005). Other benefits of using interviews were considered in this study. These benefits include such factors as flexibility in terms of time and place of conducting the inquiry, high response rate, easy administration and opportunity to observe non verbal behaviour and ability for the researcher to control the environment(Babbie, 2010; Bryman, 2012).

The researcher made a prior appointment with each of the interviewees as an ethical requirement. All interviews were conducted at the interviewees'/respondent's place. The researcher proposed that interviews were to be conducted in the participant's natural setting (offices) as required in qualitative research. Also prior appointment created

rapport and trust for the interview sessions (Babbie, 2010). Also, during the interview sessions, rapport with the participants was further established through visual cues like smiling and eye contact. This created an environment of openness and trust with each interviewee and also assisted in obtaining relevant data (Blanche and Durkheim, 2002; Bryman, 2012).

The interviews were conducted in English. English is the medium used for all communication at most universities in South Africa, hence this language was familiar to all respondents. Each interview session lasted about 25 to 30 minutes. Some of the interviewees were tape recorded in order to ensure the accuracy and trustworthiness of the data. Tape recording depended on the agreement of the interviewee. For those participants who were uncomfortable with tape recorders, the researcher had to manually scribble key points.

The guiding for the interviews covered these broad topics.

How is the institutional strategy on retention implemented in the five programme?

What evidence is used to ascertain if programme goals are being met?

How do the different sections in the university link up when implementing the retention programmes

In what ways can the programmes be structured for maximum student benefit?

Although interviews are an important instrument for obtaining first hand information in research, data collection depends on the willingness of the respondents to be interviewed and even recorded. Participants may give biased responses to impress the interviewer (Bryman, 2012). In such cases, the researcher had to study the same

aspect from different angles so as to cross check responses. When the research involves too sensitive information, participants may feel insecure about the implications of the findings and refuse to be recorded (Cohen and Manion, 2005). In such instances, the researcher made use of manual recordings to obtain the trust of the respondents. Maree (2007) recommends that participants must not be coerced to respond to all questions. A written document explaining the purpose of study, confidentiality, security and anonymity of data gathered from the respective participants was issued to participants to gain their trust.

Another flaw in interviews is researcher bias (Maree, 2007).In this study researcher bias was minimised by corroborating data from other research instruments other than interviews and limited use of non verbal cues. The other instrument used in this study was a focus group interview.

3.6.2 Focus group discussions

Focus group discussions with students assistants involved in support programmes were adopted to gather in depth views about monitoring, timing, methods and challenges in the implementation of student retention strategies in the two South African universities. Krueger & Casey (2009) defines a focus group discussion as a carefully planned series of discussions designed to obtain perceptions on a defined area of interest in a permissive and non-threatening environment. Group interviews might be more likely to produce valid data than a one to one interview (Cresswell, 2007). This is attributed to the interactive and social nature of focus groups, diverse expressions (verbal or non verbal) form the participants provide evidence about similarity and differences in the

participants' opinions of phenomenon. Participants reconstruct viewpoints in a social setting as they think more deeply about answers and reflect critically upon them in their responses to others (Bryman,2012; Babbie, 2010; Maree, 2007). Forgotten details of experience are activated in the mind, releasing inhibition that may otherwise have discouraged the participants from disclosing information (Meke, 2011). Focus group interviews are ideal when there are limited resources to carry out one to one interviews.

However, administration of a focus group require skill on the part of the researcher, not only to create a conducive environment for participants to freely express themselves, but also to ensure that participants focus on the main topic under discussion (Cresswell, 2009). On one extreme, participants may initially be unwilling to open up, while on the other extreme it may be difficult to exhaust all issues of concern if participants are excited about the topic under discussion.

Focus groups allow the researcher to gather varied participants views on a phenomenon in minimal time. Focus groups widen the range of responses (Maree, 2007;Krueger & Casey, 2009). Non verbal data gathered through the interview process provide other data insights such as participants' perceptions of the phenomenon under study. Focus groups are dynamic in that the researcher can modify questions (Maree, 2007). The group dynamics generate new information about the topic hence the research objectives can generate valuable information for the study. However there are also several flaws in this research method as discussed below.

However, De Vos, et al. (2011) assert that group discussions are time consuming. Also individual expression and opinion can be influenced by the presence of other people

thus resulting in artificial and biased responses (Babbie, 2010). Thus focus groups may produce biased data. In addition, some participants dominate the discussions, thus inhibiting indepth information from the shy and reserved members of the group, especially in situations where power struggles exist among the participants (Maree, 2007; Krueger & Casey (2009). Kruger highlights the need for the researcher to be skilful in moderating discussions in such cases in order to curb limitation of dominance in the discussions (Cresswell, 2009). This researcher solicited contribution from every member and maintained focus on the topic under discussion. Students' assistants chosen were representative in terms of the disciplines and programmes.

Barbour (2008) as cited by Meke (2011) concedes that focus groups are an ideal method for researching on professional practice. Due to this characteristic, this method was selected for the student assistants because they act as professionals in the implementation of student support programs which are part of institutional retention strategy. This yielded data that gave insights into the implementation processes and issues in terms of the timing programmes, activities involved in the programs in relation to the goals, monitoring of the programmes as well as successes and challenges.

3.6.3 Document Analysis

Document analysis is a data gathering instrument which uses all types of written communications to shed light on the phenomenon under study (Maree, 2007). The researcher focuses on identifying trends in the descriptions, frequencies and interrelationships, and, occasionally, statistical analysis.

Documentary methods appear in a variety of forms, but the most common are documentary study, content analysis, and text analysis (Sarantakos, 2005). This study employed documentary study. In this method, the focus of analysis is on description, identification of trends, frequencies and interrelationships, and, sometimes, statistical analysis (Bryman, 2012). In research, primary and secondary sources of data can be obtained from document analysis (Maree, 2007; Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007). Primary sources are original documents or unpublished data such as minutes of a meeting, reports, memoranda; agendas; administrative documents; letters; reports; newspaper articles; minutes of meetings; or any other document that is connected to the investigation (Maree, 2007).   On the other hand, secondary sources refer to second hand information based on previously published work (Creswell et al., 2009; Mertens, 2010).

Written data sources may include published and unpublished documents, company reports, memoranda, agendas, administrative documents, reports, newspaper articles or any document that is connected to the investigation (Maree, 2007:80). Of great interests to this study were primary data sources relating to implementation of student support strategies such as: institutional plan or strategy, program objectives, reports on policy program implementations, evaluation reports, students database. Using documents, the researcher was able to gather data on students' demographic information which would serve as basis for background characteristics. Details of program objectives and implementation plans which shed light on how the strategies were enacted in the institutions, data on staff details and qualifications which may impact on program implementation capacity, details on training schedules to determine duration of programs and philosophies behind the programs. This data helped much in shedding

light on the potential best practices in student retention as outlined in literature. The data obtained from the document analysis was corroborated with data from questionnaires, focus groups and semi-structured interviews.

In particular, the researcher was looking for training activities and sessions conducted by peer groups and lecturers for first year students and their duration. Document analysis was very useful in analyzing retention strategy program implementation trends and practices against the pre-set objectives of each university retention framework. Other documents that were analysed were attendance information for tutorials, orientation and peer counselling to ascertain the rate of student participation and integration. The researcher also checked for evidence of student assistant professional development and appointment procedures.

In the interest of crystallisation of data, documents could serve to corroborate the evidence from other sources (Cohen, Manion & Morrison,2007). In this study, the use of documents was considered on the premise that some of the detail un-captured other sources could be fully captured. The researcher stresses that the use of documents in this study also presented other advantages as alluded to by existing literature.

The use of documents offered other advantages highlighted in literature such as authenticity, and low cost, retrospectively, (Maree, 2007, Bryman, 2012). Primary documents were less likely to provide subjective information as in interviews and focus groups. Documents of all types (primary and secondary) can help to gain information on institutional cultures, and climates so as to discover insights on retention (Yin, 2009). Document analysis requires less time for data collection than other research modes due

to availability of information (Babbie, 2010). Documentary research was more economical than using questionnaires and interviews. Furthermore, documents were easily accessible.

Analysis of documents in this study complemented interviews and questionnaires in the data collection process and enlightened the researcher on some areas which needed clarification. The researcher evaluated the authenticity and accuracy of the records before using them.

Document analysis also has flaws just like any other research instruments. One such flaw is the currency of information. Source documents may be outdated hence may provide misleading data that will eventually affect study results (Cresswell, 2009;De Vos et al, 2011). However with the advent of technology most institutions place materials on the internet and others have storage and filing systems which increase ease of access to data (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007). Thus the researcher used updated information reflected on the university websites where possible. However, the researcher also was cognisant of the fact that access to confidential information in documents can be problematic if the stakeholders feel that it exposes them (Bryman, 2012). However in this study there was no much confidential information that would put institutions on the spotlight, hence permission to access most of the documents was granted.

3.6.4 Questionnaires

A questionnaire is a written or electronic instrument that comprises a series of predetermined questions, designed to measure a specific item or set of items that

137

emerge from the research objectives (Babbie, 2010; Briggs, Cohen & Morrison, 2012). Questionnaires can be used to collect both quantitative and qualitative data from large samples of people in survey designs (Creswell, 2009; De Vos et al, 2011, Bryman, 2010). Four methods of collecting data from respondents through questionnaires include use of telephone, email, postal and face-to-face. All these methods are ideal when the researcher wants to collect data fromaa large population. While there is no consensus among researchers on the most effective type of questionnaire to use, the self-reporting or self administered was favoured due to its high response rate and also because the current study was evaluative in nature.

Questionnaires also vary in format and this determines whether qualitative or quantitative data can be derived from the data. Three types of questionnaire formats are structured questionnaires, semi structured and unstructured questionnaires. When a question is asked in a closed/structured format, the respondent is given a number of options from which to choose the appropriate answer. This method is usually ideal in survey research where large amounts of data is required for comparison purposes, but has its own advantages and shortcomings.

The advantage of closed questions is that answers are easy to process. For example, a response in the form of a tick or a circle allows for quick data recording and analysis. Closed questions can also clarify the meaning of a question for respondents by scanning through the options. Closed questions enhance comparability of answers by making a quick and mechanical analysis.

They also reduce the possibility of variability in the recording of answers (Bryman, 2004). Nevertheless, closed questions also exhibit certain disadvantages. Questions might be irritating when respondents are not able to find the category they think applies for them. It can also be difficult to make fixed choice questions mutually exclusive. When the respondents fail to interpret fixed choice answers, this can affect the validity of the answers.

Open questions or unstructured questionnaires allow the respondent to respond as they wish in their own words. This helps to understand the respondent's level of understanding of issues.

Semi-structured questionnaires use a mixture of fixed questions and open questions. The study made use of semi-structured questionnaires to collect data from students because of the need to collect predetermined information as well as well as personal elaborations from the participants. Semi-structured questionnaires have their own benefits. A semi- structured questionnaire can be answered in the absence of the interviewer/researcher and anonymously. Babbie (2005) note that a semi- structured questionnaire is ideal instrument for collecting data from a large diverse sample of people in a nonthreatening way. However the major challenge of any questionnaire, including the semi-structured questionnaire, is low response and return rates. There is also a greater risk of missing data. Participants may get bored or even lack motivation and co-operation when answering questions that are not salient to them. It is easier for respondents to decide to skip other questions and this creates a problem of missing data for variables that are created. Semi-structured questionnaires also do not give room for going back to clarify or verify responses (Seale, 2004).

In this study, self-administered semi structured questionnaires enabled both qualitative and quantitative data to be obtained from students facilitators concerning their views and experiences of implementing student support programs aimed at retaining students. The questions included both rating scales and open-ended questions. A questionnaire also enabled anonymous data collection that enabled the participants to be more open to express themselves (Babbie, 2010). Given that data was collected in three institutions from 100 people in each institution, questionnaires were ideal to curb time constraints to reach participants. Research assistants were also used in the distribution follow up and collection of questionnaires. Research assistants also assisted in clarifying ambiguous questions since this is one cause of low return rates in surveys (Bryman, 2012).

3.7   Data Analysis

Qualitative data were analysed using the thematic content analysis technique. The themes were derived from the transcribed interview data and the questionnaire responses as well as field notes from the focus group interviews.

The qualitative data was analysed using statistical analysis software .Specifically IBM SPSS version 21 was used to determine the relationship between variables.

3.8   Validity and Reliability of the study

Babbie (2010) defines validity in relation to how accurately the instrument reflects the concept to be measured to ensure that the results are meaningful. Validity is crucial in positivist paradigms to ensure that quantitative research instruments legitimately lay claim on accurate representation of the 'object' or phenomenon under study (Johnson

and Christensen, 2008). Reliability is the extent to which a research instrument is repeatable and consistent in producing the results across settings with the same characteristics (Maree, 2007; Johnston and Christensen,2008 Bergman, 2008;Leedy and Ormroid, 2009). The reliability of any research instrument implies that the results of the study do not change even if different researchers collect data on the same population. Both reliability and validity are important in research. Several strategies were used to ensure reliability of the study and these included peer debriefing, pilot study, member checking and triangulation of research instruments.

3.8.1 Peer debriefing

During the design of the research instruments fellow postgraduate students and colleagues from the faculty provided feedback on the setting up of questions and simplicity of the research language used.

Validity in quantitative research can be enhanced through careful sampling, appropriate instrumentation and appropriate statistical treatment of the data. In this study, the sample was for 300 first year students actively involved in the various programs, and their responses provided more accurate data on what is transpiring in the programs. In addition, the questionnaires were responded to anonymously so as to allow the participants to clearly express their views on the implementation of retention programs without fear of being identified.

3.8.2 Triangulation

Bryman (2012) assert that multiple perspectives on a phenomenon can increase validity or trustworthiness. Hence, multiple perspectives in data collection were used through triangulation of research instruments and data analysis. The data omitted in some of the research instruments was captured from the other quarters to enhance validity. Mouton (2005:277) emphasises that, "triangulation helps to achieve credibility in a study."

3.8.3 Member Checking

Trustworthiness is a way of ensuring accuracy of data in qualitative approaches. Trustworthiness has to deal with the way the researcher claims that the research is "worth paying attention to" or accurate (Lincoln & Guba, 2005). This is achieved through credibility and authenticity. Authenticity of the data in the study was achieved through detailed descriptions of tape-recorded data. In instances where the respondents were uncomfortable to be recorded, field notes were used (Bryman, 2012). In order to ensure credibility of the findings, member checking was employed. The transcribed data was sent to participants to edit, clarify, elaborate and at times remove their own words from the narratives if they were not comfortable with the recording.

3.9   Ethical Aspects

According to Neuman (2007), researchers solicit data which deals with personal information and this raises ethical dilemma. Thus, the code of practice for research is that the researcher explains how ethical issues are taken into consideration. An authorisation letter by the Faculty of education was the primary document used to seek permission to carry out the study in the two universities. Bryman (2012) emphasises the need to ensure that the researchers are made aware of the purpose of the research.

The researcher explained the purpose of the study to the respondents and requested them to sign informed consent forms as sign for willingness to participate in the study. Participants had an opportunity to ask questions for clarity before responding to questionnaires, interviews and focus group discussions (Babbie, 2010). Silverman (2010) highlights the need to provide information written in a language that the respondents can understand. The document explaining the purpose of study and the questions were written in English since it is the official language used within the two universities. However the language used was very simple to allow all participants to understand the data sought for.

Participants had an option to withdraw from the study at any given moment. They were not compelled to disclose information. The recorded data was crosschecked in the interviews with the respective participants. As an ethical requirement for confidentiality, participants were assured of non-disclosure of their identities (Babbie, 2010). The self-administered questionnaire was anonymous and as such, respondents did not indicate their personal details such as names and addresses (Babbie & Mouton, 2005). Pseudonyms were used in the qualitative presentation and analysis of the data.

Interviews were tape recorded pending approval and consent of the respective respondents. The researcher took notes in instances where participants rejected to be voice recorded.

3.10 Limitations of the Study

Student retention is regarded as a complex issue involving interplay of factors (Tinto, 2006). Although information on characteristics of students linked to retention may be

generalized across higher education, experiences and perceptions concerning implementation may differ. The fact that the current study was confined to two universities out of the twenty five in the whole country may imply unbalanced statistical representation. However since most of the programmes which are discussed in this study seem to be common across most universities, the results of the study may be generalized in South Africa, but not necessarily beyond South Africa .

3.11 Summary

This chapter highlighted the methods that were used to address the research objectives of the study. The chapter provided a detailed account of the research paradigms and justification of the postpositivist paradigm adopted for the study. The chapter also outlined the research approach, research design. It also highlighted the demarcation of the population, sampling techniques used to select the research site and of actual participants. The chapter also highlight the four data collection procedures and instruments used in the study, together with a justification of how validity of research instruments and the data were ensured. The chapter also described the methods used to analyse data and how ethical aspects were addressed in the study. Finally the chapter also highlighted the limitations in the study. The next chapter is going to focus on the presentation and interpretation of findings.

CHAPTER 4: DATA PRESENTATION, INTERPRETATION AND ANALYSIS

4.0 Introduction

This chapter provides presents the findings on the study that sought to investigate the implementation of student retention programmes in two institutions of higher learning in South Africa. Specifically, the following research objectives guided the study:

To examine the strategies used to select students participating in the five programmes

To examine the strategies used in delivering the five programmes

To examine the mechanisms of monitoring the implementation of these five programmes

To develop a comprehensive model for student retention based on study findings on programme implementation models.

The data was presented in various sections following the overall research objectives as outlined above. The first section dealt with the demographic profile of the participants while the rest of the sections dealt with how the programs were implemented taking into account how students were selected, how the programs were delivered and supported. Finally, the chapter deals with how the programmes were monitored.

4.1 Profile of the Staff Participants

Overall, 15 staff members participated in the interviews. These participants were made up of staff members involved with counselling, 2 involved in orientation, 2 SI co-ordinators , 2 faculty managers involved in student admission and orientation, 2 staff

from tracking program and 2 tutoring and PAL co-ordinators, one member had been involved in both SI and tutoring and two lecturers. These staff members were critical informants due to their direct involvement in the programs so they could provide first hand information on their experiences in the program implementation.

Table 4.1   Staff participants by retention programme

PROGRAMME	University WW	University FF
Counselling	1	1
Orientation	1	1
SI Co-ordinators	1	1
Tracking & Monitoring	1	1
Faculty managers	1	1
Tutoring/PAL	2	1
Lecturer		1
Total	8	7

4.1.1 Staff participants by Gender

As for the staff who participated in the study , 6 male and 9 female staff members took part in the study. This information is illutrated in table 4.1.1 below.

Table 4.1.1 Gender of staff participants

Gender	Total	Percentage
Male	6	40%
Female	9	60%

Total	**15**	**100%**

4.1.2   Professional expertise of staff involved in the programmes

Overall, the participants in these programmes were drawn from varied academic disciplines. Ten of the participants possessed Masters Degrees and one had a Doctor of Philosophy while the other four had Honours degrees. This shows that the staff co-ordinating the programs were professionally qualified to work in higher education sector programs. However, it was important to ascertain whether the participants had undergone some form of training in the programs that they were involved in. This is because some programs have implementation principles not necessarily taught in the regular curriculum. However, the findings showed that participants involved in counselling, SI and tracking had undergone training. Those dealing with counselling and SI were also allied to a professional association. This was in accordance with policy requirement that all practicing counsellors and SI co-ordinators be part of the professional association. This was very important in that the staff also had a supportive network outside the institution that could assist in enhancing program implementation. This aligns with Beatty Guenter's assertion that all retention strategies should have a supportive component for both staff and students.

However, the fact that the interviewees were certified does not necessarily mean that all the staff who are currently involved in these programs also met the professional requirements. In fact, the findings show that there were serious shortages of certified personnel in the counselling department in both WW and FF. The programs largely relied on a score of helpers. Since interns and peer helpers are professionally not supposed to handle all counselling processed, the shortage of certified staff caused

workload pressure on the few qualified staff who had to run various facets of the counselling programme.

As regards student tracking program, all universities had appointed a tracking specialist to support staff with technical skills to run the tracking program. However, given that tracking is a multi sectorial program with a counselling component as well as intervention component, the staffing challenges experienced in counselling programs spilt over to tracking programs.

This finding showed acute staffing challenges in most of the programmes in the selected institutions. Similarly, there was a shortage of certified PAL and SI co-ordinators leading to a situation where one PAL co-ordinator had to manage the programme on three campuses at university WW while the SI coordinator in University FF was operating on two campuses. This scenario could result in challenges in the implementation of the programmes.

Apart from having been certified, it was important that most of the staff also attend in-service professional development programmes so that they could sharpen their professional skills in running the programmes in light of the change is students demographics and learning needs. In fact, it also emerged that all the staff dealing with counselling and student development were expected to participate in annual workshops to enhance their professional skills. However, one participant indicated that at times it was not possible to attend these professional development workshops due to pressure of work and institutional resources.

On the other hand, interview responses from staff involved in the orientation programs and tutorial programs showed that staff was not necessarily supposed to undergo any formal training in running these programs. These staff members depended on the institutional policy documentation and program guidelines to conceptualise the program objectives. In fact the admission guidelines were   the main source of implementation procedures for these programs.

4.2   Profile of the peer facilitators for the different programs

	Tutoring/PAL	SI	Peer Counseling	Orientation	Tracking
FF	40	8	2	3	
WW	24	7	2	2	
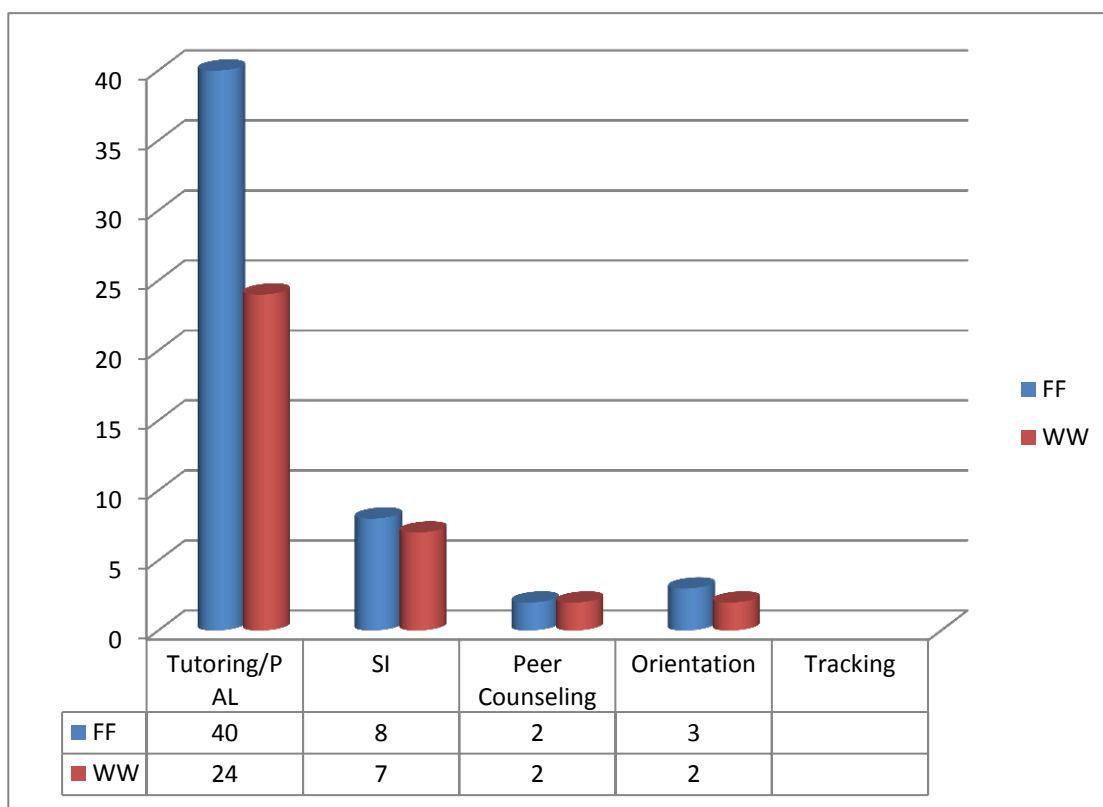
Figure 4.2: Facilitators (Senior Students) By Programme

As can be noted in figure 2 above, out of the 88 facilitators that responded to the questionnaire 44 were involved in tutorial programs (tutors) at university FF while 26 were involved in Peer Assisted Learning (PAL leaders) at university WW.

Fifteen facilitators were involved in SI with 7 from WW and 9 from FF. Also 4 were involved in counselling and 5 were involved in student orientation programmes. There were no facilitators directly involved in student tracking programmes.

The statistics above imply that the tutorial programme is the most preferred student retention programme. The prevalence of structured student support programmes could possibly be due to the increased demand for institutions to account for student throughput. On the other hand, it seems that tutorials have an older history compared to other programmes.

4.2.1 Gender Representation of the Facilitators

The figure below shows the gender representation of the facilitators who participated in the study. These were drawn from the five programmes under study.
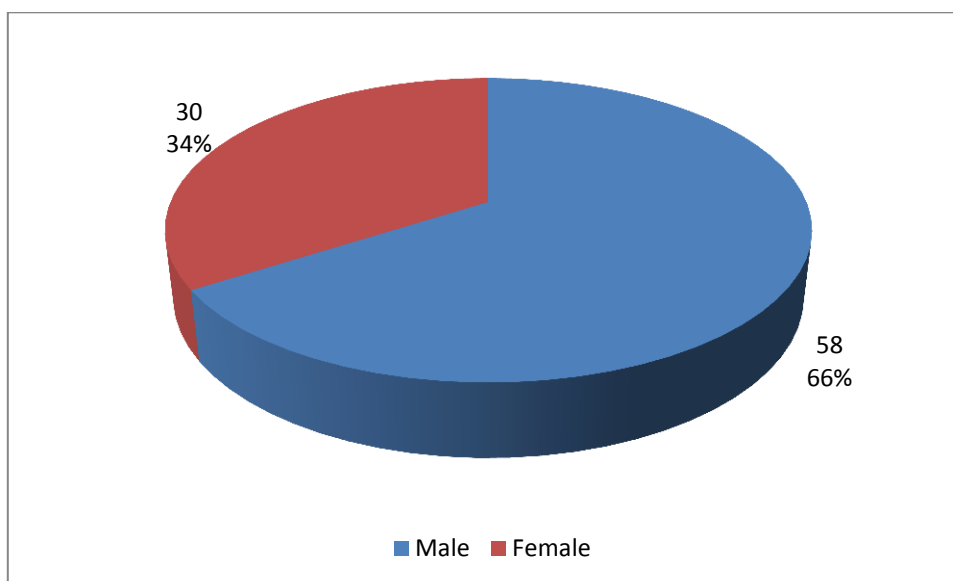
Figure 4.2.1 Facititator participants by Gender

The findings show that there were 58 (66%) male and 30 (34%) female facilitators. A further inquiry from the program co-ordinators showed that most of the female students opted to take up employment after attaining the first degree qualification. Probably, this

scenario could also signal low female students retention in science related academic careers.

Also, it could be that the learning environment was not favourable to female students. The study did not ascertain whether the students appointed were part time or full time. It could be possible that more full time students may be selected to take part in student retention programs due to their availability to participate in the program. If this was the case, then this could explain the fact that most female students may be enrolled part time and thus not eligible for the facilitation roles for the four programmes.

4.2.2 Professional and Academic Credentials of Facilitators

Table 4.2.2 below provides a snapshot analysis of the academic levels of the facilitators. A document analysis of the facilitators' profile showed that the highest number of the facilitators (37) were pursuing masters degrees, followed by honours (20), doctoral students (15) and 6 were undergraduates.

The tutor Academic Development Centre manager provided the rationale for this criteria:

"Although the departments are responsible for section of tutors, sometimes there are fewer postgraduate students enrolled in the programme, so we have to rely on undergraduate students. These are equally good."

This means that facilitators who were involved in the programmes were not necessarily of any higher level than the students they were assisting. What is not clear however is

whether they possessed the supportive dispositions which are key in all these programmes.

Table 4.2.2 Professional Profiles of the Programme Facilitators

	Institution FF	Institution WW
Undergraduate		6
Honours	12	8
Masters	22	15
Doctoral	9	6
Total	**53**	**35**

4.2.3 First year students' profiles

Two hundred and twenty first year students participated in the survey with 120 males and 100 female students. Also 151 students were first generation, implying that they were the first people in their families to attend university.

100
45%

120
55%

■ Males
■ Females
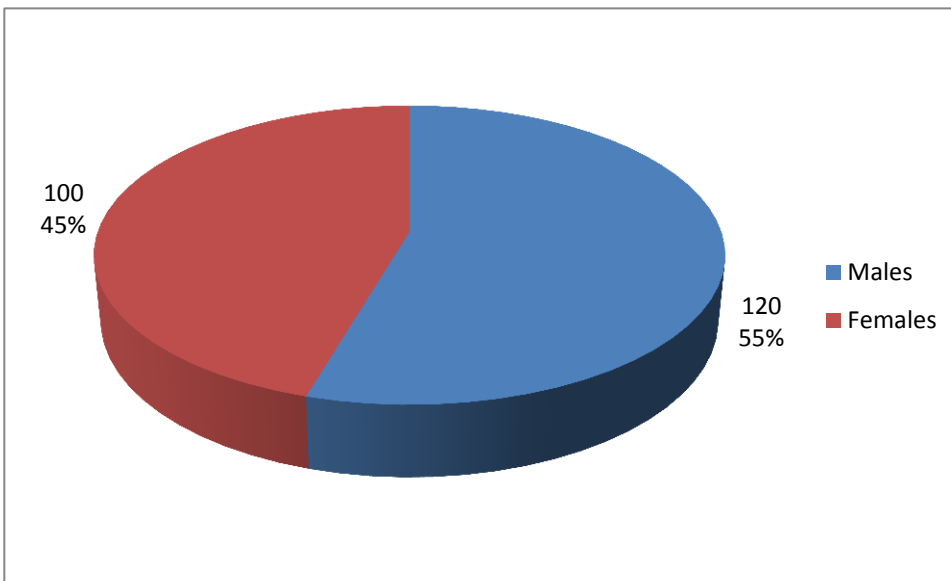
4.3   Selection of facilitators and students in the retention programs

On the aspect of selection mechanisms involved in the five retention programs under study, the data were sought from interviews with the program co-ordinators, document analysis of the facilitators' profiles and questionnaires to the facilitators themselves.

4.3.   Student Selection in Tutorial programmes

4.3.1.1   Tutee Selection Process

On tutee selection, study findings from 40(45%) tutors and 44(55%) PAL leaders indicated that tutees were selected by virtue of being enrolled in any first year academic programme in the institution. The finding above is qualitatively supported by the following sentiment from faculty staff involved with admission.

> *All first year students are supposed to participate in the tutorials because they are compulsory to everybody. What lecturers normally do is to assign the first year students into tutorial subgroups. (FF_AM2)*
>
> *All students are part of PAL. The rule is that all students should participate as long as they are enrolled in this institution. However the program co-ordinators have to subdivide the class into small groups for easy interaction. (WW_MN1)*

Sometimes, I use the alphabetical order to subdivide students into the various tutorial groups. There are no clear criteria really; it all depends on the lecturer. (FFADM1)

It's really difficult to set a specific criteria [for the tutorial groups], but we attempt to mix students so that they learn to appreciate each other's cultures and backgrounds.(FFADM1)

From the above responses, it can be presumed that tutor selection was done randomly, sometimes based on diversity and other times by default. On diversity, selection was based on academic background, age, nationality and home language. This was meant to allow social cohesion among students through constant interaction so that they get an opportunity to exchange their ideas, beliefs and values. This is likely to achieve social integration. Perhaps this could mitigate possible forms of xenophobic dispositions within the student body. This is critical considering the apparent accusations that institutions of higher learning in South Africa harbour xenophobic tendencies.

4.3.1.2 Tutor Selection Process

Regarding tutor selection process, the findings indicated that 35 (90%) tutors from institution FF were simply nominated by departmental program coordinators to participate in tutorial programs with emphasis on nationality and also academic performance. The above finding finds support from the following sentiment from one of the tutor trainers:

Tutors are selected from the departments. Ideally, all students doing post graduate studies are eligible to be tutors. However, due to departmental budget constraints, most students who have performed well in the discipline are nominated to assist other students (FF_ADN1)

We request all those interested in tutoring to register their names with the program co-ordinator. We make sure that 60% of the tutors are local students as required by university Human Resource guidelines. This is because we also have so many local first year students, so this will help in setting up good role models (FF_TR1)

However, findings above stress the importance of possessing a Bachelor's degree as the minimum qualifications for one to be selected in the tutorial program at FF. However most of the tutors who are selected at FF are postgraduate students. The rule of qualifications did not apply fully because the Human Resource Department adhered to employment regulations requiring that there was proportional student representation by nationality. This researcher thinks that it is important that whoever is selected to take up the tutorial roles should not only qualify academically, but also possess the relevant qualities of leadership, guiding and motivating others in their learning. The researcher thinks that Human Resources guidelines on tutor selection puts co-ordinators in a state of dilemma because in the absence of well qualified local students, the co-ordinators pick relatively less competitive students, leaving other more competitive students from other nationalities. This could pose some challenges in universities where students' performance and throughput are documented to be lower. This could possibly explain some students' dissatisfaction with tutor quality. Perhaps the Human Resources guidelines should not compromise on the quality of the tutors. In this researcher's perspective, this could be one of the grey areas that negatively affect the program success.

Concerning the selection of Peer Assisted Learning leaders at institution WW, the findings from the 26 (100%) PAL leaders who responded to the questionnaire showed that the selection process was co-ordinated by the academics in consultation with Academic Development Centre. Procedurally, the prospective PAL leaders had to submit both their Curriculum Vitae and academic record alongside the application form duly signed by the course lecturer. The ADC staff member participating in the interview highlighted the rationale for this selection process.

> *In this [PAL] model, the lecturers have to confirm the eligibility of PAL leaders to teach other students. We are not necessarily interested in the academic performance only, but we select those PAL leaders who have a passion to help others and have proven leadership skills. This is important because we are dealing with students taking high risk courses in which most students struggle to make the ends meet (WW_ PAL1)*

The finding above point to the need for a clear criterion when selecting PAL leaders, and the need to have a collaborative selective approach that involves course leaders and ADC staff. This is an aspect that can facilitate increase in selection validity and inclusivity. Besides academic merit, which was critically important, the quality of being passionate and possessing proven leadership skills was also considered to be of central importance. The quality of being a passionate was especially critical in facilitating socialization of students from diverse backgrounds and personalities, and being able to holistically handle different students who are usually burdened by high risk courses. This is important because students taking high risk courses have a higher tendency to drop off, repeat or take supplementary examinations. Leadership qualities of PAL leaders

were also important to facilitate guidance, coaching, mentoring and motivating the students.

4.3.2 Selection of SI leaders

The findings from the 15 (100%) SI leaders who provided quantitative responses in both WW and FF indicated that SI leaders are selected through interviews. Findings also revealed that SI leaders were selected by SI co-ordinators based in the ADC. These were also responsible for the SI leader training and monitoring. The above information finds support from the following sentiment by one of the SI trainers:

> *SI leaders are supposed to be senior students who have passed the course that they support. The SI leaders should be willing to attend the classes with the students and be model students. We interview them to check qualities such as interpersonal skills, handling diverse students and leadership capacities. We also insist that departmental lecturers be part of the interviews. The challenge is that most lecturers don't pitch up for meetings and we as ADC staff end up interviewing and training the SI leaders unilaterally (FF_SI TR1)*

The remarks by the SI trainer show the importance of an interdisciplinary team in selecting SI leaders. This is to widen the scope of goodwill, ownership, validity and reliability of the SI selection process. While this appears to be a participatory method, it was messed by non participation of some stakeholders, especially the lecturers. This was also indicated gap of minimal ownership of the program on the side of lecturers. Perhaps there could be co-ordination gaps. Subjective information indicates that

157

lecturers were not informed about the selection interviews in time and were not involved in the planning of the programs.

If what the lecturers are indicating is true, there are possibly communication challenges among the SI co-ordinators and the course lecturers who teach high risk courses. If this is the case, then this could pose a co-ordination challenge which could negatively influence students learning, retention and throughput. The above response also indicated that the selection of SI leaders had to consider fool proof competence of the SI leaders. They had to demonstrate that they had competently passed the subjects they were to facilitate. The findings further indicated that the SI leaders had to possess the following array of competencies such as being role model, possessing leadership skills, being able to handle diverse students and interpersonal skills. This is to ensure effective and efficient learning among the diverse students struggling in high risk courses. This is an assurance that the program would meet all the program objectives and ensure high retention, success and throughput.

4.3.3 Selection of Peer Counsellors and Mentors

The quantitative responses from 3 (75%) peer counsellors indicated that they were participating voluntarily and through internship. On the other hand, qualitative data showed that peer counsellors and mentors were recruited by the counselling programme directors. This was expressed in the following responses:

> *We solicit those who want to assist others in peer counselling on voluntary basis.*
>
> *We train these people the basic principles of the counselling programme......*
>
> *(FF_PC1).*

One has to gain the professional skills so we take them. We mainly take interns from various disciplines however those who would have done social work and psychology have basic theoretical understanding of the job (WW_PC2).

The selection of peer counsellors and mentors followed some criterion. The major criterion was being passionate to help and volunteer their services. The programme recruiters, however, emphasised on those students with a background in psychology and social work. This is because such students are expected to have done many counselling oriented courses in their degree. It is also assumed that most people who take psychology and social work are passionate and ready to serve people with various problems.   When the peer counsellors were asked what prompted them to be part of the program, the following sentiments were provided.

I just love helping in whichever way I can (Peer Counsellor)

I just need to practice what I have been taught at university (Peer Counsellor)

The above responses show that the selection of peer counsellors into the programs was adhoc because it depended on the participants who were willing to be part of the program. The researcher is of the view that while voluntarism could possibly result in facilitators who would put their best effort, the program may on the other hand, fail to be sustainable if there are no volunteers.

4.3.4   Selection of Student Assistants in Orientation programmes

Responses from orientation co-ordinators showed that most of the student assistants involved in the orientation programs were volunteers. However, emphasis was placed on volunteers who had knowledge of the university procedures, processes and important buildings within the institution. This means that the fact of volunteerism made it difficult to effectuate any desirable selection criteria. This may also imply that probably the

program had to be flexible if it were to get the orientation leaders it had intended. It may also indicate some challenges in trying to monitor and evaluate their operations in that their functionality was voluntary.

Despite the fact that selection was voluntary, the coordinators, however, opted to have diverse orientation leaders in terms of gender, nationality and even academic background. This is to make it inclusive and therefore meet the various demands of the programme objectives. This diversity of orientation leaders was a panacea in that the new students or the inductees were likely, whether through design or default, to choose the orientation leader to work with. This is because issues of language and cultural identity could still be strong factors to influence socialization.

Consequently, the orientation leaders were spread across various academic levels from second year to postgraduate level. This may imply that certain clients were likely to receive differential treatment. This is because the calibre of the orientation leaders displayed different levels of competence. This may also pose challenges when evaluating the programme impact. In this researcher's perspective, there appears to be a conceptual and operationalization gap in the objectives of the programme that needs to be addressed if programme objectives are to be met.

The findings from the five orientation leaders defined the duties of orientation leaders as those of guiding tours, coaches and mentors to the the inductees, counsellors, motivators and college role models. However, the tenure of most orientation leaders was only confined to the first few months of the year. The findings also revealed that the

orientation leaders did the task in tandem with other university functionaries such as SRC leaders, student representative council, residence assistants and mentors.

4.4 Delivery of the five Retention Programmes

4.4.1 Delivery of tutorial programmes

The findings emanating from the structured questionnaires revealed different perspectives pertaining to making the tutorials mandatory with 24 (60%) tutors holding the opinion that making the tutorials mandatory had a positive bearing on students learning. Perhaps the idea of enforcing the tutorials could assist in maintaining student discipline. The idea of enforcing the tutorials must also have a positive motivation on the side of the tutors, for it could also enhance their discipline and possibly their participation. Perhaps, the huge dilemma rests in how to ensure that the weak students who need the tutorials most participate actively in the programme

In contrast to the above findings, 15(40%) tutors felt that forcing all the students to engage in tutorials was not necessarily paying huge dividends to all of them. This is because some tutees were good and therefore did not need any tutorials to reinforce their learning. However, enforcing tutorial attendance helped some students who initially had negative attitudes and therefore stigmatized those who were academically weak. A number of them changed their mindset and improved their attendance.

4.4.1.1 Tutorial Duration

Responses from 18 (45%) tutors revealed that the time allocated for tutorials was inadequate to fully address the course content. Tutors mentioned that weighty content

was one the reasons that slowed down the coverage of tutorial content. This is evidenced by the following remark:

I find myself spending a lot of time teaching basic concepts, like meaning of symbols. So it takes some time for students who sometimes miss tutorials to catch up. Some of the students don't seem to remember much of what they were taught at high school (FFG3, 1).

Furthermore, the language of instruction was also a barrier to tutors who had to spend more time explaining "simple" words and concepts.

Most of our students really want to participate in class but face language barriers. Most students struggle to understand English in the first place. The challenge is that some scientific words are difficult to simplify to any vernacular" (WW-FFG3, 2)

From the responses above, it can be noted that the language mastery and competence was immensely hampering student learning in terms of understanding the concepts and communication between the tutor and among themselves. This, in the researcher's perspective, posed a huge challenge the local students probably because of the geographical locale they hailed from and also their high school poor socialization of the English language. Otherwise, the abovementioned were comfortable with the level of language that the tutors used.

Findings also indicated the fact that most tutors had difficulties in covering the content of the syllabus. The fact that some students faced language problems could be a critical factor causing the tutors to go slow and therefore fail to cover the content timeously. Perhaps also the programme timeframe did not adequately address the time to cover the requisite content.

Related to the above finding, almost all the tutor responses (36) (90%) and 20 (77%) PAL leader responses indicated that most of the tutees were not adequately preparing for the tutorial sessions. The challenge was that the tutorial time could be insufficient if the students did not do preliminary preparation of reading the notes. This could imply that more time could be spent covering key issues which could have been done prior to attending tutorial sessions.

Research findings also revealed that the programme delivery suffered infrastructural challenges in relation to venues. This is supported by the following sentiments:

Sometimes we spend so much time looking for an appropriate venue if there is a clash. This also takes up much of the scheduled time (WWG2, 1).

The challenge we experience is that in tutorials we have many smaller groups that have been allocated the same timeframe and venue. (WW,G1,3)

The above scenario implies that timetabling of the tutorial program was not adequately conceptualized and co-ordinated. For example, the same course with various tutorial groups were, by default, allocated the same venue. This presented a stressful moment not only to the tutors but also to the students. This sometimes could generate heated debate and undue competition between the tutors that could cause or generate unethical practices especially if these exchanges are to be made before the students. On the other hand, such encounters could make some students and tutors get an excuse for not attending the tutorial sessions.

4.4.1.2   Repeating students not benefiting from tutorials

The responses from the tutors 25(63%) from FF indicated that most of the first year students who were repeating courses were not adequately embracing the tutorial programs. This is supported by the following sentiments:

> *Some of the repeating students miss the tutorials because of the clash in their timetable (FF_FG3,4)*

> *Some students who fail in the examination do not attend or attend at adhoc basesFF_FG1,3)*

> *Continuing students who failed the courses do not normally attend tutorials because they feel shy. It appears that attending tutorials is associated with being dull among most first year students (FF_FG2,2)*

The scenario above show that most students who repeat have not adequately benefitted from the tutorials. This is because they have either ignored the tutorials and have not embraced their importance. Perhaps the issue of tutorship being stigmatized and being stereotyped to be the programme for the low performers was a big hurdle that needs to be addressed. What is probably needed is a strategy to motivate tutees so that they see the value of the program. It is also necessary to probably make frequent follow up on those students who may be experiencing such psychological hiccups as stigma and shyness challenges that affect their learning. If no strong follow up mechanism is put in place, it could promote the issue of "revolving door syndrome" whereby students continue to be enrolled in the higher education system due to failure to complete the programs. Perhaps also a stigmatization session needs to be factored in during the faculty student orientation week.

4.4.1.3   Delivery Strategies used in Tutorial Programmes

On the aspect of tutorial strategies used to deliver the programme, a document analysis of the prospectus, strategic plans and tutorial programme indicated that the goal of tutoring was to improve student academic aptitude so as to increase throughput (FF Retention Plan, 2009, WW Strategy, 2012). These documents also revealed that the tutorials were compulsory for all first year students. Findings from the 38 (95%) tutors also highlighted that the tutorial program was mandatory for first year students at institution FF.

However, when lamenting about the delivery of the tutorial programmes, one tutor co-ordinator highlighted that most of the students were not fully participating in the tutorial programme.

> *The challenge we face here is that most of the students do not attend classes regularly. It's even worse for the tutorials. It's probably because there is no serious penalty for students who do not participate in tutorials (FF Cor1)*
>
> *You would think that those who abscond classes are part time students who stay off campus. However the even those who stay on campus and are fully funded are also missing classes and tutorials (FF_ Cor1)*

The response above shows that some students who had negative attitudes towards tutorials did not attend them. The above sentiments also show that even those students who had finances and those who stayed on campus absconded tutorial sessions.

The response above heralds a lack of policy enforcement in the tutorial program delivery. This lack of uniformity in the implementation resulted in most students absconding some courses and frequently attending others. This concern was reflected

in the document analysis of teaching and learning committee meetings where it was observed that most of the students who were performing poorly in some courses were not active in the support program in the main lectures. This finding reflects a weak institutional culture in the implementation of policies. The fact that students who were performing poorly were not performing actively in the academic activities also could be linked to lack of a strong tracking and monitoring mechanism to quickly identify such faltering students so that corrective measures could be taken before it's too late.

4.4.1.4   Benefits of Tutorial Delivery

The benefits of tutorials from the perspetive of the tutors are highlighted in the table below.

Table 4.4.1.4 Tutor views about the benefits of tutorials

Aspect	Total	Percentage
Clarify aspects not understood in class	28	70%
Students share with a peer who is not as threatening as the lecturer	25	61%
Help to students to explain to each other in simple language or their own language	12	30%
Students to interact with tutor other one on one	16	40%
Tutorials helped those who had missed class to catch up	10	25%
Tutorials miminise the challenge of large classes	20	44%

As shown in table 4.4.1.4, 70% (28) of the tutors felt that the tutorials clarified what was learnt in class. This was because tutorials espoused an environment of freedom that made the tutees to freely engage the tutor as well as their fellow colleagues. Tutors also freely allowed students to share their understanding of the content and discuss the course expectation. The students also took advantage of the possible peer relationship with the tutors to unpack their fears in the engagement and learning process.

Twenty five (61%) tutors indicated that students took advantage of tutorial classes to foster peer learning relationships because the tutors compared to the lecturers were not rigid and students could not fear them. This was perhaps working for the students because peer relationships are believed to have a motivational and psychological positive disposition towards learning.

Findings from tutors 16 (40%) interviewed revealed that students had an opportunity to interact with the tutors on a one on one basis. According to some tutor responses the fact that students could interact one on one also minified the challenge of large classes.

Findings indicated that 30% (12) of the tutors felt that tutorials helped students to explain to each other the course content or any learning material. Perhaps this happened to students who shared the same language and cultures and depending on the class diversity, it was not a norm that could be relied on by the whole class. It could also mean that students who had reached a level of socialization to be free with one another were taking advantage of this phenomenon.

In contrast to the above, only 25% (16) felt that the tutorials helped those who had lagged behind in their learning. This could indicate that tutorials were not replacing what the lecturers were doing. This highly emphasizes the need for students to attend classes and understand the course content as taught by their lecturers. Tutors were not qualified

teachers. They may not have had the skills to competently unpack what the lecturers could easily do. Tutorials only reinforced the learning that the lecturers did.

4.4.1.5   Influence of student Diversity on tutorial Delivery

Responses from the focus group discussions with tutors indicated that student diversity had negative influence on the delivery of the tutorial program. This was evidenced by the following sentiments:

> *The challenge I am experiencing is that some of the students are not accepting advice because I am younger than them. I find myself being belittled by the people I am supposed to assist and this is frustrating. (FFG, 2,1)*
>
> *I have noticed that the mature students who have been out of school for some time struggle to recall concepts. So I usually ask them to work in pairs so as to share. But this pairing is not successful because of too much dependence (FFG3,4)*
>
> *I have actually noticed that there are two extremes concerning mature students. There are those who are always asking questions to kind of understand things and those who are scared (FFG3,1)*

Findings from the tutors unexpectedly revealed that the phenomenon of diversity was not positively working for the success of the tutorial programme. It is apparent that the scope of student diversity is too wide; it means dealing with many aspects of the students' needs was not possible. Perhaps the scope of diversity needs to be narrowed where by the tutors are sure which kind of students to handle and how. The multiplicity of diverse values could put the programme and the role of the tutor into a state of disarray. For example, in the above scenario, there was the diversity of age, personality,

learning style, and motivation. This level of diversity could be confusing. However, it is also possible that the tutors did not have requisite skills to adequately handle them. Perhaps if they were dealing with students of narrower diversity, their responses could give more positive results.

Perhaps another possible gap in the responses above could be attributed to the way the programme selected the tutors and whether they stuck to the laid down procedures and processes. For example, one of the tutors above felt belittled by the tutees who were much older than him. This presented the challenge of power dynamics and therefore lowered the self esteem and motivation of the tutors. Perhaps having tutors who are either of the same age with tutees or older could possibly reduce this problem of power dynamics.

4.4.1.6   Pedagogical strategies being used in tutorial programmes

On pedagogical strategies used in the delivery of tutorials, responses from the tutors and trainers who were involved in FGD revealed that tutors should embrace a participatory approach in their delivery and also allow individual students to attempt the question on their own (WW_TR1). The above finding finds support from the below sentiments:

> *We emphasise that the tutors should avoid giving direct negative feedback, instead when a student gives a wrong answer, the tutor should break the question into simpler and understandable components (FF_TR1)*

> *We emphasise on the use of ice breakers to lighten the classroom environment. Students enjoy an amicable learning atmosphere (FF_TR2)*

We work out tutorial questions in class and everyone has to attempt the questions before coming to class. The challenge however is that most students do not prepare responses in advance (FFG2,1).

Findings above emphasize making learning a participatory and active process. This is where the role of a tutor is more facilitative than directional or instructional. This is to makethe teaching environment a democratic space that allows more engagement and reflection bythe students. This also reduces the instructor-student gaps that dominated the traditional learning pedagogy, where the instructor was the authority figure while the student was only a passive recipient of learning. Of central importance is the need to empathize with students so that a tutor can be at their level and therefore facilitate freedom to learning. This would also make the tutor easily understand and reflect on their concerns however petty they may be.

Findings also recognized the role of using humour, role play and other forms of pedagogy to make the learning environment more conducive, freer and motivational. The role of positive feedback was found to be prominent in making successful learning. Results also indicated the importance of student preparation before the tutorials as a possible precursor to effective tutorials.

4.4.1.7   Tutor conduct and its impact to tutee performance

Findings emanating from document analysis of the student evaluations of tutorials showed that the tutorial delivery was immensely influenced by the tutors' conduct. The following excerpts of document analysis validate the observation above:

Most of the tutorials are not adequately engaging. This is because in some verifiable cases, tutors would just write assignment solutions on the board without

explaining. Usually, the tutors have a negative attitude and sometimes comment

that they are not lecturers when asked to elaborate information (FF_ Do2).

The above excerpt from a tutorial evaluation report by students seems to suggest that at times, some tutors hide their lack of understanding by only providing unexplained answers. This means that tutors who lack disciplinary mastery of the content promote rote learning strategies because students are likely to memorise the answers without understanding. The researcher is of the opinion that such a practice may promote surface learning as well as poor content mastery. Therefore such a scenario is unlikely to benefit students with lower ability to learn such as those with low conceptual thinking and understanding.

The responses above also show that the some tutors lack ethical and professional conduct when they become rude to the students by indicating that they are not lecturers. This means that such tutors fail to pass the test of embracing and operationalizing tutorial goals and objectives, as well as role modelling as espoused by social educational learning theories.

Concisely, such behaviour is likely to discourage the tutees and cause them to lose confidence with their tutors as well as with the program. This means that the tutors, instead of being agents of positive reinforcement of good learning behaviour and practice become negative reinforcers of learning. This also means that such tutors' behaviour espouses an environment devoid of motivation in learning. Perhaps also such negative reaction of the tutors could emanate from the fact that they were not competent enough, did not embrace the requisite interpersonal and leadership skills that the tutors are supposed to possess. This may also point to poor selection practice or lack of training. It could also be a pointer to gaps in the programme that if not timeously

addressed could continue to weaken the programme through students scoring low in their examinations..

4.4.1.8 Co-ordinated tutor training necessary for programme success

The study findings from FF shows that tutors had undergone some training at the ADC centre. The same data was corroborated from tutor trainers who expressed the following:

> *We train tutors here at the Academic Development Centre. We have a once off training of over two days at the beginning of the year....The training focuses on professionalism, diversity and time management and leadership. After training the respective departments are responsible for monitoring tutors' work (FF-TTR1)*
>
> *There is low buy in from academic staff. The tutor training program is designed such that a departmental representative can talk about the departmental expectations on the second day of the training. But in most cases no one turns up and we end up leaving out that aspect (FF-TTTR1)*

Yes, there seems to be an ownership problem, even from the conversations we do you will see that they feel like ADC have to do training and monitoring of tutors. Besides the issue of capacity I think ADC cannot monitor tutors because we do not have enough staff and also this should be the responsibility of departments (FF_TTR1.

The above sentiments suggest that tutor training ought to be a co-ordinated effort between ADC and academic departments. However, it appears that few academic department representatives honoured their responsibility of presenting sessions dealing

172

directly with departmental requirements such as assessment, and departmental expectations. This affected the quality of the tutor training. The scenario above points to lack of collaboration and co-ordination among the different sections of the institutions. Probably, a proper agreement was not initially reached during the conceptualisation of the program; hence the academics feel no obligation to be fully involved.

On the question of whether tutors are trained about assessment strategies and academic writing principles, a tutor trainer had this to say:

It could be important to train tutors about assessment since some lecturers give tutors assignments to mark, but currently we are just telling them the basics. We are not teaching them principles of academic writing. Academic writing is mainly taught to language and writing consultants who serve across disciplines (FF_TTTR1)

The sentiment above shows that the tutor training program did not fully address the professional needs of the tutors because topics on assessment and departmental expectations were left out in most cases, yet these are crucial for the efficient program delivery. In fact, the responses show that that some lecturers would give tutors some students work to mark, yet they were not adequately grounded on assessment principles in higher education. As already indicated in earlier sections of thisstudy, most students struggle to learn because of barriers in reading, writing and not understanding assessments requirements of the higher education environment. If tutorial programs are not adequately addressing the above gaps, then their relevance in enhancing student learning becomes questionable.

4.4.2.0   Delivery of Student Tracking Programmes

4.4.2.1   Goals for the tracking programme

Concerning the goals for tracking programmes, a document analysis revealed that the tracking programme was a response to a national mandate for institutions to respond to student needs as recommended by the Department of Higher Education. The rationale behind the student tracking system was to assist institutions in quickly identifying weaker students at an early stage so as to institute interventions. This was evidenced by the following excerpt from the strategic plan at WW.

> *This [tracking and monitoring system] system has been ... also extensively applied in the higher education sector… The strategy compliments such efforts on WW responsiveness to national imperatives, as in the current WW throughput Strategy, which is funded by the Ministry of Education (WW_TKM1).*

The above findings show that student tracking was not only applied at the institutions under study, but to the wider higher education community and had support from the Department of Higher Education and Training. It appears that the thrust for this support was the need to increase student throughput given that the country was experiencing low student participation of around 15% as noted by the Human Resources Research Council (HSRC) (Letseka & Maile, 2008)

The findings also show that student background information which was captured during admission was kept in the South African national database for higher education institutions known as the Higher Education Management Information System (HEMIS).

> *We keep a record of all student data that is captured during enrolment in the HEMIS database. The same system is used to manage courses,*

174

finances. So I am able to extract student demographics, previous schooling details, and finance information, and current academic performance for each semester. We can even get the results of tests and assignments if the lecturers record the information on the system (WW_TKM1).

I usually send out a report on the pass rates every quarter so that faculties can decide what to do to support their students. There are many ways to calculate pass rate but I base on the average number of students who get a pass mark of over 50% out of the total number for the course (FF_TKM1).

The findings seem to show that there is a challenge of erroneous data capturing.

All the information that is kept in the system is dependent on whether the admission staff captures correctly or whether the students provide accurate information at admission. What we noticed so far are errors on aspects such as gender. We always encourage students to verify the information and correct it (FF_TKM1).

The responses above show that the HEMIS was used to record all students' background information which encompassed demographics, high school results and current courses. In the researcher's opinion, the background information could be useful when applying predictive models of student performance. In other words, such background information could provide pointers of student risk so that institutions device proactive interventions. For instance, if the demographic data shows that most students are first generation,

then institutions could perhaps implement one on one peer mentoring programs for all first years to allow them to get acquainted with the higher education. This could possibly make a big difference to the experiences of such students when they have someone to guide them in all aspects of their transition.

The responses above also show that students' academic performance details was recorded by course lecturers into the HEMIS database. However, the challenge noted was that at times the data was inaccurate due to capturing errors and misleading information provided by students during the time of admission. This data inaccuracy can pose a serious gap which could hinder effective tracking and monitoring. In actual fact, many students who need immediate intervention can be missed out. Perhaps, there is need for periodical and routine verification of the accuracy of the HEMIS, apart from the one used in yearly enrollments.

The above responses, however, do not seem to indicate that the two institutions under study were mainly focusing on summative assessments as a way to identify student risk aspects. While this is common practice in many contexts, at times the root cause of the student's challenge may not necessarily be academic. Therefore, indicators of risk could possibly be expanded to include engagement in academic and non academic aspects such as participating in extramural activities. Academic engagement could include attending classes, completion of tasks, participating in student support activities and any learning enhancement activities. Other non academic indicators may include participation in activities that enhance physical health and psychological wellbeing. This is important given that the students' wellbeing is holistic as it includes social , emotional, and psychological balance.

4.4.2.2   Capacity to use the Tracking Software

On the question of the delivery of the tracking and monitoring programme, it was imperative to ascertain whether there were sufficient human resources who had the capacity to spearhead the implementation of the tracking and monitoring programme. The findings revealed that there was inadequate staff from both institutions. The following responses shed some light on the issue:

The tracking system was installed as part of the SANTED II project in 2009, but it has not been fully operational because the person who had been appointed to run the system resigned. Basically, the software is linked to the HEMIS database and people just need to know how to extract the relevant information when indentifying students at risk. We have appointed two people now that are responsible for training the staff to use tracking software. They will also be responsible for researching on the effectiveness of the tracking and monitoring system (FF_TKM).

The new system being tested actually is under the HEMIS database co-ordinator, but then this tracking and monitoring person has got a password to that, she is also an ICT specialist. Part of the chain that we targeted for 2014 is to get academic development officers. These ...will be working with the faculties to help with the checking and monitoring (WW-TKM2).

The findings from the key informants on the tracking system revealed that the system is more theoretical with very little operationalisation. This was due to lack of qualified human resources from 2009 when the system was installed to 2013 when new staff were appointed at FF. It also appears that the long period taken to source the qualified

personnel to run the tracking system at FF is an indication of the challenge of sourcing specialist human resources such as statisticians and information technology specialist staff.

The findings revealed that tracking specialists were responsible for training staff. However, the program seemed to be in its infancy in terms of implementation. For example, at FF two departments in the whole university had been trained to use the tracking software, hence there was not enough evidence that the trained staff were already using it or were willing to use the system.

> *Only two faculties have been trained in the university...the tracking system has been under-utilised due to staff shortage, as only one person is responsible for training departments until May 2013 (Document analysis, FF).*

At WW, the tracking program was in use but was still administered manually.

We have been doing it manually. The tracking specialist extracts marksheets of exam results from the HEMIS database. She then assesses students' performance and categorises students' performance indicators as red, green or amber, the results are send to the guy who deals with the Blackboard learning management system. The Blackboard learning management system is used to communicate students risk status in the form of email messages.

> *If a student got marks below 50%, he/she is required to hold a meeting with a career and guidance counsellor. The career and guidance counsellor assesses the intensity of the student's challenges and recommends a plan of action. The counsellor then makes referral so that the student receives support from the relevant personnel depending on the nature of the problem (WW_TRK)*

As can be noted from the responses above, the tracking system at WW was multi-sectorial and manual. This was a cumbersome process that required co-operation of the

lecturers, the exams department, and the counsellors. In principle, the manual process involved having the tracking specialist extract names of students and their marks from the HEMIS database, in consultation with the examination department. The tracking specialist would then use statistical models to classify students' level of risk, paying attention to courses where the mark was less than 50%. Details of students who were flagged as at risk were sent to the Blackboard administrator who sent out emails to such students to indicate that they were at risk. The email directed the student to see the career guidance counsellor or psychologist, who would recommend an appropriate intervention.

However, theoretically, the inclusion and involvement of many departments could be beneficial in that the program would tap from the expertise of various stakeholders, hence ensuring that excellent support could be provided. In practice, however there were serious co-ordination challenges between those who referred students and the psychologists.

At FF the tracking program was heavily reliant on the course lecturer who was expected to identify the student at risk and make referrals to support programs or to device their own intervention. This was expressed in the response below.

> *The tracking and monitoring database is supposed to draw its data from the ITS and HEMIS. The system gives the lecturer the opportunity to comment about the progress of every student after writing a test or assignment. The system is designed in such a way that the lecturer can refer the student to counselling or any other support (FF_TMTR).*

...The system is too technical; lecturers who do not embrace technology will struggle to use it.(FF_TMTR)

The excerpt above shows that the tracking model was decentralised because the responsibility for tracking the student lies with the course lecturer. However, this meant a lot of work for the lecturer. In view of the large classes that some courses have, such a system could mean more administrative work on the part of the lecturer.

Furthermore, one of the interviewees felt that the tracking and monitoring software at FF was not user friendly because it required a high level of technical skills. The high technical demand identified above could discourage staff from using the tracking and monitoring system. In view of this, the study sought the views of those staff who had been exposed to the computerised tracking system at FF.

4.4.2.4   Staff   Acceptance of the tracking system

The findings indicated that lecturers and faculty managers, although trained, were skeptical about the administrative workload required to use in the tracking software. This is expressed by the following excerpt from the tracking report:

> ...all identified risks point to academic matters for which the lecturer is responsible, and has to respond to individually. This could be an impossible task for a lecturer who has to juggle with other departmental roles... (FF_ TMR).

The findings from the report seem to show that the tracking model adopted at FF did not align with the realities of the institutional context. The excerpt below shades more light:

The system does not seem to respond to the FF context [where there are large classes and few staff members] ....no consultation had taken place between the university and the software tracking system developer (FF_ TMR).

The response above indicates that the tracking system at FF was not matching the contextual realities of limited lecturers and large classes. The large classes would mean that the lecturers had an extra workload of reporting on each student's record in order to recommend an intervention. This was a cumbersome exercise which needed dedicated personnel.

At WW, the co-ordination challenges worked against programme objectives. A full description of the processes involved in the centralised tracking model is illustrated by the following interview response:

The student tracking system commences by identifying students at risk based in the results of SATAP tests. The results are analysed using 50% as minimum acceptable peg. Each student is flagged depending on their performance using robot colours of red, amber and green are used. Analogously a student in the in the red category failed and therefore is highly in danger of expulsion within weeks , the one in amber needs support and the one in green is progressing well.

> *For students who are already admitted, tracking involves monitoring their academic performance three consecutive times a year in the months of March, July and September. In March, the tracking and monitoring specialist who is also a statistician gets a mark list of students marks in Excell from examination department, assesses and sends the information to the blackboard administrator to send emails. The students then is advised on the plan of action through the intervention of the counsellor. The counsellor keeps a record of all referrals and this information is used when making concessions for those students who may fail in the following terms. If we find that the student was not active in the*

intervention sessions, the ADC staff have to write that in the report to be handed

to the Exclusions committee (WW-TMC)

The above response shows that a referral system was multisectoral. Tracking depended on the availability of updated marks at the exams department. In a case where such marks were not updated, there was likely to be inaccurate identification of at risk students.

 The researcher is of the view that the use of Blackboard Learning management system for sending out messages to students was ideal because the system keeps a record of the communication even after the student erases the message. However, there was no guarantee that all the students would frequently check their learning information, unless if the system is also linked to the students' cellphones, hence there could be possibilities that some students still missed the information.

The idea of sending the email to the student to indicate that they are at risk before seeing the counsellor could cause the students to develop high levels of stress. The use of a psychologist to determine student problems points to the program's adherence to holistic student development. However, in cases where a large number of students failed at once, this meant an extra workload for the counsellors.

The findings also indicated that the tracking process was mandatory for all students since there was periodical checking of student progress in the intervention. However, it emerged that at times, the students did not fully participate in the intervention strategy, hence the need to have a tight reporting system on the part of the staff member responsible for tracking.

4.4.3 Delivery of PAL and SI Programmes

4.4.4   Delivery of Orientation Programmes

4.4.4.0   Goals of Orientation Programmes

On the goals of orientation programmes, findings from the 61 first year students who participated in the orientation programme in 2012 attested to several benefits accruing from of their participation in the programme. The table sumarises these sentiments.

Table 4.4.4.4 Benefits of Orientation Programme

Benefit of orientation	N=61	Percentage
Opportunity to meet with leadership and staff during the welcome function was good	18	29.6%
History of the university was inspiring and also important	24	39.2%
Orientation allowed us to meet with the fellow senior students to tell us about university life	8	13.1%
Movies , music and socialising	6	9.8%
Information provided motivated us to work hard	5	8.2%
Total	61	100%

The table above shows that 18 (29.6%) of the students appreciated the first year welcome function which allowed them to meet with the university leadership. This means that students felt that they were treated as important members of the university community. The 24 (39.2%) first year students also appreciated the tours to important sites and resources such as the library, the clinic and recreation centres, as well as the

history of the university provided through the various presentations. The knowledge of important resources that enhance a student's life, in the researcher opinion, reduces the confusion that people have when they are in a new environment not knowing services at one's disposal**.**

4.4.4.1   Poor Attendance Of Students To Orientation Programmes

On attendance to student orientation programmes, findings revealed a poor attendance. Out of the 220 students who responded to the survey on orientation, 50 (22.7%) had attended the orientation program that was conducted during the first week of the year 2012. This implies that more than three quarters of the students who participated in the study did not gain from the orientation program objectives of introducing and acculturating students to the higher education environment. This scenario is detrimental for student grounding which later influences persistence because they may fail to access university resources that are at their disposal due to lack of knowledge. The poor students attendance to orientation indicated above could also be attributed to poor arrangement in terms of the timing for the implementation of the orientation program. For instance findings indicate that the orientation program is implemented one week before the institutions officially opens. During this period some students are still held in other institutional registration obligations.

This researcher is of the opinion that orientation must be offered when students have finished the registration processes. However, in some instances, registrations may oscillate and even take longer than the initially programmed dates. This may affect therefore the number of students who may have not finished registration by the time orientation commences. For instance, findings from first year students show that

60(38%) of the students failed to attend orientation due to course selection processes. This is probably those students who had not undergone clear career guidance and were on the fence regarding their desired career choices. Delays in course selection could also imply that such students did not attain good passes and were therefore being tossed from pole to pillar. The other 46(29%) were still finalizing their bursary requirements, and 27 (17%) were still searching for accommodation. This implies that at this time, most students had equally competing aspects to attend.

Reason for not attending orientation programmes	Response	%
Still finishing course selection and admission	60	38%
Didn't have the bursary money to register yet	46	29%
Was too confused to locate the venues for orientation	11	8%
Did not know the orientation dates	9	5%
I was still looking for permit	6	3%
Still looking for accommodation	27	17%
Total	**159**	**100%**

The above responses were also supported by the responses from one admission staff who highlighted that orientation commenced while some students were still finalising the registration processes.

In most cases we have a lot of walk ins who come to register here after failing to secure places in other institutions. The reason why we take these students is that sometimes they may have better marks than those who will have applied earlier.

> *The challenge we have is that most of the students who have got good grades for university entry are walk inns. They come here after failing to get places from the other universities because our cut off point is much lower than most universities. So you find that they come when we are almost closing registration. We take them because their grades are usually much better than most of the regular applicants (WW FM).*

The finding above shows the dilemma that two institutions face at the time of registration, where better performing students do not apply on time and come to register almost at the end of the scheduled registration time. The response above shows that most students who may not have applied are admitted due to high scores. However, most of such students are unable to attend orientation because of sorting out registration issues. Since higher education institutions have total responsibility for the students they enrol, the above response shows efforts that the two institutions make to enrol students with higher grades due to the belief that they have higher potential to succeed. However, the dilemma is that accommodating the 'walk ins" also affects the preplanned programmes such as orientation.

4.4.4.2   Dissemination of Orientation information

The study found that the method of disseminating information about the orientation program was not appealing to all the stakeholders, Findings from the student orientation program co-ordinators showed that information on orientation was disseminated through

a handbook which was posted to the address provided by students. An alternative method was to send out an sms which notified the students the date for registration and orientation

> *Information about the university procedures and processes is provided in the form of a handbook. This guideline also includes other important dates for registration, orientation and study skills commencement of courses as well as important contacts in case the students get stuck. Students are also sent an sms to indicate that they have been provisionally accepted, pending finalising all the other registration processes like paying the registration fees before they could participate in orientation. The handbook usually has more detailed information about the procedures (FF _Or,interview)*
>
> *My experience is that although you send out these handbooks, most people phone the admission office asking about the same things you have explained in the handbook (WW Admissions)*

The above responses show that printed handbooks and a short messaging system are the main modes of disseminating information to prospective students about the procedures they have to follow. However, it appears that the printed mode has not necessarily benefited most of the students as they either never read or did not understand the contents of the guide. Also, this is supported by the fact that about 5% of the students who participated in the survey indicated that they did not know about orientation.

It seems that there could be a poor reading culture among most students, especially on printed materials. It is also possible that very few students really read completely the contents of the offer letters that are sent to them with guidelines on policies and

procedures. If this is the case, then that could explain their ignorance about orientation as highlighted in the foregoing findings.

On one hand, the researcher is also of the opinion that the communication method used may not be ideal for most students of the current generation. This is due to the prominence of electronic communication devices which young people prefer more to than the paper mode. It appears that the institutions are wasting resources by printing and posting guides which are minimally used by the students.

This is further supported by sentiments by an admission staff member who would get inquiries from the people about the very same things outlined in the guideline. A poor reading culture among students poses serious concerns about their future retention because reading is an important trait required at this level. In terms of culture, most African communities rely on oral communication as opposed to written communication. This could also influence students in that they still expect to be addressed orally on the procedures rather than relying only on written information. Perhaps these institutors could consider sending out a CD or voice recorded instructions instead of only depending on printed documents as is currently the case in most institutions.

4.4.4.3   Poor student selection eligibility

On the time allocated to orientation sessions, findings from document analysis of orientation programme goals indicated that all first-year or fresh students were eligible for participating in the student orientation programme. This may imply that some of the students may have no interest in the program. This raises a question on whether the students have been fully sensitised of the importance of attending the programme. The

fact that very few students have attended the programme over so many years may imply that many students have taken this program for granted. Since orientation is offered before commencement of official classes in the two institutions, some students might have reasoned that orientation was not part of their classes and ignored it.

4.4.4.3   New students still confused about requirements

The findings indicated that 9(5%) of the students did not attend orientation because they were still confused about university requirements. This is a common challenge that students experience when they are in a new environment. Perhaps this challenge could be overcome by allocating peer mentors who would assist students on a one on one basis for the whole year instead of just using orientation leaders during orientation time only. This could possibly reduce the confusion that all students are likely to experience when they get to a new environment.

4.4.4.4   Inadequate time Orientation

The findings point to the fact that orientation programs lasted for less than a week in the institutions under study. This limited the time required to address some of the topics which needed a longer time to teach. This view was expressed in the response below:

 Sometimes we have topics that need more than one hour session to tackle. We encourage the presenters to introduce the key aspects and probably conduct detailed workshops with the students during the course of the year. What we don't know is whether all students are able to take part in those follow up workshops. For example I think issues of stress management , conflict management and study skills need to be given much attention with most of our students"

I feel that our orientation program has focused too much on the social side of things at the expense of academic issues. These students come out of orientation without knowing their own learning styles and how to study effectively. The presents sometimes just highlight the different ways, so some students come out of orientation without a full grasp of issues.

The responses above show that the time allocated to address some topics is not adequate to fully address topics that are important for first year students

On the question of mechanisms in place to monitor the delivery of tutorials, the findings pointed to extensive use of tutorial attendance registers.

> *Due to the current human resource requirement tutors are required to bring registers for the sessions that they facilitate. This registers were also used by the tutors to claim for their monthly stipends However, this is not always a valid monitoring tool because tutors at times request students to sign registers for sessions they have not attended. However it is usually difficult for students to openly confess such unprofessional behaviour unless one asks for the content covered on the days that the register is signed (FF_TTTr)*

The sentiment above was also echoed in a document analysis of tutorial evaluations where some first year students revealed that at times they signed registers without attending tutorials.

From the responses above it is clear that the use of the registers alone as a monitoring tool can be open to abuse by both tutors and tutees. On one hand some tutors may ask students to sign the register without actually conducting the tutorial so that they get their stipends. On the other hand students agree to sign registers so as to earn credits for

tutorial participation in those courses where tutorial attendance is attached to rewards. A scenario such as this, however unethical and unprofessional it may be, is common in many first year courses and is contributing to the current scenario of low student performance and low retention.

Perhaps it is important to also emphasise the provision of other forms of evidence to prove that students have actually took part in the tutorial programme. For example course lecturers may insist that all students who have participated in a tutorial session do a small exercise such as an online or paper quiz at the end of each tutorial session and hand in to the tutor. The lecturer then can randomly sample the students work to check for the level of learning that has taken place. These exercises together with the register may be used as monitoring tools for student engagement. Also perhaps tutorial evaluations can also serve as useful pointers to program and institutional leaders to ascertain the learning that is taking place in these programs.

4.4.5.0 Delivery of Counselling Programmes

On how the counselling programme was delivered to the students, 2 (50%) out of the 4 peer counsellors indicated that that the program was supporting students in diverse areas such as directing career choice, and assisting students in dealing with mental health and assisting students experiencing transitional problems. Despite peer counsellors' assertion that the programme was very supportive, findings from the student responses apparently presented contrasting results. Results from document analysis of students surveys showed that 10% had sought counselling services from their teachers; 6.8% from peer counsellors; 31.7% from families; 11.3% from friends; and 40% did not consult anybody.

Statistically, it appeared that the counselling programme was either unpopular in that 40% of the students had not engaged it, or was poorly marketed leaving a score of students unaware of the structures of delivery; or was poorly discharged and therefore not attracting a sizeable number of students. Perhaps, poor visibility of the programme made those students who needed counselling seek it from other sources such as family members, friends and teachers. Perhaps the issue of poor marketability can be confirmed from other empirical researchers that pointed to poor visibility of the counselling structures at FF (Dude et al., 2011). The fact that the students sought counselling from various sources, though welcome, could indicate the level of desperation that the counselling programme is failing to handle. This is because the miscellaneous counselling process by non professionals does not guarantee solving the social problems that the students normally undergo. In the researcher's perspective, such miscellaneous sources of help cannot be overemphasized. This is because they could have provided the requisite emotional and social support needed, however unqualified and meager it may be. However, this cannot in any way replace professional counselling. Professional counselling in the researcher's lenses remains a panacea in addressing social-emotional-psychological challenges.

4.4.5.1 Students Perception of Counselling Programmes

The study sought the first year students' views on   counselling programmes. the table below highlilights these views.

Table 4.4.5.1 Student Perceptions of Counselling Programmes

ASPECT	N=220	Percentage
Some counsellors/mentors are inexperienced because	30	17%

they are also students		
I don't trust advice from strangers	80	36%
I don't need counselling because I can solve my own problems	70	32%
I don't think my problem is so big to require counselling	50	22%
Total	**220**	**100%**

In light of the views above, peer counsellors were also requested to indicate their views on the delivery of the program. Quantitative responses from two (50%) peer counsellors indicated that counselling was not fully achieving its goals as evidenced by the following sentiments.

> *Most of the students whom we see have a counselling need do not trust the help we are giving them. ...(FF_FG1,1)*

> *Participation in most of the programs is very poor... For instance very few students attend workshops on career counselling, stress management and HIV awareness campaigns.(FF_FGPC1,3)*

The responses also show that few students participated in the programmes. Apparently, the response above seems to indicate that students' use of counselling services depends on how much they trust the counsellors. If the clients (students) perceive the counsellor to be untrustworthy, they would not be attracted to take up the service offered in the programme.

> *... Also people associate seeking counselling with people who have failed to handle their problems in life. So it's even frightening for people to mention that they are going for counseling (FF Peer counselor).*

Once the potential client or the person who needs help has doubts onthe counselling system, then they think twice about using the service. If this is the case, perhaps this could explain why counselling is not as popular as it should. Perhaps this could be corroborated by the data from the document analysis of the first year students' evaluation survey of the orientation programme conducted in 2013 at institution FF that indicated that out of 220 students, 80 (36%) students had not used counselling services.

As can be noted from the responses, it appears as if professional counselling is still not widely accepted at this institution since only a small proportion of students relied on the teachers and peer mentors. It could be possible that the cultural aspects also contribute to people's views about professional counselling. Given that the majority of the respondents in the study were Africans, it is likely that family members provided counselling in times of distress because the family unit plays a major role in African communities.

Also, the responses show that career counselling was the mostly sought in both institutions. This shows the importance of ensuring social network on the wellbeing of students. The social network in this case constitute of family members, friends and other staff within the institution with whom a student interacts. Given that most African communities still believe in the use of familiar individuals when trying to solve problems at home, it most of the participants in the study relied on their families.

The findings indicated inadequate counselling support for students. This is reflected in the following sentiments expressed by the counselling specialist and peer helpers.

Sometimes, it is difficult to adequately support all the students because we are thinly spread. Currently we have three certified psychologists for the whole institution. This means that one person is responsible for more than three programs that have been set up in the centre (FF-PL1).

Responses by interview participants at WW also highlighted staffing co-ordination, attitudes and staffing concerns as emphasised in the following response.

WW is an institution in which the different sections spearheading tracking are not fully cooperative. Sometimes students who have been sent to counsellors through referral are not attended to. Since counselling is done by a different department from those who diagnose the students problems, the counsellors are spread very thin, I think we have four certified counsellors in the whole institution (WW-TMC)

The response above shows that in principle, the counselling program at WW is not fully attending to students with identified counselling challenges. The data shows that the students who are referred for counselling are given a referral letter. Furthermore, the number of students who need counselling attention is also very high. This may probably not be the only ideal method as students may decide to ignore the letter and fail to see the counsellor. Another possibility is that the communication could be one way instead of two way to ensure effective plan for enhancing retention. This poses a serious threat to the legitimacy of the counselling program as well as all other retention initiatives in the institution. For instance, it emerged that the student tracking program is also linked to the counselling program. The response abovet reveals weak co-operation among key program drivers who ought to spearhead the program. Leadership is crucial for the

195

success of any program, but in this instance, the counselling program seems to be hampered by lack of goodwill. The response above also seems to show lack of accountability among the staff responsible for the program.

The interview responses above points to shortage of qualified staff which makes it difficult for the counselling program at WW to function effectively. The fact that there are only four counsellors in an institution with over 25000 students points to a lack of goodwill on the part of management to provide the necessary human resources to address students' challenges.

> *We only have one career advisor which is why she sometimes has to see students in a focus group environment. Ideally it is not really supposed to be because the students will not come to you and tell you the truth, for instance a lecturer does not teach well, the student wouldn't really want to say that in front of many other students so sometimes the data that we get is a little bit distorted. She tries to push for one on ones but when there is urgency she sees students in groups of 4s/ 5s (WWADC2)*

Probably one way to deal with the above challenge is to ensure that academic staff are also empowered to have basic counselling skills. Another possibility could be to train peer counselling helpers who can assist in preliminary diagnosis of student challenges than not to attend to students at all.

4.4.5.2.   Counselling environment

Responses from peer counsellors pointed to the fact that the environment was not conclusive for counselling.

> *It's even worse when your counsellor is located where everybody can see you*
>
> *coming and going (FF _FGPC1,3)*

The above response shows improper physical space for the counselling centre . This reduces client feeling of security. Guidelines in the programme goals highlight that the counselling should be located in a setting that promotes confidentiality. To this end rooms used for counselling should be sound proof, well ventilated and at a point accessible. However, the responses seem to indicate that the counselling centre offices are located in a place which is not user friendly. It's apparent that people may avoid to go to a place where they feel that their confidentiality is compromised.

4.4.5 Monitoring implementation of the five programmes

4.4.5.1 Monitoring of tutorial programmes

On the question of mechanisms in place to monitor the delivery of tutorials, the findings pointed to extensive use of tutorial attendance registers.

> *Due to the current human resource requirement tutors are required to bring*
>
> *registers for the sessions that they facilitate. This registers were also used*
>
> *by the tutors to claim for their monthly stipends However, this is not always*
>
> *a valid monitoring tool because tutors at times request students to sign*
>
> *registers for sessions they have not attended. However it is usually difficult*
>
> *for students to openly confess such unprofessional behaviour unless one*
>
> *asks for the content covered on the days that the register is signed*
>
> (FF_TTTR2)

The sentiment above was also echoed in a document analysis of tutorial evaluations where some first year students revealed that at times they signed registers without attending tutorials.

From the responses above it is clear that the use of the registers alone as a monitoring tool can be open to abuse by both tutors and tutees. On one hand some tutors may ask students to sign the register without actually conducting the tutorial so that they get their stipends. On the other hand students agree to sign registers so as to earn credits for tutorial participation in those courses where tutorial attendance is attached to rewards. A scenario such as this, however unethical and unprofessional it may be, is common in many first year courses and is contributing to the current scenario of low student performance and low retention.

The blurred picture concerning tutorial monitoring was also echoed by one tutor trainer

> *Yes, we give tutor program co-coordinators feedback reports on tutor training statistics after two weeks. But whether they do read these reports is another matter because sometimes you don't even get a response acknowledging receipt. It is the responsibility of departments to monitor tutors. Some do it but others don't (FF_TTR1).*

Tutors were also questioned on the monitoring challenges they experienced in the tutorial programme and the responses are reflected in the table below

Table 4.4.5.1 Challenges in Monitoring Tutorial Programmes

Aspect	N=28	%
Lecturers do not hold frequent monthly meetings to discuss tutorial progress	21	75

Some lecturers just give tutors the textbooks and/or manual topics to teach without proper guidance	15	54
Tutors taking full responsibility of class while lecturer is away for long periods	14	50
Use of attendance registers for monitoring student progress is not uniform across departments	13	46
Some tutors just ask students to sign the register without conducting the tutorial	11	39
Practical and tutorial work marked by tutors but is not moderated	18	62

As can be noted in the Table 4.4.5.1 tutor respondents (50%) revealed that there were minimal discussion contacts and trouble shooting meetings between the tutors and the lecturers. This indicates serious grey areas and probably gaps that could contribute to low output of the tutorial sessions. This is because any possible gap by the tutors did not have any opportunity to be corrected and redressed by the lecturers. It may also mean that the lecturers' mentorship and coaching tasks were minimal or non existent altogether.

Also 54% of the tutors complained that some lecturers were abdicating their responsibility of guiding, mentoring and coaching the tutors. Apparently, such lecturers appeared to unprofessionally pass over their requisite tasks to the tutors without care. Perhaps the lecturers abdicating their responsibility to tutors find support from 50% of the tutors who indicated that tutors usually take full responsibility of the class while the lecturers are away.

On the use of attendance registers as a monitoring tool, 46% of the tutors revealed that the process was ad hoc and not uniform across all the classes in the science faculty. This implies that the use of registers was a discrepant way of monitoring student engagement and learning.

On the role of the tutor in monitoring, 39% of the tutors indicated professional negligence and abdication of their tasks by making the students sign the register without delivery. This points to lack of qualities of being a good tutor. It points to lack of moral and ethical responsibility, poor interpersonal relations, poor leadership and lack of passion as required by the programme. This may also point to poor selection process of tutors by the programme coordinators. It was a sure recipe for poor results of the students and mal performance of the programme in monitoring and evaluation.

On monitoring and evaluation of the programme through moderating students' work, 64 % of the tutors pointed out immense grey areas in the task because a sizeable number of the lecturers were not moderating the students' work. This is serious because one of the pivotal goals to effectively monitoring tutorial delivery is to have it moderated

4.4.5.2   Monitoring of Tracking Programmes

The findings from the document analysis shows that the tracking programmes in the two institutions were to be monitored through joint meetings among the representatives of the various sections of the university. Document analysis on the programmes implementation plan state that these meetings ADC staff at WW seems to indicate that even though these meetings were conducted, the challenge of implementing the resolutions always cropped up. This was attributed to staff shortages as well as attidutes of some staff who felt that tracking was not their responsibility. Document analysis

shows that the tracking and monitoring was adopted using a top down approach and thus most of the implementers were still trying to make sense of its rationale.

At FF the meetings among the stakeholders were still incomplete hence there is little evidence of implementation of monitoring. However, according to the plans, monitoring of tracking was aimed at ascertaining the number of at risk students that would have been successfully supported by the programme in relation to those that are completely excluded.

Also the study found that monitoring of student progress was done based on marks. However due to large classes, apathy and unclear understanding of the purpose of tracking, at times it became difficult for the tracking specialists to get all the required marks on time. Also the fact that academic indicators were the only main measure currently used to identify student risk means that institutions under study may fail to capture the holistic picture about students' performance.

4.4.5.3   Monitoring of SI and PAL programmes

On the question of how SI programmes were monitored in the institutions, the document analysis of the program delivery processes showed that the principles of monitoring PAL and SI programs were similar. The SI model guidelines insists that SI leaders be monitored by both the SI co-ordinators through debriefing meetings, peer observations, students evaluations and self reflection reports. Course lecturers on the other hand ought to check for improved learning behaviour such as improved reasoning skills, problem solving and performance. This aligns to the tenets of the SI model (Arendale, 2004) who contend that staff members must provide SI and PAL leaders with required support. Interview responses concerning the value of monitoring strategies used in SI and PAL programs revealed divergent views between the SI and PAL leaders as

opposed to the views of the program co-ordinators. The responses below shed more light concerning the monitoring mechanisms.

As program co-coordinators we are supposed to conduct monthly observations on SI and PAL leaders as a way to ascertain program delivery. However in most cases we have relied on peer observation done by the SI leaders who mentor each other. This is because of the serious staff shortage we are experiencing. For instance in some cases we have one PAL co-ordinator being responsible for PAL and SI leaders in two campuses or more. This weakens our monitoring system. However we also hold debriefing meetings and shared learning contacts to assist to deal with immediate challenge that the leaders may be experiencing (WW_PAL).

We also have rare has instances, where SI and PAL Leaders don't attend all sessions. We usually pick up on these during the impromptu class visits. We always have a timetable for all sessions so we use the impromptu for that. However sometimes this may be due to a change of the session time that the leader may make with the students and does not inform the co-coordinator. We are always on the lookout for such problems (FF_ SITR)

On the whole it can be observed that SI and PAL had robust monitoring mechanisms despite the challenge of staff shortage.

4.4.5.4   Monitoring of orientation programmes

On the question of monitoring the implementation of student orientation delivery, students were, in most cases, required to fill in anonymous structured questionnaires on the last day of orientation so as to get students' impressions of the program. The findings from some of the orientation evaluations showed fewer students than those

reflected in the attendance registers participated in the survey and there was also very scanty information on students' views about the programme.

The response below from one of the orientation co-ordinators at FF indicated that they used student satisfaction surveys during the orientation.

> *"We have always used the student satisfaction surveys as way to see how students feel about the program. We however noted a challenge that by the last day, some students would be already absconding some of the presentations, so the evaluation is usually done by fewer students than those who initially participated. However the little information we get is useful for making improvements to the program where necessary. The one thing we have not yet managed to do effectively is to extend the orientation over a longer period so that information is not packed" (FF_OC)*

As can be seen from the response, surveys were used as a monitoring tool, but did not represent all the inductees due to absenteeism by most students.

Probably the gap with this approach is that the students may not have internalised the program goals to be able to adequately comment on the relevance of the program for their transition. In this light, perhaps getting the feedback from more senior students such as those pursuing second year could also provide a wider array of perspectives on whether the orientation program is achieving its goals. Those students who have been in the university system for a relatively longer period are also able to objectively evaluate the relevance of the information provided at orientation in comparison to the **actual experiences they encounter when they are in the university system.**

4.4.5.5   Monitoring of counselling programmes

On the aspect of monitoring the implementation of counselling programes the findings from both staff and students showed that the programmes had to allow the clients to reflect on the counselling process in the form of discussion or fill in questionnaires on the effectiveness of the services. The challenge with user reflections were that they were time consuming. The two institutions under study therefore relied heavily on satisfaction surveys, reflections in journals and focus group discussions (Krueger & Casey, 2009). The findings indicated that the overreliance on few monitoring mthods also compromised the quality of the feedback provided . This finding finds support int he assertion by (Gibbs, 2010) of ensuring constructive alignment between the programme goals and other processes that are carried out. In this light it can be argued that booth institutions had gaps in the monitoring strategies they employed in counselling programmes. This is because varied tools webre not being employed to ensure triangulation. According to (Brookfield, 1995) Babbie, 2010) monitoring strategy may not fully address the desired goals, hence the need to complement with another strategy.

4.5   Summary

This chapter provided biographical information the 220 first year students who responded to the questionnaire, 88 facilitators who participates in the questionnaire and as focus group discussions and 15 staff members. The facilitators were drawn from the science faculties of the institutions under study.

The findings were presented based on the key objectives namely selection of students and facilitators into the five programmes, delivery models in place and their relevance to

the context, monitoring strategies in place and its usefulness. Each of the research objectives generated many themes. Selection and participation of first year students in orientation, tracking and tutorial was compulsory. However participation in PAL and SI were voluntary. Sadly, there was reported low participation of first year students in most of the programmes owing to clashes in timetables, poor enforcement of policy and students attitudes towards most programmes. As for the selection of the facilitators, various selection strategies were also used, the main ones being voluntarism, nomination and interview selection. In all the cases, facilitators had to possess specific attributes. However , evidence of these attributes are open to question as results seem to indicate negative attitudes, poor professional understanding of roles in most of the programmes.

As regards the delivery of the five programmes, different models were in place. The main issue of concern was the capacity of the facilitators to handle the diverse students. There were large student facilitator ratios with empeded effective programme delivery in tutorial , tracking and counseling programmes. Also these large ratios made it difficult to address the diverse students needs, mainly on language of learning, cultures, learning pace. This therefore negatively influenced the programme goals. Limited professional training and support from the staff members who were in charge of co-ordinating the prorgrammes also exacerbated the above challenges.

With respect to monitoring of programmes needs SI and PAL programmes had robust and diverse monitoring strategies. These included debriefing sessions, observations, peer visits and journal reports. However, the other pogrammes had good implementation plans which were hardly enacted due to staff shortages.

Desipte the challengese higheted in each of the above research objectives, all participants highlighted the crucial role of these programmes in improving student success and also suggested different ways to improve the programmes in place. These will be discussed in detail in the following chapter.

CHAPTER 5:   DISCUSSION

5. 0 Introduction

This chapter discusses the major findings of the study that sought to investigate the implementation of five student retention programs in two universities in South Africa. The discussion is based on themes emanating from the research objectives:

1. To examine the strategies used to select students participating in the five programmes

2. To examine the strategies used in delivering the five programmes

3. To examine the mechanisms for monitoring the implementation of these five programmes?

4. To develop a comprehensive model for student retention based on study findings on program implementation models

5.2   Major Findings on the Implementation of the Five Programmes

5.2.1   Tutorial Programme

5.2.1.1   Importance of tutorials

The findings showed that the tutoring program was largely implemented at FF and was viewed as an important academic strategy to improve student learning, success and retention of first year students. In this institution, tutoring was officially made compulsory for all incoming students.   Studies show that education settings make tutoring compulsory on the premise that students of varied academic abilities could benefit from discussions, and coaching by peers (Alsup, 2008; Topping, 2001). This also seemed to be strongly linked to the fact that the tutorial program has the potential to develop transferable skills that first year students can use throughout their lives (Trigwell & Ashton, 2003).

Tutorials were beneficial in clarifying the course materials. This finding aligns with the view that tutoring complements lectures, through reinforcing what lecturers have already taught (Shaw et al, 2010; Adams, 2006; Topping, 2001). However, for this reinforcement to work well there is need for constant communication and co-ordination between the tutor and the course lecturer to ensure that the same topics are covered. This means that lectures always provides the key content highlights whereas tutorials provides details about how such content is applied in novel situations. Thus students who miss lectures miss the disciplinary grounding while those who miss tutorials may take time to develop problem solving capability.

 Another benefit highlighted as linked to tutorials in this study is the opportunity for students to build peer relationships. These peer relationships are the source of social networks which students consult when experiencing social, emotional and academic difficulties. This explains why social learning theorists such as Vygotsky (1978) argue

that learning is best achieved through peer interactions and amicable relationships. Similarly the above finding confirm Tinto's view that students who have established strong social networks may find it easier to be academically integrated and retained in higher education than those who are not socially connected. This means that even students who are initially weak academicallycan improve their performance over time due to the assistance they get from friends, class mates and tutors. However it should be understood that the peer relationships that are formed through the tutorial groups do not occur automatically. Actually there are a lot of stages of conflict that each student undergoes and it takes a skilled and knowledgeable tutor to handle the various group processes. The tutor has an important role to play in coaching students on the ways of dealing with both academic content and social situations. These processes are handled differently depending on the tutorial model adopted.

The findings based on responses from tutorial program trainers indicated that FF had adopted cross age tutoring model. Cross age tutoring involves having asymmetrical individuals assisting each other in learning. In most cases the more experienced and older person takes responsibility of academically supporting the other person who is usually at a lower grade level (Gumpel & Frank, 1999, Topping, 1996; Greenwood et al., 1988). However, in this study findings show that tutors who were allocated older students were belittled. Resultantly, this lowered their self esteem and motivation. Perhaps the cultural dimension of respecting elders was the main reason for the tension between tutors and tutees in this case. Culturally, in Africa, younger people ought to get assistance and instruction from their elders and not the opposite. In some cases, the assistance sought can also be confined to the same gender (Juma, 2011). This finding has implications on the design of student orientation for first years to emphasise issues

of tolerance to diversity, so that all students may be able to embrace various forms of diversity that are encountered in a university setting. This diversity extends to issues of gender, language, social class and race. This is also a way of ensuring that the ethical values enshrined in the national constitution are also enacted in the classroom environment. On another angle, perhaps tutor co-ordinators could ensure tutors guide tutees who are younger or of their age to reduce the cross age conflict as experienced in this study.

Another importance of tutorials noted in this study was that students felt relatively free to express themselves in tutorials than in the lectures. Perhaps students were still experiencing the power dynamics in traditional pedagogy where the lecturer stamped authority and instilled fear in thestudents. However, the free environment created in the tutorials enabled tutors who had developed amicable relationships with tutees to assist in academic work as well as other social issues because of the safe and trustworthy environment. Beck (2007) contends that if well implemented, tutorials can dispel psychological, attitudinal or social challenges that may negatively influence students' effective learning and retention. Infact tutoring enhances psychological development of the students in terms of self esteem, locus of control and self regulation.

5.2.1.2   Student selection into tutorial programmes

The findings show that the tutors who were selected were expected to have at least acquired a Bachelor's degree, as well as possess motivational and leadership skills. Probably this was to ensure that each tutor has a certain level of academic aptitude to be able to assist others in learning. For instance, previous studies found that a good tutor must be a source of encouragement, and must embrace the qualities of being

nonjudgmental, must be patient, empathetic and of higher understanding (Kottasz, 2005, Hutcheson & Tse, 2006). Also a tutor must have skills to rekindle, and motivate those being tutored. These qualities develop tutee self-esteem, locus of control, self-regulation and independence (Beck, 2007).

However guidelines from human resources department emphasised a 60% representation of local students and gender equality. This however created a challenge in some departments where there were not enough tutors possessing the above qualities. Also, most tutors were just nominated by lecturers; therefore it was not easy to ascertain whether all of them met the set criteria. Tutees constantly complained about poor tutor quality and the researcher is of the opinion that the selection process could be negatively affecting the tutorial program success in terms of improving student learning , success and throughput.

Previous studies in South Africa also show that all students qualify to be tutees by virtue of them being registered as first year students. This implies that the selection is not discriminatory as all students have an opportunity to be supported in their academic work. However, course lecturers and program directors selected students into tutorial groups and there was a mix of diverse students in terms of age, culture, social and economic status, and prior educational experiences. There were possibly various reasons for ensuring that each tutorial group had diverse students, one of them being enhancing social cohesion and appreciating diversity. In a way, the educational setting was mirroring national values of enabling students to learn to adopt the national freedom charter. However, as will be discussed in detail in other sections of this chapter, this diversity also created many challenges which if not addressed can threaten the accomplishment of tutorials as a student success and retention strategy.

5.2.1.3　　Inadequacy of time to address tutorial content

Findings indicate that the goals of tutoring were hampered by inadequate time to address course content. Tutors indicated that the course content was heavy and difficult for most students, particularly at first year level. It is not usual that students coming from high school face challenges in adapting to the demands of higher education in terms of the curriculum demands. This is attributed to the fact that the high school curriculum has not been adequately designed to prepare students for higher education. However, subjective observations by the researcher seem to indicate that this is not the case for all students as some adapted very well. For the majority of the students in this study, findings from tutors indicate that the challenges of workload are exacerbated by the fact that most of the students were struggling to communicate, particularly reading and writing in English. This meant that most students could not read and understand the material before coming to the tutorial session. Therefore, much of the tutor's time was spent explaining learning content which was supposed to have been covered outside the class so as to form the conceptual grounding needed. This perhaps led to some tutors ending the tutorial session without adequately covering the content that had been planned.

The above observations have been well documented by scholars in South Africa and elsewhere and there is a tendency to focus on how the high school curriculum is not preparing students for the demand for higher education (Mabila et al., 2008). However the researcher is of the opinion that even the higher education curriculum itself is also not an alternative to the glaring learning gaps. Tutoring offers an opportunity to address the above gaps only if it is well carefully planned and structured to infuse those conceptual, practical and competency gaps that students are meant to be exhibiting.

Gisbert & Font (2008) argue that while tutoring has a potential to enhance learning a well-structured and organised curriculum design and interactions can achieve this.

One aspect which has potential to improve curriculum redesign is to restructure the assessment of first year tutorial work to infuse reading, writing and practical components or any other key competencies that the educators have found to be missing, then ensure that such activities are assessed continuously. Gardiner(1991) is of the view that engaging undergraduate students in more time on task enhances their learning. This implies more opportunities for students to practice the requisite skills through guided support. This may imply increasing tutorial sessions or increasing exercises so that students have opportunities to be engaged. This approach, however, may require much smaller tutorial groups of five students or less to allow students to effectively interact and give each other feedback. Falchikov (2001) highlights that the peer assessment feedback that is provided in learning settings such as tutorials is non threatening in that students have an opportunity to clarify issues without fear of being intimidated or judged. On the aspect of types of assessment strategies to be used in tutorial sessions, Angelo & Cross provide a wide array of assessment techniques that are ideal for different types of learning purposes.

5.2.1.4   Tutorial group size too large for effective learning

Another finding in the study was that the tutorial groups had a large number of students and this made it difficult for the tutors to attend to the various personal and learning needs of the tutees. This is important that the size of the tutorial group allowS all students to interact sufficiently through discussion, debate, pair wok and any mechanism

that allow students to share their ideas. While there is no specific ideal number of students required in a tutorial, perhaps any group of more than 15 students reduces chances for group cohesion. Social cohesion is important as IT IS the primary step towards social integration as espoused in Tinto's theory on retention.

5.2.1.5   Delivery strategies used in tutorials

The study found that the facilitative tutoring approach was the desired strategy for diverse students. Facilitative approach emphasises making the learning process active and participative as opposed to directive and passive, and is beneficial in reducing the instructor-student gaps that dominate the traditional learning pedagogy. Roscoe & Chi (2007) found that the use of facilitative tutorial strategies enhance students' creative thinking because scaffolding in the form of probes instead of detailed explanations are used to assist students to learn the content. This helps students to make logical connections between various concepts in order to construct new meaning. The tutor provides a democratic space for students to reflect and debate on the learning content so as to develop metacognitive skills. In order to facilitate a focused conversation relating to the content, the tutor usually uses different questioning techniques to guide students to think. Where students seem to be lacking background understanding, tutors may provide the scaffold in the form of brief explanations (Roscoe & Chi, 2007). This develops the competence to solve the problem or the learning activity thus enhancing deep knowledge building and high level reasoning (Berghamans et al, 2012). Facilitative tutoring is ideal for motivating students because role play, humour and paired activities may be used to facilitate understanding.

 Also the facilitative strategy also develops soft skills such as logical thinking, independent thinking and communication (Trigwell & Ashton, 2003). In this study, it was

observed that a number of students lacked background knowledge and this forced tutors to spend time introducing concepts. The content of the tutorial ought to include a recap of the basic concepts learnt as far back as primary school so that students are able to make links between previous and current knowledge. It is also important during delivery that the tutor compbines expnalations with probes so that students who have not been adequaltely taught certain concepts are able to catch up. While the above strategies are believed to be crucial in enhancing students learning , the study found that repeating students were not benefiting.

5.2.1.6   Repeating students minimally benefiting from tutorials

The study found that repeating students were not attending the sessions. Students benefit when they consistently attend sessions (Chin & Jerome, 2011; Gordon, 2009). Many reasons were provided for the non participation and the easiest excuse was time table clashes. Another reason espoused by most of the tutors was that some students were stigmatised for being repeaters therefore they would try to hide from their peers. Perhaps low performing students like the repeaters may be suffering from stereotypes formed during high school where tutoring in some contexts is associated with people who are weak (Du Plessis, 2012). This implies that attitudinal and psychological issues such as low self esteem are influencing the achievement of student learning in tutorials among the repeating students. Felder (2005) assumes that tutorial non attendance is a reflection of students resistance to innovative learning strategies adopted in tutorials, which may be different from what they already practiced at high school.   Previous studies indicate that tutorials are associated with deficiency, and thus some students shun them because they do not want to be associated with being dull (Adams, 2006) . In most cases, tutors and even lecturers may not easily realise that this is a potential

learning risk and assume that this is laziness or lack of seriousness on the part of the student. Brophy (2004) highlights that students attitudes and motivation are every important to learning. Strategies to motivate students such as inviting successful beneficiaries of tutorials to be guest speakers for such sessions so as to raise the morale of the repeating students.

Another strategy which perhaps enhance positive attitudes of low performing students is to give them teaching responsibility for lower academic levels as a means to enhance their motivation. For instance, Patterson & Elliot (2006) reported that there was successful reading and attitudinal improvement by low performing grade nine students who were given a responsibility to support reading for low performing second and third grade students. Similarly for the first year students in high education, they can be made part of a community engagement team to assist a group of high school students in a related discipline to what they are studying. The reason for doing this is to improve attitudes and also give them a sense of responsibility and the feeling that they still have some capability to teach. This may force such students to research.

5.2.1.7   Inadequate Monitoring of Tutorial Programmes

On the issue of how a tutorial programme is monitored, findings from tutor focus group interviews indicated the use of class registers as the only monitoring tool. Monitoring is regarded as an important phase in the delivery of tutorial programmes (Gordon, 2009). However, it emerged that some students were more concerned about signing the register than attending the tutorial sessions. This could mean that signing of the register was not a foolproof evidence of tutorial effectiveness. This implies that enforcing and

monitoring the process of signing was not tantamount to increased tutorial attendance and possibly learning.

Additionally, responses emanating from the structured questionnaires revealed different perspectives pertaining to making the tutorials mandatory. Some of the tutors felt that making the tutorials mandatory had a positive bearing on students learning. Perhaps the idea of enforcing tutorials had some other values such as maintaining student discipline. Perhaps the huge dilemna rests in how to ensure that the weak students who need the tutorials most participate actively in the programme. This concern was also raised by some scholars (Van Schalkwyk, 2010;Lemmens, 2010).

In contrast to the above findings, 15 (40%) tutors felt that forcing all the students to engage in tutorials was not necessarily paying dividends to all of them. This is because some tutees were good and therefore did not need any tutorial to reinforce their learning. However, forcing the attendance of the tutorials helped some students who initially had negative attitudes, and those who were academically weak and experienced low self esteem, to change their mindset and improve their attendance.

Findings on monitoring also revealed that the attitude of the lecturers responsible for implementing monitoring had an immense bearing on students' participation. To this end, it was apparent that courses where lecturers emphasised tutorial attendance had good attendance. It was also found that frequent impromptu visits to tutorial sessions resulted in increased student participation.

5.2.2   Tracking and Monitoring Programme

5.2.2.0   Tracking and Monitoring as a means to enhance student success

The study findings show that the tracking and monitoring program encompassed identifying students with indicators of dropping out, monitoring their academic performance and supporting such students with research based strategies to enhance their academic success and retention. The identification process entailed using statistical software to sort students who had course marks below 50% in summative assessments. This was done on a quarterly basis beginning in March of each year. In the researcher's opinion the two institutions were initiating the tracking process too late. The researcher concurs with scholars who argue that the value of tracking lies in how much it can support students' learning (Cuseo, 2005). The current scenario of identifying at risk factors could pose a challenge in that the intervention strategy could not be effective for those students needing prolonged support. Most of the scholars concur that the first three weeks of the term are a crucial time for early identification (Siedman, 2005; Madiny, 2005; Longden, 2004; Pascarella & Terrenzini, 2005). This is because there will be limited time for students to improve their performance in those modular courses which last less than four weeks. Monitoring of students basing on academic and non academic factors is more effective than just marks. In this study the two insititutions largely relied on early semester marks for tracking poor performance. This may present challenges for large classes where academics usually find challenges in punching marks on time. Perhaps using historical data such as performance in the previous year after the first three weeks could ensure that support is immediately provided to all students to allow sufficient time to improve.

Another challenge noted with the current tracking programme is that there was overreliance on academic performance as a potential indicator of dropping out. However, research in South Africa and elsewhere shows that student persistence and success depends on complex and interrelated factors (Breirer & Letseka, 2005; Tinto, 2002). It may therefore be necessary to also include a wide range of academic, social and psychological indicators of student risk. This information can easily be obtained from institutional historical data, f institutional surveys, graduate views or any other baseline sources. Historical data such as student engagement can also be used as an indicator. Strydom et al., (2010) found student engagement in academic activities as a strong indicator of potential success or drop out. Information on student engagement can be obtained from programs such as counselling, SI, PAL, tutoring, voluntary services and even library training. Such information can then be complemented with others such as enrolment status, residence status, and socio-economic backgrounds and previous schooling.

5.2.2.1   Student Selection into Tracking Programmes

The findings show that all students who were enrolled into the two institutions were eligible for tracking. This ensured that students would be supported without discrimination. The findings also show that academic performance was the main basis for separating those students that needed immediate support or those at risk from those who did not need any intervention. However, literature recommends using more than one risk factor to ensure a holistic understanding of student challenges (Krause, 2006; Fusch, 2012).

Findings indicate that the student tracking processes slightly differed. At FF selection of at risk students was the prerogative of the course lecturer and there was no clear strategy on how monitoring should be instituted. However at faculty level, a list of pass rates for each course was sent to Deans by the HEMIS officer on a quarterly basis. The faculty teaching and quality assurance structures would then discuss the plan of action for any course with performance of less than 50% in the end of term summative assessments. Even in such an instance the course lecturer was usually required to write a report explaining the possible reasons for students' failure and to implement any possible alternative measures. This approach, though strongly tied to the OBE principles of giving primary responsibility of students learning to the lecturer, created problems for courses which were historically difficult because lecturers would be required to account for student learning gaps almost every time. This somehow ended up creating apathy.

At WW the selection of at risk students was slightly different in that the tracking specialist was responsible for identifying at risk students for the whole institution. Each student was monitored and given a flag for each of the courses they were studying. The robot analogy was used whereby students flagged in the red were highly at risk of being excluded from university, those flagged as amber were moderately at risk while those flagged in green were performing well. The categorisation used at WW termed the "robot model" ensured monitoring staff would prioritise referrals to other stakeholders depending on the gravity of the student's risk status. Findings indicate that students who were in the red were given a letter to see the psychologist. The psychologist performed an advisory role and used intrusive advising strategies to recommend the plan of action or intervention. The plan of action sometimes involved academic development officers, finance office or the course lecturers.

Given the high number of stakeholders involved in the selection and monitoring process, there was a need for high levels of commitment, communication, and co-operation. The findings indicate that it was a requirement that the various stakeholders meet monthly to discuss issues of concern. In practice the findings indicate that although meetings were done the practical implementation of the plan sometimes faced challenges, especially of communication and commitment. Tinto (2013) notes the lack of coherent goals and intention in student retention frustrates effort for effective retention practices.

5.2.2.2   Tracking Delivery Strategies

Findings indicate that the two institutions were using different tracking and monitoring models. Institution WW was using the centralised model where a task team was spearheading the implementation of tracking in the whole institution. This task team was made multidisciplinary. Simons (2011) asserts that the centralised model is deal for large institutions where varied expertise is required. Multidisciplinary strategies were also recommended by Gibbons et al. (1998) and Kraak (2000) as optimal ways of enhancing problem solving in contemporary society. However, the challenge with the centralised tracking model is that all stakeholders have to be clear about the goals and commit to effectuate their respective roles. Any lack of commitment and co-ordination drastically affects the whole process. In this study lack of two way communication between staff, ADC officers and counsellors inhibited effective delivery of the tracking programs. Therefore it can be concluded that the tracking process at WW was well conceptualised but faced challenges at the point of implementation due to lack of experience, shortage of qualified staff and poor communication.

At FF a decentralised model was proposed. The study findings showed that the use of computerised tracking software by staff was not yet operationalised. This was attributed to shortage of qualified staff to train staff on the new software. Thus there was still reliance on the manual procedures of identifying at risk students.

In general, this decentralised model is based on the assumption that the course lecturer has the primary responsibility for the students in his/her course therefore it is the staff member's prerogative to institute tracking and monitoring processes (Simons, 2011; Madiny, 2005; Du Plessis, 2005). The lecturer as the expert has to use own intelligence to identify at risk students, monitor their progress and institute intervention processes that are most appropriate. This model assumes that the lecturer has both the will and the capacity to intervene and assist students who exhibit learning challenges.

However in the current scenario, the system is still cumbersome for the lecturer because marks have to be entered manually into the HEMIS where all student academic engagement is recorded. In this study the researcher feels that the adoption of the same model at FF failed to consider the influence of class sizes, and technical experience. In the researcher perspective, the model overlooked other contextual issues such as class size which had a bearing on the administrative work required on the part of the lecturer when identifying students at risk and carrying out advisory sessions with those students experiencing stress. Given that most of the lecturers were not trained in basic counselling and advising skills, this would imply that students at risk were to be refereed to counsellors. However in both institutions the student counsellor ratios were very high and therefore there was little guarantee that the students concerns would be immediately attended. On the other hand, it emerged that most students shunned counselling due to stigma, cultural beliefs and personalities, therefore any intrusive mechanism that would be used to nudge students to seek counselling needed to be well

crafted by the relevant lecturer. This finding aligns to previous studies where counselling goals were stifled by clients cultural beliefs and attitudes(Reeves & Dryden, 2008, Govalias, 2010). This approach however is ideal for course tracking systems using learning management systems. In such a situation it is easy to monitor student engagement in a variety of learning processes because all the information is automated. Another challenge with the decentralised model was absence of robust technology to track students' conduct and engagement in a number of formal and informal learning environments, using the swiping system. Centralised model is ideal for small institutions where classes are small. The model is founded on Outcome Based Education (OBE) principles which say that the course lecturer is ultimately accountable and responsible for students' learning. In this study the findings seemed to suggest several challenges with the decentralised student tracking mode at FF. Firstly, contextual factors such as large classes increased the administrative work of the lecturer as far as identifying at risk students was concerned. This was because some classes were as big as 600 students per course. Secondly, the software used to determine student risk factors at FF was perceived to was too technical and not user friendly to staff. Some of the tracking staff were sceptical about the usability of the tracking software by those members who were not adept in the information and communication technologies. In a previous study on use of technology for teaching and learning in South African insititutions, Laurrillard (2003) observed that staff competencies in the use of technology also influenced adoption and effective use. This finding align with observations that decentralided tracking models require personal motivation and commitment and even skills on the part of staff who spearhead the tracking processes ((Jones , 2008). Thirdly, the tracking and monitoring software would work best if it was linked to learning management systems so that staff could easily track student engagement with the courses. However at the time

of collecting data the LMS and the Tracking software were not linked. This could be an area that the university administrators could consider to improve the usability of the system. Fourthly, the intervention strategy was to be decided by the lecturer. Giving this responsibility to lecturers was positive in terms of making lecturers accountable for the students they teach. However, the challenge was that they could also get overwhelmed by the amount of handholding that they needed to do with the majority of the students.

5.2.2.3   Staff capacity and understanding of the tracking programme

The study found that the majority of the staff in the two institutions had not been trained to use the tracking software. In both institutions tracking was still done manually by specialists who had knowledge in IT and statistics and were extracting student information from the HEMIS database. Therefore it implied that much of how the tracking software would operate was more theoretical than practical. Even though there was no tracking software practically used there was clear conceptualisation of how this software would be used. Du Plessis (2005) highlighted that one of the seven challenges of implementing tracking and monitoring is to get buy in from the university community and proposes the use of a wide range of marketing and information awareness sessions to sensitise staff and students on the rationale of the program.

 The findings showed that a few awareness and software training sessions had been conducted on a small number of staff at both institutions. The responses from the tracking specialists also suggest that plans were in place to train more staff. However, the effective use of the computerised tracking program was still at its early stages to conclude whether the trained staff were already using the tracking software or were willing to use the system. Further studies on staff buy in may need to be conducted after

three years of implementing new tracking software. Research shows that the adoption of innovations in technology usually depends on the capacity of the stakeholders to use the system (Laurillard, 2003).

5.2.3   Counselling Programme

5.2.3.0   Counselling programmes Essential for Personal Development and Emotional Support

In this study counselling was found to be an important program to enhance personal development of the students experiencing stressful situations through supportive communication. Bojuwoye (2002) found that sources of stress for most first year students in South Africa emanated from financial difficulties, administrative processes during the initial months, workload and time management demands and relationships. This social and supportive interaction from the counsellor provides a platform to discuss and modify thoughts, behaviour, and attitudes of the client and facilitates self-insight (Feltham & Horton, 2009).

The need for counselling in higher education has increased due to open access policies that have resulted in students with diverse economic, social, and cultural backgrounds flocking into universities (Beekerman, & Cillliers, 2012). Counselling indirectly enhances student success and retention in that students who could have dropped out of school because of stressing situations are provided with support through various intervention strategies to manage their situations. In most cases, a qualified counsellor provides emotional support by assisting the student (client) to interpret the causes of emotional concern, to make reflections on best ways to solve the challenge, motivate and reassure the client that the problem can be solved (Morrison et al., 2006;Sue, 2013). Studies conducted in other South African higher education institutions attest that

counselling provide support to students on a wide range of topics such as relationships, career selection, mental health and social problems that may hinder student success and retention (De Jager,Ntlokwana, 2012; Nicholas et al., 2011;Hartung, 2009, Maree, 2009). In this study, first year student respondents who had used counselling services were also assisted on issues of mental health, career choices, finance and social issues. This implies that counselling is an important program for enhancing both academic and social integration as highlighted by Tinto's (1993) theory on student retention. Despite its potential to improve psychological wellbeing of individuals by allowing them to reach their maximum developmental potential (Rogers, 1971) very few of the enrolled students actually make use of the counselling programmes on campus. In this study, the same observations was made that students were not fully utilising counselling programes. The following section will discuss possible reasons for this scenario.

5.2.3.1 Student selection into Counselling

The study found that the use of volunteers and interns for peer mentoring was partly ineffective. This was because the selection depended on those who volunteered and there were possibilities of a low turn up of students wishing to serve in the program. This would imply that the program's sustainability was compromised.

On the part of student selection for participation, the study found that all students could participate as long as they were willing to seek help. However, the findings also noted that very few students had the courage to go to professional counsellors on their own volition; therefore the majority of the students who were participating in the program were sent to counsellors through the referral system. In principle, the use of the referral had potential to nudge students who were at high risk academically, socially, emotionally

and physically to receive immediate support. However in practice the referral approach system suffered from poor co-ordination and communication, commitment and co-operation of most of the stakeholders. In particular, there was no feedback system instituted to ensure that none of the students fell through the cracks.

5.2.3.3 Students' conceptualisation of counselling influence acceptance

Findings from the two institutions under study indicated that counselling was poorly conceptualised among most of the students. Limited conceptualization of counselling could be influenced by the environment one grows in which in turn influences how one perceives the world around them. A similar finding was noted by Flisher, Beer and Borkhorst (2002) who reported that 932 out of the 23158 registered students at the University of Cape Town sought counselling services over a period of three years.

5.2.3.4 Counselling associated with Stigma

In some contexts help seeking is stigmatised (Nicholas, 2002; McIntyre, 2008). In this case, counselling is viewed as a service for people who are weak and cannot solve their own problems. In another South African study conducted at the University of Limpopo by Meiberg, Arjan, Bos , Hans, Onya and Herman (2008), 72 undergraduates black students between the age of 18 -32 years highlighted the fear of stigma as the main reason for not using HIV counselling and testing. Most of the participants distrusted the health care workers who they believed were not skilled enough to administer adequate (Meiberg, Arjan, Bos , Hans, Onya & Herman, 2008) testing. Others feared that the health workers could disclose their status to family members or the community and would lower opportunities for employment.

In fact in this study a similar view could be observed based on the responses from students who indicated that they had not sought assistance because they were capable of sorting out their own challenges. This may also be an indication of ignorance of the value of professional counselling for one's psychological well being (Maree, 2002)

Another possibility for limited participation could be students' attitude towards formal counselling in these institutions This finding found support in the fact that people's perceptions about the value of counselling are critical in determining whether they use the service or not (Gaught, 2013; Seitawan, 2006). In a university study in Greece, Giovazolias et al., (2010) found that both staff and students knew about the existenseof counselling and its importance, but were not using the service because of the negative perceptions students held about the counselling.

The researcher is of the opinion that counselling has a big role to play in addressing social-emotional-psychological challenges of students and even human beings in general (Sue & Sue, 2013;Saunders, 2002). Therefore, it is pivotal that marketing of counselling services be stepped up in institutional settings so that there is a clearer conceptualisation and sensitisation. Apart from using pamphlets and posters and presentations at orientation forums as a way of marketing counselling programs , perhaps the use of movies depicting typical situations requiring counselling in the weekly orientation seminars or life skills courses might empower students on how to solve problems , and socialise them to realise that counselling is an important educational endeavour. This may assist in increasing visibility of counselling services and activities as part of the curriculum. It has also been observed that the counselling services are not fully used by most students.

5.2.3.5 Students' cultural beliefs influencing use of professional counselling

This finding as shown on table 4.4.5.0 indicates that a mere 6.8 % of the 220 first year respondents sought professional counselling from the available counsellors. The rest sought counselling services from other sources such as teachers 10% , 31.7% families;11.3% friends; and 40% had not used any counselling service. The fact that students sought counselling from unprofessional sources could mean a dire need for the emotional help on one hand, and poor visibility of the counselling program on the other. A previous empirical study in one of the institutions under study highlighted poor visibility of the counselling centre as one of the key reasons students were not using this service even though it was very important for their wellbeing (Dube, Mavhunga, Moyo , Mutopa & Sibanda, 2011).

Research also point to culture as inhibiting or enabling the use of counselling services (Maree, 2009 ; Allen, 2002). This finds support in previous studies by Dryden & Reeves, (2008) who found that cultural aspects also strongly influence help seeking behaviours. In this study, it appeared that seeking counselling assistance from a stranger was not culturally acceptable to most of the students of African origin. This seems to be more prominent in most African rural settings where the traditional perspective of counselling usually involve seeking advice from elderly people one knows, usually are members of the nuclear family the person trusts rather than strangers. This means that discussing one's problems with a stranger is uncommon and sometimes viewed as "washing one's dirty linen in public". In this study the fact that 35% (80) students indicated that they didn't seek advice from strangers could imply strong cultural roots influencing these perceptions. However, with infiltration of westernisation it is possible that these beliefs

are slowly eroding, especially among those who dwell in urban areas where there is increased contact with professional counselling centres. In this study this influence was probably not prominent because the majority of the students in the two institutions were drawn from rural communities and townships. A document analysis of the demographic information of the students showed that more than 60% came from rural communities in many parts of Africa while the other twenty five came from peri urban areas and townships. This could therefore explain why help seeking was still largely confined to family members. Perhaps further research on unique features of counselling from an African perspective is required in the two institutions under study so as to attract the majority of the African clients to ensure that students feel comfortable. This finding may therefore raise a need to put in place structures that mimic the family unit to ensure that more students make use of the service.

5.2.3.6   Counsellor Capacity influencing optimal program delivery

The study findings revealed that staff capacity seriously impacted on the delivery of counselling programmes. Staff capacity in this instance refers to student staff ratios that would enable optimal attention to students with counselling needs. On the aspect of staff student ratios at institution WW, shortage of counselling personnel made it difficult for students referred by advisors to be given appointments to meet the counsellor. The institution had over twenty five thousand students served by four counsellors while in FF three counsellors were serving close to twelve thousand students. The scenario above shows very high student to counsellor ratios. This scenario goes against counselling guidelines for South African higher education institutions of one counsellor per 1500 clients (Beekerman,2007). These counsellor student ratios negatively influence the delivery of counselling services. In essence one client may require a minimum of six

sessions to fully address the challenge they are experiencing. This is because counselling requires frequent scheduled contacts between the client and the counsellor in order to complete the full counselling cycle which involves several stages. Therefore, counsellors have to dedicate sufficient time to each client if counselling goals are to be effectively achieved. Even though there were interns and peer counsellors to, sometimes, assist with preliminary diagnosis, the work-load was still too much for the qualified psychologists who were serving in the counselling program. Therefore the above result may imply that counsellors themselves were also experiencing stress due to inability to cope with the workload demand. Like any normal human being, the counsellors were also unable to effectively carry out their duties because their work environment was not conducive for optimal performance. This perhaps points to the need for institutions to put in place Employer Assistance programs to help their employees also deal with such issues.

5.2.3.6   Congruence of counselling approaches with students characteristics

Research shows that the counselling approaches used must align with the needs and characteristics of the clients (Maree, 2009; Means,& Thorne, 2007). Maree and Beck (2004) found that the use of psychometric tests to assess student counselling needs were inappropriate for most of the students who were from non English and non Afrikaans speaking backgrounds. Instead, the authors advocated the use of narrative counselling and other approaches which were more appealing to diverse settings. However in this study the responses showed that multiple approaches were used in counselling students and these seemed to be working well.

The main issue of concern however was too much reliance on group counselling as a means to curb the staff shortage. For instance, one career and guidance counsellor at WW was reported to be handling students who were identified as at academic risk in groups of four or five instead of one on one. While group counselling is also recommended in counselling fraternity, it has the disadvantage of minimising the data integrity of the details discussed during the counselling sessions (Feltham, 2006). The use of group counselling approach seemed to be less approapriate becuase students' confidentiality was compromised. It could be possible that students who were uncomfortable with group counselling could abandon the sessions. Perhaps the staff shortage issue could be addressed through training peer leaders on basic counselling skills so that they assist in the initial advising of students. Or alternatively each department could appoint an advisor to directly deal with preliminary student diagnosis. Since research shows that there is a slight difference between counselling and advising, it is possible that structured advising could also be useful because the advisors ought to be trained as well.

5.2.3.4   Referral system not effective in supporting students counselling needs

Findings in this study show that the referral system used in counselling was weak. A person is usually referred for counselling when their concerns affect their relationships, responsibilities, health and performance and when the emotional well being is at risk (Gordon, Kuhn & Webber, 2006).   In the interviews that were conducted with co-ordinators of the different student retention programs in FF showed that most staff were just sending students to counselling program staff , in most cases verbally and an email to the counsellor, but made little effort to t follow up on whether the student had really been assisted. In the same way counsellors would also send students for academic intervention, but there was little two way feedback. This lack of two way communication

rendered the referral system ineffective. It could be possible that some students never honoured the referral. On the other hand, most staff never made an effort to check if students really got the assistance. Such a scenario poses a threat to the accomplishment of the purpose of counselling especially with regards to students who will have been identified as at risk for whatever reason. This also points to lack of commitment among the various stakeholders to the operalisation of the counselling program as it should be. Davies (2010) asserts that the institutional strategy on counselling support should ensure that there is clear communication between those who detect students' needs and those who implement the relevant support mechanisms. On the contrary, this study revealed that some of the referred students who would have fallen through the cracks were noticed when it was too late to effect sensible intervention. Since the success of the tracking system relies heavily on the successful identification of students learning needs, the gap in counselling could adversely affect the success of the tracking and monitoring programs in these institutions. Similarly, two way communication and follow up is needed to ascertain whether the program objectives are being realised. The counselling programs at WW seem to be experiencing serious gaps in co-ordination among the stakeholders. What is still not clear is whether there was commitment from all the stakeholders to make this program work. Tinto points out that effective retention is not spontaneous but a well planned action that takes into account contextual issues (Tinto, 2013) In this instance student counselling was also a retention strategy which failed to address co-ordination and monitoring strategies .

Perhaps an alternative solution to the above challenge is to ensure that basic counselling skills are provided to all staff so that they can at least be involved in student

advisory services. . Krumei, & Newton (2009) highlight that advisory programmes use the same processes as counselling. However counselling deals with issues of greater gravity than advising. Since not all staff trained as psychologists, they may sometimes feel less empowered to handle emotional and social aspects of students that hinder learning. Therefore perhaps offering in-service training in advising processes could increase the number of staff with capabilities to assist students experiencing distressing situations.

5.2.3.7   Trusting relationship necessary for optimal counselling delivery

Humans in general tend to seek assistance from the people they know and trust. Even in counselling programs, delivery is underpinned by principles of trust, confidentiality and genuinity of the counsellor (Siegel, 1967; Dryden & Reeves, 2008;Feltham & Horton, 2009). The counsellor is required to have personal and professional qualities that dissipate fear from clients. For instance, counsellors ought to be friendly, empathetic, upholding integrity, and non judgmental.

This is believed to enhance the counselling process (Morrison et al., 2006; Rogers, 1971). In this light, some institutions have set up peer counselling programs in the hope that students are more likely to open up to their age mates about their concerns than to professional counsellors. However, the current study showed mixed results about the use of peer counsellors. On one hand a few students sought counselling, on the other students were not confident in the peer counsellors because they were age mates. The above finding is not unique to the two institutions as Motsabi (1999) found that peer counselling was not used because of the stigma associated with the service as well as lack of trust of the peer counsellors.

Given that counseling is sometimes linked to stigma, the current study is interested in finding out strategies that can be used to convince students to make use of counseling services.

2222 Just like any other programme offered in higher education student counselling programmes should offer opportunities for clients to reflect on the counselling goals and provide feedback on improving the programme. This aligns to HEQC (2004) guidelines on the evaluation of educational programmes. Ideally the monitoring entails use of various evaluation tools such as satisfaction surveys, reflections in journals and focus group discussions (Krueger & Casey, 2009). The use of varied tools ensures triangulation because at times one tool is not fully effective in gauging the desired goals (Brookfield, 1995). During the closure of the counselling sessions clients ought to be given an opportunity to reflect on the counselling process so as to gauge the achievement of the initial goals agreed between the counselor and the client. This helps the counselor to ascertain whether the approaches adopted were relevant to client needs (Means & Thorne, 2007). The monitoring of the counselling process also assist the client in making an introspection of how their actions, attitudes and behaviours contribute to their emotional growth during the counselling process. Therefore in view of the above, it is very important that periodic monitoring tools be implemented so as to improve the programme. This is an aspect that would be explored further in this study.

5.2.4   Orientation Programme

5.2.4.0   First years challenges in the first three months of university

The study on the implementation of student retention programs was premised on the assumption that students encounter many challenges when they enter the higher education setting. Thus one of the subresearch questions sought the challenges that students encounter during the first three moths of entring higher education. The findings based on responses from 220 first year students who responded to a semi structured questionnaire are illustrated in table 4.4.4.0 in chapter 4 . However main challenges highlighted issues around interpersonal relationships . For instance, out of the 220 first year students' responses 55 (25%) were not sure of how to deal with difficult peers in class and in the residences. A second prominent challenge 45 (20%) was carreer choice. This is still a serious gap as highlighted in several other participants who particpated in the study. The fourth challenge was dealing with negative aspects brought by multicultural environment. The   researcher is of the opinion that most of the challenges indicated above revolve around psychosocial issues

The above findings seem to concur with the observation that the higher education environment has norms, cultures and expectations that sometimes conflict with students' prior experiences in high school and in their home communities (Geri, 2005). If not well handled such challenges can actually develop devastating effects on students' retention. Retention schoalrs argue that the support structures inside the institution are crucial for enhancing student socialisation, engagement and retention (Pascarella and Terrenzini, 2005; Kuh, 2008; Strydom et al., 2010). In this regard orientation is one such program

specifically designed to deal with the issue of adaptation and acclamatisation of new students into higher education.

5.2.4.1 Orientation Programmes as a transition strategy

Orientation programmes are various ways used by higher institutions to acquaint students to the new experiences that they are likely to encounter during their life cycle (Upcraft & Farmsworth,1984;Noel, 1985 as cited by Wonsoek, 2007). The rationlale behind accliamatising new students was that the majority tend to encounter personal, social, psychological and emotional challenges that disturb their learning (Hicks, 2005;Honkimäki & Kálmán, 2012). This is beacuse any new enviroment is overwhelming and the demands of higher education in particular can be stressful if support is not readily provided (Tinto, 1987; Newman-Gonchar,2000). As can be noted from the findings illustrated in figure 4.4.4.0. challenges should be discerned early enough so that support endevours to deal with each of the aspects can be implemented timeously. Perhaps one way of identifying students' diverse needs is through adminsitering student readiness surveys.Brown (2012) highlights that students' readiness surveys are able to solicit a wide range of students' issues such as emotional control, social connections, self efficacy and confidence, commitment to college and many others.

5.2.4.2 Orientation is an important social component of student transition

In this study , findings shown in table 8 of chapter four confirm that the students who attended the orientation program were glad to have an opportunitry to meet university leaders, staff and senior students who welcomed and also assisted them in understanding the expected behaviours,key university processes, procedures, and important places to go to when in need of help. This means that the orientation program

eased students adjustment by familiarising them to the university environment (Newman-Gonchar, 2000) .This finding shows that the orientation programme has withstood the test of time, since medieval times, as an important welcoming strategy to socialise new students Rait(1969). In this study, students socialisation with staff and fellow senior students enhanced their social intergration. Pascarella and Terrenzini (2005) assert that student interaction with the university community during the early days significantly shape new student personal goals and aspirations, as well as make them acquire a laconic sense of belonging and build social networks. Similarly, in the current study about 29.6% of the students reported that information on pass rates, study skills and services available to support their studies motivated them to work hard. This means that such motivation initiatiated at orientation also enhance self confidence and esteerm. This concurs with the views postulated by Wonsoek (2007) that students who have a clear understanding of the insitutional processes develop increased confidence, social and emotional satisfaction and a sense of belonging. Furthermore, students who attend orientation become assertive irrespective of gender, social, economic or ethnic background (Tinto; 2002; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). In this study, the demographic information revealed that the majority of the students were non traditional , as evidenced by 159 (72.3%) first generation students who registered, therefore their participation in orientation was crucial for their adaptation to higher education requirements. The next section expores whether orientation enhanced academic intergration through functional literacies.

5.2.4.3 Orientation not fully addressing functional literacies

However, in spite of oreintation programs having successfully enhanced social intergration, it appears tthere was a gap in their ability to address academic intergration

in terms of the functional experiences and literacies that students need in thier carreers as highlighted by Berger & Millen (2000). According to Berger and Millen (2000),functional experiences include knowledge in using of technology, confict and team working skills, self regulation and reading and writing conventions and financial managment. However the documents that were analysed and students responses were silent on the role of orientation in addressing study skills and carreer goal setting, stress management, learning styles, time and financial management, conflict management and team working skills and academic literacy requirements of higher education. There was very little evidence that the above were emphasised during the orientation period. The researcher is of the opininon that these aspects have to be introduced to students at the onset of their higher education careers. This assist students to be able to cope with the demands of higher education. In a United Kingdom study, Yorke (2006) found that most students dropped out becuase they were unable to cope with the demands of higher education. Simialrly, if students' functional literacies are not fully developed , they are likely to fail to cope as well.

In this study the findings show that the traditional orientation model which is currently being offered in the two institutions is not adequately addressing students' needs. The orientation duration for a traditional model is very short, usually lasting two to five days. The challenge with this approach is that very little time is given to fully address topics, therefore there is a tendency for information overload as many presenters attempt to cover a lot of topics over a short period of time. Given this characteristic, the traditional model does not provide opportunity for studentsto fully internalise information nor to develop the practical competencies that may be required. However, this model is still favoured because it is cost effective and requires very few human resources. In this

study, the findings show that academic staff were willing to be part of the orientation, but oppotunities were not necessarily afforded due to the short duration of the program.

Cuseo & Barefoot (2005) suggest the use of first year seminars or extended orientation where a small number of credits are attached for students' participation in weekly seminars covering various topics that deal with issues of transition. These seminars can be facilitated by specialists from different disciplines. Kramer (2006) argues that inclusion of various academic staff to teach some of the topics during orientation seminars is a strategy for enhancing prolonged students – staff interaction which enhances academic intergration. The use of an interdisciplinary team is also a way of developing the communities of practice highlighted by Wenger (1998). Porter (2011) found that activities dealing with health, psychological aspects and academic skills were equally important. Yorke (2004) argues that treating student support as both an academic and social milieu enhances student retention. However, it is important that this integration be sustained beyond the orientation week. Krause, Hartley and McInnis (2005) contend that comprehensively delivered orientation programs sustain improved student success if staff continue to work in teams.

5.2.4.4   Timing of orientation commencement critical for student engagement in the programme

In this study, findings shown in section 4.4.4.1 indicate that a few students 50 (22.7%) out of the 220 students who participated in the study had attended the orientation program that was conducted during the first week of the year 2012. The rest of the students pointed out varied reasons for not attending orientation such as career selection 60 (38%), looking for accommodation 46(29%) and settling bursaries (17%). This could imply that orientation was competing with registration demands and failed to

attract most first year students. Since empirical research proves that students who participate in orientation have higher chances of being retained into second and third year after controlling demographic, schooling and gender variables (Hansan & Swain, 1993), the scenario above already shows a gloomy picture of the potential of most of the students in the two institutions to be retained. This is because more than three quarters of the students who participated in the study did not gain from the orientation program objectives of acculturating students to the higher education environment.

The poor orientation attendance implies poor operalisation of the program through constant oscillation of cut off registration times. This was attributed to the fact that these institutions tended get most eligible students from "walk ins". Walk-ins are students who do not apply in time but come to register after high school results come out. These students were in most cases best performing students who had high potential to complete their studies. Given that the national policy on student selection gave each institution the prerogative to select students with minimum university requirements and to be accountable for the support of such students, this oscillation of registration dates was a way to attract students who had failed to secure places in highly selective institutions. However, the dilemma is that accommodating the 'walk ins" also affect the preplanned programs such as orientation. The above finding is not unique to the two institutions under study because Jama et al, 2008 also assert that student participation in orientation can be erratic if there is a clash between orientation and other activities that students perceive as important for their wellbeing. Crossling et al. (2008) recommend that orientation should be conducted at a time when all the registration processes are complete. Perhaps these two institutions have to reconsider introducing first year seminars or extended orientation programs so that they are able to cater for

their diverse clientele. First year seminars have the advantage that they are spread over a longer period of time.

Another reason found in this study that contributes to low orientation attendance was the socio economic status of most students. The findings revealed that some of the students did not have registration fees or were still sorting out financial issues by the time orientation commenced. Given the above reality, it may be necessary for the institutions to revisit the commencement dates for orientation so as to ensure that the majority of the students are served. There appears to be little suggestion from the literature on how to deal with such an aspect. Perhaps an extended orientation program spreading the orientation activities over several weeks or months could benefit most of the "walk ins".

Researchers have found that the e first three weeks are a crucial moment for students who enter higher education because it is a period to make critical decisions (Allan, 1998;Parmar & Trotter, 2004). It is therefore very important that the orientation program is admistered during this period, and has a component of decision making and goal setting. In this study, the findings suggest that the timing of the orientation program was usuitable bacuse of the clash betweenorientation and other important student commitments. This means that students who missed orientation may take a longer time to accustom to their new institutional environments, and probably struggle in setting realistic goals for their lives and careers. Probably the career choice challenges that most of the students expereince during the first year of study could be a sign of non participation in orientation programs. Further studies could determine whether there is a corelationship bewtween student career indecision and attending orientation.

On the contrary, South African scholars have also found that those students who fail to adapt to the new demands are likey to drop out within the first year of study (Letseka & Maile ,2008 Scott, Yeld and Hendry, 2007).

241

In this study, the findings from the first year students who participated in the orientation program show that they were motivated to study harder when they were informed about the students' retention rate and its effects. In this study, the orientation leaders who were senior students, seemed to be the main sources of this motivation because they were the ones responsible for taking the first year students for tours. They were also in charge of explaining most of the processes and procedures required for a successful university student. This finding is supported by literature which asserts that senior students and peers provide social networks that students turn to in times of confusion and difficulty (Tinto, 2002). A multi institutional study by Pascarella & Terenzini, (2005) found that students who had developed social networks were assertive irrespective of gender, social, economic or ethnic background. The researcher is of the view that in some cases students' social networks are not sustained and this affects commitments to their educational goals. In most cases this zeal for learning dies a few months after orientation if there are no other strong forms of enhancing this . Similarly a gap noted in the current study was that few orientation leaders had further contact with students beyond the orientation week. This means that the social networks formed at orientation are not formally sustained. Perhaps extending orientation activities could ensure prolonged engagement. Also, ensuring that all orientation leaders serve as facilitators in the different programs could further strengthen the social integration of the new students. Orientation can however only service student needs as far as aclamatising , but may not assist students in finding a solution to the emotional challenges they may be experiencing during the priod of transition. Also understanding the institutional environment also develops students' sense of belonging (Wonsoek, 2007; Wilcox, Winn & Fyvie-Gauld, 2005 as cited by Honkimaki & Kalman, 2012.

5.2.4.5 **Poor operationalisation of orientation policy resulting in poor student participation**

The findings indicated very poor student participation in the orientation programme. This was because less than a quarter of the 220 first year students who responded to the semi structured questionnaire had attended orientation. Yet the institutional policies in the two institutions emphasised orientation to be a compulsory program for all incoming students. The orientation program was made compulsory based on the assumptions that all new students experience personal , social and psychological stress when they enter a new environment, therefore orientation was aimed at acclimatising students so that they quickly acquaint to the higher education demands(Martinez, 1997;Crossling et al,2008). However the above scenario where fewer students participate in such an important program, points to serious challenges in the enactment of policy in the institutions under study. Tinto (2008) points out that successful student retention strategy ensure that there is alignment between institutional policies and practices. In this study it seems that the policy on orientation did not fully take into account the nature of the institutions admission practice in relation to orientation programming.

For instance in this study communication and marketing channels used to disseminate information about orientation were not very appealing to most students, therefore very few accessed the information meant to assist them. Literature points out to the need of using various modes of communication to market orientation programs (Mullendore, 2005). Communication about orientation was mostly done through a printed handbook posted to students as part of their admission package. However, admission staff pointed out that they received several phone calls asking about the same orientation details which were included in the handbook. It could be possible that most there is a problem

of poor reading culture among most of the students. Even though there is a general observation that the English language command of most students is poor since its not their mother tongue, in this study the assumption was that the students who were sent handbooks could understand English because proficiency in English as a language of instruction was one of the university entry requirements. The fact that most students still did not read the handbooks shows the diminishing popularity of print media. This finding may therefore mean that the institutions under study have to use alternative marketing and information dissemination strategies for orientation in order to reach its students. Perhaps sending out audio and video clips explaining about the orientation program on the cell phones or through social media such as facebook, twitter and google could reach most of the young people much faster than the current modes.

Another alternative marketing of orientation was through institutional websites, but very few students pointed out that they used the institutional website to get more details about orientation. Maybe the majority of the students in these two institutions do not frequently use the website South Africa due to lack of knowledge that the information was readily available or did not have knowledge on searching information from websites. Kramer & Wasburn (1983) as cited by Pein (1987) outline six attributes of a successful orientation programme. Among these attributes include issues of ensuring that the program meets the characteristics of the various students enrolling in higher education, careful planning of learning materials and enhancing functional competencies.

5.2.4.6 Selection of Orientation leaders through Volunteering

Responses from orientation co-ordinators showed that most of the orientation leaders who were participating in the orientation programs were volunteers. However, the point of reference was placed on volunteers who had knowledge of the university procedures,

processes and important buildings within the institution. This was to ensure that accurate information is conveyed to the new students. Longden (2004) contend that one of the reasons hindering student persistence in higher education is that students are provided with incomplete and sometimes inaccurate information during the early days of their engagement. Such students later on discover that there is misalignment between what they have been told and the realities on the ground. Hence they are likely to get discouraged and even drop out if immediate support is not provided

5.2.4.7   Diversity among the Orientation leaders selection enhancing inclusivity

Orientation leaders were diverse. The findings of the study revealed that the orientation co-ordinators preferred orientation leaders who were drawn from diverse backgrounds to ensure role modelling and identity formation. This is because issues of language and cultural identity could still be strong factors that influence socialization.

Thus orientation leaders were in terms of gender, nationality and even academic background. The diversity of orientation leaders was aimed at making the program inclusive and therefore meet the various demands of the programme objectives. Thomas (2000) asserts that orientation is one way of enhancing inclusion by making all students feel that they are valued institutional members. Consequently, the orientation leaders were spread across various academic levels from second year to postgraduate level.

5.2.4.8   Monitoring of Orientation Compromised by Differing Staff Competencies and Response Rate

Monitoring the accomplishment of the orientation program goal was important in line with national policy guidelines from the Council on Higher Education. The study showed that

the orientation program had several goals. The most prominent goals were acquainting students to the higher education environment, to develop functional literacies such as handling conflicts and embracing diversity, studying and goal setting. However, monitoring the accomplishment of the above goals was done through a satisfaction survey administered to the orientation final day. The data from the document analysis of the survey responses shows very low response rate from participants. This makes it difficult to accurately determine the program impact. Perhaps the leaders could consider extending the survey to a wider population several months after students have experienced the program. In this light perhaps, getting the feedback from more senior students such as those pursuing second year could also provide a wider array of perspectives on whether the orientation program is achieving its goals. Those students who have been in the university system for a relatively longer period are also able to objectively evaluate the relevance of the information provided at orientation in comparison to the actual experiences they encounter when they are in the university system. Palomba & Banta argue that evaluation and monitoring of programs can be regarded as effective when there is user reaction, a change in participant's performance. These were still difficult to measure in such a short period of time.

Another reason which hindered effective monitoring of the facilitators or orientation leaders was the use of volunteerism as selection criteria. Even though the duties of orientation leaders was similar and entailed guiding tours, coaching and mentoring the inductees, counselling, motivators and as college role modelling, orientation leader performance was compromised by the differing levels of competencies. This made it difficult to evaluate their operations in that their functionality was voluntary.

5.3   Summary

This chapter outlined the major findings of the study in relation to the research objectives on selection mechanisms used in the five retention programmes, delivery strategies and monitoring mechanisms in place. The study found that selection of students and facilitators varies per programme and this influenced effective delivery of the programmes. The study also found that the models used in delivering programmes were in some instances inappropriate, specifically, it became difficult to address the diverse students' needs in counselling and tutorial programmes. The study also found some gaps in the monitoring strategies used in most programmes. The next section will provide a conclusions, recommendations and areas for further study.

CHAPTER 6: SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.0   Introduction

This chapter presents a summary, draws conclusions and makes recommendations on study focusing on the implementation of student retention programmes at two South African Universities. Specifically the research objectives focused on examining strategies used to select students who participated in the five programmes, examining the strategies used in delivering and monitoring the five programmes. The study also envisaged on developing a comprehensive model for student retention based on study findings on programme implementation.

6.2   Summary of the Major Findings

6.2.1   Summary of findings on selection strategies used in the five programmes

In terms of the selection mechanisms that were used to ensure students' participation in the different programmes, the study found that self-selection (voluntarism), nomination and compulsory participation were the main strategies that were adopted. This finding aligns with Beatty Guenter's model of student retention that advances the importance of sorting students into specific categories. Similarly, in this study, mechanisms used fell into three categories which are: self-selection or voluntary participation, ad hoc selection and compulsory participation. The sections below provide a summary of the selection strategies and how they impacted the delivery of the programmes.

6.2.1.1 Tutorial programmes

The study found that selection of tutees was ad hoc, particularly when placing students into different tutorial subgroups. On one hand, ad hoc selection ensured that there was no discrimination in the selection of students. However, the diverse composition of the

students compromised the overall achievement of the programme goals. For instance, in large tutorial groups where there were mixed age individuals, tutors were looked down upon by elderly tutees. Also, given the diverse personalities encountered in the tutorial groups it was difficult to adequately address learning gaps. This was exacerbated by language problems and lack of reading and writing skills which were needed in the tutorial programme. Thus, students' individual circumstances were ignored, particularly socio-cultural issues and perceptions which could influence the success of the programme.

6.2.1.2 Supplemental instruction and PAL programmes

PAL and SI employed voluntary participation for first year students. However since no direct reward was associated with participating in the programmes, most of the students ignored the programmes.

6.2.1.3 Tracking programmes

Students who participated in tracking and monitoring programmes were selected based on their performance in assessments. It emerged that those students who had performed below 50% in one or more subjects were eligible for this programme

6.2.1.4 Orientation Programmes

This programme applied compulsory selection of all first year students who were registered for that particular year. Even though it was expected that many students would come, attendance was very low in both universities. This meant that the policy was weakly enforced as nothing was done to those students who did not attend.

6.2.1.5 Counselling Programmes

The study found that students who used this programme either selected themselves or were refereed for counselling through the tracking system. Those who self selected themselves acknowledged that they were in distress and were willing to seek professional help. However, due to the general stigma associated with counselling programmes, very few students took part in the counselling through self selection. The study also found that students' perceptions about the relevance of the programme for their wellbeing also influenced their participation.

However, the majority participated in the programme through referral. The challenge with the referral approach was that it had an intrusive component; therefore it required constant two way communication between the person who had refereed the student and the counsellor who was providing relevant support. The study found that in cases where such communication and feedback was lacking, students who were selected ended up resisting participating in the programme.

6.2.2 Summary of the findings on delivery strategies employed in the five student retention programmes

On the delivery strategies used in the programmes, the study found that each programme preferred a particular approach. However, in some cases there was contradiction between theory and practice.

Tutorial programmes were offered through compulsory participation and the cross age tutoring model was adopted. While compulsory participation enhanced systematic delivery of content, student negative perceptions about tutorials limited attendance. Also, during the delivery of the tutorial programmes, the facilitative approach, which was

the preferred one, did not bear much fruit because of lack of training among most of the tutors. In fact, some tutors adopted the directive approach which resulted in shallow learning, memorisation and high dependency on tutor ideas. This inhibited autonomous learning among most of the tutees.

On the delivery of tracking, the institutions adopted different models. However, in both cases the flaw was high reliance on manual tracking which made the tracking process cumbersome. At FF, the decentralised tracking model had not taken off because of limited expertise among the academic staff. The decentralised model requires highly motivated and technically skilled staff and is ideal for small institutions using Learner Management Systems. At WW, the centralised model was in use. Also shortage of staff and lack of robust infrastructure caused the staff to resort to manual procedures of student tracking. While the centralised model was favoured for ensuring multidisciplinary participation of staff, lack of communication and co-ordination among the key staff in these programmes impeded optimum delivery of the tracking and monitoring programmes. This finding therefore supports the assumption that the tracking programme does not fully take into account the circumstances or context of application. At FF there were classes with very large numbers; therefore this made the process difficult in the absence of a link between the HEMIS database and the existing learning management software. Also given the large number of students enrolled in classes at FF, the Learner Management System (Blackboard) had not been linked to the tracking programme. In tracking programmes students are supposed to be identified early enough so as to institute intervention in time. At WW, multidisciplinary support team was a prerequisite for the success of the centralised model. However, at the time of implementation, the study found poor communication between the various sections,

particularly between the course lecturers and the programme co-ordinators which led to poor monitoring of students.

The delivery of SI/PAL programmes was based on the assumption that those students who are afraid of failure would voluntarily participate in the programme. In the researcher's perspective this programme was specifically meant to serve students who had clear goals - focused and self-motivated; students who could regulate their learning. However owing to poor carrier guidance, unclear goals and low self-motivation, some students ignored PAL because there were no credits associated with the programme. For this reason, among others, the SI and PAL programmes suffered erratic attendance.

In counselling programmes, strategies for identifying students were supposed to take into account the structural and personal characteristics of different students. The study found that in both institutions, most students sought student counselling based on referral. However, due to serious staff shortage, the counsellors especially at WW relied on group counselling methods. There was also limited privacy and lack of individual attention for clients, which are key components of this program. Overall, students were sceptical of the counselling programme because of its location which did not guarantee privacy. Moreover, The counsellors are also perceived as incapable of upholding confidentiality. Other socio cultural aspects such as stigma associated with counselling services also limit students' use of the programme.

The number of counsellors was also very low compared to the number of students who needed help. The study also found that students' perceptions of counselling also influenced use.

In the counselling programmes, delivery strategies differed depending on the facilitator's preferences. However, the challenge was that counsellor preferences did not necessarily meet client preferences and beliefs. This implies that the counselling approach was not adequately catering for individual students' needs.

Overall, it is noteworthy to highlight that the various student retention programmes were delivered in isolation hence their limited effectiveness.

6.2.3   Summary of the major findings on monitoring of the five student retention programmes

Monitoring of each of the five programmes was very important for the retention of students. This is also a way of complying with the national mandate to monitor the quality of educational provisions as espoused by the Council on Higher Education. The study found that the monitoring mechanisms that have been put in place in the different programmes are weakly operationalised. Sadly, while institutional policies and guidelines provide a coherent set of modes of monitoring the implementation of the various programmes, staff and facilitators employed in these programmes reported minimal use of these strategies. Below are observations from the five programmes under study.

Tutoring

There was inconsistent and minimal use of class observations and impromptu visits to tutorial sessions. As a result, most tutorial sessions never actually happened. In fact, the study found that the use of attendance registers as a monitoring strategy for tutees' academic progress and a yardstick for tutor remuneration was ineffective because

registers could be signed without engaging in the required activities. The monitoring of tutorials was further weakened because some courses did not insist that tutees submit written or practical work done in each session. Feedback meetings between the lecturer and the tutors were in most cases nonexistent. This could explain why some students still failed even after they were believed to be attending tutorials

Tracking and Monitoring

The monitoring of tracking programs entailed meetings among the different stakeholders to ascertain the total number of students who had been retained after participating in the programme. While at WW these meetings were taking place, at FF there was still a challenge of staffing, therefore the monitoring strategy was not yet enacted.

Supplemental Instruction and PAL

These programmes had the most comprehensive monitoring strategies, making use of reports by SI/PAL leaders, impromptu visits by the co-ordinators, peer observations class registers and students evaluation surveys which were administered twice a year. However a small flaw was that staff shortages made it impossible to implement all the monitoring strategies

Orientation Programmes

The monitoring of orientation programmes was mainly hindered by low response rate from the students.

Counselling Programmes

Counselling monitoring was also weak owing to limited staff numbers serving in the programme. Ideally, the monitoring of counselling programmes was supposed to result l in peer counselors and other psychologists issuing client satisfaction surveys to the clients to ascertain their views on service delivery. However, this was never done in both

universities owing to the heavy workloads. Therefore it can be concluded that staff shortage was the main challenge in monitoring counselling programmes.

6.2.4 Beatty-Guenter's Student Retention Strategy

According to Beatty Guenter's Student Strategy Model, when designing and delivering student retention programmes, it is important that the institution makes use of a typology of five strategies namely sorting, supporting, connecting, transforming the student and transforming the institution.

In this study it was observed that many aspects of Beatty Guenter's model were being employed during the delivery of the programmes. Sorting strategies were particularly useful in counselling programmes and tracking programmes where specific indicators were used to delineate student at risk factors. This supports the assertion that sorting is a critical approach in student retention programmes (Johnson, 2001). The challenge, however, was that a limited number of indicators were used, particularly in tracking, thus there was a possibility that some students risk factors were overlooked until it was too late. Therefore it is important to employ varied sorting strategies that are co-ordinated.

However the study also found that most of the programmes under study were specifically designed to connect the student to the institutional norms and values. The orientation was a gateway to expectations and access to the key resources. Similarly SI, PAL, and tutoring supported the literacy practices of the various disciplines. However the low participation of most students in these programmes meant that there was a weak connection between the student and the content, and the peers who were supposed to provide emotional, academic and social support. The student was therefore not adequately transformed as initially intended. According to Beatty Guenter a transformed institution has a clear retention plan and strategy which is constantly monitored and

modified to ensure that resources are frontloaded to areas of most need. In this regard, the two institutions had not adequately transformed. In the researcher's view the two institutions under study were partially transforming retention policies and plans. However, the lack of co-ordination and co-operation among the stakeholders implied that institutional cultures were not fully supporting student retention.

6.2.5 Tinto's Interactionalist Model

The current study findings support the views by Tinto's interactionalist model who asserts that students enter into higher education with varied personal, academic and social characteristics that institutions need to address. This diversity was displayed by students' views on the relevance of the various programmes in their lives, including their behavior as reflected in attendance and non attendance to the programmes.

Tinto's theory was also relevant in ascertaining the extent of social and academic integration that students had with the institution as reflected in their participation in the various programmes. The study found that social and academic integration was relatively low among the first year students who participated in the study. This is because of limited students' participation in the programmes reflected in low participation in almost all the programmes. Since social integration can influence academic integration, there is need to strengthen the social factor so that students use these to improve their studies.

6.3   Conclusions

It has been established that the mechanisms used to select students into programmes limit achievement of the intended goals. Similarly, in this study, it was found that there was: poor implementation of the selection policy in most of the programmes. This is because nothing was done to the students who did not participate in orientation, attend tutorials or make use of tracking programmes. In addition, first year student selection strategies for PAL, SI and Counselling were based on voluntary participation. This means that only interested students attended them. Although the nomination of the first year students into tutorial programmes was done by the coordinators and lecturers, the diversity dynamics were poorly addressed. This may indicate that the process was not competitive and therefore these findings support the above assumptions that the mechanisms used to select students into programmes limited achievement of the intended goals.

Generally the delivery strategies that were used for most of the programmes did not take into account students' diverse characteristics. The following observations were made: each programme had a preferred approach. However this approach was not always implemented as stated in the goals due to the lack of professional qualities and inexperience of those offering the programmes. For example, the tutorial programmes were offered through compulsory participation and the cross age tutoring model was adopted. While compulsory participation enhanced systematic delivery of content, student negative perceptions about tutorials limited attendance. Also, during the delivery of the tutorial programmes, the facilitative approach, which was the preferred model, was not adopted. This is due to lack of training among most of the tutors.

On the delivery of tracking programmes, the institutions adopted different models. However, in both cases, there was heavy reliance on manual tracking which made the tracking process cumbersome. At FF, the decentralised tracking model had not taken off because of limited expertise among the academic staff. While the centralised model was favoured for ensuring multidisciplinary participation of staff, lack of communication and co-ordination among the key staff in these programmes impeded optimum delivery of the tracking and monitoring programmes.

In terms of the assumption that student retention programmes were implemented in isolation and hence limiting their efficacy, the following observations were made: There was no proper coordination among the programme coordinators and any flaw in the programmes was left to be sorted by the unitary programme coordinator. Tracking was very difficult to implement because it required communication and involvement of all the above programme coordinators and staff. This scenario, therefore, validates the assumption that student retention programmes are implemented in isolation which hinders programme efficacy.

The study concluded that lack of proper monitoring mechanisms result in poor achievement of original goals. The following observations were made:-Inadequate Monitoring of Tutorial Programs owing to overreliance on registers which were susceptible to abuse. Lecturers were not making frequent visits to tutorials and thus students did not see the value of the tutorial programmes. There was also lack of ownership of the tutorial monitoring process given that tutors were trained by ADC and

monitored through their departments. The monitoring process of the tracking programme was not adequately conceptualized in that no monitoring process had been put in place at FF. As For PAL and SI programmes, staff shortages compromised the implementation of multiple monitoring. Also monitoring of the orientation programme was compromised by differing staff competencies and low student response rate. The above discussion validates the conclusion that lack of proper monitoring of programmes results in poor achievement of original goals.

6.4   Recommendations

Raise the professional competencies of staff and facilitators

It is pertinent that the programmes prioritise the selection of competent facilitators. This may mean that the institutions should refrain from imposing rules that promote the recruitment of unqualified personnel in the quest for proportional student demographic representation. Research elsewhere shows that the quality of facilitators for any programme enhances the goals of the programme. As such the importance of competence in the different programmes find support from advocates of the various programmes

Strengthen the tutorial programme

Since tutorials are an important strategy to support students and fill up learning gaps that are not dealt with in lectures, therefore it is important for management to crack the whip in enforcing the policy on tutorial participation. This is because it was found that some students as well as some tutors were not attending the tutorials. As a solution tight monitoring of the tutorial programme is pivotal and must include submission of written or practical tasks to limit unethical practices among some tutors and tutees who signed registers without participating in the sessions. Also, continuous troubleshooting

meetings or shared learning discussions among tutor trainers, lecturers and tutors to maintain professionalism may improve tutor professionalism.

In order to ensure effective interaction among students, tutorial groups should have a manageable size of tutees. It is therefore recommended that Universities such as FF comply with the benchmarked tutorial size of 15 students per as recommended in literature.

Tutorials can be further strengthened manageable workloads so as to cope. Also , given the multilingual backgorounds of most students, English and writing skills be infused into the tutorials. The students who are weak in these areas should also be handled uniquely and carefully so as increase their confidence and coping.

Use diverse mechanisms to determine students' academic, social and psychological needs.

The study found that academic aspects were used as the main basis for selecting students into programmes. But diverse mechanisms are needed to ensure that varied student needs are met.

It is recommended that tutorial delivery make use of facilitative approaches that improve the adoption of collaborative and active learning in the form of discussions, brainstorming and role play, in class reading and writing and mini assessments .

The need to integrate and link all the programmes to effectuate tracking

Pivotally, all the retention programmes should be linked comprehensively so as to address all the facets of the student life cycle (FF Retention Policy, 2009). It is critical that various stakeholders meet monthly to discuss issues of concern as well as conduct joint professional development activities. Also memoranda of agreements should be

signed to show commitment to the goals of the tracking programme. This will make the process of identifying students' diverse needs and sorting them into appropriate categories, monitoring progress and implementing plausible support, easier to manage in the tracking programme.

Age a critical factor in selection of facilitators

The researcher considers having facilitators who are older than the students as a critical factor. This is because of socio-cultural factors which make some students feel belittled in the face younger facilitators. Although it was only in the tutoring programme where age was a challenge, it is important, for the programme coordinators to work towards filling this gap.

The programme needs to be diversity friendly

Since research findings have indicated that the students come from various economic backgrounds, it is important for their diverse backgrounds to be considered while planning and conceptualisng these programmes as well as in running them. It is important for example to understand that some students' level of language mastery may be wanting. Such students may need to be handled with caution if the programme is to fully retain them.

Emphasize and strengthen the implementation of writing and various forms of peer assessment

It is critical that institutions of higher learning emphasize and strengthen various forms of peer assessment so as to improve motivation, understanding of academic standards and providing immediate feedback (Falchikov, 2007).

Reward and encourage low performing students

It is critical that the tracking system avail and identify low performing students and keep close check on their performance and offer them rewards for any minimal positive improvement. Alternatively, this researcher agrees with Patterson & Elliot (2004) who proposed that low performing students should be given an opportunity to tutor others as a way of bolstering their confidence and self esteem.

Bolster monitoring strategies in all programmes

It is critical that diverse and cross sectional monitoring strategies are used to evaluate how programmes are delivered. The use of only registers as a monitoring tool in tutoring was ineffective. On the other hand, PAL/SI programmes were successful because of they employed various mechanisms. Therefore the success of monitoring strategies employed in PAL should be emulated and be applied to other programmes as well.

Furthermore it is recommended that the monitoring mechanisms for student tracking programme adhere to the guidelines provided by the higher education quality committee.

Counselling component to be infused into all the programmes

Since students indicated a lot of problems that call for counselling, the researcher is concerned that, as observed in other studies (Nicholas, 2002, Govalias, 2008) most students were unable to adequately make use of the counselling services, due to stigma, cultural aspects and staffing constraints. Therefore, it is central that all the facilitators and even lecturers be trained in basic counselling. This is to increase the staff numbers as well as professional capacity to handle problem solving endeavours. It is important that all the facilitators adhere to the counselling ethics.

It is critical that counselling approaches are student and context friendly. The counsellors should be well versed with counselling dogma and methodologies such as the Rogerian approaches. They need to display humanistic values such as trust, love, non judgemental, genuine etc (Siegel, 1967; Dryden & Reeves, 2008;Feltham & Horton, 2009). The counsellor is required to have personal and professional qualities that dissipate fear from clients. For instance counsellors ought to be friendly, empathetic, upholding integrity, non judgmental.

Orientation programme need to meet student's needs

Due to the gaps that the study found with orientation programmes, it is critical that they are conceptualized to meet the students' needs. To this end, Brown (2012) highlights that students readiness surveys are able to solicit a wide range of students issues such emotional control, social connections, self efficacy and confidence, commitment to college and many others. The orientation programmes need to be student friendly and the content should not be well spread to ensure easier understanding and internalization.

Orientation leaders need to be selected competitively

Since this study found that orientation co-ordinators were volunteers, this meant that they could drop anytime and mess the programmes. It is critical therefore that they are selected competitively, also based on a repertoire of qualities such as knowledge of the university procedures, processes and important buildings within the institution. This will ensure that accurate information is conveyed to the new students. Longden (2004) contend that one of the reasons hindering student persistence in higher education is that students are provided with incomplete and sometimes inaccurate information during the early days of their engagement.

6.5   The Study's Contribution to New Knowledge

Proposed Comprehensive Model for Student Retention

This section highlights a model which the researcher has proposed to enhance the comprehensive implementation of retention programmes. The model is based on the following gaps identified in the two institutions:

Inconsistent selection strategies for facilitators limit recruitment of professionally qualified and experienced personnel that serve in the different student retention programmes.

Delivery of successful student retention approaches in the different programmes is hampered by lack of joint curriculum design and shared delivery of some topics and activities which cut across the various programmes

Lack of two way communication and collaboration among staff and facilitators working in the various programmes stifles effective implementation of institution wide retention strategy embedded in the different programmes

Addressing students needs holistically when delivering the different programmes is not successful due to limited qualified staff. Hence, ongoing professional development of personnel (Staff and peer facilitators) involved in all student retention programmes ensures shared professional and ethical values, as well as development of core knowledge of the various programmes.

There is limited implementation of joint meetings, shared troubleshooting sessions, team teaching of all staff involved in the various programmes. This is important to enhance ownership of the programme goals and create a community of practice among staff serving the various retention programmes.

Use of a combination of varied monitoring mechanisms such as observations, written reports, students' performance and satisfaction surveys can provide authentic and valid information on the value of different programmes.

able 6.4.1   Alternative Comprehensive model for the implementation of student retention programmes

In essence this comprehensive approach to the delivery of the various programmes can be instituted through collaborative   selection of staff and facilitators, in-service training of staff focusing on specific topics such as professional qualities , joint delivery of the programmes on topics that cut across and ongoing joint monitoring of the implementation of the programmes.

Aspect of Retention programme implementation (identified from literature)	Aspects of student retention programme implementation (as used in the two universities currently)	Aspects of alternative model of a comprehensive student retention model (as suggested by this researcher)
Selection of staff that serve in the various programmes		
Selection of qualified and experienced staff to run different retention programmes	Inconsistent selection strategies with some programmes using volunteerism while others use compulsory selection criteria	Devise a standard selection procedure for staff in the various programmes. Comply with agreed selection policy following national guidelines. Select facilitators and staff who

Aspect of Retention programme implementation (identified from literature)	Aspects of student retention programme implementation (as used in the two universities currently)	Aspects of alternative model of a comprehensive student retention model (as suggested by this researcher)
		are approachable and have interest and passion for assisting other students. Tutors and counsellors , PAL Leaders and SI leaders of same age or older than those of the students they serve Use interdisciplinary selection panel when recruiting staff for the various retention programmes to ensure that facilitators have professional skills and competencies that cut across various programmes
Delivery Strategies (Tutoring, SI, Tracking, Orientation, Counselling)		
Context friendly programme	Most models used were borrowed elsewhere	Initiate institution wide discussions on context friendly

Aspect of Retention programme implementation (identified from literature)	Aspects of student retention programme implementation (as used in the two universities currently)	Aspects of alternative model of a comprehensive student retention model (as suggested by this researcher)
retention delivery models		and specific student programme delivery approaches Action research on all existing student retention programmes
Inappropriateness of programme delivery methods	Methods used are research based but not context sensitive due to limited monitoring	Implement various best practice monitoring strategies for each programme. Constantly monitor programme implementation so as to ascertain programme effectiveness. Modify strategies to suit clients' needs so as to achieve the intended goals
Ongoing two way communication and co-ordination of institutional stakeholders	There is lack of vibrant two way communication. Programmes work as separate units	Each student retention programme should involve many staff from other sectors of the university as possible. Two way communication to remain open
Monitoring strategies for the different programmes		

Aspect of Retention programme implementation (identified from literature)	Aspects of student retention programme implementation (as used in the two universities currently)	Aspects of alternative model of a comprehensive student retention model (as suggested by this researcher)
Coordination and communication among the different programmes	Referral system of students who need help show at risk factors as less co-ordinated	Memorandum of agreement among various programmes to ensure ownership of the programmes by all stakeholders
Programmes designed to address student needs holistically	Each programme is currently designed to address one or two key aspects of students needs	Redesign programmes to ensure that they holistically address the students' needs. For instance orientation programmes should offer familiarisation to the environment, while counselling , tutorial and PAL and SI reinforce the required skills. Tracking programme to provide evidence of the achievement of the skills through monitoring individual student performance.
Inadequate time to	Most programmes were	Inter link programme activities so

Aspect of Retention programme implementation (identified from literature)	Aspects of student retention programme implementation (as used in the two universities currently)	Aspects of alternative model of a comprehensive student retention model (as suggested by this researcher)
deliver programmes due to high student facilitator ratios	suffering from lack of time for delivering the intended goals. For instance, time for some tutorials was not sufficient. In counselling, opportunity to attend individual needs limited by high student staff ratios	as to provide more time for topics programme e.g. functional skills currently taught in counselling is also taught in orientation programmes
Improve timetabling of programmes	Poor timing orientation offered too early before students settled, tracking offered too late into the semester, counselling not providing sufficient time for individual discussion, tutorials not covering full content	Redesign curriculum and programmes so that all important aspects are covered in one programme. For instance first year seminar topics can deal topics such as study skills, learning styles.

Aspect of Retention programme implementation (identified from literature)	Aspects of student retention programme implementation (as used in the two universities currently)	Aspects of alternative model of a comprehensive student retention model (as suggested by this researcher)
Bolster monitoring strategies in all programmes	Insufficient and incoherent monitoring	Implement institution wide and inter programme-monitoring strategies to reduce respondent fatigue and increase response rate. Use multiple monitoring strategies to ensure validity of the programme implementation.

This researcher is of the opinion that this model may be applicable to all universities, however it may be ideal for historically disadvantaged universities where limitations in resources may be hampering the recruitment of many qualified staff.

While the researcher believes that the ideas above can enhance the implementation of student retention programmes, it has to be borne in mind that there are other factors that this study has unveiled that need to be addressed. Such factors include the role of human resources in the recruitment process, availability of institutional infrastructure, remuneration for facilitators, resources and the teaching and learning environment. As alluded to earlier in the review of literature, factors that enable or inhibit student

retention and success can be handled by the institutions. Therefore, a lot of workshops to raise understanding of the rationale for combining certain components of programme delivery need to be spearheaded with the programme co-ordinators. Also there may be need to increase the incentives of facilitators to motivate them to work across many programmes. This is necessary as a way to streamline resources through this integrated approach. Tinto (2006) argues that a change in classroom settings, teaching and learning strategies to be important when attempting to improve student retention. Thus, resources such as information and technology infrastructure can be used innovatively to mitigate the physical resource limitations being experienced currently. For instance, an increased use of the learning management software can improve interaction among the staff and students.

6.6   Areas of Further Research

The current study was confined to two universities. The researcher is of the opinion that the study could be extended to other universities. Such a study might assist in providing a general picture on how student retention programmes are conceptualised and implemented in the whole of South Africa. If the same findings can be obtained elsewhere, this can help to influence national policy on education vis-à-vis the implementation of student retention programmes.

Based on the findings from the two institutions, the study has proposed an alternative comprehensive model for the implementation of student retention programmes. An pilot study in the form of an action research study needs to be tried out with the staff working in related programmes both in the institutions under study or elsewhere, so that this model can be tested for feasibility .

A further study could make an in-depth analysis of the trajectory performance of those students who actively participate in all of these retention programmes.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1 : Request for Permission from to conduct study in institutions of higher learning

Appendix 2: Co-ordinator Supporting Letter

Appendix 3: Questionnaire to first year students

Appendix 4: Facilitator questionnaire

Appendix 5: Focus group guide for student facilitators

Appendix 6: Document analysis guide

CERTIFICATE OF EDITING FOR PATRICIA MUHURO 200604761

This is to certify that this thesis has been edited for the following grammatical errors and language-related inconsistencies:

⇨ Subject verb agreement
⇨ Syntax and construction
⇨ Punctuation
⇨ Word order and meaning
⇨ Consistency in the use of tense

However, as an editor I only make recommendations that may improve the quality of the thesis. It is solely up to the candidate to accept and effect the grammatical changes and recommendations suggested.

Dr. R. Makombe

Senior Lecturer

Department of Media, Language and Communication
Durban University of Technology
Durban, 4001

312

Appendix 1 : Permission letter to higher education insitutions

School of Further and Continuing Education

University of Fort Hare

Private Bag X1314

Alice 5700

12 March 2011

Dear Sir /Madam

Ref: Request for Permission to conduct Research at your institution

I am Patricia Muhuro, a teaching and learning consultant at the University of Fort Hare. I am currently studying for a Doctor of Philosophy Degree (PhD) in Education at the University of Fort Hare in South Africa. My research study is focusing on the implementation of student retention programmes in two South African Universities. I am therefore seeking permission to conduct this study in your institution. The main aim of the study is to examine successes and challenges in implementing student retention programmes. I wish to use institutional documents on the implementation of student tracking, student orientation, peer counselling and tutorial programmes. I would also like to interview co-ordinators or those individuals leading the programmes mentioned above. Furthermore, I wish to conduct focus groups with selected student facilitators involved in the delivery of the above student retention programmes.

I am looking forward that the findings of the current study will inform the design of a comprehensive model for implementing student retention programmes in South African universities. This model could also be useful to your institution. I am willing to avail the findings of the study to your institution through a copy of the dissertation.

Right to confidentiality and Privacy

To ensure confidentiality of the information you provide in the study, your name is not attached to the questionnaire. The information you give will be completely confidential and private. The consent forms you sign will be kept separate from the questionnaires. No names or reference to individuals or institutions will be used in any reports or discussions about the results of the study. The information you share will not be used against any person or any specific student retention programme. Further, the information that you will provide will be used for academic purposes .The results of the research may be presented in conferences and meetings, and also published.

Possible Benefits and Compensation

The research study does not provide for direct individual benefits. However, satisfaction can be derived from the fact that by participating in the study, the participants have contributed to knowledge in the area that affects them as teachers. Such knowledge base widens understanding of issues that affect education in general and provision of In-service education in particular. This questionnaire will take about twenty five minutes . It is my hope that you will give me your open and honest opinions. If you have any questions or concerns, contact Ms Patricia Muhuro, Faculty of Education, University of Fort Hare, Private Bag X1314, Work phone 0406022703;   email: pmuhuro@ufh.ac.za.

Yours faithfully

Patricia Muhuro(Researcher)

University of Fort Hare
Together in Excellence

Faculty of further and continuing education
P Bag x1314
Alice 5700

19 March 2010

Dear Sir/Madam,

Re: Permission to Collect Data your institution Patricia Muhuro

The above mentioned is a PhD candidate at the University of Fort Hare in the Faculty of Education. She is conducting a study on "The Implementation of student retention programmes in two South African universities in South Africa: Towards a Comprehensive student retention model". She is supposed to collect data from staff and students in the Science faculty, and from directors and programme co-ordinators for

orientation, tracking , counseling supplemental instruction and tutoring programmes as well as students in the first year of study. I would also be grateful if you could allow her to conduct interviews the programme co-ordinators and focus groups with student facilitaitrs involved in the above programmes. I would also be grateful if you could provide her with documents and other materials that will assist her in her study.

I would like to assure you that all the information collected will remain confidential and no names of respondents will be disclosed.

Yours Sincerely

Prof S Rembe

Co-ordinator Med and PHD Programs, Alice Campus

Faculty of Education

Appendix 3: First Year Student Questionnaire

Dear Participant

The questionnaire below solicits your experiences in support programmes offered in your institution. Please respond as honestly as possible. Please do not write your personal name and be assured that the information you provide will be used for research purposes. The data being solicited is meant to improve the student counselling services in your institution.

1. Did you attend student orientation_____

2. If not how what hindered you from attending_____

3. Are you the first person in your family to attend university _____

4. Who assisted you in choosing your university career _____

5. Who do you consult when you are experiencing any type of personal problems

   _____

6. Have you ever made use of institutional counseling services_____

7. If yes which aspects of the student counselling service were most beneficial to you?

8. If not, why have you not sought for counselling when experiencing problems of any kind._____

9. Your gender _____Age _____ Academic Discipline_____

10. _____

11. Counselling is meant to solve various aspects of student life ((Emotional –eg stress depression; social eg family, relationships, accommodation, financial spiritual, Health, educational). How have you benefited from these services

_____

12. Basing on what you have experienced or heard from friends , what improvements should be done by the student counseling with respect to the following aspects

    Assisting students in choosing careers_____

    Assisting graduates with placement_____

    Improving student life_____

Appendix 4: FACILITATOR QUESTIONNAIRE

Section A: Demographic data (please circle appropriate answer)

1. What is your gender   (a) Male__   (b) Female__

2. In which of the student support programmes are you involved?

_____

3. What is your discipline and academic levels

_____

4. What type of students frequently participate in your programme

Please explain the kind of skills, values , attitudes you knowledge that you aim to impart/teach in the programme.

Values_____

Attitudes_____

Knowledge_____

Skills_____

5. What kind of student concerns are catered for in this programme

_____

6. For how long have you been working in this area of student support _____

9.   Have   you   received   any   training   to   conduct   the   programme

_____

10. For how long is the training done _____

11. Are there times when you find it difficult to apply what you have been trained.

Explain_____

_____

_____

12. Who do you turn to when experiencing challenges in supporting students

13. What kind of support are you provided to accomplish the programme goals

_____

14. If given an opportunity to change how this programme is run, what would you do

differently

15.What kind of support would you prefer to get from:

      Students_____

      Lecturers_____

      Institutional management_____

      Deans of faculties_____

      Student services_____

16. How is the program monitored_____

_____

17 What can you say are the successes of the programme

_____

18.What challenges do you experience when implementing this student support

programme_____

19.Are there any institutional documents you use as guidelines for programme

delivery_____

Appendix 5: Interview and focus group guide for staff and facilitaitors
    1. In which programmes are you involved

2. Why did you introduce the programme in your institution (What kind of students needs are targeted by the programme)

3. In what way does this programme differ from other student retention strategies within the institution?

4. For how long is the programme run

5. Where are the activities of the programme conducted?

6. Is there any way in which the activities of the current programme integrate with other support programmes within the institution

7. How do you select students who ought to participate in programme

8. Is the programme compulsory of voluntary

9. What measures are in place to encourage students to participate in the programme

10. How do you raise awareness about the existence of the programme

11. What methods do facilitators use to impart the knowledge and skills to the students during the implementation of the programme

12. What kind of academic or social issues are mainly addressed by this programme

13. In what way are the academic or social issues addressed (what methods, content)

14. How do you communicate with students not attending the programme

15. How do you deal with possible misconceptions about the role of the programme

16. Do you train the facilitators working in the programme and how is this done

17. Is there any mechanism to evaluate how the programme achieves its goals

18. What aspects do you mainly focus on during the training

19. What challenges did you face in the implementation of this student support strategy?

20. What are the successes of the programme

21. What support is provided to facilitators when implementing this programme

22. What monitoring mechanism is in place to check achievement of goals.

23. If you had all the power and resources to change the way this programme is implemented, what would you do differently

24. Do you think the model used in the programme is suitable

Appendix 6: DOCUMENT ANALYSIS GUIDE

1. Student support strategies will be analyzed with reference to the following:

2. programme goals in relation to students needs and institutional mission and vision

3. Model used to implement the programme and its rationale

4. Sorting strategies – ways to get students who need the help most

5. Facilitation strategies and their link to student engagement

6. Professional competencies of those facilitating the programme

7. Key knowledge, values and attitudes inculculated in the programme

8. Integration of the programme with other support programmes

9. Where the programme is conducted.

10. How long the programme is run and who facilitates it.

11. Monitoring of the programme

12. Evaluation of the programme

13. When the programme commences and ends

14. Rewards for participation in the programme

15. Duration of programme

16. Professional competencies needed to facilitate in the programme

17. Challenges met during implementing the programme

18. Gaps between theory and practice

Appendix 7 : Editing Certificate

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Dr. R. Makombe

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