7. Students in further education and training

This section analyses the responses of students who indicated in the Phase 2 survey that they had enrolled in an FET institution in 2002. Because the 2002 database of enrolments in FET Colleges was not available for analysis at the time of writing, an analysis similar to that undertaken on HE enrolments is not possible. The following findings, therefore, are not generalisable to the entire population of first-time entering FET College students who were in Grade 12 in 2001.

Of the learners enrolled in an FET institution in 2002, the vast majority (81.7 per cent) were enrolled in an FET College (formerly a technical college). The programme enrolment profile for FET College learners is shown in Table 24 (the data are weighted).

Table 24: FET College enrolments by field of study

Field of study	Percentage
Business Studies	30.3
Engineering Studies	21.2
General Education	13.0
Utility Studies	3.9
Other	31.6
Total	**100.0**

The first noteworthy finding from Table 24 is the relatively small percentage of enrolments in Engineering programmes (only 21 per cent); as previous studies have shown (see Cosser 2003; Powell & Hall 2000), Engineering programmes traditionally attract the vast majority of enrolments (between 54 per cent and 60 per cent) in the FET College sector. Most of these, however, would be enrolments at the N1–N3 level. One would have expected Engineering Studies to attract a slightly higher percentage of enrolments than Business Studies, which, with 30 per cent of enrolments, is normative in FET programmes up to the N3/NSC level (see Powell & Hall 2000: 29).

The second noteworthy finding is the large percentage of enrolments in 'Other' programmes. An analysis of textual responses reveals that the majority of these (18 out of 30 responses) are in the Information Technology (IT) field; the remainder are in Chemical Engineering (5) and Security Studies (2), with one each in five other areas.

Factors affecting enrolment in a FET institution

Asked to indicate their main reason (from among a list of possible reasons provided) for enrolling in an FET institution, learners participating in the 2002 survey responded as shown in Table 25.

Table 25: Main reason for enrolment in an FET institution, in descending order of frequency

Variable	Percentage
I wanted to improve my marks so that I could proceed to higher education	39.8
It was too expensive for me to study at another type of institution	27.8
I wanted to study in a field that would lead to my finding a job	22.3
The school I attended last year would not re-admit me so that I could repeat Grade 12	2.7
I knew that I could achieve a qualification more quickly in the institution at which I am studying	2.5
I was interested in studying in a field not offered by any other type of institution	1.9
Other	1.5
My parents/guardians/relatives persuaded me to study at an FET institution	1.5
Total	**100.0**

Immediately apparent from this profile is that *no* learners indicated as their main reason for FET study that their parents/guardians/relatives had studied at an FET institution (the ninth listed reason) – which may mean that none of the learners had any family association with such institutions from a terminal qualification perspective. Indeed, a cross-tabulation with Question 6.5 of the survey – 'What is the highest level of education of each of your parents/guardians (where applicable)?' – confirms this assumption: no parents/guardians of any learners enrolled in FET institutions – public or private – had themselves obtained an FET certificate or diploma as their highest qualification – which does not necessarily mean, however, that they did not have *any* study connection with FET institutions.

The popularity of the first three reasons in Table 25 comes as no surprise: poor marks, lack of funds, and the need to enhance employability are – besides HIV/AIDS – arguably the three major issues confronting the majority of young people in South Africa early in the 21st century. Importantly, two out of five learners enrolled in FET institutions (39.8 per cent) want to proceed to HE, and see FET as the vehicle for such a passage. This finding reinforces that of the HSRC's 2001 Technical College Responsiveness survey, which found that many college students view FET study as a gateway to HE (Cosser 2003).

8. Learners still at school

This section focuses on the responses of learners in the Phase 2 response profile who were in Grade 12 in 2001 and who were still at school in 2002. As in the case of the FET sector, the data here presented are not generalisable to the entire population of Grade 12 learners still in school the year after the 2001 survey.

The main reasons advanced by learners for enrolling in a school (state or independent) are shown in Table 26.

Table 26: Main reason for enrolment in a school, in descending order of frequency

Reason	Percentage
I wanted to repeat Grade 12 to improve my marks in specific subjects to enable me to proceed to higher education	53.7
I failed Grade 12 and am repeating the year	34.6
The school I attended last year would not re-admit me so that I could repeat Grade 12	4.9
Other	2.5
My parents/guardians wanted me to repeat Grade 12 at school	2.4
I can earn higher marks at the school in which I am now enrolled	1.9
Total	**100.0**

No learners indicated that they wanted to enrol in the school's post-Grade 12 programme – one of the listed reasons. All learner participants in the survey who were at school, then, were repeating all or part of Grade 12 in 2002.

Significantly, more than half the learners at school (54 per cent) wanted to improve their marks in specific subjects so that they could access HE, the next highest percentage (35 per cent) having failed outright. Of those wanting to improve their marks, there is a sizeable discrepancy between those learners taking specified subjects at the higher and standard grades for all subjects except Fine Arts. These discrepancies are:

- While 23.2 per cent of learners were repeating Mathematics at HG, 76.8 per cent were repeating it at SG.
- While 45.2 per cent of learners were repeating Physical Science at HG, 54.8 per cent were repeating it at SG.
- While 36.9 per cent of learners were repeating Biology at HG, 63.1 per cent were repeating it at SG.
- While 15.9 per cent of learners were repeating History at HG, 84.1 per cent were repeating it at SG.
- While 19.3 per cent of learners were repeating Business Economics at HG, 80.7 per cent were repeating it at SG.

These statistics underscore the severe problem posed by the HG–SG split at school level, which effectively precludes the majority of learners from entering HE in general, and universities in particular.

The only subjects in which there is a positive differential are Geography, which 70.2 per cent of learners were taking on HG, 29.8 per cent on SG, and Afrikaans, which 96.1 per cent of learners were taking on HG, 3.9 per cent on SG.

Learners repeat specific subjects for one reason: they wish to improve their marks – either simply to pass or to give them access to further learning. That the majority of learners in the majority of subjects listed chose to repeat subjects at the SG would seem, at face value, to negate any notion that they wanted to improve their marks '*to be able to proceed to higher education*' (emphasis added). However, learners who have absolutely no chance of passing the specified subjects at HG take them at SG with a view to having a reasonable pass converted to a HG pass, which might then qualify them for entry into HE. Alternatively, many learners are simply misinformed – lack of career guidance having been identified in Phase 1 of the Student Choice Behaviour study as a major deficiency in schools.

9. Respondents not studying

The previous section has focused on learners studying – whether in HE or FET institutions, or in schools. This section discusses the responses of all respondents who did not enrol in education and training institutions in 2002 to the question 'What is your main reason for not studying at present?'. The data are weighted.

Table 27: Main reason for not studying, in descending order of frequency

Reason	Percentage
I do not have the money to study further	62.6
I wanted to get a job so I could save towards future studies	12.4
I failed Grade 12	6.1
Other	4.2
My marks were not good enough to allow me to study further	4.1
My parents/guardians wanted me to get a job so that I could support the family	2.9
My parents/guardians wanted me to get a job so that I could support myself	2.9
I wanted to get a job so I could become independent	2.5
I do not need to study further because I have a job	1.5
I am pregnant	0.7
I am tired of studying	0.1
Total	**100.0**

Lack of funding is the prime reason for learners not studying further, confirming the Phase 1 finding that access to funding is one of the key issues affecting young people's learning trajectories. Parental inability to finance HE study is ranked as the most significant factor affecting learner decision not to enter HE (Cosser with du Toit 2002: 68). For black learners, access to external sources of funding – scholarships, bursaries, and loans – is the key determinant of educational opportunity. Female respondents (of all population groups), a disaggregation of the above data shows, are more prone than are males (54% : 46%) to having no access to finance for further study.

The second most important reason advanced by respondents for not studying further – wanting to finance further study through the proceeds of work – reinforces the first reason and points to the 'Catch-22' (Heller 1961) in which most young South Africans find themselves: unable to finance further study, they look for work; but without the appropriate level and range of skills – a function of not having had the educational opportunity which access to finance would have afforded – they cannot find employment to pay for further study. Again, female students are more keen than males to find work to save towards future studies (53% : 47%).

10. Employment

Profile of the employed

This section of the monograph considers those learners who participated in the 2001 Grade 12 survey and found employment in 2002. The section has five foci:

- Respondents' means of finding employment;
- Their actual employment situations;
- Their remuneration;
- The extent of alignment between their school subjects and their work situations;
- Their sense of job satisfaction.

The data below are weighted as per the formula outlined in Section 4.

Means of finding employment

Of the 28 per cent of respondents who were employed at the time of the survey (late 2002), nearly a quarter (22.9 per cent) found employment through relatives, 14 per cent through personal contacts, and 12 per cent through family enterprise – underscoring the significance of social networks in 'the networking society' (to distort Castells' [1996] phrase). In short, nearly half of all working respondents found employment not via external means but through networks operating within their spheres of activity. Table 28 presents the full profile of responses.

Table 28: Means of finding employment, in descending order of frequency

Variable	Percentage
Through relatives	22.9
Through personal contacts	14.3
Other	13.7
I joined the family business	11.7
By going from place to place to ask for work	11.5
Through making telephonic, fax, or mail enquiries at workplaces, factories, and shops	7.0
Through contact with my employer through holiday jobs during my schooling	6.0
Through a private employment agency	3.8
Through Department of Labour employment services	3.7
Through a newspaper advertisement	2.7
Through a labour broker	0.8
Through my employer coming to the school to talk to students about jobs in that company	0.8
With the help of the school	0.5
The school gave me a reference	0.4
Through school teaching staff	0.2
Total	**100.0**

The paucity of respondents who found work through responding to newspaper advertisements (2.7 per cent) bears out the importance of 'networking for work' as well, possibly, as the low esteem in which employers appear to hold those with only a Senior Certificate.

On average, it took working respondents 4.5 months to find a job. Table 29 below categorises responses to the question into quartiles:

Table 29: Categorisation of time respondents took to find a job

Time taken to find employment	Percentage of learners
1–3 months	45.7
4–6 months	26.9
7–9 months	22.5
10–12 months	4.9
Total	**100.0**

As Table 29 illustrates, a larger percentage of employed learners found employment in the first three months of searching than in any of the other quartiles. Furthermore, while approximately a quarter of respondents found work in 4–6 or in 7–9 months, only 5 per cent found work in the last quarter of the year after job-searching had commenced. If respondents are going to find work, then, they will do so sooner rather than later.

Those factors that facilitated respondents finding employment are ranked in Table 30.

Table 30: Factors influencing respondents finding employment, in descending order of influence

Variable	Mean
Your personality	4.4
Your ability to speak English well	4.2
Having Grade 12	3.8
Personal faith	3.7
References from people who know you well	3.5
Having gained some work experience through holiday/casual jobs	3.3
The confidence which having a Grade 12 gave you for the job interview	3.2
Having a personal contact at the workplace of your employer	3.1
The subjects you took for your Grade 12	2.8
The reputation of your school	2.8
Being computer literate	2.6

Variable	Mean
The marks/symbols you achieved in Grade 12	2.6
Having a valid driver's licence	2.3
Your gender	2.3
Formal career guidance from your school	2.2
Informal career guidance from a teacher at your school	2.2
The assistance which your school gave you towards your job interview	2.0
Your population group	2.0
Offering to work for no pay	1.9

The findings in Table 30 make for fascinating reading. Factors that might not have been expected to influence respondents' perceptions of their employability emerge as most significant, while factors that might have been thought more significant prove to be less so. In the former category are respondents' personalities and their 'personal faith'; in the latter, career guidance – both formal and informal – received at school. Importantly, however, these findings should not be misinterpreted to suggest that these are the factors that caused respondents to be offered employment; the perspective here is the respondents' own perceptions of how employment offers came about.

Most significantly for respondents for whom English is a second or third language – the vast majority of young people in the country – is the degree of importance that respondents who *have* found work attach to the ability to speak English well. This ability is far more influential a factor for female respondents than for males (the mean scores being 4.4 and 3.8 respectively). Interestingly, the only two factors that score above 4 in Table 30 have to do with presentation in the interview; having Grade 12, while clearly important, ranks only third in the table – and, again, is more influential for females (3.9) than for males (3.7). That 'personal faith' ranks above such factors as personal references and work experience attests to the importance which respondents attach to their own inner belief systems – which might well align with the presentation skills underpinning the top two factors. Female respondents attach more weight to their personalities having affected their finding a job than do male respondents (4.5 versus 4.2).

Another remarkable finding is that the mere fact of having a Grade 12 (Senior) certificate is more important, from learners' perspectives, either than the subjects that make up that qualification or the marks the learner achieves in them – both of which factors are below the mid-point (3), and therefore, from learners' perspectives, of little significance. Also insignificant for respondents who found employment is their race. Blacks constitute 80 per cent of those working part-time, whites 12 per cent. The white-black ratio for respondents working full-time and studying part-time is 84% : 16% (coloured and Indian responses factored out) and for respondents working full-time and not studying is 64% : 36% – the effect of which is to render this factor only slightly more significant for blacks (mean = 2.1) than for whites (mean = 1.7).

Finally, being computer literate is not considered an influential factor in finding employment (mean = 2.6). This is either cause for concern in the technological age or

says more about the kinds of employment and the types of occupation represented in the employment profile than anything else. As far as kinds of employment are concerned, nearly half of working respondents (46 per cent) are employed as casual workers, a quarter as temporary contract workers and only 29 per cent as permanent employees – which might suggest a fairly low demand for computer skills. On the other hand, were computer literacy high amongst job-seekers, this profile might have looked quite different – many more workers being represented in the permanent and temporary contract categories. Occupation types are addressed later in this section.

Employment situations

An analysis of employment situations reveals that two-thirds (67 per cent) of those in employment work for a company/organisation, while nearly one-third (30 per cent) assist someone else in that person's business. Negligible percentages work for themselves, on their own (1.3 per cent), work for themselves and employ others (0.9 per cent), and work in a partnership with one or more persons (0.8 per cent). This profile is normative for school-leavers who enter the labour market with little or no work experience and a limited array of skills.

Further analysis shows that nearly two-thirds of those working (61 per cent) are employed in a private company, nearly one-third (30 per cent) in government or the public service, and 9 per cent in an NGO or community-based organisation (CBO). The average number of hours worked per week is 29, which reflects the bias towards casual and part-time employment. A categorisation reveals that 41 per cent of those employed work between 1 and 20 hours per week, 33 per cent between 21 and 40 hours per week, and 26 per cent more than 40 hours per week.

Two of the open-ended questions in the questionnaire (5.9 and 5.10) target, respectively, the industries and occupations in which employed respondents were working at the time of the survey. A post-coding of these responses reveals that the vast majority of post-Grade 12 learners who were working were employed in the Wholesale/Retail/Repairs/Hotels sector (65 per cent), followed by Community/Social/Personal Services (17 per cent), Manufacturing (12 per cent), and Construction (3 per cent), with less than 2 per cent employed in each of the other sectors. Nearly one-third (32 per cent) of those working were employed as Service Workers, Shop and Market Sales Workers, 26 per cent were employed as Clerks, 13 per cent in Elementary Occupations, 12 per cent as Technicians and Associate Professionals, 7 per cent as each of Plant and Machine Operators and Assemblers, and Craft and Related Trades Workers, 3 per cent as Professionals, and 2 per cent as Legislators, Senior Officials and Managers – a not unexpected finding, for learners straight out of school. No respondents were employed as Skilled Agricultural and Fishery Workers.

A cross-tabulation of these Standard Industrial Classification (SIC) and Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) categories reveals that:

- All the Legislators, Senior Officials and Managers were employed – as managers – in the Wholesale/Retail/Repairs/Hotels sector;
- Professionals and Technicians and Associate Professionals were distributed either entirely or largely across the Wholesale/Retail/Repairs/Hotels and Community/Social/Personal Services sectors.

These profiles – that is, few matriculants being employed at the Legislative/Managerial/Professional levels, most matriculants being employed as Service Workers, Shop and Market Sales Workers, Clerks, and in Elementary Occupations – are normative for new entrants into the labour market, particularly where such entrants are not equipped, by virtue of their limited skills profiles, to enter other sectors in more skilled capacities.

Remuneration of workers

Gross remuneration packages of those employed are reflected in Table 31 below.

Table 31: Gross monthly earnings of those employed

Gross monthly income	Percentage
Nothing – I am not paid	8.8
R1–R500	31.6
R501–R1 000	29.0
R1 001–R2 000	21.1
R2 001–R3 000	8.3
R3 001–R4 000	0.2
R4 001–R5 000	0.4
R7 501–R10 000	0.6
Total	**100.0**

Immediately evident is that nobody earned between R5 001 and R7 500 a month or more than R10 000 a month – the latter as one might expect for recent matriculants. Almost one in ten persons (9 per cent) worked for no remuneration at all. Even more revealing is that nearly two-thirds of those employed (60.6 per cent) earned between R1 and R1 000 per month. However, this picture is somewhat misleading. 14 per cent of those working part-time while studying full-time failed their Senior Certificate, 29 per cent of those working full-time while studying part-time failed, and 15 per cent of those working full-time failed their Senior Certificate. By no means all the Grade 12 learners who found work in 2002 had a Senior Certificate, then – which places the very high percentage (61 per cent) of those earning less than R1 000 in greater perspective.

A disaggregation by gender reveals that men earn more than women: while 65.8 per cent of men earn less than R1 000 per month, 71.7 per cent of women do so; while 27.8 per cent of women earn between R1 001 and R3 000 per month, 31.9 per cent of men do so; and while only 0.4 per cent of women earn more than R3 000 per month, 2.3 per cent of men do so. The differences, however – except in the latter case – are not particularly stark.

Alignment between school and work

One measure of work preparedness is the extent to which school subjects and outcomes are aligned to work situations. Accordingly, part of the survey gauged the perceptions of

those who found employment about the degree of alignment between their schooling and their jobs.

Respondents were asked to rate the extent to which they used, in their jobs, the knowledge and skills they had acquired at school. They rated this alignment on a five-point Likert scale at 3.4 – only marginally positively, therefore. More revealing is the percentage of those who indicated that their jobs were neither appropriate nor linked to their school qualifications. The reasons advanced by these 78 per cent of workers for taking jobs not linked to their qualifications are shown in Table 32. (Respondents could mark more than one box.)

Table 32: Reasons for those employed accepting work not linked to their schooling

Reason	Percentage
I have not (yet) been able to find a job that is better linked to my level of education	15.6
I had to accept any work so that I could support myself/my family	13.1
I can gain valuable work experience in my current job	13.0
My current job allows me to work part-time or when I want to	10.9
I do not mind having a job that is not linked to my schooling	10.1
My current job allows me to support myself/my family	9.9
Other	5.9
My current job provides more variety	4.1
In doing this job I have better career opportunities	3.8
I have to accept work that is not closely linked to my studies at the beginning of my career	3.6
My current job is more interesting	3.4
I can earn more money in my current job	3.1
My current job is more secure	2.1
My current job allows me to work where I want to	1.4
Total	**100.0**

Interestingly, there is a fairly even spread of reasons. Cumulatively (reasons ranked second and sixth), however (23 per cent), taking a job to support themselves and/or their families is a salient reason for accepting the appointment – the notion of having no option being reinforced by the independently highest-ranked reason: having to accept employment not linked to one's level of education.

The cohort of employed respondents includes those working part-time (half of those employed). This places the high percentage (78 per cent) of learners who took jobs not linked to their schooling in perspective. However, only 11 per cent of those employed

ascribe their decision to accept their current jobs to the need for flexibility which part-time work affords them.

The high percentage of those employed who indicated that their jobs were neither appropriate nor linked to their school qualifications is a sobering comment – albeit from the learners' perspective – of the extent to which school is an adequate preparation ground for work.

Job satisfaction

The final questions posed to those employed concern job satisfaction. Asked to indicate their levels of satisfaction with various listed aspects of their work situations, respondents replied as shown in Table 33.

Table 33: Satisfaction with aspects of work situation, in descending order of extent of satisfaction

Aspect	Mean
Working conditions	3.5
Opportunity to learn while working	3.5
Job security	3.5
Content of work	3.4
Opportunity to use knowledge and skills acquired during schooling	3.1
Income	2.8

There is clearly little satisfaction with work, given these mean scores – four of which indicate something between neutrality and satisfaction. Again, the proportion of respondents in part-time employment may skew this profile.

Those employed by a company or organisation are most satisfied with equal treatment of disabled persons (mean = 4.1), followed by equal treatment of men and women (mean = 3.9), equal treatment of persons of different race groups (mean = 3.6), promotion opportunities (mean = 2.8), and benefits (mean = 2.3). Here there are some differences between the sexes, however: females are more satisfied than are males with regard to equal treatment of men and women (3.9 versus 3.7) and equal treatment of disabled persons (4.2 versus 3.9). However, for males and females, the fact that they had not been in employment sufficiently long to make informed assessments of equity and other practices means that these findings should be treated with some caution.

Overall, job satisfaction levels are only marginally above neutral – the mean being 3.2.

Profile of the unemployed

All respondents who were unemployed at the time of the survey (late 2002), whether they were studying or not, were asked to complete a section entitled 'Not working'.

Asked to indicate their current status with regard to unemployment, 51.1 per cent of those who indicated earlier in the questionnaire (Question 3.3) that they were unemployed said that they were studying, 41.3 per cent that they were looking for a job, 4.2 per cent that they did not need to work, and 3.4 per cent that they had given up looking for a job. Nearly 45 per cent of the sub-set of those not working, then, were actually in need of employment. This analysis underscores the extent to which studying and unemployment are not mutually exclusive categories in the minds of a large number of South African youth, studying being used as a holding mechanism for or until the finding of a job.

This section of the monograph focuses on four aspects of the job search:
- The length of time those unemployed had been looking for work;
- The strategies they had used to find employment;
- Their perceived reasons for being unemployed;
- How they thought they could enhance their employability.

The final sub-section reports on their means of daily support.

Length of job search

Of the unemployed respondents, 11 per cent had been looking for a job for 1–3 months, 22 per cent for 4–6 months, 46 per cent for 7–9 months, 20 per cent for 10–12 months, and 1 per cent for more than 12 months. Assuming that all school-leavers unemployed at the time of the survey started looking for work in January 2002, these findings would suggest that all those who had been looking for a job for 1–9 months – that is, 79 per cent – had actually given up looking, since the survey was conducted in October/ November 2002, that is 10–11 months into 2002. Such a conclusion, however, contradicts the earlier finding that only 3.4 per cent of those unemployed had given up looking for a job. More plausibly, then, unemployed respondents must have started looking for work at different stages during 2002. The average length of time respondents had been looking for employment, indeed, was 7.6 months.

A comparison of the length of time those employed took to find a job with the length of time those unemployed had been looking for a job shows an inverse relationship between the two. The following cline (Figure 1) illustrates this relationship:

Figure 1: Length of time spent seeking and finding employment

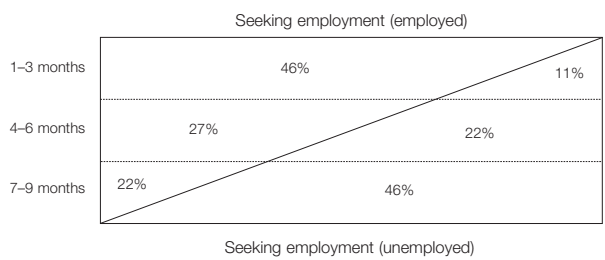

Figure 1 shows that most of those who found employment did so earlier rather than later, while most of those seeking employment had done so for a longer rather than a shorter period. The longer respondents are engaged in the job search, then, the less likely they are to find employment.

Strategies used to find employment

The strategies used by the unemployed to find work are reflected in Table 34. (Respondents could mark more than one box.) Table 34 factors out those who did nothing to find work – the 'nothing' category constituting 1.2 per cent of respondents answering the question. In other words, 98.8 per cent of respondents did *something* to find employment – which is disaggregated into the different options in the table.

Table 34: Strategies used by those unemployed to seek employment, in descending order of frequency

Strategy	%
Asked friends/relatives for assistance	21.9
Mailed/faxed/e-mailed my CV to companies/organisations	21.6
Answered newspaper advertisements for jobs	18.4
Made enquiries at workplaces/farms/factories/shops	15.4
Went from door to door looking for work	12.2
Placed newspaper advertisements looking for a job	4.2
Approached the Department of Labour employment office	2.8
Waited at the side of the road	1.7
Registered with a private employment agency	1.6
Other	0.2
Total	**100.0**

As Table 34 indicates, there is a fairly even spread of strategies used by respondents to find employment: use of personal contacts (this device having *created* employment opportunities for the majority of those in the sample who found employment, as demonstrated earlier); sending out a CV; applying for jobs in response to press advertisements; and relying on sheer leg-work to find employment (going from door to door and making enquiries at various possible workplaces). Very few respondents either registered with an employment agency (public or private) or placed their own newspaper advertisements.

Perceived reasons for unemployment

Ninety-four percent of unemployed respondents gave at least one reason for why they thought they did not have a job; 6 per cent said they did not know. Of the 94 per cent, respondents' main reasons for their not finding employment are shown in Table 35. (Respondents could mark more than one box.)

Table 35: Main reasons for not finding employment, in descending order of frequency

Reason for not finding employment	%
There are no job opportunities (businesses, etc.) where I live	24.1
My level of education is not high enough	22.2
No employer wants me, because I don't have the skills/experience for the job	14.8
I do not have money for transport to go and look for work	14.0
I do not have money to phone or fax in response to job advertisements	11.4
I do not have any information on how or where to find work	6.3
Other	2.7
I do not have the confidence to approach employers to ask for work	2.4
No employer wants people with skills in my subject areas	1.6
No employer wants people from my school	0.5
Total	**100.0**

Almost a quarter each of responses (24 per cent and 22 per cent respectively) have to do with there being no job opportunities where respondents live and their level of education not being high enough for them to be employable. Taken discretely, these findings are striking enough. In combination with related findings, however, they indicate the gravity of the employability-employment complex. Thus 24 per cent of responses indicate that there is no employment opportunity – in the form of business activity – in respondents' area of abode; if one adds to this category those who would need to travel (distances sufficiently large to require what seems to be large sums of money) to seek employment, 39 per cent of responses have to do with not having ready access to employment opportunities. Similarly, Reasons 2 and 3 in combination show up the mismatch between school supply and labour market demand, suggesting high under-qualification for employment. Even though respondents could indicate more than one reason for their not being employed, work location and un(der)preparedness remain cogent factors affecting employment opportunities.

The other major issue for respondents is money: a quarter of responses indicate that respondents do not have money to travel in search of employment (14 per cent) or to telephone or fax employers in response to job advertisements (11.4 per cent). This confirms the finding from the 2001 survey that 78 per cent of learners' households nationally fall into the low socio-economic status (SES) category; amongst blacks the figure is 84 per cent (Cosser with du Toit 2002: 48–9).

Interestingly, neither race, level of physical ability, nor gender was perceived by respondents as having exerted a perceptible effect on their employability. The means for these three variables (on a five-point Likert scale) were 3.0, 3.0 and 2.3 respectively.

Enhancing employability

Asked to indicate which factors would enhance their employability, respondents answered as shown in Table 36. (Respondents could mark more than one box.)

Table 36: Factors that would enhance employability, in descending order of frequency

Variable	Percentage
Get (more) practical training	19.5
Send my CV to employers/organisations	14.7
Apply for more jobs than I have so far	14.4
Move to another area where there may be work	13.3
Make an appointment with employers/organisations to ask them for a job	13.1
Enrol for a post-Grade 12 qualification	8.8
Send my CV to an employment agency	8.4
Advertise in the newspaper that I am looking for a job	4.6
Get someone to help me write a good CV	2.9
Other	0.3
Total	**100.0**

Again, there is support for a broad spectrum of factors, ranging from acquiring practical skills, to making approaches to potential employers (either through a CV, in response to a job application, or through making an appointment), to relocating in search of work. In the case of the latter, interestingly, there is not as high a correlation with the response to the question about reasons for not being employed as one might have expected: while 24 per cent of respondents cited as a main reason for their being unemployed that there was a lack of business opportunities in their area, only 13 per cent cite, as one of the factors that might improve their employability, the need to relocate.

Two of the factors for which there is far less support, however, represent arguably two of the more important means whereby unemployed respondents could enhance their employability. The first is to enrol for a post-Grade 12 qualification – after all, 22 per cent of respondents cited not having a qualification at a high enough level as a main reason for their not being employed; the second is to enlist the help of an experienced job-seeker/mentor in writing a good CV. These anomalies highlight the restricted nature of respondents' perceptions of how to go about enhancing their employability.

Means of support

It would be anomalous in a questionnaire dealing with unemployment not to ask how respondents support themselves. An analysis of responses to this question reveals that:

- 60 per cent of respondents are supported by a person/persons in the household in which they are living;

- 17 per cent are supported by a person/persons not in the household in which they are living;
- 12 per cent have a study bursary, loan, or scholarship;
- 8 per cent do odd jobs to survive; and
- 3 per cent are supported in other ways.

A disaggregation by population group reveals that the ratio of 'respondents who are supported by the household in which they are living' to 'respondents who are not supported by the household in which they are living' is similar for blacks, coloureds and whites (60% : 18%; 58% : 16%; and 52% : 16% respectively). This ratio is very different for Indians: 78% : 6%. This suggests that Indian households are more intact, perhaps by virtue of family habitation patterns (women marrying into a family being required to live with that family), than are households amongst the other population groups.

The other interesting finding is that whites are supported in greater numbers by study bursaries/loans/scholarships (19 per cent) than are the other population groups (11 per cent of blacks and coloureds and 12 per cent of Indians are thus supported). A more representative profile might well have indicated a reverse trend, which would be in line with the establishment of the National Student Financial Aid Scheme specifically to assist disadvantaged black students in funding their HE.

11. Experience of 2002

First-year students' experiences of 2002

While Section 5i of the questionnaire gauged the satisfaction levels of those respondents who were employed during 2002, the satisfaction levels of those who were studying in HE institutions were not canvassed at the analogous point in the questionnaire. Both in order to survey student perceptions about their first year of HE and to understand all respondents' experience of 2002, the final section of the questionnaire sought to gauge respondents' perceptions of their life situations and choices.

The 628 students in HE were asked how well they had performed in their studies to date. 78 per cent said they had performed better than expected, 22 per cent worse. A comparison of the factors affecting the performance of those who said they had performed *better* than expected with the factors affecting the performance of those who said they had performed *worse* than expected shows a large variance in terms of mean scores on the five-point Likert scale. For those who had performed better than expected, the mean scores are much higher – to the extent that the highest mean score for the worse-than-expected category is lower than the lowest mean score for the better-than-expected category. Tables 37 and 38 illustrate the point.

Table 37: Factors affecting the academic performance of students who performed better than expected in 2002, in descending order of effect

Variable	Mean
Being self-confident	4.5
Having a positive attitude towards life	4.5
My interest in the programme I am studying	4.5
Having a space where I can study in peace and quiet	4.1
Wanting to prove myself to those who thought I would not succeed	4.0
Quality of teaching	3.9
Knowing I am studying at an institution with high academic standards	3.9
Knowing my studies are paid for	3.9
The influence of my lecturers	3.8
My Grade 12 marks	3.6
My social life	3.6
Feeling secure on campus	3.6
The foundation for higher education studies that my schooling laid for me	3.5
The quality of student life	3.4
Studying with like-minded students	3.4

Table 38: Factors affecting the academic performance of students who performed worse than expected in 2002, in descending order of effect

Variable	Mean
Being worried about how to finance my studies	3.3
My social life	3.2
Studying with students with whom I have very little in common	2.6
Not having a space where I can study in peace and quiet	2.6
The poor preparation for higher education studies that my schooling gave me	2.6
Having little self-confidence	2.5
The disappointing quality of student life	2.4
Poor quality of teaching	2.2
Feeling insecure on campus	2.1
My lack of interest in the programme I am studying	2.0
Having a negative attitude towards life	2.0
Others not having expected me to succeed	2.0
The negative influence of my lecturers	1.9
My Grade 12 marks	1.7
Knowing I am studying at an institution that does not have high academic standards	1.6

The differences in overall mean scores are hardly surprising, since positively-minded respondents tend to answer positively-oriented questions much more positively than negatively-minded respondents answer negatively-oriented questions. So much is clear from the way in which, in the 2001 survey, Grade 12 learners answered questions about the factors affecting their preferences with regard, first 'to entering', then, 'to not entering', HE (Cosser with du Toit 2002: 61–4; 68–71).

In the above comparison, it is arguably easier to attribute success to a range of positive factors than to attribute failure to a range of negative factors: the binary nature of the elements, coalescing with the respondents' frame of mind, colours the way in which they will respond to a set of questions. Thus it is not surprising that self-confidence and positive outlook are the factors which influenced respondents' academic performance most positively.

It is similarly unsurprising that 'interest in the programme studied' ranks third in the list (Table 37), also with a mean score of 4.5: if learners had no interest in their programme of study, they would presumably not be studying in that area. This factor, moreover, proved to exert the strongest influence upon Grade 12 learners' planned fields of study in the 2001 survey – the mean score (4.5) being identical (Cosser with du Toit 2002: 110). This does not suggest, however, a correlation between a student's level of interest in 2001 and that same student's level of interest in 2002 – only that there is alignment at the aggregated level.

A further factor strongly influencing students' academic performance is having a place to study in peace and quiet. This factor correlates well with the Phase 1 finding that 36 per cent of Grade 12 learners had no place in their homes where they could study in peace and quiet (Cosser with du Toit 2002). The fifth and last item scoring 4 or above (that is, exerting an unambiguously positive influence on students' academic performance) has to do with measuring one's self-worth against others' expectations (mean = 4.0) – a factor particularly influential among black learners (the mean for this item is 4.1, versus 3.9 for white learners and only 3.4 for coloured and Indian learners). Of the remaining factors, 'Knowing my studies are paid for' is an important one – as its corollary ('Being worried about how to finance my studies') in Table 38 demonstrates. Though the mean score for the latter variable is hardly high (mean = 3.3), the variable does top the list of those factors adversely affecting respondents' academic performance – underlining the point that financial security is uppermost in students' minds, to the point that it can supplant all other factors that might appear to affect academic performance.

The only other factor above the mid-point, and therefore slightly influencing the poorer-than-expected academic performance of the 22 per cent of students in this category, is social life. Interestingly, the social life of those students who performed better than expected (mean = 3.6) influenced that superior performance more than the same variable influenced the inferior performance of those who performed worse than expected (mean = 3.2). However, social life is only slightly influential for both categories of student.

Student perceptions of performance: gender profile

A disaggregation by gender of the question of whether first-year students had performed academically better or worse than expected reveals that a higher percentage of female than of male students (81.3 per cent: 74.4 per cent) had performed better than they expected to.

With regard to the factors affecting superior performance, the gender differences between the mean scores on the five-point Likert scale are negligible for all items except three. Having a space to study in peace and quiet was slightly more influential for female than for male learners (4.2 versus 4.0), as was the notion of schooling having provided a foundation for HE studies (3.6 versus 3.3) and social life (3.7 versus 3.5). Even these differences are not large, however – which suggests that there is no significant difference between male and female learners in terms of the factors that affected their better-than-expected academic performance.

With regard to the factors affecting *inferior* performance, on the other hand, on all items except 'My lack of interest in the programme I am studying' – where the mean scores are the same – female students are significantly more affected than are male students by the listed factors – in a few cases by an average of 0.6. Thus, for example, female students are far more affected than are male students by feeling insecure on campus (2.5 versus 1.9). However, since students' social life and concerns about how to finance their studies are the only two factors positively affecting negative academic performance (total mean scores being 3.2 and 3.3 respectively), these are the only two items to which any importance can be attached. The mean for female student claims that their social life has negatively affected their academic performance is 3.5, for male students 3.0, while the mean for female students' concerns about financing their studies as a factor having affected their poorer-than-expected academic performance is 3.5, for male students 3.1.

Student perceptions of performance: racial profile

A lower percentage of coloured students than students of the other three population groups indicated that they had performed better than expected in their first year of HE. The ratio for blacks: coloureds: Indians: whites is 78.2% : 67.6% : 76.5% : 78.2%. This finding, coincidentally, correlates well with the 2001 finding that a lower percentage of coloured Grade 12 learners than learners of other population groups intended entering HE (Cosser with Du Toit 2002: 60) – that ratio being 73.8% : 56.5% : 79.6% : 71.6%.

For those who had performed better than expected, the degree of influence they assigned to the listed factors is shown in Table 39.

Table 39: Factors affecting the academic performance of students who performed better than expected in 2002, by population group, in descending order of effect, by total

Variable	Black	Coloured	Indian	White	Total
Being self-confident	4.6	4.4	4.2	4.4	4.5
Having a positive attitude towards life	4.6	4.3	4.1	4.4	4.5
My interest in the programme I am studying	4.5	4.5	4.4	4.6	4.5
Having a space where I can study in peace and quiet	4.2	4.2	3.7	4.1	4.1
Wanting to prove myself to those who thought I would not succeed	4.1	3.4	3.4	3.9	4.0
Quality of teaching	4.0	4.1	3.4	4.1	3.9
Knowing my studies are paid for	3.9	4.0	3.3	3.7	3.9
Knowing I am studying at an institution with high academic standards	3.9	3.9	3.5	3.9	3.9
The influence of my lecturers	3.9	3.6	2.9	3.8	3.8
My Grade 12 marks	3.7	3.4	2.7	3.5	3.6
My social life	3.8	3.1	3.1	3.3	3.6
Feeling secure on campus	3.6	4.0	3.0	3.7	3.6
The foundation for higher education studies that my schooling laid for me	3.5	3.4	3.2	3.3	3.5
The quality of student life	3.5	3.5	2.9	3.2	3.4
Studying with like-minded students	3.4	3.7	3.5	3.4	3.4

There is not a great variation between population groups with regard to these variables. The effect of most of the variables is greater upon black students than upon students of other groups – notably self-confidence, positive outlook, the need to prove oneself, social life, and the quality of student life (which is equally influential for coloured students). All these factors, moreover, revolve around 'the student experience', being concerned with

students' acclimatisation to, and acculturation within, academic life. They underscore the importance of socialisation in facilitating study.

In addition, black students' academic performance is more influenced by the knowledge that their studies are paid for than is the performance of students of the other groups. This variable, moreover, exercised the greatest influence upon the worse-than-expected performance of black students than upon students of other groups – the mean score being 3.6. These findings in combination confirm that financing their HE is a major factor affecting students' academic performance.

The other factor affecting black students' performance more than the performance of students of other groups is their Grade 12 marks. That the corollary does not apply in this instance (black students who performed worse than expected do not attribute their performance to their Grade 12 marks) suggests that the Grade 12 marks of black students must have given them proportionally more confidence than they gave students of the other three groups entering HE, and that the marks in themselves did not necessarily materially count in the students' favour.

All respondents' experiences of 2002

Moving beyond students in HE, the entire sample were asked to indicate how happy they were with their present life situation, particularly as it pertained to their current studying/working/not working status. The mean score was low – 2.9 – indicating that respondents were slightly more negative than positive about their situations. This profile may reflect the apathy which a large number of the unemployed (22 per cent of the sample) and Grade 12 repeaters must have felt in the wake of their poorer-than-expected performance in the 2001 Senior Certificate Examination.

A disaggregation by gender reveals that female respondents are slightly more positive about their life situations than are male respondents (mean scores = 3.0 for females and 2.8 for males). A disaggregation by race, on the other hand, reveals that white respondents are progressively happier with their present life situations than are Indian, coloured and black respondents (the mean scores are 3.8, 3.4, 2.9, and 2.8 respectively). The vast difference between white and black respondents' perceptions on the happiness continuum is in part attributable to perceptions of the extent of choice open to respondents of these two groups – as confirmed below.

Asked to indicate the extent to which they felt they had been able to choose their present life situations, respondents were only slightly more upbeat: the mean score was 3.5. However, as the population group disaggregation shows, white respondents indicate that they have been able to a large extent (mean score = 4.0) to choose their present life situations, while black respondents are less sanguine about the options open to them (mean score = 3.5). Interestingly, however, coloured and Indian respondents feel they have even less space to exercise choice – the mean scores for both groups on this variable being 3.3.

Overall, then, for the learner sample there is, at best, ambivalence about whether they have been able to choose their lot; and since choice is *conscious* behaviour, it is likely, by virtue of respondents' ages and the consequent limits of their insight into notions of

volition which age confers, that the true picture is bleaker than they perceive. In other words, respondents' 'horizons for action' (Hodkinson 1995) constrain their choices in ways they cannot even recognise.

Reasons for learners' responses about choice

A number of reasons were advanced by respondents for their responses to Question 7.5 – 'To what extent do you feel that you have been able to choose your present life situation?' What follows is a synopsis of the main themes emerging from an analysis of arbitrarily-selected responses from 200 learners who were at school in the Eastern Cape and Gauteng at the time of the 2001 survey. Since a separate study could be devoted just to the responses to Question 7.6 of the questionnaire, the idea here is not to suggest that the following responses are representative of the perceptions of post-Grade 12 learners countrywide but, through attention to some of the peculiarities of speech gleaned from a discourse analysis of selected utterances, to offer a sense of the diversity of world views of learners that these utterances encode.

In general terms, what emerges from a reading of these responses is that respondents' perceptions of choice are located at various points along a choice continuum – at the one end of which is zero choice while at the other end, absolute choice. The following two responses epitomise these end-points:

> I wasn't able to choose the life that I wanted to live, before I was born; that's why it turned up this way. Lack of money is the main problem in my life, because I want to complete my matric and further my studies, I want to live my dream. God help me. (Respondent 1 – a learner who failed Grade 12 and in late 2002 was working as a cleaner in a company for less than R500 a month)

> My parents gave me freedom to choose anything I wanted to do, and they would've supported me in whatever field I went into. (Respondent 2 – a learner who passed Grade 12 without endorsement and in late 2002 was registered for a National Diploma in Engineering at Technikon Witwatersrand)

Respondent 1 seems intuitively to understand ('before I was born') the correlation between socio-economic status (SES) and choice – that 'lack of money' is the root cause of the inability to 'live [one's] dream'. There is a certain fatalism in this account: what in another context would be mere flippancy ('God help me') becomes here a genuine plea for divine intervention. Respondent 2, on the other hand, has 'freedom to choose' – the breadth of choice underscored by the use of 'anything' and 'whatever field'.

At the same time, however, there are parallels between the two accounts. Both respondents make extensive use of the first-person pronoun 'I', which would suggest control; yet volition is constrained in both accounts – in the first, by the determinism of 'it turned up' and 'God help me'; in the second, by the exercise of choice within the parameters of parental approbation. Interestingly, moreover, neither respondent represents, in his/her actual life situation, the zero or absolute choice at either extreme of the continuum. Notionally these would be an unemployed respondent who had failed Grade 12, and a student registered for a university degree who had passed Grade 12 with endorsement and distinction. For purposes of illustrating the dichotomy between zero and absolute choice, however, the discourses of the two examples are pertinent.

Another linguistic cue that locates respondents at different points along the choice continuum is evident from the following utterance:

> In the beginning of the year I was so confident that I would get a job and be *independent*, but ever since then, I'm still without one. (Respondent 3; emphasis added)

The dependence-independence divide is one such location pointer – the reference points for both terms (*dependent* and *independent*), a reading of many responses suggests, being finances and parents/family.

Three other terms highlighted in the following excerpts are also semantic clues to locating respondents' positions on the choice continuum. These, however, all have unambiguously negative applications:

> I have never wanted to repeat Grade 12 but due to *circumstances* I had to. I would have loved to be in university or technikon this year. (Respondent 4; emphasis added)

> Present life situation makes me feel good and have confidence … I feel great but sometimes I become *stressed* when I think of finances. (Respondent 5; emphasis added)

> *Lack of* funds and transport. *Lack of* support in the community. (Respondent 6; emphasis added)

The italicized terms recur even in the small sample selected for investigation.

What illustrates most poignantly the discrepancy between aspiration and behaviour from Phase 1 to 2 of the study, however, is the following respondents' use of the dream motif deployed also in the first account (Respondent 1) above.

> I'm not studying for what *I dreamed of* because of not having the right subjects, but that is not suppose to stop me from succeeding in life. I found another alternative and I will do my best in order to prosper. (Respondent 7; emphasis added)

> I didn't choose this kind of life. *I did dream to be something* this past year but life did not go the way I wanted to be. So the life that I am living its too much harder to live, maybe if I could get a job it can be better. (Respondent 8; emphasis added)

The dreams of these young people confirm the optimism that the 2001 Grade 12 cohort of learners demonstrated in their responses to the question 'How likely is it that the following will describe your situation ten years from now?' Mean scores on a five-point Likert scale (ranging from 'Not at all likely' to 'Very likely') for two listed items – 'Working in a satisfying occupation' and 'Studying towards a higher qualification' – were 4.4 and 4.2 respectively (Cosser with du Toit 2002: 115). Yet in the above excerpts dreams are dashed by poor subject choice and joblessness – the realisation of which sets in post-Grade 12.

Settling for less

The final excerpt chosen for analysis is, by virtue of its more sophisticated articulation, a more subtle portrayal of the respondent's perception of his 'horizons for action' (Hodkinson 1995: 7), not only vocabulary but the syntax itself providing certain clues as to where to locate his response (the respondent *is* a male) along the choice continuum:

> Factors such as finance played a big role in determining my present life situation. I found myself having to settle for less because of my financial status; I feel that if I could find myself part-time employment I would be able to control/regulate my present life situation accordingly. (Respondent 9)

In the first clause, the formulation 'finance played a big role in determining' reveals the extent to which the respondent ascribes his situation to external agency. 'Factors such as finance' is the subject of the clause – hence the agency. Finance *played a big role*, moreover: the respondent is caught up in a drama over whose script he has no 'control' – a word picked up later in the utterance. '[D]etermining' reinforces the power of external forces (finances) in shaping the respondent's lot. The second clause is even more sophisticated. 'I found myself having to' is a few temporal steps removed from 'I had to', the realisation of impecuniousness dawning *gradually* on the respondent; 'having to' reinforces his essential passivity. '[S]ettle for less' suggests having to compromise – to accept less than bargained for. The whole is greater than the sum of the parts, however: 'I found myself having to settle for less because of my financial status' epitomises the life situations of most of the sample of Grade 12 respondents to the 2001 survey, whose SES severely constrains their ability to make choices.

In another sense, this respondent is not atypical of many black learners who attain some measure of success against all odds. Though coming from an impoverished background (his family's household income was less than R3 000 a month in 2001, and neither of his parents/guardians had a Senior Certificate – the combination of which places him in the low SES category of learner), he passed Grade 12 with endorsement and registered for a Social Science degree with a business orientation at Potchefstroom University in 2002. This information underscores the point that choice is a highly individual construct, which, particularly for those who are academically talented, may heighten their sense of the injustice which birth has conferred upon them. This respondent seeks to 'control/regulate' his life through improving his financial status because it is his way of redressing the inequities of his past and introducing some stability into his future ('if I could … I would').

12. Interpretation of key findings

Translation of aspiration into enrolment

The primary reason for implementing Phase 2 of the study was to ascertain the extent to which learners' aspirations in 2001 with regard to entry into HE had materialised in 2002. The first part of this section focuses on the translation of aspiration into enrolment in terms of the dependent variables established in Phase 1 of the study: entry into HE; choice of institution; and choice of field of study.

Entry into HE

A total of 60.2 per cent of learners in the 2001 Grade 12 Learner Choice survey (results were weighted to the entire Grade 12 population in the country) indicated that they intended entering HE in 2002. (73 per cent aspired to enter HE within three years of the survey date.) Only 13.7 per cent of the 2001 Grade 12 cohort (as calculated from the HEMIS databases – DoE 2002a and b) enrolled in HE institutions in 2002. With regard to the first dependent variable, then – entry into HE – there is clearly a large mismatch between learner aspiration to enter HE in 2002 and student enrolment. A far higher percentage of Grade 12 learners wish to enter HE than are accommodated the following year in the first-year intake.

At face value, there are two main reasons for this discrepancy: lack of money; and poor marks in the Senior Certificate Examination. Asked in the 2001 survey to indicate the extent to which a range of listed factors had influenced their decision to proceed to HE, learners planning to do so did not accord as much influence to finance-related factors as to others. HE enhancing employability (mean = 4.4), intrinsic interest in a field of study (4.1), HE leading to a higher income (3.9), and family urging HE study (3.8) all proved to be more influential than: the offer of a bursary (3.5); ability to finance study through the NSFAS (3.5); the offer of a scholarship (3.2); and the ability to finance study through a bank loan (3.0). And though learners' parents/guardians not having enough money to send them to university or technikon was the most influential of a list of factors affecting the decision of those learners *not* to proceed to HE, the mean score for this item was only 3.2 – little above the mid-point on the five-point Likert scale.

Access to funding for HE, then, is seemingly not the biggest barrier to access to higher learning – notwithstanding the protestations of many learners (in response to Question 7.6 in the questionnaire) that this is the case. The single biggest factor preventing learners from entering HE is not financial incapacity but academic ill-preparedness. A CHAID analysis confirms that learners' average Senior Certificate symbol (an aggregate of the symbols for the six or more subjects taken towards the Grade 12 examination) was the strongest predictor of whether they would enter HE. There is a certain disingenuousness, then, about learners' claims that lack of money is the main obstacle in the way of their studying further.

One needs to differentiate here, however, between access to university and access to technikon. A desk-top investigation into admission policies at technikons and universities (see www.studysa.co.za) reveals, broadly speaking, that for admission to technikons learners need a Senior Certificate, and that for admission to (at least degree programmes at) universities they need a Senior Certificate with endorsement. This means, from the DoE statistics (DoE 2003), that while only 15.1 per cent of Grade 12 learners could have gained admission to universities for degree programmes, a further 46.6 per cent could

have gained admission to technikons. A total of 61.7 per cent of Grade 12 learners in 2001, then, theoretically had access to some form of HE in 2002.

Much depends, however, on the subjects learners choose to take for the Senior Certificate, on learners' marks for specific subjects, on their average Grade 12 symbols, and on the admission policies of specific institutions. With regard to the latter, there are exceptions to the general admissions rule outlined above. In the technikon sector, one institution (North West) requires a Senior Certificate with an aggregate E symbol, while one (Witwatersrand) conducts selection tests (assessing aptitude and ability) to determine entry into most of its courses. In the university sector, there are more differences:

- The University of the North requires matriculation endorsement, but has an alternative admission programme in place;
- The University of Zululand requires full *or conditional* endorsement and an E-aggregate Senior Certificate symbol;
- UNISA requires matriculation endorsement, but strongly promotes access course programmes for those without matriculation endorsement that enable them to get into the HE system in order to read for a degree in due course;
- The University of the Western Cape is the only institution requiring a Senior Certificate only (i.e. with or without endorsement);
- Potchefstroom has varying entrance requirements, depending on the degree programme in question, but *usually* a pass with endorsement;
- The University of Pretoria admission requirements *vary*. While matriculation endorsement is the norm, for the Diploma in Theology learners need only a Senior Certificate, for the Bachelor of Education, a Senior Certificate with three subjects on the HG;
- The University of the Free State is the only institution to indicate that admission can be obtained, in some cases, through the recognition of prior learning or on the basis of age and experience.

This list is by no means exhaustive, however. Students, as indicated earlier, gain admission to institutions by a variety of means. The website from which this information is derived (www.studysa.co.za) is pitched, moreover, at foreign students wanting to study in South Africa, and therefore reflects particular biases geared towards cross-border and cross-continental student attraction. The qualification that needs to be made, then, is that the variety of admission requirements may well mean that lack of funding is indeed a barrier to access to HE in general – which suggests at least the *co-influence* of these factors on access to HE.

The influence of these factors aside, the mere existence of so large a discrepancy between aspiration and enrolment is bound to have individual and social repercussions which the DoE and its sister departments, Labour and Social Development, will need to manage if large-scale disaffection amongst young people is not to set in. Multi-disciplinary research to establish the extent and implications of such disaffection is needed.

Choice of institution

Of those Grade 12 learners in 2001 who planned to enter HE, 61.3 per cent wanted to study at a technikon, 38.7 per cent at a university. The finding from the 2002 HEMIS database is that 55.6 per cent of the learners who entered HE straight from school the previous year enrolled in universities, 44.4 per cent in technikons.

With regard to the second dependent variable – institutional choice – the swing from technikon preference to university enrolment may at first glance be puzzling. On the logic that, from an academic performance perspective, it is easier to gain admission to technikons than to universities, one might have expected the 2001 predictions of larger student enrolments in technikons to have been realised in 2002.

On closer analysis, however:

- there are more universities (21) than technikons (15, at the time of the study) to choose from; the capacity of the university sector to absorb students is therefore greater than that of the technikon sector; and
- universities are more geographically accessible than technikons in certain provinces (in Limpopo, for example, there is no technikon, while in North West there is one technikon – in Ga-Rankuwa, north of Pretoria – that offers a narrow range of programmes in three faculties, eight departments). Indeed, it emerges, from a CHAID analysis, that the province in which the family home is located is the strongest predictor of which institution the student enrols in.

There is therefore a clear systemic explanation for the preference-enrolment differential.

A further reason for the greater popularity of universities over technikons, however, is that universities offer a broader range of programmes leading to a broader range of qualifications. Without analysing the prospectuses of all 35 public HE institutions (a task beyond the scope of the present study), it is difficult to make this comparison, given the different ways in which institutions carve up their academic provision. A desk-top analysis (from the websites of the 35 institutions), however, reveals the following.

While both technikons and universities use the *faculty* as the highest form of division, only 10 of the 14 technikons divide their faculties into *departments* (the remainder divide them into programmes, courses or qualifications), while 17 of the 21 universities divide their faculties into departments, four into schools. There are 63 faculties in the 14 technikons and 127 faculties in the 21 universities – though there is clearly a great deal of overlap of faculties by field of study amongst institutions. At face value, however, university provision outweighs technikon provision, the average number of faculties per technikon being 4.5, per university 6. Problematic as it is to make, a comparison of departments reveals that while the 14 technikons have about 463 departments (some of these, however, are programmes or courses), the 21 universities have 942 departments alone – excluding courses and programmes. The average number of departments, etc. per technikon is 33, while the average number of departments per university is 45. Moreover, the university figure excludes scores of research units. Also, while the predominant qualification towards which technikon students are studying is the National Diploma (except in Pretoria Technikon, where 31 190 students were enrolled for the BTech degree in 2002 [DoE 2002b]), most university students are studying towards a degree – which may in turn be a first degree, an honours degree, a masters degree or a PhD. It is clear, therefore, that there is substance to the argument that university provision, by dint of faculty and departmental division at least, is more extensive than technikon provision.

More telling a factor influencing student enrolments than shape – as intimated earlier – is sheer size. Technikons simply do not have as many student places as do universities. An

analysis of the headcount enrolments in HE institutions for 2002 reveals that the university system accommodated 438 455 students, the technikon system fewer than half this number – 213 727 students (DoE 2002a; 2002b). This means the average headcount enrolment per university is 20 879, per technikon 14 248. On the strength of numbers alone, then, and assuming that universities and technikons can indeed, physically and academically, accommodate all the learners they enrol, universities offer prospective students more scope than do technikons.

It is likely, moreover, that there is spare capacity in some universities and over-capacity in some technikons – though this hypothesis would need to be tested. The project team made a serious attempt to ascertain institutional capacity to absorb first-time entering students who were Grade 12 learners in 2001, but met with little success – largely, we believe, because institutions may be reluctant to turn students away when their future funding allocations from the state will be based on graduate output. They might therefore be unwilling to divulge details about their actual capacity.

Reputation of the institution

That the reputation of the institution and of the school/faculty/department in which the student is studying proves to be the most influential listed factor upon choice of institution is surprising only if one divorces student choice from the context in which it is exercised. Choice of institution for enrolment is, in the first instance, a function of the quantity and quality of information about HE study that learners glean from their schools, their teachers, their families, their communities, and from HE institutions themselves. Considering that receiving information about HE study directly from a HE institution is cited by the Grade 12 learner cohort as the most important determinant of their applying to study at that institution (mean = 4.2 for the entire cohort) (Cosser with du Toit 2002: 101), and that almost all learners would not be privy to direct receipt of such information, greater reliance must be placed on 'network information' received via parents, siblings, or members of the community who have studied at and/or are graduates of HE institutions, via the media, or via schools, which may invite HE institutions to mount career exhibitions on their premises or arrange for learners to visit such exhibitions or attend HE institutional open days.

Reputation may be a function of:

- The effectiveness of institutional marketing;
- The calibre of graduates from an institution, as measured by employment rates and employer satisfaction levels with those graduates;
- Resource levels of an institution;
- Perceptions about the stability of an institution;
- Notions of league tables of institutions;
- Length of operation – the cumulative effect of generations of study at the same institution by successive generations of family members and friends;
- Institutional size – headcounts and full-time equivalent (FTE) enrolments.

It is not possible in a study of this kind to assess the effectiveness of institutional marketing or the employment rates of, and employer satisfaction levels with, graduates of institutions – for both of which separate surveys would be needed. But the effects of period and size of operation – not necessarily in conjunction – can be shown to contribute towards the building of a reputation. Fort Hare, for example, has, despite its

relatively small size, built its reputation on having produced black leaders of distinction over decades – to the extent that the leaders of certain Southern African Development Community (SADC) states – Lesotho and Zimbabwe, for instance – now fund their nationals to study at Fort Hare under a presidential grant system (Mabizela 2003). In the same way, Stellenbosch produced a number of leaders of, and within, the National Party government over half a century of apartheid rule. Size is not necessarily in itself an indicator of reputability, however. The University of Pretoria, though by far the largest residential institution in the country, does not necessarily have the same international reputation as the universities of the Witwatersrand and Cape Town, the two premier research institutions in South Africa that have established international reputations over an extensive period through the production of eminent leaders in their fields and through their formidable research output. This, however, is a speculative observation that would need to be verified through additional research.

One of the ways in which learners and their families assess the 'reputation' of an institution is, as alluded to above, through a reading of league tables. The production of league tables has become a major industry in the United States (Thompson 2003). U.S. News's *America's Best Colleges* is so influential that the day after announcing its 2003 rankings in October 2002, Business Week's website received two million hits. Such is the following of league tables that an institution's reputation rises or falls according to its position in such a table – which clearly affects student enrolment decisions.

While the production of supposedly scientifically derived league tables in the US has been turned into an art form, the trend has not (yet) hit South Africa. But informal, unofficial league tables abound. We exercised our league table prerogative in pontificating upon the supposed merits of five universities only two paragraphs ago.

The criteria one might use to assess institutions in South Africa include:

- Length and size of operation (as in our speculation above);
- Political influence (also as above);
- Research output, as measured by annual number of books, chapters in books, and accredited journal articles published (according to which measures the University of Cape Town and the University of the Witwatersrand have traditionally 'dominated', but are now 'threatened' by the universities of Pretoria and Stellenbosch);
- Quality of teaching, measured by student ratings of lecturer performance and by pass-, throughput-, and graduation-rates;
- Staff composition – particularly, the number of staff with masters and PhD degrees, especially if they are from foreign universities.

No doubt the publication of results arising out of the audits of HE institutions by the Higher Education Quality Committee (HEQC) (the Education and Training Quality Assurance body – or ETQA – for HE) will, in time, come to shape the ways in which institutions are viewed in South Africa – which will, in turn, influence enrolment patterns as increasing numbers of prospective students become more (upwardly) mobile and begin to exercise greater choice.

Institutional type and skills development

With the imminent restructuring of the HE system to comprise universities, universities of technology, comprehensive institutions, National Institutes for Higher Education and,

perhaps, institutes of science and technology, the DoE will need to pay close attention, from a career guidance perspective, to institutional enrolment patterns in relation to Grade 12 aspirations – particularly since technikon enrolments should be exceeding university enrolments if the production of intermediate technical skills is to be increased. The well-known 'inverted triangle' syndrome from which South Africa has traditionally suffered – in which, in contrast to the situation in developed countries, the university sector is the largest sector, followed by the technikon and technical college sectors – will need to be turned on its head if sorely needed intermediate skills output is to be achieved. Most recent statistics, encouragingly, indicate that headcount enrolments are increasing in the FET Colleges (from 302 550 in 1998 to 350 465 learners in 2000 – Powell & Hall 2000), enrolments in this sector exceeding those in the technikon sector (213 727) (DoE 2002b) but falling far short of those in the university sector (438 455) (DoE 2002a). On these counts, of the 1 002 647 learners in the public FET and HE system, one-third of enrolments (35 per cent) are in the College sector, a fifth (21 per cent) in the technikon sector, and almost half (44 per cent) in the university sector. However, since most university students would be enrolled in three- or four-year programmes, most technikon students in two- or three-year programmes, and most FET College students in one- or two-year programmes, the distribution of enrolments amongst the three sectors remains skewed.

A broadening of the pre-degree levels (5 and 6) in the Higher Education and Training Band of the National Qualifications Framework would go some way towards addressing this all-important HRD imperative for skills development at the intermediate level.

Attention will also need to focus on the roles of the institutional types under the new dispensation, particularly in terms of the distinctiveness of their contribution to the development of intellectual leadership nationally and within a global economy.

Choice of field of study

The analysis of the DoE HEMIS database of student enrolments in 2002 has shown that the enrolment ratio for Humanities : Business and Commerce : SET for the 2002 student cohort enrolled in HE institutions in 2002 (DoE 2002a; 2002b) was 31.4% : 32.2% : 36.4%. The Ministry of Education wants the balance in enrolments for the *entire* HE system to be 40% : 30% : 30% by 2011. A comparison of the 2002 first-time entering previously-in-matric enrolment ratio (31.4% : 32.2% : 36.4%) with the total enrolments by CESM category for 2002 will assist us in assessing the supposed achievability of the Ministry's target.

The provisional 2002 headcount enrolment statistics by CESM category already show encouraging signs of nudging towards the 40% : 30% : 30% enrolment ratio for Humanities : Business and Commerce : SET. While the ratio just prior to the publication of the NPHE was 49% : 26% : 25% (DoE 2001), a calculation from the latest HEMIS statistics (DoE 2002a, 2002b) for the 2002 year of enrolment shows the ratio to be 43.4% : 30.4% : 26.2%. In other words, the Business and Commerce target has already been reached; a 3.5 per cent downward shift needs to take place in the Humanities field, a comparable upward shift in the SET field, for the desired enrolment ratio to be realised. Put differently, both Humanities and Business and Commerce enrolments have moved fairly significantly in the right directions (the former down, the latter up), while SET enrolments have increased by only one percentage point in the last two years.

While the percentages of first-time-entering students who were in Grade 12 in 2001 and who enrolled in Business and Commerce (32.2 per cent) and SET fields (36.4 per cent) in relation to the Humanities (31.4 per cent) in 2002 are encouraging, HE planners will need to monitor attrition, retention and throughput rates in these areas closely in the short to medium term, and the DoE will need to promote teacher education in these fields more vigorously in schools, to ensure ultimately that more students enrol, and graduate, with marketable qualifications in Business and Commerce and SET. At the same time, however, HE planners need to guard against too large a fall in Humanities enrolment and graduation rates, particularly in the context of the need for learners to develop the communication and social skills required for optimal functioning in the 21st century workplace. In the longer term an over-production of SET and Business and Commerce graduates at the expense of Humanities graduates could have consequences as dire as the over-supply of Humanities graduates – particularly if programmes in the two former fields under-emphasise the importance of analytical and report-writing skills in their curricula.

Factors affecting choice of field of study

Only three of a list of 19 factors have been shown by the study to have a significant influence upon learners' choice of field of study: interest in the field (mean = 4.5); job opportunities in South Africa after graduation (4.1); and the ability to use a qualification in the field to contribute to development (4.0). That these correlate closely, in order and in mean score, with the factors that influenced Grade 12 learners in their choice of field of study in the 2001 survey would seem to validate their significance.

The second factor, moreover, through its link to the notion of HE enhancing employability cited by Grade 12 learners as the most significant factor (mean = 4.4) influencing their decision to enter HE (Cosser with du Toit 2002: 61), confirms the importance that learners attach to becoming employable.

Implicit in the third factor, finally, is an altruism that acknowledges the privilege which HE study confers on those who enter the doors of higher learning. Contributing to social development is a means of giving back to the community what the community itself has not necessarily been able to enjoy. In addition, the extent of subscription to the third factor suggests a sense of commitment, in the face of much recent talk of the 'brain drain' from South Africa, that must be encouraging to HE policymakers and planners and indeed the nation at large in the context of the huge developmental needs of what is still, relatively speaking, a very young democracy.

The school-to-labour market transition

Kraak (2004: 30–31) estimates that a maximum of 185 000 of the estimated 1 011 000 learners who leave the school system (all twelve grades) each year (his analysis is based on the 2000–2002 period) enter further learning programmes: 65 000 enter the public HE system; and 120 000 enter private HE, public and private FET, or pre-employment training. The remainder either enter the labour market in search of a job or become economically inactive.

The value of the present study is that it indicates the ratio of learners who, whatever the percentage of learners who enter further learning, repeat all or part of Grade 12, are

unemployed or not economically active one year after Grade 12, and are employed one year after Grade 12 – in relation to one another. That ratio, derived from Table 4 in Section 5 of the report, is based necessarily on the majority-time understanding that respondents to the Phase 2 survey were either repeating Grade 12, studying, working, or unemployed in late 2002. A reconfiguration of Table 4 in Section 5 of the monograph according to majority-time occupation differentiates respondents' situations as follows:

Repeating Grade 12:	13 per cent
Studying:	47 per cent
Working:	14 per cent
Unemployed or not economically active:	26 per cent

According to this differentiation, the ratio of respondents repeating Grade 12 : employed : unemployed is 25% : 26% : 49%. In other words, half the respondents who were not in further study in 2002 were unemployed (or not economically active), while a quarter each were repeating Grade 12 and were employed.

This ratio does not, however, indicate the proportions of respondents who were employed in relation to those who were unemployed at the time of the Phase 2 survey. To ascertain the ratio of the employed to the unemployed, one would need to factor out all respondents who were studying in 2002, whether in further learning or at school. Of the 40 per cent of respondents entering the labour market, then, 35 per cent were employed, 65 per cent unemployed. Notwithstanding the bias in the sample towards students in HE, then, only one in three persons who entered the labour market straight from Grade 12 in school the previous year had found employment one year later.

The finer-grained understanding that this finding gives is the following: in Kraak's analysis (2004), which indicates the destinations of learners from all grades (Grades 1–12) who leave the school system in any one year (the period 2000 to 2002 is focused on):

- 19 per cent enter further learning (FET or HE);
- 30 per cent find jobs; and
- 51 per cent are unemployed (Kraak 2004: 29).

From these calculations we can deduce that the ratio of the employed : the unemployed is 37% : 63%. The finding from Phase 2 of the Student Choice Behaviour Project is that, of the first-time labour market entrants *from Grade 12 only*, the ratio of the employed : the unemployed is very similar: 35% : 65%. An analysis of a cross-section of the post-Grade 12 population of school-leavers, then, suggests that whether one leaves school with or without a Senior Certificate does not materially influence one's employability – a very worrying finding in the context of the huge weight accorded the Senior Certificate in the popular and academic mind alike. However, the reliability of this observation would need to be established through further research.

Testing the hypotheses

HE enrolment

The first hypothesis of the study was that the majority of learners who indicated in the 2001 survey that they wanted to enter HE in 2002 did not do so. This hypothesis has indeed been borne out by the central finding that while 60.2 per cent of Grade 12 learners wanted to access HE in 2002, only 13.7 per cent of learners did so.

University versus technikon enrolment
The second hypothesis of the study was that a larger percentage of Grade 12 learners enrolled in universities than in technikons in 2002. This hypothesis, as the foregoing discussion has demonstrated, has also been borne out by the research findings – notwithstanding the finding that the highest percentage of Grade 12 learners who passed the Senior Certificate Examination (75.6 per cent of the 277 206 learners who passed) did so without endorsement, qualifying them to enter technikons but not universities.

Enrolment in the Humanities
The third hypothesis of the study was that, despite the Phase 1 finding that learner preferences in 2001 were to study in the fields of Business, Commerce and Management (26.6 per cent), Manufacturing, Engineering and Technology (16.2 per cent), Health Sciences and Social Services (14.6 per cent) and Physical, Mathematical, Computer and Life Sciences (10.6 per cent), a higher percentage of students enrolled in the Humanities than in these fields. This hypothesis has *not* been borne out by the findings, which show that roughly equal percentages of learners enrolled in the Humanities, Business and Commerce, and the Humanities – with enrolments in the latter in fact being the lowest in relation to those in the other two fields.

The main reason advanced by learners for changing their minds about their study fields between 2001 and 2002 is that their Grade 12 marks were not good enough. A CHAID analysis confirms that academic performance as measured by average Grade 12 symbol is the strongest predictor of which field of study learners enrolled in.

Factors affecting enrolment
The fourth hypothesis of the study was that the same factors affecting the choices of Grade 12 learners with regard to HE institution and field of study would affect their enrolment decisions. Thus the most influential factor affecting choice of institution would be the reputation of the institution and of the school/faculty/department in which the learner chose to study, while the most influential factors affecting choice of field of study would be, in rank order:

- interest in the field;
- job opportunities in South Africa after qualification;
- ability to use a qualification in the field to contribute towards the country's development;
- ability to follow a practical course of study; and
- job opportunities abroad after qualification.

As demonstrated above, this hypothesis has been borne out almost to the letter. The only difference lies in the insertion of one factor – 'Good performance in this field at school' – into the list of items in the Phase 2 survey. This factor, not included in the list of factors affecting learner choice of field of study in the Phase 1 survey, displaces 'Ability to follow a practical course of study' to sixth position on the ranking table. After interest in the field, job opportunities, and contribution to development, then, academic preparedness to enter a specific field, as one might expect, emerges as a significant factor affecting choice of field of study – though with a mean score of 3.5, its effect is not particularly strong.

Transition from school to work

The final hypothesis of the study was that the percentage of the 2001 Grade 12 cohort of learners unemployed one year after the 2001 school survey would be higher than the 31 per cent recorded in the Technical College Responsiveness study (Cosser, 2003). This has not been borne out by the findings – which show that only 26 per cent of learners were unemployed (21.9 per cent) or economically inactive for various reasons (3.6 per cent). This lower-than-expected unemployment percentage is largely attributable to the higher-than-expected percentage of learners in further study – 56 per cent. More than half the cohort, then, went on to study further – reinforcing the finding (Cosser with du Toit 2002: 61) that employability through skills acquisition remains the driving force behind learners' decisions to continue their studies after school.