

**THE EFFECTS OF THE EXTENDED CURRICULUM
PROGRAMME ON THE SOCIAL IDENTITY OF
STUDENTS**

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by

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Abstract

This study explores the perceptions of the first formal cohort of Extended Curriculum Programme (ECP) students in the Somatology Department to determine the effects it has had on the social identity of these students. The Somatology ECP was one of the pioneer extended programmes offered in higher education in South Africa. The aim of the programme is to assist under-prepared students and to attend to the transformation of the programme. It is hoped that the insight gained from investigating how these ECP students perceive their situation, opportunities and experiences in relation to their full curriculum peers, can provide relevant awareness in future curriculum development of any programme using this type of extended curriculum model. In curriculum design, the focus is frequently on the academic sphere, with minimal attention to the social development of the student. In recent years there has been a movement in academia to understand the students' experience holistically in order to develop curricula which successfully improve their academic performance. Although some research has been conducted into foundation provision offered predominantly to address the concern of low throughput rates, few studies have been conducted to determine the effects of these types of programmes on the students' social identity.

Thirteen students that were currently registered in the Somatology Extended Curriculum Programme were interviewed using semi-structured interviews, and content analysis was used to identify the main themes from the data. The two main themes that emerged were that students believed the ECP programme had assisted them with the transition from high school to University. They had also constructed and adopted a particular group identity but still become fully integrated with the Full Curriculum students in their second year.

Declaration

I, Dorinda Borg hereby declare that this Master of Education (Higher Education) dissertation is my own work and that all sources have been appropriately acknowledged. This dissertation has not been submitted to any other institutions as part of an academic qualification.

The research was conducted in Durban at the Durban University of Technology in the partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Education at the University of KwaZulu-Natal under the supervision of Dr. S. McKenna.

Dorinda Borg

Date

Place

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Acronyms:

DoE	: Department of Education
DUT	: Durban University of Technology
UoT	: University of Technology
ECP	: Extended Curriculum Programme
FCP	: Full Curriculum Programme
FCS1	: First year Full Curriculum Students – year 1
FCS2	: First year Full Curriculum Students – year 2
UKZN	: University of KwaZulu-Natal

Definitions:

With reference to the National Diploma: Somatology (NQF 6) offered at DUT the following definitions apply:

Extended curriculum students:

This term refers to the students, who are registered to complete the qualification additional academic support modules in addition to their subject lectures. All new applicants are required to write entrance tests. Based on the results of these tests, students are selected to participate in the ECP. In the context of this study, the term only applies to the cohort of students registered at the beginning of 2005.

Full curriculum students:

This term refers to the traditional curriculum students who are registered to complete their qualification within the required three year period.

Academic literacies:

This concept comprises "the norms and values which manifest in discipline-specific practices" (McKenna, 2004: ii). Academic literacies are essential if a student is to develop the skills, beliefs and practices associated with the Somatology profession which are acquired or learnt while in an university environment.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study is to conduct an investigation into how extended curriculum students perceive themselves in relation to their full curriculum peers and to explore what motivates them to complete their qualification. Because the extended curriculum is a new programme structure and no previous study has been conducted by the department, I will try to establish whether my findings are similar to, or contradict, those views expressed in recent literature regarding foundational provision in South Africa (for example Bass 2007; Wood & Lithauer 2005; Timm 2005; Mohamed 2007 and McKenna 2004) which touch on issues of identity, self-esteem and motivation. I will discuss these issues in more detail in Chapter Two using the Social Identity Theory of Tajfel and Turner (1986) as a theoretical framework. my study provides some insights into the impact on students of being placed on the Somatology Extended Curriculum Programme. My interest also stems from the fact that I am the co-ordinator of this programme and, as such, am interested in understanding these students' perceptions in order to provide insight for future planning of the ECP.

For the remainder of this chapter I will attempt firstly, to provide an overview of the Somatology discipline and then to provide an explanation of the context of the study.

1.2 Definitions:

With reference to the National Diploma: Somatology (NQF 6) offered at DUT the following definitions apply:

Extended curriculum students:

Refers to the students, who are registered to complete the qualification over a four year period instead of the traditional three years. They are attending additional academic support modules. Placement onto the programme was determined by the results achieved from the entrance test all new applicants have to write. In the context of this study the term only applies to the cohort of students registered at the beginning of 2005.

Full curriculum students:

Refers to the traditional curriculum students who are registered to complete their qualification in the required three year period.

Academic literacies:

Comprises of "the norms and values which manifest in discipline-specific practices" (McKenna 2004: ii) that are essential in order for a student to develop the skills, beliefs and practices associated with the Somatology profession which are acquired or learnt while in an university environment.

1.3 Background to Somatology

The National Diploma: Somatology is at a level 6 on the National Qualification Framework. It is currently a three year qualification which is offered at four Universities of Technology (UoTs) and one Comprehensive University in South

Africa. According to The Chambers Dictionary (1994, p.1644), Somatology is defined as 'the science of the human body' which involves studies that incorporate teaching and learning in areas of complimentary health and wellness. The scope of practice of the Somatologist or Somatology qualification includes reflexology, aromatherapy, electrical and manual body treatments including massage, specialized facial treatments, exercise physiology, nutritional supervision, aesthetic enhancement treatments and minor surgical removal procedures (epilation). Training is also provided in marketing and clinic managerial skills as they are essential practices needed to succeed in this field (DUT: Department of Chiropractic and Somatology Handbook, 2008).

Traditionally Somatology has been a predominantly female profession. Over the past five years only five males have registered for this programme at Durban University of Technology where this study is based (DUT Management Information System, 2008). Currently there are three registered male students in the Extended Curriculum Programme (ECP) which is the specific focus of this study.

Somatologists find employment in clinics, retail department stores, hydro spas or corporate wellness centres and gyms or they may choose a position where they assist dermatologists and plastic surgeons with pre- and post-surgical treatments. Some become trainers or sale representatives for cosmetic or pharmaceutical companies. Others lecture in the public and private education sector. A number of graduates each year are selected to work on luxury cruise liners. Many small businesses are owned by entrepreneurial Somatologists. Therefore, in this profession people who are service-orientated and have acquired good communication skills are as important as people who have the technical expertise of the qualification itself. Many of the ECP students selected to participate in this programme were recognized as having these characteristics yet were also identified as likely to be at risk of succeeding in academia.

1.4 Context of study

The Somatology Department at Durban University of Technology (DUT) designed and implemented a formal ECP in 2005 as an attempt to address issues of inequality and to encourage transformation within the new educational system. This was in line with various national policy documents such as the Education White Paper 3: A Programme for the Transformation of Higher Education (DoE, 1997). The Department of Education (DoE) developed policies and provided the funding for these foundation programmes which aimed to assist students to articulate the gap between achieving a school leaving certificate and being able to cope with the academic requirements of higher education.

The aims of the Somatology ECP (Somatology Department Strategic Plan, 2005) were aligned to those of the Faculty of Health Sciences (Durban Institute of Technology:Strategic Plan, 2005). These aims were to widen access, particularly to disadvantaged female students, improve the student throughput and provide support systems to students who were challenged by the essential academic literacy practices needed for success in higher education. These were the main aims of the programme whilst simultaneously granting the students time to orientate themselves to the lifestyle of higher education. Therefore, it was hoped that the improvement in the low throughput rate of the qualifying Somatologists would assist in filling the industry's needs. According to Fynn (personal communication November 10, 2008) who manages the public relations portfolio within the Somatology programme, the department cannot provide enough Somatology graduates to accommodate the needs of salons, spas and retail outlets. This bears credibility to the concerns raised by Scott, Yeld and Hendry (2007) that the South African education sector is not yet meeting the demands of industry.

I was appointed in 2005 as the co-ordinator to oversee this new programme. My portfolio included curriculum issues, general administration duties, providing the students with necessary mentoring support and acting as the liaison person with the other subject lecturers facilitating on the programme. It is for that reason that my interest in this research arose. My rationale was that, by being able to understand this cohort of ECP students' perceptions, I would be better equipped to assist future ECP students' learning experiences by being able to use their experiences as flexible guidelines. I use the word 'flexible' in this context, as these experiences are unique to this particular group and cannot be regarded as generic or typical of all future groups of ECP Somatology students. Additionally being a White, older female whose experiences and perceptions may differ from those of the current student body, it is essential that I try gain knowledge from a different perspective.

The first cohort of Somatology ECP students who registered for the programme in February 2005 has already successfully completed all their full first year Diploma subjects, having had extensive support structures and a two year period in which to complete them (DUT Management Information System, 2008). The students' first year in the ECP only required them to register for three diploma subjects and thus attend half the number of lectures allocated to the full curriculum students (Aesthetics I, Anatomy & Physiology I, Communication Skills). For these three credit-bearing subjects, they joined class of full curriculum first year students (FCS1). The ECP students attended an extended curriculum subject named "Wellness" on their own. The subject (Wellness: Module I) was developed and introduced as a support subject, based on an integrated curricular approach of the Diploma subjects completed in that year. In 2006 they completed the remaining first year diploma subjects (Biotics I, Soma Techniques I, Nutrition I and Science I) with the 2006 full curriculum first year (FCS1) cohort. Wellness Module II was completed simultaneously as the support subject for the ECP students' second year of study. A more comprehensive explanation of the subject structure is provided in Chapter Two.

In February 2007 the ECP students registered for the full second year of the diploma which involved the merging of their cohort with the full curriculum second year students (FCS2) without the benefit of any further intervention or support. This was coupled with a heavier workload. My study will focus on this crucial stage of their academic progress. Student academic performance tracking is being undertaken by the institution (DUT Student Academic Record Cards, 2008). However, the focus of this tracking is on academic performance, not on how these students have been coping emotionally and what impact the integration has had on their self image and motivation levels. This study aims to consider these issues. Chickering and Reisser (1993) believe that a student's cognition and emotional development are inter-related, that is, when their emotional development is improved, it has a subsequent positive impact on their cognition.

I will also be looking at whether Tajfel and Turner's Theory of Social Identity (1986) can be usefully applied to these Somatology students. This Social Identity Theory describes how people categorize themselves and others and compare themselves with other individuals. This results in them positioning themselves within a particular group with which they identify the most strongly. The theory is further elaborated in Chapter Two. In this dissertation, I will be exploring the perceptions of the ECP students' group identity and review the relationships they have developed with their full curriculum classmates. I hope that this will provide valuable information for future curriculum development in the Somatology diploma that is offered at DUT as well as a better understanding of foundational provision at universities across South Africa.

1.5 Key research questions:

1. How has being an extended curriculum student affected the students' self-esteem, self image and perception of themselves?
2. Do the extended curriculum students perceive the full curriculum students' situations, opportunities, experiences and characteristics differently from those of their own?

1.6 Overview of the dissertation

In Chapter Two I will discuss the conceptual framework and will review the literature to provide a background to the study. The literature review focuses on the definition and purpose of the extended curriculum programme and more specifically the Somatology ECP and provides a platform for discussion of the structure of the programme. It also explores the issues of both group and self identity and emphasizes factors such as motivation, self-esteem and a sense of belonging which may have influenced the group or a student's attitude, perception and performance.

The research process or methodology of this study is discussed in Chapter Three. This chapter describes how a case study was conducted within an interpretive paradigm using a qualitative approach. It continues to report on the tools used to select participants, collect data, and analyze the data. The chapter ends with a discussion of the limitations of the study and the ethical considerations arising in the study.

The findings of the study are presented and reported in Chapter Four. Content analysis was used to develop key themes which are discussed in detail. To increase validity, the findings arising from the data are compared with the literature and conceptual framework with the ultimate goal of addressing the key research questions.

Finally the conclusions and recommendations are reported in Chapter Five.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

The legacy of the Apartheid era in South Africa has resulted in many disadvantaged school leavers not being adequately prepared for tertiary education. To address this issue, the Department of Education (DoE) developed policies which encouraged transformation within the new educational system (such as the Education White Paper 3: A Programme for the Transformation of Higher Education, DoE 1997). More specifically, the focus was on improving access for Black students (which also incorporated Asian, Coloured and Indian students) to enter a tertiary education system. Research conducted by Scott (2008) confirmed that one of the major roles of a University of Technology is to broaden access to higher education because the entrance requirements are lower than that of traditional universities. There has been a significant increase in enrolments of Black students at tertiary institutions over the last few years. However, as and Hay & Marais (2004, p.61) highlight, these previous racial inequalities were more prominent when assessing the enrolment growth rate at historically White universities.

Additionally, it has been documented (Scott et al. 2007; Hay & Marais, 2004; Grussendorf, Liebenberg & Houston, 2004; Van Wyk, 2002; Webb & Erwee, 1990) that although the universities increased their intake of students of colour, they were ill prepared to deal with the large intake of disadvantaged students. Difficulties arose because the student-to-lecturer ratios increased and there was inadequate capacity to manage the students' educational needs. Therefore, the key to overcoming these factors that contribute to inhibiting student learning, is

not only a matter of increasing access, but also of improving student retention rate and increasing the throughput rate¹.

The challenge for programmes offering foundational provision was to focus on and address the disparity between the levels of preparation of school leavers and the expectations embedded in first year university education. Within this study I hope to explore the effects that this transition process has on the social identity of the ECP students who undertake it.

2.2 Under-preparedness of students

In order for me to establish if the ECP has made a significant impact on the learning process of the ECP students, I need to understand under-preparedness. The Higher Education Monitor No. 6 cautions that under-preparedness should not be linked with a fundamental inability to deal with higher education demands. (Scott et al. 2007). According to Scott (2008) as well as Scott et al. (2007) the students that have been granted access into tertiary institutions are in the upper quintile of the South African population in their prior academic performance; therefore, these students should not be regarded as deficient in potential to succeed in higher education regardless of concerns about their levels of preparedness.

Scott et al.(2007) also suggest that the problem stems from inadequate articulation between secondary education and tertiary education. Traditional higher education, which consists of its own set of academic discourses and practices, barely acknowledges this gap or that many of these under-prepared

¹ For the purpose of this study retention rate describes the ability to keep students in the Somatology programme. Throughput rate refers to students who graduate within the allocated time required to complete their qualification; therefore, a Somatology student registered on the full curriculum programme (FCP) should take three years to complete this undergraduate diploma or four years to complete for the ECP.

students have limited exposure to these key academic approaches due to their educationally disadvantaged upbringing. This 'articulation gap', as it is referred to in the White Paper (DoE, 1997:2, p.32), implies that due to the absence of the sound academic foundations deemed necessary for higher education studies, students have a reduced capability to react positively to programmes in higher education and to take on the practices required of them.

Recently a report on teaching and learning in Higher Education in South Africa included a national cohort study (Scott, Yeld & Hendry, 2007) to comprehend the performance patterns of students in higher education. Many of the findings pointed to the fact that a discrepancy existed between the outcomes of schooling and the requirements of first year in higher education programmes. The study also reiterated the sentiments of the DoE, that the present system which I have referred to as the traditional system of higher education, was limited in being able to meet the "moral, political, social and economic demands of the new South Africa" (DoE, 1997).

According to Scott et al. (2007) one concern raised by education minister Pandor (2005) was that the number of graduates exiting the higher education system was not meeting the economic requirements of the country. To comprehend how this statement specifically related to the Somatology profession, I sought clarification from a number of South African top product house manufacturers and distributors. Binnemann (personal communication, November 12, 2008) confirmed that the sales of salon products had increased steadily over the last few years with more salons and schools opening up in and around the KwaZulu-Natal region. However, she also emphasized that many of these new schools were 'not around long'. Mackril (personal communication, November 12, 2008), the international training manager for a leading South African brand with experience in facilitating product house training nationally and internationally, confirmed this and elaborated further by suggesting that South Africa needs to offer better qualified people who are also thoroughly trained in life skills.

Many tertiary institutions in South Africa were allocated funding from the DoE for foundational provision to assist learners in articulating the gap between their school attainment and the academic requirements of higher education. Foundational provision originated in the 1980s, long before any funding existed to address the issue of the under-preparedness of the increasing number of Black students who came from educationally disadvantaged backgrounds, entering either historically White Higher Education Institutions or historically Black universities. The focus of the funding was to provide support and attention to the majority of the student intake. These early interventions were focussed fairly strongly on 'fixing' what was perceived as a student deficit and thereby allowing the curriculum to remain unquestioned. Shifts in understanding have occurred over the years, driven partially by the integrated model called for by the DoE in order to obtain the current methods of foundational provision funding (Boughey, 2007).

It is acknowledged by the DoE (2006) that many of these students' prior learning experiences had been unfavourably affected by either educational and/or social inequalities. As a result, these foundational interventions became the key means of addressing and facilitating equity of access and of achieving outcomes.

For the purpose of this study it is important to define what is meant by Extended Curriculum Programme. According to the DoE policy (2006), an ECP is defined as follows:-

Extended curriculum programme is a first degree or diploma programme that incorporates substantial foundational provision that is additional to the coursework prescribed for the standard programme. The foundational provision

incorporated must be (a) equivalent to one or two semesters of full-time study, (b) designed to articulate effectively with the regular elements of the programme, and (c) formally planned, scheduled and regulated as an integral part of the programme.

(DoE, 2006)

Wood and Lithauer (2005) state that the core purpose of an ECP is to provide students with alternative avenues of access to tertiary education, via equipping the student with the essential academic knowledge and skills required to meet academic outcomes. This was similar to the view of the Somatology department at DUT which designed and implemented a formal ECP in 2005. Besides the aim of widening access, particularly to disadvantaged Black students, the purpose also crucially included providing additional foundation support in order to improve the throughput rate of these students. This enabled students to develop their subject knowledge and academic practices to a level that provided a valuable foundation for ensuring academic success in higher education. The focus was thus as much on improved success as it was on improved access.

Evidence from studies conducted on either foundation or extended curriculum programmes such as the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University Foundation Programme and the career preparation programme (CPT) at the University of the Free State suggests that a well developed extended curriculum programme achieves these core functions by providing the students with a diverse range of knowledge, skills and values external to what may be considered solely the academic content arena (Wood & Lithauer, 2005). It is these additional benefits or 'added value' as Wood and Lithauer (2005) refer to them, which have been the stimulus for this study.

Wood and Lithauer state that, based on a pilot study conducted by Lithauer, students that had completed the foundation year tended to achieve or perform

better in the later degree studies (2nd and 3rd year) as opposed to the students who had been admitted directly into the three year programme (FCP).

Thus issues of self-esteem, self image and motivation will be discussed to establish if they are inter-related and if there is a correlation to Chickering and Reisser's (1993) stance that enhancing emotional development positively influences or impacts on student cognition. Bradley and Graham (2000) stress that, for a student to successfully achieve their academic outcomes it is essential that they have a sense of belonging. Therefore, one area of focus in this study is how these extended curriculum programme students perceive and position themselves as a unique cohort and what kind of relationship they create and form with the students from the full curriculum programme.

2.3 Student development context of ECP

Scott (2009) suggests that Academic Development (AD) has a very different 'set of associations' within the South African context to that perceived internationally. The rest of the world would most likely regard AD's primary focus to be on academic staff development. According to the HEQC (2007:74), AD work in South Africa comprises four interwoven areas of work. These include curriculum development, staff development, institutional development and student development. It is within the student development sphere that the ECP can be considered to fall. This section of the thesis provides a historical overview of student development initiatives in SA and looks at the very different perspectives of student development that exist.

In the early 1980's academic support programmes (ASPs) were developed and introduced to facilitate the entry and integration of black students into English-medium and as Scott (2009) refers to as 'liberal' universities in South Africa. These universities had been historically statutorily White Only universities.

During the 1980's and 1990's there was a noticeable shift from a predominately material and general advisory and academic support function to a more holistic approach which included specialized teaching, tutoring and instructional design. This shift was motivated by the fact that the ASP's only appeared to address the concerns or needs of the few disadvantaged black students who were attending these 'liberal' universities. The ASP's design was not suitable to meet the requirements of historically black institutions where the majority of students were regarded as educationally disadvantaged. Scott (2009) also suggests that these ASPs were designed to 'fix' a problem perceived as centred in the minority student even where this 'problem' was more broadly understood as being greater than that of language and study skills and included a concern with the socio-economic realities and the effects of poor schooling. Scott critiques ASPs as being structured by and acting to reinforce the higher education parameters which were originally designed for the majority (White) privileged student body.

Both Boughey (2005) and McKenna (2004) address how students entering higher education battled to take on academic discourses because the expected literacy practices were viewed as confusing, difficult to master and, at times, estranged them from their other identities. As Boughey (2005) explains, students draw on their different backgrounds and personal experiences for their range of beliefs, attitudes, values and practices. Gee (1990) refers to these initial understandings as being the primary discourse and suggests that one's primary discourse sometimes makes it difficult to acquire secondary discourses which one normally acquires through life. Boughey (2002) explains that many students experience problems with taking on the secondary discourse of the university and in particular the academic literacy of their discipline. The difficulty does not only lie with language as a separate, neutral medium. However, many language intervention programmes which are run in higher institutions continue to focus on language as a set of decontextualized skills. The concept of support during this phase was linked primarily to the intake of disadvantaged students and was often

understood exclusively as a remediation process for the student. This in turn led to such initiatives being linked to the perception of inferiority.

The notion that AD should move away from an exclusively support function and should include a focus on staff development, was supported by many staff in the AD field. These professionals saw this as a move away from AD which helped to sustain the status quo into AD as a way of transforming practice. Thus, a new model of Higher Education Development emerged in the higher education sector. This model's focus was focused more on institutional development and issues such as curricula and the development of teaching methodologies that would meet the requirements of the all of the student body. It is critical to stress that this progression from the support stage type model through to the institutional development stage model cannot be considered linear as they overlap and different discourses are used in different institutions or even different faculties.

Within these various understandings of academic development, arose the model of foundational provision. Foundational provision was implemented to address the articulation gap from school leaving into higher education institutions. Foundation provision is defined as:

Foundational provision is (the offering of) modules, courses or other curricular elements that are intended to equip underprepared students with academic foundations that will enable them to successfully complete a recognized higher education qualification. Foundational provision focuses particularly on basic concepts, content and learning approaches that foster advanced learning. Even where the subject matter is introductory in nature, foundational provision must make academic demands on the students that are appropriate to higher education.

(DoE, 2006:2)

The Somatology programme chose to design and develop an Extended Curriculum Programme which would address both the access and articulation concerns while still providing a holistic academic development role. There are

therefore different ways of understanding student development. These understandings greatly impact on the approach and structure adopted in the design and organization of an ECP.

2.4 The design and organisation of the Extended Curriculum Programme

The FCP and ECP students all register for the National Diploma: Somatology. However, in the case of the ECP, the three year diploma is curriculated over an slightly longer period of time. The first year is split and completed over two years. Both of these years comprise diploma modules and additional subjects. Refer to Table 2.1.

The programme allows for second and third year intervention with regards to foundation provision. This allows support to be continued throughout the qualification and continues to address the concerns of student retention and throughput. This is achieved for example in year two, by allowing the students to complete one 2nd year subject (Anatomy and Physiology II) during the 2nd year of their first year. This allows them some extra time in their full second year. The students complete Computer Skills I in year one, which is an elective subject; therefore, they do not have to complete Socio-Psychology II in their 3rd year which is year four on their curriculum (Refer to Table 2.1). In this way space is made in the curriculum after the first two years of ECP study for continued support to be provided.

The following table demonstrates the alignment of the ECP with the FCP.

Table 2.1: National Diploma Somatology

All students register for the following qualification: National Diploma: Somatology (3211007).

	NATIONAL DIPLOMA: SOMATOLOGY	NATIONAL DIPLOMA: SOMATOLOGY ECP
YEARS OF STUDY	THREE YEAR MINIMUM	FOUR YEAR MINIMUM
Year One	Aesthetics I Anatomy & Physiology I Communication Skills I Biotics I Nutrition I Science I Soma Techniques I	Aesthetics I Anatomy & Physiology I Communication Skills I Computer Skills 1 Wellness - Module 1
Year Two	Anatomy & Physiology II Biotics II Business Practice I Nutrition II Science II Socio-Psychology I Soma Techniques II Beauty Technology Practice III (experiential training)	Anatomy & Physiology II Biotics I Nutrition I Science I Soma Techniques I Wellness – Module 2

Year Three	Applied Bio. Science (Module 1) Applied Bio. Science (Module 2) Biotics III Business Practice II Nutrition III Socio-Psychology II Soma Techniques III Soma Techniques Project III	Biotics II Business Practice I Nutrition II Science II Socio-Psychology I Soma Techniques II Beauty Technology Practice III (experiential training)
Year Four		Applied Bio. Science (Module 1) Applied Bio. Science (Module 2) Biotics III Business Practice II Nutrition III Socio-Psychology II (optional if Computer Skills is done in year 1) Soma Techniques III Soma Techniques Project III

Originally the additional support subjects during this round of funding (2005 - 2007) were non-credit bearing. The highlighted subject (Wellness I and II) represents this non-credit bearing support subject. These modules were designed to assist the ECP student with academic literacy in Somatology, self-management, improvement of their communication skills and greater exposure to the scientific terminology of Somatology. Information literacy which involves developing academic practices such as how to find books and journals in the library, how to undertake internet searches, and referencing techniques, are also

covered in these modules. The modules were aimed at making the discipline-specific academic literacy norms overt for students.

The lecture periods for Wellness Module 1 are shared by the various subject lecturers of the other credit bearing subjects and the subject areas include Wellness Aesthetics, Wellness Anatomy and Physiology, and Wellness Communication. The Wellness Module 2 covered Wellness Biotics, Wellness Nutrition, Wellness Science, and Wellness Soma Techniques. These subjects are thus 'owned' by the discipline lecturers who co-create the curriculum in particularly discipline-specific ways.

The Subject Librarian supervizes the information literacy sessions within Wellness 1 and 2. Learning material on whichever topics/assignments are being conducted at the time is provided to the subject librarian by the various subject lecturers. This provides the learner with time to re-examine the work taught in the credit bearing subjects while developing relevant information literacy practices.

A member of DUT's Centre of Higher Education Development facilitates the academic literacy, study skills and time/self-management sessions in consultation with Somatology lecturers. Therefore, the essential academic literacy practices are incorporated into the learning outcomes which, according to Spady (1994), could be described as enabling outcomes, because the learning demonstrations that are included in the programme, are essential building blocks for learning and achieving more difficult complex outcomes or higher order competencies. For example, a student cannot produce a well constructed and referenced essay if they do not know how to construct one or how to reference sources correctly within the norms expected by their discipline. They can direct their focus on critically analyzing or reviewing literature and reflecting on content alongside the particular 'rules' for doing so in their discipline. These academic

literacy practices are taught in alignment with the academic tasks and assignments that students are required to undertake in their other Somatology subjects.

2.5. Conceptual framework

In order to describe the conceptual framework used in this study, it is essential to first establish what is meant by the term 'group'. In this study, the students are clearly identifiable because they are in the extended curriculum programme. However, the concern in my research is not so much with this simple notion of group membership, but more with how groups construct their own social identity. A group is not simply a collection of people, it is an assortment of individuals who share or are seen to share common characteristics. To show how the ECP has impacted on the students' social identity, it is crucial that we consider broader theories about identity because as Stryker (2000) in Hogg (2005) points out, the notion of identity is contested. The notion of identity is complex and can be considered from a variety of theoretical angles. Gee (2000a) suggests that these theoretical angles can be classified within four broad understandings as follows: Firstly, identity can be considered as the natural state of each individual, an approach which focuses on the biological aspects of identity. Secondly, identity could be understood from the perspective of institutional structures which position individuals in certain ways. Thirdly, identity can be considered from the perspective of discourses which construct the individual as having particular traits. Finally, identity can be considered from the perspective of shared practices within affinity groups. Gee (2000a) indicates that all of these understandings of identity have merit as analytical lenses, and it is within the last understanding of identity as affinity groups that this study is positioned.

The Social Identity Theory of Tajfel and Turner (1986) encompasses and expresses the understanding that people want to associate or belong to groups

because membership of various social groups provides positive reinforcement for self-identity. Secondly, according to Tajfel and Turner (1986), the desire to claim membership of a group arises from identification with key characteristics of the group's membership.

Tajfel and Turner (1986) developed a theory known as the CIC theory to account for the processes of social identity. It is based on three central elements, Categorization, Identification and Comparison. These elements will be used to account for how the ECP students view their relationship with the FCP students and how their perceptions and opinions influence the self-image and self-concept of this cohort of Somatology extended curriculum students at the point of merger with the FCP students as they all proceed into second year. Each of these elements of the CIC theory will now be discussed in more detail.

Categorization

According to Tajfel and Turner (1986), we classify people we see into different groups which allow us to make sense of the social world by dividing people into various groups. By placing all first year students onto either the FCP or the ECP based on their performance results achieved from the entrance test, the Somatology programme has already categorized the two groups to some extent.

Identification

The main desire of all individuals according to Tajfel and Turner (1986) is to strive for positive personal identity. Throughout this process we associate with groups which seem to have characteristics with which we

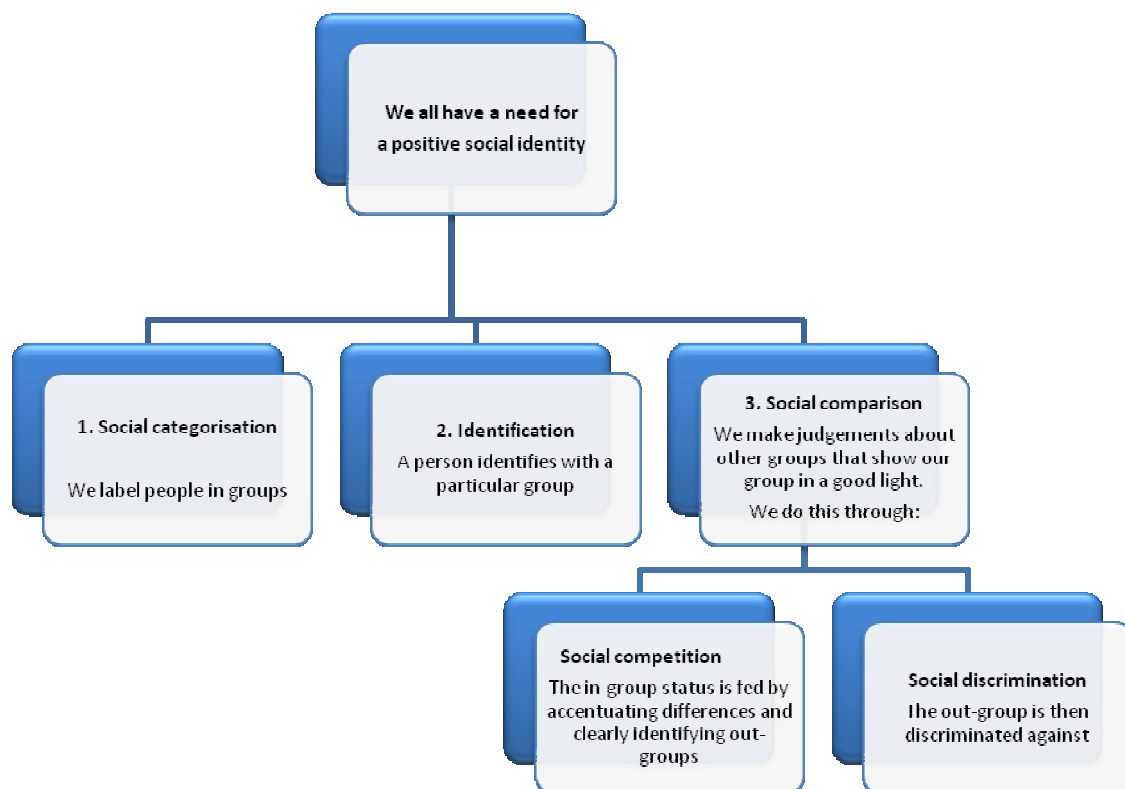
identify in order to bolster our self-esteem. This results in the process through which in-group and out-group status is achieved.

Comparison

We make judgements about various groups and seek favourable bias towards the groups from which we claim membership. Hogg (2005) expanded further on Festinger's (1954) view that a person confirms his or her perception and attitudes through interpersonal comparisons with those of similar people. With regards to this study, it could mean that ECP students perceive of themselves as ECP students at least in part by communicating with other ECP students and ascertaining their perceptions and attitudes and checking that these align with their own. According to Hogg (2005) such comparisons encourage camaraderie and unity amongst the members of a particular group. It is therefore necessary to determine if this applies to the ECP group

Tajfel and Turner's (1986) CIC theory can be simply explained using the following flow chart based on Cordwell's work (1996, p. 221) which depicts the process of how, as an individual strives for a positive personal identity, they may identify with a particular social group to which they perceive themselves as belonging and the results that may occur as a consequence.

**Figure 2.1 Diagrammatic representation of the Social Identity Theory:
(Based on Cordwell, 1996)**



An in-group accentuates differences between themselves and others through social comparison, competition and discrimination. By accentuating differences, this feeds the positive social identity of in-group as the in-group members perceive themselves as both different and better than the out-group members.

People simultaneously perceive themselves as an individual (with a personal identity) and whilst also aligning themselves with particular group/s (with a social identity). Although Tajfel (1986) supported Festinger's (1954) original views regarding social comparison, he differed from Festinger's views in that the focus

is solely on the individual's comparisons of themselves to other people in the group to develop their own personal characteristics. Tajfel (1986) expanded Festinger's (1954) theory and connected the notion of self-conception to group behaviour through social categorization. Gee (2000b) notes that researchers in many disciplines took a 'social turn' whereby a shift occurred from a fairly behaviourist, individual focus to a concern with social contexts and groups within these contexts. Identity theories likewise saw an expansion to include a more social focus. This study therefore attempts to move beyond a look at the individual students towards considering their group membership within a particular socio-cultural context. The perceptions of the students who were analyzed within this study are seen to "make sense only when studied within the social and cultural practices of which they are part" (McKenna, 2004, p. 10). Tajfel believed that an understanding of group dynamics produced a more nuanced understanding which was different to an individual comparing themselves to just another person only. Tajfel's (1986) theory at this point differs from Festinger's (1954) as the Social Identity Theory suggests that inter group comparisons are based on the differences between groups as opposed to the similarities. This results in the two groups comparing themselves to one another (social competition), which highlights and accentuates their differences, and may lead to social discrimination in order to reflect positively on their own group.

The theory continues to explain that groups select the dimensions that maximize the positive image of their own group. A group that perceives they are the superior group (in-group), highlights the differences between them and other groups so they reflect more favourably. A group that has a low status (out-group) will minimize the differences between themselves and other groups or completely select a new dimension of comparison, thus drawing the focus away from the differences altogether (Cordwell, 1996). It was necessary in this study to establish if the data collected from the interviews provided evidence to support the notion that the ECP group developed a strong in-group identity or perceived

of themselves as the out-group and to see whether they sought to diminish or highlight the differences between themselves and the FCP students.

This study considers the ECP students' group identity and also considers the way in which the ECP students relate to the FCP group. According to Social Identity Theory, we would expect that the ECP students may form a strong group identity, which could be in-group or out-group. If the data indicates an in-group identity, they may compare themselves to the full curriculum students in order to achieve a more positive social identity. This could lead to social competition and/or social discrimination between the two groups. Alternatively, if the ECP students reflect an out-group identity, the data should indicate that the differences between the ECP and FCP groups would be reduced by the ECP students, in line with Tajfel and Turner's belief, minimize the differences between them. In order to become well integrated, they may have first had to progress through the various stages of categorization, identification and comparison while simultaneously being influenced by issues such as motivation, self-esteem and self-image. Group identity is not necessarily fixed and the data will be analyzed with the understanding that the identity presented at the time of the interview may have shifted from that which was present when the ECP students began their studies.

2.6 Self-esteem, self- image and motivation

According to Burns (1979, p 3) self-esteem 'is a composite image of what we think we are, what we think we can achieve, what we think others think of us and what we would like to be'. Gerdes, Moore, Ochse, and van Ede (1988) describe state self-esteem as being composed of social, moral, physical, psychological and intellectual self concepts. In their discussion of self-esteem, Leary and MacDonald (2005) include the idea that self-esteem can be either a trait, which refers to generally how a person perceives and feels about themselves overall or

it can be a state. 'State self-esteem' is how an individual feels about themselves and their confidence at a particular moment in time or in a particular situation. Initially I will be exploring the 'state self-esteem' as I will be relating to the feelings of the ECP students when they were originally placed in the ECP (which is not a permanent situation). However, it will be interesting to observe whether, as the students progressed through the system, their successes would in turn affect their trait self-esteem? Could there be longer term self-esteem benefits evidenced in the data?

A person's self-esteem is dependent on how the individual feels about themselves, taking into account their confidence levels and self image. The individual's perception of themselves is based on their unique thoughts and beliefs which can be applied to Tajfel & Turner's (1986) Social Identity Theory, regarding the elements of categorization and identification. Firstly, the self-esteem and self-image of some students may be diminished due to being placed on the ECP when they had hoped to be part of the FCP. If this does occur the student may categorize herself with the 'out-group' as she feels she has the most in common with that particular group thereby identifying with them. Therefore this enquiry uses CIC theory in considering if, the ECP group perceived the FCP group to be any different from them to establish if they would compare their situations and status against the FCP. Secondly to determine if this process had led to any social discrimination between the two student groups.

The Social Identity Theory also suggests that an individual will usually endeavour to achieve a higher self-esteem and develop more positive identities. The student may be motivated to study harder, thereby improving their own personal attributes. This refers to the intrinsic motivation which is driven by traits such as a sense of self satisfaction, pride and status. Associating with a particular group (in-group) can enhance self-esteem, thus groups to which people belong, contribute greatly to maintaining and enhancing self-esteem (Mynhart, 2006). While the students in this study did not choose which programme they were

placed in (ECP or FCP), they could choose who to associate with during shared classes and non-class time.

Extrinsic motivators are increased by professional achievements which are attained via increased levels and intensity of knowledge and skills (Mynhart, 2006).

A model which expands on the Social Identity Theory further is Zins, Weissberg, Wang & Walberg's (2006) Concept of Interpersonal Relationships. Their model emphasizes that if students have a sense of belonging, this becomes a motivational tool that helps them to achieve academic success. This study thus seeks to establish whether the ECP students feel that they belong to a social group as this may contribute to their academic achievement.

Another model that may affect identities is Wenger's (2007,1998) idea of a community of practice. This concept draws on notions of identity which involve the process of social learning which takes place, including the shared socio-cultural procedures that arise and develop when people who possess similar goals, interact as they attempt to achieve those goals. He views learning as central or key to the development of human identity. He further proposes that when a person is an active participant in the practices of a social community, they are constructing their own identity through these communities. Hence, a community of practice is developed. Smith (2009) refers to Wenger's (2007) description of communities of practice as a group of people taking part in a process of collective learning or shared activity or domain of human endeavour (such as a clique of students) experiencing and engaging in creating and defining their common identity through contributing to the community's practices. By sharing a concern about being placed in the ECP or a passion for Somatology, the ECP students may therefore develop better learning approaches as they interact or engage with one another regularly. This notion of group memberships is considered in the data analysis. The ECP students could be considered to have what Lave and Wenger (1991) describe as peripheral

participation in the National Diploma. Perhaps, in line with theories of Communities of Practice, this could result in the ECP students becoming better prepared (through the ECP) and mastering the knowledge and skills required for success in Higher Education to be able to move towards full participation or full integration into second year.

2.7 The concept of self as a target of prejudice

Social Identity Theory (Tajfel and Turner 1986) suggests that often, in the process of a group striving for a positive identity, as they make comparisons with other groups, the differences between the groups are accentuated and this could result in a form of discrimination. According to Mynhart (2006), stereotyping can be 'seen as the cognitive component of attitudes toward any social group, prejudice the affective component and discrimination the behavioural component'. Or as Oakes, Haslam and Turner (1994) suggest, stereotyping is largely referred to as a 'personal adaptation to cognitive overload', which results in people developing an inaccurate perception of social reality. The Anti-Defamation League (2001), most aptly describes stereotyping as an 'oversimplified generalization about a group of people'.

When confronted with a particular group, people are strongly influenced by their perceptions about which traits the group possesses. These prejudices could result in discrimination against the people who are associated with the minority or out-group. In turn, this could influence the general wellbeing of a person because the self-esteem of an individual declines when they perceive themselves to be discriminated or stereotyped against. This may result in them believing what Mynhart (2005) terms the 'negative outcomes targets' or more commonly, the prejudice.

According to McKenna (2003) many students who have been placed in add-on tutorial and remedial classes often feel stigmatized having to sign up for additional courses that are designed for those with a history of poor performance. Although an extended programme cannot be described as an add-on, it may still be perceived negatively by some individuals, particularly if additional support subjects are included in the programme. But De Klerk, Schoeman, van Denventer, and van Schalkwyk (2005) observed in their research on the Extended Degree Programme conducted at Stellenbosch University, that issues surrounding stigmatization and stereotyping were only raised by a few learners. These learners indicated that some of their peers who might have benefited from an extended programme had chosen not to take part in such programmes due to the stigma attached to them. These findings were similar to what Bass (2007) observed when investigating the perceptions of Dental Technology ECP students at DUT.

2.8 Conclusion

In this chapter I have discussed Social Identity Theory as the conceptual framework and reviewed literature which provided the background to the study. The literature examined the need for national foundational provision within the South African context and the design and purpose of an extended curriculum programme, more specifically the Somatology ECP. It also explored the issues of both group and individual identity and emphasized factors such as motivation, self-esteem, self-image, stereotyping and a sense of belonging which all may have an influence on a student's attitude, perception and performance.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In this chapter I will describe the approach and methodology that I used in this study and describe the steps taken from the selection of participants, to the methods of collecting the research material, the data handling process and the data analysis methods used. This chapter will also include a discussion of the ethical considerations and the limitations of the study.

3.1. Qualitative approach

This research employed a qualitative approach to ensure validity of this study, given its concern with perceptions. According to Berg (1989), qualitative research emphasizes the essence or ambience of a phenomenon. The data collected represents the quality, meaning, and perception of the reality of what the participants really experience and feel as opposed to what may be generalized from a large quantitative research study.

A quantitative researcher may debate the validity of the unreconstructed logic of a study like this one due the difficulty in replicating it. Often the method the qualitative approach uses to collect data cannot be expressed in numbers and is therefore, not easily measured. This data is collected through words, gestures, observations and, in some cases, images rather than numbers. Open questions allow for investigation into complex issues which often cannot be answered with the use of simple closed quantifiable questions (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2007). The issue of flexibility in design is recommended by both Conti (1997) and Sidani and Sechrest as cited in Krauss (2005, p.764) who state that “deep

understanding and valid representation of the participant” (the individual student) is gained through using this qualitative method of data collection.

Qualitative research does not necessarily follow the principles or reconstructed procedures which are undertaken in quantitative research. More simply, Denzin and Lincoln (2003) refer to how Lofland and Lofland (1984) describe qualitative research as involving methods of data collection and analysis that are not considered quantitative. According to Cohen et al. (2007), the concept of validity is usually understood through the view of quantitative research, but recently it has acquired new nuances to include qualitative methods. In particular, ‘validity’ is often presented as a caution that the qualitative researcher’s own positioning within the study may influence and bias the findings. The qualitative approach to this aspect of validity may be that the individual researcher’s perspective should be overtly included. The issue of validity in this study is addressed via the concepts of honesty, trustworthiness and rich descriptive data which are generated to allow both the researcher and the reader to gain a sense of understanding and create meaning from these unique situations. The findings presented in Chapter Four will be supported by quotations from the data to address reliability. My research focuses on my interpretation of the understanding and significance of a phenomenon which in this case study involves the students’ perceptions and opinions of being an ECP student.

3.2. The paradigm used in this study

This study was undertaken in an interpretive paradigm, which when considering Jurgen Habermas’ theory of knowledge, as described by MacIsaac (2006), would be aligned to the concept of practical interest. The interpretive researcher (such as myself) distinguishes themselves by understanding a specific situation as it is presented to them instead of generalizing or trying to replicate the study.

Therefore, it is generally believed that the knowledge generated from this type of approach is socially constructed. Quinn (1999, p.41) summarizes it most appropriately when she says: "Thus the knowledge and reality constructed through research is relative to the research context and there can be multiple constructions of any situation". A positivistic researcher would argue that the role of a researcher is to uncover, predict and control the one 'true' reality. Their argument would presume that an interpretive researcher's subjectivity or bias would reduce the validity of the study. However, the notion of subjectivity from an interpretive perspective is that it acknowledges that the researcher's own comprehension of reality may contribute to the concept of multiple constructions of a particular circumstance. Adler and Adler (1987) refer to qualitative research as subjective methodology and they argue that a fundamental aspect of interpretive research is that the researcher themselves becomes the research instrument. Therefore, it is critical that I explain my own position as the research process unfolds. I have attempted to do this by describing my role in the ECP in Chapter One and by providing detailed explanations for my analyses and including quoted evidence for the conclusions I reach in the data analysis in Chapter Four.

The second important characteristic of this interpretive paradigm is that meanings are established to explain the activities or behaviour of the research participants. In this study it may apply to some lines of enquiry. However I do not believe this to be the case in every situation. Cohen et al.(2007, p.22) state that:-

The aim of scientific investigation for the interpretive researcher is to understand how this glossing of reality goes on at one time and in one place and compare it with what goes on in different times and places. Thus theory becomes sets of meanings which yield insight and understanding of people's behaviour. (Cohen et al.,2007, p.22).

3.3 Methodology

I believe that an interpretive in-depth case study is the most appropriate methodological design type (Mouton, 2001) or research strategy (Yin, 1994) for this study. Henning (1997) aptly states “that the researcher suspects that there is something waiting to be unravelled in the case” which typifies the principles of qualitative research. According to Merriam (1998), the interest in the case study is more in the procedure than the outcomes, in the context rather than in a specific variable. The case study is focused on an exploration and discovery instead of confirmation and generalization. These characteristics are what make the case study unique and different from other methodologies of research. Soy (1997) cautions that a case study is not intended for broad generalizations of results to be made, nor for a standardization to be concluded from this case study research project.

I used Yin’s (1994) four stages of conducting a case study as a guideline for my methodology. These stages involve:

1. Devising the case study,
2. Carrying out the case study,
3. Analysing the data collected and then
4. Establishing conclusions and suggesting recommendations.

Case studies strive to portray ‘what it is like’ to be in a particular situation, to catch the close up reality and ‘thick description’ (Geertz 1973b) of participants’ lived experiences of, thoughts about and feelings for a situation. They involve looking at a case or phenomenon in its real-life context usually employing many types of data (Cohen et al., 2007, p. 254).

In a case study, a hypothesis is usually not formulated. Rather, general ideas or expectations play a role in guiding the empirical research (Mouton, 2001). Generally, a case study "requires a problem that seeks a holistic understanding of the phenomenon or question based on inductive logic-reasoning from specific to more general terms" (Colorado State University n.d.). I am seeking to ascertain the impact the ECP has on the social identity of students who are in the Somatology ECP. Although the department has monitored their academic performance, there is limited evidence available regarding their social development.

Many authors (for example Yin, 1994; Stake, 1995 and Soy, 1997) agree that a case study is not based on sampling research but rather on selecting cases that would maximize the amount of rich descriptive data that could be collected and learnt from in the time available for the experiment. One view regarding case studies is that they are sometimes referred to as 'methodological holism'. This means that it is necessary to find a subject/participant who is the most average and representative of a group of people or environment to which they belong. This subject then reflects and typifies the whole universe of other subjects or people around them, thus patterns in behaviour are formed. Although I can comprehend this concept, I would question if this is not a form of generalization which is in contradiction to the principles of a case study.

Some critics of a case study suggest that this methodology should only be used as an exploratory tool for research. Other authors such as Denzin and Lincoln (2003) emphasize that a case study draws attention specifically to the question of what is to be explored and learnt (concentrated inquiry). For example, in this study the social effects of this ECP are under scrutiny. These may be unique and only experienced by students on this programme and may not apply to other students from different programmes. Therefore no generalization can be drawn from it. Another characteristic of a case study highlighted by Cohen et al. (2007) is that

as people read about a particular case study, they may have a comparable phenomenon and they may relate to some of the findings. This may be because they have similar contexts which allow them to connect some of findings to their own situation. As a result, the findings can be used as theoretical confirmation or as guidelines that can be considered within the context of other researchers' individual situations. Some findings of my research and my recommendations could be useful for future planning for the Somatology programme and other programmes / qualifications which are offering extended curriculum programmes at higher education institutions.

This case study explores the experiences and perceptions of a specific group of students, within what Henning (2004, p.32) calls a 'bounded system'. The extended curriculum programme students from the Somatology Department, who were registered between 2005 and 2008, could be classified as a 'bounded system'. The focus was to understand their situation, but not necessarily to compare their experiences with other extended curriculum programme students from different departments at DUT or other Universities of Technologies. This study was therefore undertaken to investigate whether the students who were placed in an extended curriculum programme perceive themselves differently from their peers who are not registered for the extended curriculum programme and how this has impacted on them individually and as a group.

To conclude, a case study using a qualitative research design, was conducted within an interpretive paradigm. A case study was well suited to this investigation as the subjective experiences (Merriam and Simpson, 1995) and the means by which the students understood and dealt with their circumstances were the focus of the investigation. It was hoped that a greater understanding of learners' experiences as ascertained by this study would assist the students, the institution and those involved in foundational provision nationally.

3.4 Selection of participants

The number of possible respondents (population) was small. The total cohort of second year students is thirty. Of these, only thirteen had progressed through from the extended curriculum programme. As the study population was small, all thirteen of the extended curriculum group were invited to participate in the study. Ten students voluntarily agreed and took part in the study. Although one can argue that a sample size of ten is small, it is important to remember the focus of this study was to conduct a holistic in-depth investigation to establish an understanding of these particular students' real life situations, problems and experiences of being in the ECP. These sentiments are reiterated by Barbour and Kitzinger's (1999) description of how statistical representation is not necessarily the main aim or focus of qualitative research within an interpretive paradigm, making a large sample size less relevant.

3.5 Methods used to collect data

A biographical questionnaire (Appendix A) and semi-structured interview (Appendix B) were the tools employed to gather the data. A pilot interview was conducted with one of the students from this cohort of students. The data collected from the pilot study has been included in this study. The student is one of the ten participants who volunteered. The purpose of the pilot study was to establish if the questionnaire and interview schedule would address the key research questions as well as to allow me to familiarize myself with the interview schedule.

The pilot study confirmed that the semi-structured interview was an appropriate means of eliciting a sufficient amount of information to obtain the data for a 'rich description' of experiences required for the study. (Mouton, 2001)

However, one finding which emerged from the pilot interview, was that the biographical questionnaire should have been completed prior to conducting the interview and not on the same day. This would have allowed me, as the researcher and interviewer, to develop a better understanding of each participant and to provide different avenues of questioning in the interviews. This process was thus implemented for the subsequent interviews.

I will now discuss each of these data collection tools in more detail.

3.5.1 Biographical questionnaire

A short biographical profile was collected by means of an easy to complete questionnaire (Appendix A). This provided me the with background information on each participant and general characteristics of the group. This allowed me to contextualize the individual student's position when conducting the interview.

The questionnaire was given to each of the participants beforehand and could be completed in their own time. I collected all ten of the completed questionnaires the day before each interview so that I could view the information and use this as prompts for questions in the interview individual. The participant's name was not included on the questionnaire. Instead a pseudonym was used to identify each participant, thereby securing confidentiality.

3.5.2 Semi- structured interviews

Semi-structured interviews allow the researcher to investigate concerns, experiences and attitudes or beliefs related to a clearly defined topic as: "Semi-structured interviews are defined as those organized around areas of particular

interest, while still allowing considerable flexibility in scope and depth.” (Morse, in de Vos, et al, 2005, p. 292).

According to the Qualitative Research Guidelines Project (n.d.), semi-structured interviews can provide reliable, comparable qualitative data. I chose to conduct an individual semi-structured interview, with each participant, as it has a fairly open framework and no set questions which had to be answered in a uniform manner. Instead, the interview questions were used by me, to make sure that all issues were covered. As de Vos et al. (2005) suggest, not all the questions have to be asked by the interviewer if they are not needed. However, as I was in the role of both the researcher, and the interviewer, I was able to decide on the amount of deviation that was necessary. This could mean that questions could be created during the interview. This situation is especially common for this case study as information gained from the questionnaire at times led to additional and unique questions being asked. The interview process began with questions which were broad, and then narrowed down to more specific questions. This is described as the ‘funnel approach’ by Cohen et al. (2007). In this case study the uniqueness of each extended curriculum student's particular situation or perception could be captured, thus, ‘providing rich and personal data’ (Cohen et al., 2007, p.321).

Although the semi-structured interview has been shown to be a valid means of data collecting, there are weaknesses that need to be addressed. Weaknesses include aspects such as response bias and incomplete recollection by the interviewees, who in this case were the students. At this point I would like to draw attention to the issue of reflexivity as there seem to be confusing interpretations. One researcher, Tellis (1997), when referring to Yin (1994, p.80) implies that reflexivity may mean that the participants express what they think I, as their lecturer, may want to hear, thereby reducing the validity of their responses. To reduce this possibility, I spent some time discussing my desire for their authentic

views and stressing that there were no 'right' or 'wrong' answers in the interview. However, I believe that this aspect of reflexivity is limited and agree, along with McCormick and James (1988) as cited in Cohen et al. (2007), that reflexivity includes more complex concerns such as me being constantly aware of my subjectivity, attempting to be continually aware of my own interaction with participants and being aware that my reactions which may affect the data collected. For example, would simply nodding my head in agreement encourage them to continue to provide similar answers? As my questions could also limit or bias the responses, I tried to keep them as broad as possible to allow each participant to interpret and answer them as they wished. I needed to continuously question and check my interpretations to ensure validity. Hitchcock and Hughes (cited in Cohen et al., 2007) warn that as interviews are interpersonal, it is expected that I would have some influence on the interviewee and may therefore influence the data being produced.

Another cross check I put in place to reduce subjectivity was that the transcribed scripts were made available to each participant to review. Only two participants wished to view them. The one was amused at her responses but both acknowledged the authenticity of the representation of the interview.

The interview process

The date, time and venue for the interviews were established when I approached the group of participants in the classroom after a lecture to request their participation. I explained that participation was purely voluntary and that they were under no obligation to participate. They were informed that there were no consequences to those choosing not to participate.

Each participant who had verbally agreed to participate was then approached separately and given a Consent Letter (Appendix C) to read and sign along with the biographical questionnaire to complete and return the day before their individual interview was scheduled. This provided them with another opportunity to decline to participate in the case study by simply not returning the forms. The participants were informed that they could ask any questions or voice any queries regarding any documentation or about the research study. The Consent Letter also requested written permission to electronically record the conversation. All ten volunteers completed and returned the consent forms and questionnaires.

The interviews were held at a time convenient to both parties concerned and took place in a quiet spare office which was only furnished with large comfortable chairs. A desk would have created a barrier between myself and the participant, so a more informal venue was used. The door was closed and the interviews were held at times when no other students or staff members were in the offices. This ensured the participants did not feel threatened that others would overhear the conversation or see them going in for the interview. It was hoped that these factors would help them feel less intimidated and free to express their honest opinions (Cohen et al., 2007).

I also provided muffins and coffee to reinforce the feeling that I was not interviewing them in my role as lecturer, but rather as a researcher conducting a line of enquiry. Some shared freely and the conversation flowed while some participants were less forthright with their comments. This was a concern to me as I was constantly aware that I should not shift the conversation to seek answers that supported my predetermined notions and thereby ultimately bias the data collected.

Each interview was recorded electronically using a voice recorder so I was not distracted from the discussion by having to take notes and I was free to observe the participants' behaviour and body language. The recording was transcribed as soon as possible to ensure accuracy.

3.6. The Data handling

3.6.1 Transcription

The semi structured interviews were transcribed verbatim. Each participant was offered the opportunity to check the transcript as soon as possible afterwards to verify and ensure the accuracy and soundness of the representation. The concept of soundness is very important in qualitative research, as some authors such as de Vos et al. (2005) regard it in the same light as the principles of validity and reliability in quantitative research. The most realistic method to achieve greater validity, according to Cohen et al.(2007), is to reduce the quantity of bias. Bias would include my own attitudes, opinions and expectations towards the ECP. As one the role players in the conception and development of the programme, I was continually reminding myself to set aside any feelings of protectiveness and urges to defend the programme.

Confidentiality regarding each participant's personal details was maintained by omitting their names and their personal data and from the transcript. Instead, their names were replaced with a pseudonym.

3.6.2 Data analysis

Mouton (2001, p.108) explains that qualitative data analysis involves the sorting of this rich, thick description type data into manageable themes, patterns, trends

and relationships. Gephart (1999, p.3) confirms this by saying that analysis involves searching for patterns of meaning. Thematic content analysis was conducted to identify sections from the transcribed data that related to ideas or concepts in the research questions, ascribing labels, topics or themes to describe them. Finally, categories emerged from these themes and these form the basis of the findings discussed in Chapter Four.

To understand this interpretation, I considered the findings against the backdrop of my theoretical framework of social identities as discussed in the previous chapter and then attempted to explain whether or not my findings supported these theories (Mouton, 2001). This concept is supported by Stemler (2001) who suggests the purpose of Construct and Thematic analysis is for the researcher to observe the data in relation to the title, key questions and related literature of the research study with the aim of, as Aronson (1994, p. 4) reinforces by saying “build[ing] a valid argument for choosing the themes and to make inferences.”

The approach that was undertaken to interpret the data began when I reviewed the biographical data, as given in the questionnaires. I then listened to the interview recordings and vigilantly read over the transcripts to become very familiar with the text. according to Barnett (2006) this step is essential in maintaining honesty and reliability. With each reading, when a term, topic or theme was repeated or became obvious, it was highlighted with different coloured highlighters on the script. These were then noted on a separate sheet of paper under an appropriate topic / theme. The topics were then aligned with the key questions and issues raised in the literature. To achieve this, the initial topics I identified in the data had to be refined further into sub-themes to provide a more nuanced discussion in line with the purpose of the study.

To apply this theory in context, the data was analyzed to seek the perception of the ECP students in terms of which group they perceived themselves as belonging to. Group membership, in this sense, moves far beyond registration within a certain group which is forced upon them and looks, instead, at how they

identify themselves in terms of group membership. Secondly the data was analyzed to ascertain from their use of positive terms about membership of the group to what extent the ECP students see themselves as an 'in-group'.

3.7 Ethical considerations

3.7.1 Durban University of Technology

A letter of request for permission to conduct the research study using students of the Extended Curriculum Somatology programme at DUT, was presented to the Dean of Health Sciences as the authorizing representative of the University, and the faculty and department (See Appendix D). Written permission to conduct the study was granted by the Dean. The Dean did not stipulate any other conditions other than those expressed by the researcher. Only once I had been granted DUT permission could I proceed to the next stage.

3.7.2 University of Kwazulu-Natal

A standardized Human and Social Sciences Ethical Clearance Application form was completed and submitted to the ethics committee of the Faculty of Education at University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN) for the internal review process. This was approved and a certificate containing the Ethical Clearance Approval Number: **HSS/0093/08M** was issued. (See Appendix E)

3.7.3 Participants

To ensure good ethical practices, all the participants were informed of the research process and provided with the following information:

All students from this ECP, Somatology cohort (2005 -2008) that were registered students, were selected and invited to participate in study.

A verbal and written explanation of the research project to be conducted, including an invitation to participate in the research study was given to each potential participant (Appendix C).

It was explained that their participation was voluntary and that they could refuse to participate or withdraw from the study at any stage without having to provide an explanation and without any negative consequences (Appendix C).

An explanation was provided about how they would have to complete a short questionnaire and complete an interview with me of approximately thirty minutes.

An explanation was provided about how their individual identity would remain anonymous and how confidentiality would be maintained.

An explanation was provided of the how the transcriptions of the interviews could be viewed should they wish to do so.

3.8. Limitations of the study

The limitations of this study were identified as follows:

1. I am the researcher and also the co-ordinator of the extended curriculum programme and as such, I may be biased in the interpretation of the

findings. It is essential that as the researcher and as one of the stakeholders in the ECP. I try to ensure that I remain open to the experiences of the students and any analysis is firmly grounded in the data rather than my subjectivities. I had to construct themes that emerged from the data gathered and not themes that I wanted to highlight. I also needed to be careful of not directing the interviews to areas that I wanted to explore rather than being open to the authentic opinions of the participants. An interview schedule (Appendix B) assisted in preventing major deviations yet allowing a degree of flexibility to explore new concepts.

2. Participants may have been reluctant to express any negative comments during the interview to avoid offending me. Cohen et al.(2007, p.154) warn that, particularly in educational environments, it may be common for interviewees to move “beyond the institutional response or receiving what children [students] think the interviewer wants to hear.” In the interviews and when gaining the individual’s consent, I attempted to put the participants at ease and re-assure them that they may speak freely without any negative consequences. I explained that all feedback and information was greatly appreciated in order for me to fully understand their experiences and perceptions. They were informed that they would be contributing information that may impact on future curriculum planning and development and for that reason they should never censor their comments. This was done to avoid the issue of reflexivity as discussed above.
3. Anonymity could not be entirely guaranteed as everybody within the Somatology department knew who the extended curriculum students were so the identity of the group as a whole would be recognizable to people who read this thesis and who are familiar with the department. However,

the participants' individual identities have been protected through the use of pseudonyms. This secured their confidentiality and even though I may know who provided me with the information, I will not make the "connection known publicly; the boundaries surrounding the shared secret will be protected" (Cohen et al. 2007, p.65).

4. The sample population comprised thirteen extended curriculum students. However, only ten responded. The sample size is small, which often occurs in qualitative research and more specifically in a case study. This prevents broad generalizations being made, as discussed earlier. One participant had deregistered from the course due to personal and financial reasons but this occurred after all the data was collected and she was thus retained as a study participant.

5. According to Bailey (1994 as cited in Cohen et al.2007, p. 363) the fact that I am a White, English speaking, middle-class older female and therefore demographically quite different to my participants may have indirectly influenced the participants' responses to the questions. I therefore took every precaution to minimize this difference. For example on the day of the interviews I wore casual clothes and made 'small talk' while I made the coffee to try to reduce any discomfort. I conducted the interviews after I had completed my syllabus and lectures with them so that the lecturer/student relationship had changed slightly from them associating me as an authority figure to hopefully allowing a reconstruction of myself as a fellow student conducting research.

3.9 Conclusion

Data collection in a case study can comprise more than one research tool. In this case, a biographical questionnaire and semi-structured interviews were used. This allowed me to obtain a fuller picture of each participant. These were an effective means of acquiring rich descriptive data of what each participant understood of their experiences of being an extended curriculum student. I was able to integrate the information to draw the most honest interpretations and therefore gain a clearer understanding of the students' experiences. Through content analysis I developed themes using Yin's (1984) pattern matching technique. The findings arising from this analysis are the subject of the next chapter.

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION OF THE DATA

4.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter the methodology for the research study was discussed. In this chapter I will first describe the background of the participants based on the information gained from the biographical questionnaire. I will then proceed to discuss the interview data. The data was analyzed into themes and, where necessary, sub-themes. I must stress at this point that these themes are my own interpretation of what was relevant and important. Where possible, I tried to limit subjectivity by looking carefully at the issues raised in the literature and have tried to ensure trustworthiness by using appropriate quotations from the interview data within the following discussion. I will further utilize related literature in my discussion of the themes selected.

The themes correspond to the key research questions stated in Chapter Two. Some of the themes that were generated provided insights into more than one question as they were inter-related. This matter will be highlighted later under the relevant themes.

Although complete anonymity cannot be secured due to the specific nature of the study, each participant was given a pseudonym to maintain confidentiality because, as Cohen et al.(2007) state, by doing this, the reader will not be able to

make the direct connection about who said what. Each student was issued with a code which was based on the interview time slot they chose.

4.2 Biographical background of participants

From the questionnaires completed by the ten participants I managed to establish the following information. Eight participants were African females. One was an Indian female and the remaining participant was an African male student. These ratios reflect the general demographics of the Somatology programme for 2005. Of the 127 students enrolled in the National Diploma programme in 2005, 55 students were African females, 45 Indian females, 2 African males and the remainder students consisted of White and Coloured females (DUT Management Information System, 2008). According to Reid (2006) since the 1960's, it has been recognized that females in either educational institutions or industry have been marginalized as a result of society's perception of the roles and responsibilities of women. Therefore, one of the goals of the ECP was to redress these inequities of the past and advocate the objectives of the Department of Education White Paper 3: A Programme for the Transformation of Higher Education (DoE 1997) to increase and empower more South African females, specifically black women. The higher education sector's social base with regards to race and gender will be broadened to reflect the demographic realities of South Africa. Although one can argue that Somatology is predominately a female profession, it has historically attracted mostly White and Asian females and very few African women.

The introduction of the ECP has assisted in changing the student profile of the programme to be more aligned with the country's transformation objectives of the DoE. The Somatology profession is considered relatively young in the academic arena and the industry's need for professionally qualified Somatologists exceeds the current graduation rate.

In 2008 the ages of the ECP students ranged from 21 years old to 24 years old. This is also in keeping with the programme as a whole because in 2008 the average age of Somatology first year students was 19 years of age. So when they first entered the university in 2005, the average age of the ECP students was 19 years old too.

Nine of the ten participants spoke English as an additional language. This factor may have contributed to them scoring lower marks on the English entrance test, one of the selection tools used for placement onto the ECP. Language proficiency was used as a selection tool for the ECP as DUT's medium of instruction is English. Before the introduction of the ECP if an applicant failed this English entrance test, they were denied access to the Somatology programme so the selection process resulted in many students with potential being turned away. According to literature on Higher Education in South Africa and our national policy (Scott, 2008 and DoE, White paper 3, 1997) these students would be classified as 'under-prepared'. Although I strongly agree with this notion and do not wish to underestimate it, I would also include the word 'differently prepared' as they bring certain areas of expertise which are not recognized or valued by the institution such as everyday life skills.

These students showed potential and met the department's requirements in other areas (for example they had done the required subjects at school) which as a consequence resulted in them being offered a place on the ECP.

Five of the participants lived in the DUT residence. Two lived in a commune environment and the remaining students still lived at home or with extended family.

Table 4.1 : Biographical background of participants:

Student	Race	Gender	Nationality	Home Language	Residence while studying
1	African	Male	RSA	isiZulu	Sister's home
2	African	Female	RSA	isiZulu	DUT residence
3	African	Female	RSA	isiZulu	DUT residence
4	African	Female	RSA	isiZulu	Shared flat with other students
5	Indian	Female	RSA	English	At home
6	African	Female	Swaziland	isiSwati	Shared flat
7	African	Female	RSA	isiZulu	DUT residence
8	Indian	Female	RSA	English	At home with grandparents
9	African	Female	RSA	isiZulu	DUT residence
10	African	Female	RSA	isiZulu	DUT residence

4.3 Analysis of the findings

The following table summarizes the research questions and related themes that were identified in the data. A more detailed discussion will follow.

Table 4.2 Themes and sub-themes:

Key question addressed	Theme
<p>How do the extended curriculum students perceive the full curriculum students' situations, opportunities, experiences and characteristics as being different from those of their own?</p>	<p><u>Theme 1</u> ECP assisted students with the transition from high school to University of Technology</p>
<p>Sub-themes</p>	
<p>Articulating the gap through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lighter work load • ECP students appeared to be more prepared than the FCP students at point of integration into second year • The four year time frame to complete the qualification was viewed negatively initially • The smaller group size coupled with lecturer support contributed to the academic success of ECP students • Strong Relationships developed amongst members of the ECP 	
Key question addressed	Theme

How has being an extended curriculum learner affected students' self image and perception of themselves?	<u>Theme 2</u> ECP students adopted the identity referred to as 'Wellness'
Sub-themes	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Through the reflective process the concept of self as a target of prejudice became minimal • The title of 'Wellness' emerged as an ECP group identity 	

4.3.1 Theme 1: Transition from high school to university

All the participants acknowledged that the ECP had assisted them in coping with the new and unfamiliar environment of a tertiary institution as well as with the new demands placed on them. Initially I was tempted to sub-divide this theme into two categories, academic adaptation and social adaptation. However, as I reviewed the literature and data, I found it extremely difficult to separate the two issues as they are so inter-related and complex. Shin and Kim (1999) touched on this when describing how personality integration, persistence, holistic wellbeing and motivation all affect student learning. During a presentation, Klos (2004) described Naidoo's (2004) concept of wellness as: "maximization of potential regarding (holistic) interdependent emotional, intellectual, physical, social, occupational and spiritual development." The data collected supports this concept, particularly on the issue of the ECP students' transition from school to the UoT which involved both academic and social adaptations. The following student's words clarify this point most appropriately when she states:

'...When you come from high school, you still have to adapt when you come here, adapt to the situation ... plus living away from home, at the residence.'

[Student 1]

The concerns expressed by student quoted above, as well as some of her classmates are not unique. Ferreira (1995) and Wood and Lithauer (2005) found these to be common issues amongst first time registering students. In these few lines she has managed to highlight all facets of this theme from the adjustment from secondary school to higher education and the social issues of not having family and friends to support her as she has moved away from her secure home environment to this unfamiliar location. Not only will she have to develop inter-group relationships with her fellow Somatology students, develop and adopt the expected academic discourses but also adjust to the life in a DUT residence with its own set of rules and norms. The issue of accommodation needs to be flagged because the majority of these ECP students are staying at DUT residences. The issue of accommodation appeared to be a common concern. Because more than five ECP students raised the condition of the residences, I sought the opinions of some of the Somatology students currently residing in DUT residences. According to three ECP students, the residence's facilities were not in an acceptable condition. Security concerns were also raised, for example that they had to use extra key locks for their rooms as things often went missing. Learning for tests was difficult as the noise levels were always high. They did acknowledge that DUT appeared to house students from the same faculty and programmes together. This assisted them in making friends and developing study groups in the library. This factor will be discussed later in this chapter.

Another point that disturbed me was that all the ECP students, as with all first years, were placed in residences off campus and utilized the bus service provided. Although transport is provided at scheduled times, some students use the campus facilities (library, computer labs) until late in the evenings and this adds to their security risk as many ECP students are female and not from the Durban or familiar with the area.

Another growing concern that the ECP students, as with all other students entering this UoT, had to deal with was the added pressure of what has become the annual event of student protests (they occurred in 2006, 2007 and 2008) which have become more violent over the last few years. Students indicated that they did not always feel safe on campus during these times.

The university environment is considered more demanding than that of school, and in a matter of weeks, students are expected to have learnt how to be independent and in control of their own lives. Organizing their own registration, accommodation and in many cases securing their own financial aid to pay for their tuition, are all matters that have to be dealt with. This balancing act between dealing with these factors and issues such as homesickness, peer pressure and loneliness, could have a negative impact on the student's academic performance during this period of transition.

According to Haniff who is a staff member from the student counselling unit at DUT (personal communication, May 21, 2009) approximately fifty percent of all their student cases involve issues of adaptation (homesickness, loneliness or financial) to the UoT environment which often leads to many students becoming depressed. In many cases these social problems had a direct impact on students' academic performance. Scott et al.(2007) report how socio-economic influences have affected the attrition rate of particularly Black first year students. They also stress that ECP programmes should be designed and implemented to address the articulation gap that affects the many students who have come from disadvantaged educational backgrounds and to enable such students to achieve success in higher education.

However, some students who were interviewed explained that they experienced freedom for the first time by being away from the school routine and conservative home life. Seven ECP students acknowledged that the available amount of free

time allowed them to make friends and socialize which they regarded as necessary to adapt better to the new environment as one student explains:

'it's kind of difficult finding your way around when you don't really have that much friends and stuff.'

[Student 3]

This student continued to explain in the interview that because they had more free time, they could socialize and develop friendships and attend social events organized by the Student Representative Council. Therefore they were able to become more easily accustomed to the lifestyle as opposed to the FCP students who were described by some ECP students interviewed as being 'thrown in the deep end' with all the extra subjects and limited free time. This is consistent with what Shin and Kim (1999, p. 89) set out as the importance of social integration to academic success when they describe that integration is achieved through "informal peer group associations, semi-formal extracurricular activities, and interaction with faculty and administrative personnel within the college". On reviewing the first year timetable for the FCP, the notion of limited time proved true. Due to the practical nature of the profession, the FCP students attend classes from eight o'clock in the morning through till four o'clock in the afternoon almost every week day. Although orientation and mentors are provided to assist them in familiarizing themselves with the university, the FCP students are still left with little time to develop friendships and attend UoT's functions.

Many of the ECP students stressed the benefit of having to complete fewer subjects in their first year and indicated that this was the only difference between the ECP and FCP. This underplaying of differences would seem to be in line with the CIC theory where the out-group (ECP) is attempting to minimize the differences between themselves and the in-group (FCP). The interviewees acknowledged that being registered for fewer subjects increased their chances of academic success. The majority of the ECP students' views are similar to the student's statement above regarding being better able to adapt to their new environment which I will now discuss in more detail.

4.3.1.1 A lighter workload

According to Scott (2008) the purpose of an extended programme is to provide an innovative course that covers the entire syllabus of the FCP including providing additional contact and learning time. The Somatology ECP has adopted such practices as it has extended the time frame in which to obtain the National Diploma qualification from three to four years. The workload is generally reduced, particularly in their first two years. Only four subjects were completed in the ECP students' entry first year (as reported on in Chapter Two), which allowed them the opportunity to focus specifically on those subjects and perform better in them. One student explained that this contributed to reducing her stress levels:

'.. in the first year,we didn't have as many subjects we weren't as stressed. It kind of helps us [adapt] to the environment, the tertiary environment.'

[Student 2]

Or as another student stated:

'..... full time in my first year it would have been really difficult. Because the workload is a lot different; I still had to get used to DUT as a whole.'

[Student 3]

One student indicated that she had thought she would cope with more subjects but on reflection decided that it would have been too much for her to cope with:

'It's really helped methere's a too much workload and I thought it was easy, Somatology.'

[Student 5]

Student 5 raised a common preconception that Somatology would be an easy programme. However, the data indicates that adapting to the range of subjects was in fact difficult and that the reduced ECP load was a great advantage to them.

Another student appeared to have a very definite idea of the experience of being placed on the ECP as her attitude and body language all indicated confidence and I could see that she was content with her decision to register for the ECP when she used words such as:

'it was nice it was fun - the workload wasn't so hard'
[Student 3]

This student also makes reference to the smoother transition from school to higher education in a much more practical manner when she describes the benefit of the extra time as opposed to the full time table the FCP.

'it wasn't that much of a gap between high school and tertiary because in high school you in till about half past one, two,we went home at around the same time,we had like an extra day in the week in between.....'

[Student 3]

Here, Student 3 also raises the point of the length of day that was similar to school as opposed to that of the FCP students which only finished late in the afternoon. This provided the ECP students with more free time to adapt to and digest the work.

To corroborate if this perception of a lighter workload, contributed to the students' academic success, I further sought the opinions of two lecturers facilitating both the ECP and FCP subjects. Both lecturers acknowledged that the extra contact/lecture time allowed for both lecturer and students to focus on problems and difficult subject matter due to the lighter workload. This was reinforced by them also having more free time to engage with the subject matter privately. This confirms what Bass (2007) had established when investigating a similar extended curriculum programme at DUT. Bass's (2007) study found that the way the ECP had provided students with more time in which to complete their qualification had made a positive contribution to reducing the articulation gap between the school system and higher education.

4.3.1.2 Better preparation at point of integration

The preparedness of ECP students was highlighted by both students and lecturers. The lecturers mentioned that many of the FCP students lacked readiness and appeared needy in a number of ways that the ECP students did not. The FCP students required more supervision on issues such as responsibilities, professional behaviour in practical lectures and self study. This supports the ECP students' perception that by receiving more contact time with their lecturers as well as being able to focus on a lighter workload, allowed them to better master the theory and required by Somatology practices.

One lecturer hinted that the academic quality and profile of students entering the UoT in more recent years had changed. This raises the issue of whether the new schooling system implemented in South Africa adequately prepares learners for higher education. This could possibly contribute along with the previous Bantu education system for the need of such an ECP. Both lecturers also said that time management was slightly better in the ECP students. They attributed this to the skills the students had obtained from the academic literacy and information technology components within the Wellness Module which is only completed by the ECP students. A few students also emphasized the issue of time management which corroborates what the lecturers believed:

'I think the preparation of the two years helped me to cope with a lot of work, as far as time management....'

[Student 4]

On reviewing the Wellness learner guides of 2005, 2006 and 2007, it was determined that the skills of time management, learning skills, academic writing and the appropriate behaviour of a Somatologist are all learning outcomes of the course which support the student's perception of being better prepared.

The following student's words sum up this theme of being better prepared when explaining how the ECP helped her in developing the ability to cope with her studies most appropriately:

'It helped doing assignments and teaching us how to manage our time and how to study and just to be introduced into the tertiary world, it helped a lot.'

[Student 6]

Although the above student is referring specifically to the academic outcomes, the quote also suggests that the ECP students appear to be coping far better with the transition from high school to a UoT environment.

To establish if the ECP students had indeed benefited from this extended timeframe and more contact with lecturers, I reviewed both their 2005 and 2006 examination results from first year. The results supported this perception of being better prepared as the ECP students' overall pass rate was 12% higher than that of the FCP students. Some of the subjects that really drew my attention were Communication skills in which ECP had a 100% pass rate as opposed to only 84% in FCP and Nutrition I in which ECP had a 100% pass rate while FCP only achieved a 64% pass rate. Strong verification of this preparedness was found in the results of Science I which historically has one of the highest failure rates in the National Diploma. The ECP students had a 92% pass rate compared to the FCP students only achieving a 52% pass rate.

Many of the acquired life skills and academic literacy practices which are deemed necessary for student success may be considered generic to any tertiary programme whilst others are specifically related to the Somatology profession. In particular it should be noted that a lecturer commented on the appropriate professional demeanour of the ECP students as opposed to the FCP students. As I had previously taught on the ECP and was also one of the second year lecturers, I could substantiate this observation. The differences in behaviour could possibly be ascribed to the discussions that had taken place within the

ECP about the identity and appropriate behaviour of a Somatologist. Students in the ECP were thus made aware of the discipline and industry's expectations in an overt way.

When asked about how they were performing in the combined group composed of students from ECP and FCP with regards to marks and practice-based lectures, one student started her explanation with:

'For me, it was because of the support of the Wellness programme'
[Student 4]

She continued to explain that they were more 'familiar' with the classroom rules, lecturers and assessment methods used in practical assessments. She even joked about knowing how to use the laundry better.

Even with the students recognizing the benefits of the extra time afforded to them, they initially complained about the programme being extended over a four year period.

4.3.1.3 Four year time frame was viewed negatively initially

Although in hindsight the four year time frame was viewed positively in assisting in articulating the gap from high school to University, it was initially not viewed well by the ECP students interviewed for this study.

Many of the students were concerned that it would take four years to complete their studying.

'...others were doing three and we're doing four years.'
[Student 2]

'At the time, it was just too much, I felt like another extra year...'
[Student 1]

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, the extra time seemed to be what most of the students interviewed felt most significantly distinguished them as different from the FCP group. Groups that believe they have an unfavourable social identity (out-group) which may result in low self-esteem, are often good at avoiding negative self-evaluative consequences. They develop strategies to protect their self-esteem and strive for self enrichment (Baumeister, 1998 in Hogg, 2005). These students' focus was on the additional fourth year being the problem and not the fact that they may be particularly under-prepared and require extra academic support. This may also explain why some of the ECP students could not originally understand the purpose of the subject Wellness. They may have not wanted to acknowledge or understand the benefits of it at that point in time because to do so would have been to acknowledge that they needed additional support and as a consequence would have been acknowledging their out-group status.

4.3.1.4 Smaller group size and lecturer support contributed to academic success

The Wellness modules were taught in small groups of approximately thirteen students. This was viewed positively by all the students as it allowed the students to become more outspoken and to improve their confidence. This environment appeared to be less threatening to the ECP students than the one they faced when they were integrated into a larger second year class of thirty students.

'No, actually I think it's better when it's like fewer people in class and you're comfortable with people and you get used to them..'

[Student 3]

They acknowledged that the smaller group size contributed to their academic success for a number of reasons. Firstly, they felt that it allowed them to adapt more smoothly to having to speak in front of the facilitator and other students as

the cohort of students was smaller. The following student makes a valuable point when she states that by being able to first learn the skills in a smaller and familiar environment, she was better prepared for second year. The student's confidence was improved when she states:

'..because I've always kind of been nervous talking in front of people, ...it helped me. I first started with a small bunch and then when I got to second year I was kind of confident. I think it actually helped me improve.'

[Student 2]

The second point raised with regards to having a smaller group size was that the students felt that they received more personal attention. They believed that most of the ECP lecturers were more 'student friendly' and far more approachable. The relationship between the lecturers and ECP students was less formal, and as a consequence, the students consulted with the lecturers more frequently. The consultations often took the form of a mentor session as many of their concerns were not strictly academic related.

'Ja², it was wonderfullike in our first year our lecturers paid a lot of attention to us and made it much easier for us.'

[Student 7]

Some students went as far as to attribute their class's success to the smaller group as they felt they were receiving more personal attention.

'The lecturer spent more time with us... anything we didn't understand, we could always go back to a lecturer or ask [lecturer] for help..... it's different when you are a bigger class.'

[Student 1]

The factor of small class sizes also addressed the issue of motivation. In hindsight they all appreciated the interest the staff had invested in them and indicated that this encouraged them to strive for academic success. Therefore, this allowed the student to feel more accepted and comfortable, providing them with the opportunity to focus on their studies.

² Ja is the Afrikaans word meaning yes which is often used by many South Africans irrespective of which language is used.

To some extent the lecturers become almost a surrogate family for some of the students living in the residences away from their families. As the conversations progressed and the interviewed student used phrases such as 'you know' and 'remember when', I was reminded of the numerous occasions one or more students had voluntarily coming to my office to inform me of their performance in other subjects and assessments or just to greet me and receive some sort of recognition from me. Only during the interviews with these ECP students did I realize the significance of these informal encounters and the influence the staff had had on the students.

Without diminishing the contribution that the smaller group size and support from staff had played in the academic success of the ECP, it is also valuable to mention the influential role that the ECP staff co-ordinator plays in this type of programme. The students are provided with a dedicated staff member who takes charge of the Somatology programme. This provides the students with a sense of belonging to the programme, thereby encouraging and smoothing the transition from high school to a UoT environment.

However, having said this, the ECP lecturers should be cautioned not to encourage dependence in the students, as this may result in further complications for the students when they are placed in large classes and may not receive the personal attention which they have become used to. My concern stems from the following student statement:

'But also at time I felt like we're spoon-fed like we wanted that independence to feel like the main programme.'

[Student 4]

This could be seen as a contradiction to the aims of the ECP programme of empowering the student to become independent lifelong learners or, as Scott et al.(2007) caution, the importance of carefully managing these ECP programmes to steadily increase the students' independence as learners. Chhem (2000)

warns that 'spoon-feeding' may often occur in small traditional lectures where the lecturer provides the answers in what he describes as a 'knowledge dispenser' for the students who are then merely willing, passive receptors. This could compromise the learning process as it becomes too teacher centred. This is the opposite to scaffold learning which encourages the students to participate and contribute to the discussions and teaches them the skills to gather, analyze and question the knowledge. thereby preparing them for higher levels of learning.

Nonetheless most felt that by receiving the extra attention, their group's status had improved as the FCP in their first year had not received as much personal attention. The data reflected particularly how, in year two of the extended first year, the ECP were now being perceived as becoming the in-group. This happened as a result of having developed relationships with their lecturers in their year one of the extended first year before their FCP peers joined and by having the transition from school to higher education made smoother by incorporating a scaffold approach which allowed these ECP students to feel more confident and knowledgeable than the new FCP first year students. The ECP students, in line with Social Identity Theory, were now the ones highlighting the differences between the groups instead of diminishing them. This demonstrates how, according to the Social Identity Theory, as we strive for positive social identity we will continue to undergo many processes (CIC) which are constantly changing and evolving.

4.3.1.5 Strong relationships developed amongst members of the ECP

When students arrived and had to learn to adjust to university life, they had to develop new support systems. Many students indicated in the interviews that the amount of free time they had, allowed them to develop relationships and make friends as most were residing in a residence or commune. Yorke (2000) explains that family/support relationships and wellness can have a significant effect on

student academic performance. Gavette (2001) indicates that continuing personal support from friends, fellow students and lecturers can make this transition process a great deal easier. In turn, this allows the student to have a more positive experience of adjusting to university life. The link between positive experiences and self-esteem was discussed in Chapter Two. A number of the participants from the ECP were fortunate enough to develop close relationships with other members from their group as well as with the lecturers and mentor co-ordinators. Belch, Gebel and Maas (2001) determined that recreational activities are likely to positively influence and contribute to academic success. ECP students indicated that the close-knit environment contributed to their social engagement in the institution.

It would appear from the data that the ECP group originally socialized with each other, even when not in lectures. Some suggested that not only did they develop strong friendships, but also established study groups with members from the ECP. One student stated that they had found this form of peer support extremely helpful. In the Wellness Module, group activity had been a common learning situation and many had chosen to continue with group work in the form of study groups which they held in the library. These sessions were undertaken especially just before any tests. They appeared to have become united in a common goal, thereby strengthening their group identity as is confirmed by the following student:

“maybe we’re going to prove to everybody else. We kind of told ourselves you know what, we’re just going to do the best that we can – it kind of made us stronger that way.

[Student 6]

I can conclude that, according to the data, the students acknowledged that the ECP had assisted with articulating the gap by providing them with support, either

by giving them extra time, a lighter workload and a smaller group size or as a result of the personalized attention from the lecturers. The data suggests that the underlying principles and skills taught to them in the Wellness subjects appear to have provided the students with a solid foundation for further education within the Somatology profession.

4.3.2 Theme 2: ECP students adopted the identity of 'Wellness'.

The identity of 'Wellness' emerged from the data as the interviews progressed. It became apparent that the ECP students' primary responses were clouded by emotions and after being asked to reflect on and remember back to their first year, they realized that they had begun to disconnect from the initial feelings of being different and not good enough and developed a sense of self worth, belonging, support and friendship. The same students who had previously referred to the programme as 'Extended or Foundation' at the beginning of their interviews, were subsequently calling the ECP students and/or programme by the new name of 'Wellness'.

4.3.2.1 Concept of self as a target of prejudice became minimal

The beginning phase of all the interviews provided strong evidence that the ECP students initially felt like out-group members. This is possibly because the first few questions were about their first days in the ECP and, in particular, their placement in the programme. The data provides evidence of their feeling discriminated against.

'...but I am not very happy to be accepted on the extended programme.'

[Student 5]

'I felt like I was put back because I was stupid or something'

[Student 4]

'Obviously we didn't do so well in that test people – they didn't think that we were capable enough..... I felt a bit inferior compared to the full programme. '

[Student 2]

In the above examples, the students' self-esteem was low when they were told that they would be part of the ECP. All three elements (categorize, identify and compare) of CIC theory have been verbalized. In the third quote in particular, the student has categorized herself within the ECP (out-group) by using the word 'we' against others with the word 'people'. She has identified with the rest of the students placed in ECP who did not do so well in the test and finally she compares them to the FCP (in-group) by using the entrance test results to differentiate them. Student 2 concludes by stating that she feels inferior in relation to the FCP students. Later on in her interview she used the word 'categorized' when she said that she felt that some people may think the ECP students were not as clever as the FCP students.

According to the Social Identity Theory, an individual strives for positive distinctiveness which is predicated by an individual's motivation for self enhancement. It is believed that this self enhancement motivation is based on inter-group comparisons which are determined by a fundamental individual's need for positive self-esteem that influences the social identity process (Leary & Tangney, 2005). This implies that low self-esteem motivates social identification and inter-group behaviour and that social identification promotes self-esteem which Abrams and Hogg (1988) in Hogg (2005) term the 'self-esteem hypothesis'. However, there appear to be some discrepancies with this self-esteem hypothesis as a number of other variables could affect this relationship between self-esteem and group behaviour. For the purposes of this research, this would involve how closely each ECP student identifies with the group. Interestingly, the same student supported this view when she added:

[I thought].....I was the only one who felt like that but actually everybody else felt like thatwe kind of got together.'

[Student 2]

From the above student's response, she feels particularly threatened resulting in her immediate or state self-esteem being low. As these students decided to pull together, one is reminded of Swann's self verification theory (Swann, 1990 in Leary & Tangney, 2005). This theory suggests that individuals who perceive that they have a negative self-esteem would rather interact with people who have similar negative views and thus form their own group. All those students that had failed the test and been placed on the ECP, as opposed to students from the FCP, therefore had common ground on which to build a strong inter-group identity.

However, as the interviews progressed, it was interesting to observe how some ECP students mentioned that they were achieving higher marks in class assessments than their peers who had progressed through from the FCP. This could presumably have played a major role in the shift of group identity forged through negative self verification to the development of group identity through positive competition with the out-group. The following student explains this when she states:

'I found out that most people who were doing the main programme, they weren't doing very well at passing and I was doing well.'

[Student 1]

It was at this point in the interviews that many of the ECP students started referring to the ECP in a more positive light. The ECP group of students had shifted in their group identity from out-group to in-group as they expressed that the opportunities (Wellness learning outcomes, lighter workload and more time etc.) that had been afforded to them had better prepared them for the transition to higher education as stated in the previous theme. This would almost suggest

that at the point of integration (second year) with the incoming FCP students, status of the ECP and that of the students that had completed the ECP within the second year class, had improved. The two groups had reversed identities in the perception of the ECP students interviewed in this study. The ECP students were the ones that appeared to achieve better marks and many of the students who had previously completed the FCP first year were seeking advice regarding referencing and group work from the ECP students. According to one of the second year lecturers³, while she supervised students planning a group work presentation, she often observed that it would be one of the students from the ECP that was speaking out and making recommendations during group work. This would suggest that their initial concern of being in a larger group had diminished as their sense of self worth and confidence had improved.

When reviewing the data it became apparent that although most students' first impression was to regard the extra time as the main factor of the ECP contributing to their success, they then went on to identify a number of other factors. In the interviews, they almost all seemed to mention, as an afterthought, the added benefits (time management, induction into academic practices such as referencing techniques and reflective writing) they had received in the subject Wellness. It became evident that they only realized the true value of these benefits when they were integrated with the FCP. The majority of the ECP students interviewed credited these benefits to the programme as a whole and not the subject itself. As co-ordinator of the ECP in the department I found this extremely interesting. Previously, when a cohort of students were completing their first year (2005 and 2006), the question of why they had to complete the subject was raised on numerous occasions in student liaison meetings. The following quote sums this up when it states:

³ This particular lecturer had no previous association with the ECP which could affect her objectivity. She identified the students from the student photos posted in the department's office.

'It helped me to be a better person and with my marks.'

[Student 5]

The student credited the whole of the ECP for providing her with the necessary academic practices to achieve greater academic success, not specifically the learning outcomes from Wellness. The reference to being a better person perhaps encompasses what Bass (2007), Wood & Lithauer (2005), Mohamed (2004), McKenna (2004) and Chickering & Reisser (1993) were all alluding to when describing the importance of how students' social development greatly contributes to their academic success. Their position was supported by the lecturers who were interviewed for my research. One of the Somatology ECP lecturers believed that the ECP students behaved more professionally and appeared to be better prepared than the FCP students in terms of oral and written presentations, referencing and group work. She also noted that their note-taking skills were of a higher standard than those of the FCP. One of the students interviewed explained that she felt that by being taught how to use the library in the Wellness lessons, she makes use of it more than she would have if she had not completed the ECP programme.

One of the students went as far as hinting that some of the full curriculum students would have benefited from the ECP and passed instead of failing or performing poorly. .

'....they weren't doing very well as far as passing and I was doing wellthey made the wrong decision.'

[Student 4]

The above statement could show how this student has now categorized the Wellness group as the in-group as they appear to be performing better than their peers who had progressed through from the FCP. Interestingly Student 4's words suggest that she has constructed being put in the ECP as her own decision when the truth is that students are allocated to this group on the basis of their entrance

assessments. Claiming responsibility for the 'decision' to be in the ECP indicates that membership of this in-group enhances her self-esteem.

As the students began to reflect on their progress through the programme, the majority were of the opinion that in retrospect, they would not have changed anything. This resulted in some of the students acknowledging that in hindsight the additional academic support, the relevance they initially could not see, had in fact contributed to their holistic success. As Student 10 so appropriately concluded in her interview:

'But at the end it really helped..'

[Student 10]

However, initially many of these students did not feel this way and the next section addresses whether the ECP students experienced any negative discrimination from the FCP students during their first year. I will then examine this issue at the point of integration of the two groups into second year.

The concept of self as a target of prejudice relates to how the students perceived their experiences compared to those of the FCP students. There were a number of references in the interviews to initial feelings of being not as good as the FCP:

'....people they didn't think that we were capable enough'

[Student 2]

These two groups had already been categorized in the first year (2005) and either labelled the FCP or ECP. At this point, according to CIC theory, the comparison element becomes the focus. They were comparing their group (ECP) against the FCP group. On an individual level a student tried to identify where they should position themselves in the new larger group.

'I stayed with the same friendsdidn'talong with the main-group,first saw us, they were like, we treated them a certain way or, you know there was deception, we... I felt like they [the FCP students] treated us a bit differently.....we had our own perceptions, like 'They think they're smart or something' It's there'

[Student 4]

It is difficult to tell whether there was discrimination from the FCP or whether this student has reversed her own discrimination in order to protect her group identity. She suggests this when she uses the words 'we treated them in a certain way'. As her interview progressed and she was remembering her experiences during her studies she reflected on how these feelings had changed when she states:

'but it went away,when we got to know each other we joked about it, when time went by, it was quite nice, interesting.they tell you 'I thought you guys were mean'They thought we were mean [ECP], because we've been here longer than them, and we told ourselves that they thought they were superior or something.'

[Student 4]

This illustrates that both groups were engaged in process of categorization and were comparing themselves against each other. Ironically, it would seem that they may have both believed that they were the inferior group or out-group. The FCP felt that the ECP had more experience than them and the ECP felt that the FCP perceived themselves to be smarter. Only through communication and integration did they both come to realize this. It would appear that the two groups (ECP and FCP) were successfully developing a new shared group identity at the point of integration.

Some of the students suggested that they never experienced any feelings of being marginalized but they chose to primarily be friends with and work in practical lectures with fellow students from the ECP, as they were more familiar with them. They also said that, as time went by, they developed friendships with members of the FCP. This student's comment illustrates the point when she responds to questioning regarding friends:

'Yes,now we [students from ECP and FCP] become like more friends, especially – towards the end of the year, we became good friends.'

[Student 10]

However, as the interviews progressed to reflections on the course as a whole and their feelings in hindsight about being ECP students, the way in which they spoke about themselves changed. They increasingly spoke about themselves in positive ways. This would seem to be in line with the Social Identity Theory notion of out-groups diminishing the differences between themselves (in this case the ECP group) and the in-group (in this case FCP) in order to achieve a more positive social identity. I would like to take this concept further by suggesting that this may have been true initially when the ECP students discovered that they had been placed on that programme but that at the point of integration with the students from FCP, the group's statuses seemed to be reversed. The ECP programme appeared to have become the in-group. The reflection of their experiences by the ECP students subsequent to the completion of the extended curriculum part, indicates full integration with the Somatology in-group.

4.3.2.2 The title of 'Wellness' emerged as an ECP group identity

The use of the term 'Wellness' as an identity marker for the ECP group emerged from the data as the interviews progressed and the ECP students' discussions moved away from their initial memories and feelings and moved towards their discussion of their later ECP group identity. As explained in Chapter Two 'Wellness' is an academic development module designed specifically for the ECP group in which Somatology specific practices and academic literacy practices deemed necessary for student success in the programme are developed alongside integrated life skills.

All the interviewees referred to the ECP students as 'Wellness students' or 'Wellness girls' and spoke of the ECP as 'the Wellness programme' when their reflections were more focused on year two of their extended first year and their whole experience of the ECP.

As one student stated:

'I think it's the support because if I think it's different to be just thrown in the deep end like the main programme. For me, it was because of the support of the Wellness programme and the lecturers and all of that.'

[Student 4]

These words sum up the Wellness group identity most appropriately. The students stopped using the term 'ECP' to speak of their own group and adopted the word 'Wellness' at the point in the interview where they were reflecting on their later experiences. A concomitant marked improvement in self-esteem and confidence was noted.

'I'm quite glad I was in the Wellness programme.'

Student 7]

Without prompting, all the interviewed students referred to their group as 'Wellness' and not the 'ECP' at this stage. This supports the idea that they developed a strong group identity and that this identity became a positive one with in-group status.

4.4 Conclusion

The data allows me to tentatively depict the identity of the ECP group as follows:

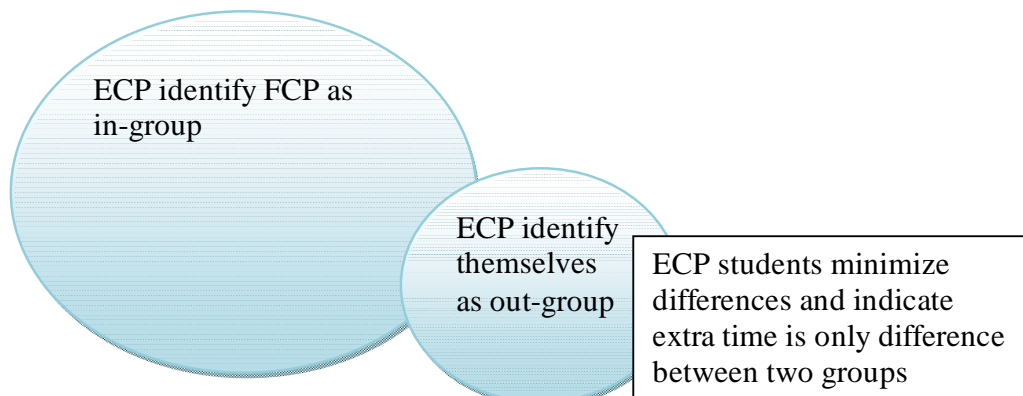


Figure 4.1 Group identification by ECP at the beginning of their first year of Study

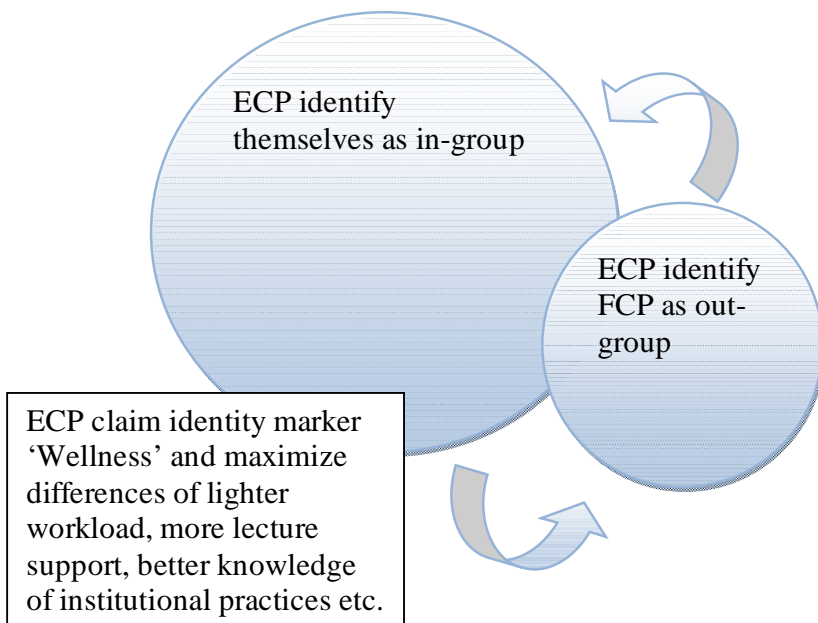


Figure 4.2 Group identification by ECP towards end of their first year and at beginning of their second year of study

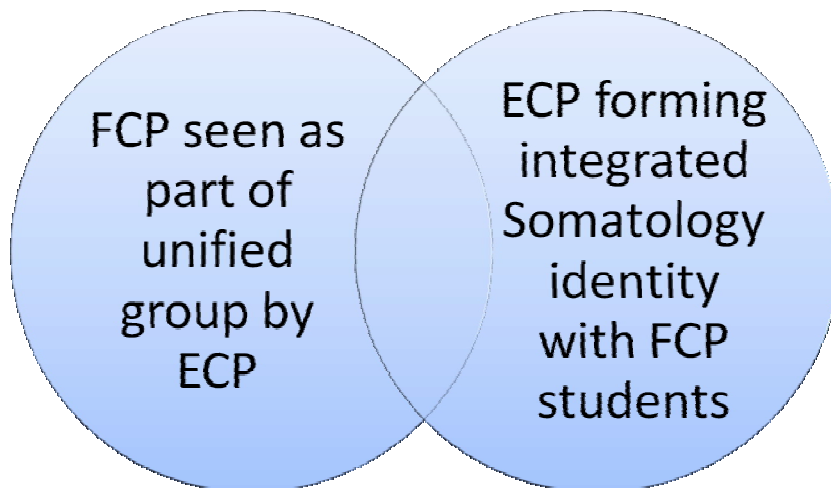


Figure 4.3 Group identification by ECP towards end of second year of study and onwards

In this chapter I have reported on the analysis and discussion of my research data comprising the biographical questionnaires and transcripts of the semi-

structured interviews. I used Tajfel and Turner's (1986) Social Identity Theory as the theoretical framework for this case study in order to provide a depth to my discussion and account for the ways in which the interviewees constructed their identity as ECP students.

The data collected revealed that the ECP has had an extensive effect on the holistic development of students' lives at university and these effects were not limited to their academic performance. The students were unanimous in their perception that the extra time had allowed them to become accustomed to their new surroundings. They were able to develop strong friendships and support groups, particularly within the ECP group. The data showed that only through reflection and time had the students' perceptions changed from what they originally felt when first entering the ECP. This could be attributed to a number of reasons such as, maturity or that any concerns of being identified and labelled an ECP student had been removed when they successfully integrated into second year with the FCP and their group status changed.

In the following chapter I will briefly discuss some recommendations that have emerged from the data and then I will conclude this thesis.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUDING DISCUSSION

5.1 Discussion

This study was undertaken to conduct an investigation into the effects of the ECP on the social identities of students. I was interested to see how these students perceived themselves, their experiences and situations as different from those of the FCP students. The focus therefore was on the social group dynamics rather than academic performance tracking. I feel that these issues need to be taken into account, as the number of foundation programmes that are being introduced in South African higher education institutions to address the under preparedness of students, is increasing. It is essential to ascertain the social impact and students' perceptions of such courses. My concern is that at the developmental stages of these programmes, the focus is predominantly on curriculum design in the narrower sense of course structure and syllabus, and not on the holistic needs of the group. As the Somatology ECP was one of the pioneer DoE funded extended programmes, and the students who participated in this study were the first cohort of students to integrate into the full second year, I felt it was imperative to observe their transition and learn from the process. Specifically, this study was one step towards the programme's objective to be able to put into place systems that would holistically support the ECP students' pursuit to successfully complete their National Diploma: Somatology. Subsequently, if these systems are put in place, the programme's retention and throughput rates should increase too. Furthermore, the human resource needs of industry will also be addressed.

The two key research questions were addressed through analysis of the interview data. Firstly, the study hoped to establish whether being in the ECP had affected the students' self-esteem, self image and general perception of themselves. Secondly, the study hoped to establish whether the ECP students perceived the full curriculum students' situations, opportunities, experiences and characteristics differently from those of their own. It was also hoped to identify the factors that motivated, facilitated or detracted from the ECP students' experiences.

The data was collected and analyzed in conjunction with the literature reviewed and the study provided a set of findings which I sum up below. Thereafter I provide recommendations arising from these findings.

The students were unanimous in their belief that the ECP had indeed assisted them with the transition process from high school to university. The majority attributed this to the fact that they had more time to acclimatize to their new environment and had a lighter work load. Some acknowledged that they would probably not have performed as well as they had if they had completed the full complement of first year subjects in one year.

The students also stated that the ECP programme had taught them valuable life skills such as time management, self management and academic literacy practices associated with Somatology studies which are an essential requirement to achieve academic success.

The students developed a stronger sense of self worth particularly when entering the full second year with the FCP students. This could be accredited to the fact that by successfully engaging in the learning process, they felt they had demonstrated and proven themselves of being equally capable. The accomplishment of this integration appeared to have become a powerful motivational tool for further studies, even though the students acknowledged that

the workload had increased. This finding seems consistent with Beder and Valentine's (1990) opinion that if an individual really wants to overcome any difficulties or obstacle then the motivation to improve self-esteem and self worth is increased.

Only when the two groups had merged into one second year class did the students from the ECP feel that the stereotype of being different had been entirely removed. The students thought they would just be seen as a member of the 'big group' or according to the CIC theory the 'in-group'. This is considered typical behaviour that occurs between two groups based on the Social Identity Theory. Ironically, it appeared that, based on informal discussion, a few of the FCP students perceived the ECP students as the in-group as they had been around longer and were more experienced than the newcomers.

After reflection, a number of ECP students who had originally viewed the smaller group size as indicating their difference, reversed their negative opinion to one which was in favour of it.

The reason for this was the smaller group provided a secure and more comfortable environment wherein the students could first familiarize themselves with the university environment generally and the expectations of the course specifically. This allowed them to acquire and practice some fundamental skills which are needed for their studies such as presentation techniques, group work and verbal interaction with peers and lecturers.

They felt they could communicate more freely in the classroom setting with both the lecturer and peers. The element of comparison and competition as discussed in Chapter Two were eliminated as they fostered a strong group identity which allowed them to enquire or ask the lecturer any questions because their feelings of being threatened or intimidated were reduced. Many of the ECP students indicated that when they had to attend the larger integrated classes in their first

year of study, they usually remained silent and held back from making any comments due to their fear of being ridiculed.

The ECP students believed that they received more personal attention from the lecturers than the FCP students had. By encouraging the ECP students to question and be involved in class discussions, lecturers addressed two important issues. Firstly, the students engaged in the learning process which is ultimately one of DoE's critical cross field outcomes⁴. Fredrickson (2001) proposes that when an individual shows interest in some aspect of their studies, they will be motivated to perform better and be stimulated to explore and be involved more. Secondly, a sense almost of 'exclusivity' emerged and the group identity of 'Wellness' was established. Many enjoyed having the lecturers' attention focused on their class. The data confirms that the students appreciated the student-centred approach used by the facilitators on the ECP. This also suggests that their perception of group identity had changed from originally being the 'out-group' to the new 'in-group'. One student even mentioned that she felt that merging with the students from the FCP would result in this close ECP relationship being compromised.

The four years it would take them to complete their national diploma was initially viewed negatively by the ECP students. The data indicated however that this initially negative view was replaced with an acceptance of the benefits offered by the ECP as the course progressed and as they developed a cohesive group identity.

The ECP students developed their own lasting support systems such as study groups and built relationships and friendships. These were formed as the motivation to prove their self-worth and improve their self-esteem, and they continued to exist after the ECP had ended. Even though they have merged with

⁴ Critical cross field outcome are identified by the Dept of Education, as generic, underpinning learning outcomes to be integrated and assessed in every programme of study from Grade R to PhD. (Government Gazette 1997:46) within South Africa.

the other cohort of students, some still wanted to demonstrate that they could perform better than these students at the more intense higher levels of their studies.

5.2 Recommendations

Lecturers should be offered specialized training in mentoring, innovative or holistic teaching and learning techniques. This may assist them in what Scott et al.(2007) see as designing alternative paths to achieve the same learning outcomes without compromising or lowering the exit standards of an academic programme irrespective of the modification of entry-level requirements. By introducing this, it is hoped that the student will be motivated to strive for academic success.

An orientation programme or team building workshop could be introduced by the Somatology programme at beginning of second year when the two cohorts have merged together. I believe that this may address the initial awkwardness and dispel any misconceptions that the groups may have of each other. Thus, the integration process could occur even sooner and more smoothly.

I would like to extend this study to include investigating the FCP students' perceptions of the ECP and its students to establish if they perceive the ECP students' experiences differently from their own. Some findings from this study suggest that they do experience concerns that the ECP are better prepared than they are. A comprehensive examination from the point of view of the ECP and FCP facilitators regarding their perceptions of how effective the ECP has been would also be beneficial to explore further. Once this cohort of students has graduated, it would be interesting to examine their throughput rates and establish if the programme has met the DoE's intentions. I want to confirm whether the projected fifty percent improvement as stipulated in the proposal submitted to the

DoE on the National Diploma throughput rate has been achieved within the minimum time of four years. These findings could substantiate Scott et al.'s (2008) call for more flexible curricula which would be able to address:

The disjunction between the traditional curriculum structures and the realities of the diverse student body thus amplifies the problem of under-preparedness arising from inequalities in schooling.

(Scott et al.2007, p.44)

This could possible encourage more academic programmes to adopt similar extended curriculum approach when designing or reviewing programmes

5.3 Personal reflections on the thesis journey

I have chosen to include a personal reflection section as I feel that through the process of conducting this thesis I have been forced to reflect on my perception of being both a Somatologist and a student. The experience allowed me the opportunity to explore the education sector of the Somatology profession in greater detail. My interest may stem from a desire to contribute to the profession which is becoming known both for its academic credibility as for the palliative treatments with which it is so often associated. Perhaps the ECP students' experiences of being an out-group attempting to forge an in-group status to some extent echo my own experiences as a lecturer within this Higher Education institution.

The issue of the identity of Somatologists has not been addressed in detail in this thesis, though it was alluded to in the data where, for example, as students referred to the perception that Somatology was 'easy'.

In my view, this programme suffers from this stigma to some extent within the institution with the discipline not being “academic” enough. The profession is also largely regarded as a fairly low status occupation (Verdon, 2009). Conversations with lecturers within the Health Sciences Faculty from other programmes led me to conclude that they deemed students entering this profession as often ‘academically challenged’ or regarded the programme as a ‘just by the way course’ like ‘a finishing school’. Most people I spoke to associated it with the aesthetic components (make-up, massage and facials) of the programme only and therefore not for higher education. There was, however, some acknowledgement that the DUT course was different to the courses offered by many other providers where such courses are often short-term and focussed on beauty therapy alone.

Even though the profession has developed and increasingly has a medical therapy aspect and a strong technical base, the profession is still perceived by many as just being about beauty. In this sense, I as a Somatologist could identify with the ECP students feelings of being an ‘out-group’.

The undertaking of this research and writing up this thesis was a difficult undertaking and I had feelings of insecurity in my own ability to present this work. Again, I think this aspect of my personal identity relates to the ECP students’ expressions of inadequacy discussed in Chapter Four. By completing this process, I am almost at the stage of integration expressed by the ECP students as they claimed in-group status with the rest of the diploma students. By completing a Masters course work and thesis, I feel more confident to claim the identity of an academic amongst my colleagues. Therefore, while this thesis tells the story of ECP students’ identity constructions, it has also been an identity journey of my own. It is only in the process of tentatively concluding this thesis that I started to feel that much of the data and the theory had bearing on my own identity journey.

5.4 Conclusion

This study has concluded that the majority of students were of the perception that they had benefited from the ECP. They acknowledged that their transition from school to university had been less complicated and less demanding than that of their peers. Their self-esteem, which had initially been fragile when they discovered they had been placed on the ECP, appeared to increase as their sense of self-worth improved. This was achieved by them being motivated to prove that they were just as good as the FCP students. As a consequence, they formed strong friendships with the other members of their ECP group, which proved to be a great support system both in their academic and their social life. However, it must be stressed that most of these findings were only realized by the students in hindsight. The students' strong cohesion led them to claim the specific identity of 'Wellness' as an in-group marker.

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Appendix A - Biographical Questionnaire

Copy of the Questionnaire given to each extended curriculum student to develop a biographical background.

QUESTIONNAIRE

Thank you for agreeing to being interviewed for my study. Please complete the following questions that will provide biographical background information that is necessary in order to understand and establish the perceptions of the Extended Curriculum Students.

A. BIOGRAPHICAL DATA

Please complete the following table by inserting your personal details in the spaces provided.

1. Age	
2. Gender	
3. Race	
4. Nationality	
5. Home language	

6. Where do you live while studying?

Tick the most appropriate answer in the box below:

At home with relatives / family	
DUT Residence	
Commune or flat with other people	
By yourself in a house/flat etc	
Private Residence	

B. SOMATOLOGY BACKGROUND

1. What year did you first register to study Somatology?

2. Was Somatology your first choice of study?

Tick the correct answer in the box below:

Yes	
No	

3. If no, what was your first choice of study?

.....

.

4. When and how were you informed that you had been placed in the extended curriculum programme?

.....

.

.....

.

5. Were you aware that the test you wrote as part of the entrance requirements was used to determine your placement into the extended curriculum programme?

Tick the correct answer in the box below:

Yes	
No	

Thank you

Appendix B – Interview Schedule

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE⁵

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study is to conduct an investigation into how the extended curriculum students perceive themselves in relationship to their full curriculum peers.

Key Research Questions:

1. How has being an extended curriculum learner affected learners' self image and perception of themselves?
2. Do the extended curriculum students perceive the full curriculum students' situations, opportunities, experiences and characteristics differently from those of their own?

INTRODUCTION TO PARTICIPANT:

- *Thank you for agreeing to participate and be interviewed regarding your experiences of being an extended curriculum learner.*
- *At any stage during the interview or the study if you wish to discontinue or reframe from answering a particular questions you may do so.*
- *In order for me to transcribe the information accurately the interview will be recorded, but I ensure you that you identity will remain confidential.*
- *If you are comfortable and ready to begin then we may proceed with the interview.*

⁵ These questions were used as a guideline and not adhered to as printed here. The semi-structured nature of the interview meant that deviations and amendments were common.

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS:

1. How did you **feel** when you were accepted to study Somatology?
2. How did you **feel** when you discovered it was for the Wellness/extended curriculum programme?
3. How do you **feel** now about it?
4. How do you think initially the **full curriculum students felt about the extended programme and the students that had gone through that route?**

Prompt: and now is it different?

5. What factors are similar or different, now that you are **a full second year** from those that you had **as a Wellness student?**

Prompt: or is there any?

Prompts: workload/support systems

Size of class/ group dynamics

Practicals/group work - who do you work with

Friends

IN CONCLUSION:

If I could just sum up

Thank you for sharing your experiences and thoughts with me.

Should you wish to view the transcription of our interview, I will be happy to provide you with a copy of the transcript to view.

Appendix C – Consent Letter to Participants

CONSENT LETTER TO PARTICIPANTS

Dear participant

Consent to participate in a study to investigate the identities of the extended curriculum students of how they perceive themselves in relationship to their full curriculum peers.

I am presently registered for M. Ed (Higher Education) with the School of Adult and Higher Education Faculty of Education University of KwaZulu-Natal. In order to complete the research component of this programme I am required to completed a half dissertation which includes conducting a study within the field of education.

Therefore, I am conducting a study on the Somatology extended curriculum students' perceptions on their experiences of becoming a member of the full curriculum second year class/group.

As this is the first cohort of extended curriculum students progressing through to full curriculum second year; it is hoped that the information gained from this study will contribute to future understanding and "holistic" planning of the extended national diploma: Somatology programme.

This is why you have been requested to be a participant in the study.

A short questionnaire would need to be completed by you and a private thirty minute interview will be conducted with you at a time and place convenient to both parties. During this interview do not hesitate to be as open and honest as this will be greatly appreciated. I will use a voice recorder to record the interview which I will transcribe as soon a possible after the event. Copies of the transcription will be available should you request to examine them before I proceed with the data analysis process. A final copy of the completed half dissertation will be housed in the department of Somatology should you wish to view it.

Your participation in the study is voluntary, and while your consent to participate is necessary, you may at any stage withdraw from the study. All the information you provide will be treated confidentially, and access to the data will only be given to those closely involved in the study. You can be assured that no participant's personal identity will be identified in the final research report.

Kindly sign this consent form if you are willing and able to participate in the study.

If you require any further information regarding this study please contact either me or my supervisor Dr S. Mckenna through the following options:

Mrs. D Borg
Tel: 031 3732390
Email:
dorindab@dut.ac.za

Dr S. Mckenna
Tel: 031 2601674
Email:
mckenna@ukzn.ac.za

Thank you

Dorinda Borg

Declaration Form

I..... (Full name) hereby confirm that I understand the contents of the document and the nature of the research project, and I consent voluntarily to participate in the research study entitled:

Effects of the extended curriculum programme on the social identity of students

I further acknowledge that I have had time to read, understand and question the information presented to me in my own time with consultation provided where necessary.

I understand that I am at liberty to withdraw from the research project at any time, should I choose to do so.

SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT

DATE

.....

.....

Appendix D – Consent form to DUT

CONSENT FORM TO DUT

To the Dean of the Faculty of Health Sciences

I am presently registered for M. Ed (Higher Education) with the School of Adult and Higher Education Faculty of Education University of KwaZulu-Natal. In order to complete the research component of this programme I am required to complete a half dissertation which includes conducting a study within the field of education.

Therefore, I am conducting a study to investigate the identities of the extended curriculum students and of how they perceive themselves in relationship to their full curriculum peers.

As this is the first cohort of extended curriculum students progressing through to full curriculum second year; it is hoped that the information gained from this study will contribute to future understanding and "holistic" planning of the extended curriculum diploma: Somatology programme.

For this reason I am requesting your permission to interview some of the extended curriculum students currently in full curriculum second year and who have completed the first and second year intervention phase of the extended curriculum programme.

A short questionnaire would need to be completed by each student participating in the study as well as a private thirty minute interview will be conducted with the student and myself at a time and place convenient to all parties. The students will be asked during this interview to be as open and honest as this will be greatly appreciated.

A voice recorder will be used to record the interview, which I will transcribe as soon as possible after the event. Copies of the transcription will be made available should a student request to examine them before I proceed with the data analysis process.

A final copy of the completed half dissertation will be housed in the department of Somatology should you or any of the students wish to view it.

The student's participation in the study is voluntary, and consent from each student to participate will be collected prior to the interview.

The students will be informed that they may at any stage withdraw from the study. All the information gained from the interviews will be treated confidentially, and access to the data will only be given to those closely involved in the study.

You can be assured that no participants' personal identity will be identified in the final research report.

If you require any further information regarding this study please contact either me or my supervisor Dr S. McKenna through the following options:

Mrs. D Borg
Tel: 031 3732390
Email:
dorindab@dut.ac.za

Dr S. McKenna
Tel: 031 260
Email:
mckenna@ukzn.ac.za

Kindly sign this consent form if you are allowing me the opportunity to interview the DUT Somatology extended curriculum students.

Thank you

Dorinda Borg

DECLARATION

I, (Full name) hereby confirm that I understand the contents of the documentation and the nature of the research project, and I am happy for Mrs D Borg to conduct her research study entitled: Perceptions of the extended curriculum students.

SIGNATURE OF DEAN OF HEALTH SCIENCES DATE

.....

Appendix E – University of KwaZulu Natal – Ethical Clearance Certificate



RESEARCH OFFICE (GOVAN MBEKI CENTRE)
WESTVILLE CAMPUS
TELEPHONE NO.: 031 – 2603587
EMAIL: ximbap@ukzn.ac.za

10 APRIL 2008

MRS. DR BORG (205526933)
ADULT & HIGHER EDUCATION

Dear Mrs. Borg

ETHICAL CLEARANCE APPROVAL NUMBER: HSS/0093/08M

I wish to confirm that ethical clearance has been approved for the following project:

“Effects of the extended curriculum programme on the social identity of students”

PLEASE NOTE: Research data should be securely stored in the school/department for a period of 5 years

Yours faithfully


.....
MS. PHUMELELE XIMBA

cc. Supervisor (Dr. S McKenna)
cc. Mr. D Buchler (Faculty Research Office)



