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Choices and Chances: FET Colleges and the Transition from School to Work

Anthony Gewer
Jet Education Services

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CHOICES AND CHANCES: FET COLLEGES AND THE TRANSITION FROM SCHOOL TO WORK

Report on FET Research Study

Author:
Dr Anthony Gewer

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Executive Summary

Introduction

The public Further Education and Training (FET) College sector is in a process of being repositioned to contribute to the development of an effective skills base for advancing the South African economy. Emerging from a prolonged period of having been dislocated from training for the workplace, colleges have over the last decade undergone a significant transformation, including a restructuring of the institutional landscape, a substantial recapitalization programme and the introduction of a new curriculum. More recently, the state has moved to split the Department of Education and create a new Department for Higher Education and Training, which should provide a basis for greater coherence in the post-school education and training arena.

Within this context, this study seeks to further our understanding of the factors that impact on the transition of young people from school to work. Building on a research base which began in 2001, this study traces a cohort of FET College students from 2003 and compares this cohort to a sample of college learners from 2009. The study is concerned with the following issues:

- Exploring the social and economic factors that influence the choice of young to people to study in a FET College.
- Examining the experiences of young people on leaving FET Colleges and during their attempts to enter the labour market.
- Describing the transition pathways from school to work via FET Colleges.

The study operates on the basis of the following research question:

What are the factors that contribute to the employability of young FET College learners in South Africa?

Based on findings from the 2001 study, as well as broader findings in the literature, the key hypotheses guiding this study are as follows:

- Parents and other family members of individuals in the sample will play an important role in guiding post-school choices, but ultimately will defer to the individual to choose their pathway because they do not have the necessary information to effectively support the choice-making process
- While family and social networks will provide better access to employment opportunities for individuals in the sample, the limited scope of these networks will often mitigate against employment in a field related to what the individual studied in college
- Moving away from home in a less urbanized area to take up studies in a more urbanized environment does not necessarily broaden access to social networks that can facilitate employment opportunities for individuals in the sample.

The tracer study adopts a two-stage methodology: an in-college survey prior to the students leaving the college, and a follow-up postal survey. In 2003 an in-college survey was conducted with 9,971 valid respondents across 19 colleges. The 2009 in-college survey involved 9,123 learners across 17 colleges. The first part of the report compares the findings for these two cohorts and explores whether or not the post-school challenges for young

people have shifted over the last 6 years. The second part of the report presents a tracer study of the 2003 cohort, conducted in the second half of 2009, using a postal survey.

Profile of Respondents

In-college survey

A total of 9156 completed surveys from the 17 colleges sampled in the study. This represented a 44% response rate. The largest response rate was achieved in Limpopo, while the lowest response rate was achieved in KwaZulu-Natal. The largest concentration of returns was in Level 2.

The data indicates that the majority of learners who enter into the NC(V) have attained a Grade 12 certificate. However, with the exception of Limpopo province, there has been a marked shift towards pre-Grade 12 learners since 2003, probably due to the introduction of the NC(V) in 2007 which has been pitched as pre-Grade 12.

When disaggregated by field of study, there is a clear discrepancy across fields with respect to entry qualifications. Whereas the engineering and information technology (IT) fields are attracting more school leavers with Grade 12 certificates, the business-oriented fields and, more noticeably, hospitality and tourism are attracting more pre-Grade 12 learners. This is a relative shift from past trends, where because engineering was concentrated at FET levels it would attract more pre-Grade 12 learners, while business studies, which was concentrated at HE levels, would attract more post-Grade 12 learners.

The highest concentration of students is in the 18-23 age range. The large numbers of students in the 22-25 range who are enrolled in Level 2 qualifications suggests that they had not completed their schooling in the expected time of 18 years.

Tracer Study

The 2003 database produced 9,921 valid addresses off a total of 10,470. Respondents to the 2003 in-college survey had been asked to provide “current address” and “home address”. Postal surveys were sent to all valid “current” addresses, and where no current address was provided, the surveys were sent to the home address. The respondents were asked to complete the survey and return it by self addressed envelope (supplied with the survey), or by fax or by e-mail.

A total of 1,218 (12.3%) responses were received. However, it is difficult to clearly establish how many of the postal surveys reached the intended recipients, considering it was 6 years since the original survey had been done.

Findings

In-college Surveys

<u>Post-school choice</u>

The literature points to the interaction of class and parental role in educational choice. The role of family in this choice-making is critical, but socio-economic conditions may undermine effective consideration of choices. Based on household income, parental education and parental employment status, the data suggests that the respondents are primarily from poor

socio-economic backgrounds. The respondents reported that they were influenced primarily by their parents in making their post-school choices. However, there is a strong indication that the youth are ultimately making these choices on their own. This supports the view in the literature that working class parents will often defer to their children to make such choices. Three factors underlie their choice to study at a FET College: interest in the field of study, accessibility and affordability. Therefore, individual choice needs to be balanced against these contextual realities. These choices also differ across regional context, by field of study, and by gender.

Learner mobility

There is evidence of high levels of mobility between rural areas and major urban areas for the purpose of studying. The primary reason for this movement is that the respondents did not know of a college in their area, or the college near their home does not offer the programme they want to study. These responses raise issues about the accessibility of colleges, particularly for people from more rural provinces, who then choose to migrate to urban areas to find a college. With the exception of Limpopo, the majority of respondents aimed to look for employment in the province in which they were studying. Therefore, those respondents who had migrated to urban areas intended staying there.

The role of colleges in preparing learners for the world of work

Colleges are reportedly not playing a meaningful role in preparing learners for entry into the labour market. College support in this regard is limited to abstract preparation in the classroom rather than actual exposure to the workplace or linkage to employers. Colleges also rate poorly on supporting learners to find work at the end of their studies.

Despite significant infrastructure investment, colleges are reportedly still not succeeding in giving students sufficient access to workshops for practical training, although access to IT is more satisfactory. The lack of access to practical workshops may undermine the effectiveness of the qualification.

Student Support

The in-college survey also asked students to rate the availability a variety of student support services on the campuses. While many reported that there are counseling services available, very few are making use of the service. The two most frequently reported reasons for not using the support services were that they were not needed or the learners were unsure how to access the support. This suggests that the support services are not being optimised, and colleges are not actively promoting the use of such services to their learners.

Access to workplace experience during studies

More than half of the respondents reported having no access to workplace experience. Where they were able to access workplace experience, it was primarily as part of a learnership or apprenticeship. Learnerships and apprenticeships would most likely be initiated from outside the colleges, and the college would be delivering the theory, and not necessarily managing the workplace component. In only 10% of cases did learners report getting access to the workplace through college links. There also appears to have been an increase in the availability of workplace experience through college links since 2003. However, as with 2003, individual initiative appears to be a more successful way to get workplace experience than relying on the college.

Plans after completion of studies

Respondents were split in terms of what they were planning to do after completing their NC(V) qualification. In total, 39% aimed to get a full-time job while 35% aimed to continue studying.

Tracer Study

Employment status

Just over half of the respondents to the tracer study reported that they had been employed and/or were still employed since 2003. One third of respondents reported not having been in employment, while a smaller portion reported they had been volunteering in order to gain experience.

With respect to employment status in 2009, 585 or 48% reported being employed by a company or organization while a further 104 reported either being self-employed or helping someone else in their small business. It is not clear if some of the respondents who claimed to have been employed at the end of 2009 also included those who were in apprenticeships and/or learnerships and/or volunteering. Employment status was evenly split for both engineering and business studies, while there was a higher frequency of males employed than females.

Most of the respondents had changed jobs once or twice in the 6 year period, largely because they had been in a temporary or part-time job or because they had found a better paying job. Few changed jobs to move into a job more appropriate to what they studied and by the end of 2009 only 35% of those still employed were employed in a position that was related to what they studied.

Despite this, however, there has been a general increase in earnings over the 6 year period. It is still concerning, though, that more than half of the respondents that were employed were still earning below R4000 per month five to six years after completing their college qualification.

Routes to employment

When completing the in-college surveys, both cohorts reported that they would predominately use advertising and employment agencies for finding work, while personal contacts and family relations were rated low in this regard. When asked which route they had used in finding their first job, four routes emerged as important:

- Advertising and employment agencies were confirmed as the most important routes to finding their first and second job
- Personal contacts and family relations play a more important role than the students anticipated.

Employment agencies feature more strongly in Gauteng while advertising features strongly in Limpopo.

Factors that impact on employment outcomes

In order to assess the relative effect of different factors on employment outcomes was conducted, using three dependent variables:

- Employed/not employed at time of study
- Employed in a relevant occupation to what was studied
- Employed in part-time or full-time employment

Dependent Variable 1: Employed/not employed at time of study

The results suggest that there is a strong and significant relationship between each of the four variables (gender, vocational field, province and highest school qualification) and the being employed at the time of the study. This suggests that being employed is contingent on each of these variables independently.

When controlling for the three core variables – vocational field of study, province and gender, the following results emerge.

- Males are twice more likely to be employed compared to their female counterparts.
- All the provinces were significantly different from Limpopo, with a significantly increased chance in finding employment in any of the other provinces.

In addition, when controlling for a range of other factors**, t**hose who have not moved between provinces had increased odds of 61% of being employed compared to those respondents who moved from their home province. This latter finding suggests that moving to a major urban area does not significantly increase one's chances of finding employment.

Dependent variable 2: CURRENT employment is appropriate to job or not

The data suggests that the employment in a job appropriate to qualifications is contingent on having work experience during studies, province in which they studied and highest school qualification.

When controlling for gender, province of qualification and field of study, the following results emerges.

- Comparing to Limpopo, respondents who studied in WC are almost 3 times more likely of being in an employment appropriate to the qualifications respondents who studied in KZN had 63% reduced odds of having a job appropriate to qualifications.
- Those that had some work experience from college had an increased odds of 82% of having a job appropriate to qualifications compared to those that had no experience from college.
- As the salaries increases, the odds of having an appropriate job also increase.

The route taken to finding a job did not emerge as significant factors in finding appropriate employment when controlling for the other variables. In their own right, though, finding employment in an appropriate job is contingent on two key routes: employment agencies and support from college staff. The analysis suggests that if these routes were enhanced, they would add value to enhancing employability.

Dependent variable 3: permanent vs part-time employment

Only province in which they studied featured as an important factor in whether the students got permanent or part-time employment. More specifically, having studied in the Western Cape seems to improve chances of finding a full-time job, when controlling for gender and field of study.

However, when controlling for other variables finding a first job through family relations or personal contacts reduces the odds of being in fulltime employment by 45% and 50% respectively compared to those who don't use these resources.

Discussion of Findings

The nature of post-school choice

The study illustrated the important role of family in supporting post-school choice. However, in the context of socio-economic deprivation, choice of field of study is invariably deferred to the young person who has limited tools at his or her disposal to make such choices. Choice is then based on individual preference, balanced against financial resources and geographic accessibility. Simultaneously, however, movement to a major urban area for those from less urbanised environments seems to be an important component of this choice.

The results suggest the need for more effective career guidance and support prior to the individual completing schooling. In addition, however, it would seem that colleges in less urbanised environments are not proactively marketing themselves and attracting local students. It would also seem that the dominant perception is that institutions in major urban areas will invariably offer better quality by virtue of their locality.

The role of networks in supporting labour market access

The study suggests that around half of the respondents had been in some form of employment since completing studies. However, for many the employment has been temporary and relatively low-paying. In addition, of those who were employed at the end of 2009, a large majority were in jobs that were not related to what they studied.

The key factors that appear to impact on achieving meaningful employment include having work experience during studies and residing in a major urban environment. Employment agencies (in major urban areas) and college teaching staff provide the most effective routes to finding meaningful employment. However, students are highly dependent on personal contacts, family relations and newspaper advertisements and these latter routes appear to be ineffective in leading to meaningful employment.

Considering that employment agencies and support from college teaching staff seem to be the most the most effective routes to finding meaningful employment, it would seem advantageous to focus strongly on developing these two avenues further. The data suggests that colleges are limited to passive approaches to preparing their students for the workplace and supporting students to gain practical exposure to the workplace during the course of their studies would seem to be an important strategy for enhancing employability.

Migration and employment opportunities

The data illustrates the high levels of migration from less urban areas to major urban areas for study and post-study work purposes. As it happens, the data supports the obvious perception that more jobs are available in these dense urban areas. However, moving to one of these dense urban areas in order to find work does not seem to improve the young person's chance of getting a job. Therefore, it would seem that alternative strategies are needed for stimulating access to employment in the less urbanised environments.

Conclusions

The findings above indicate clearly that employability in the context of social inequality requires deliberate interventions to enhance access to the workplace. For colleges to make a meaningful contribution to employment growth, their role has to be one of facilitating access to workplace environments for practical experience and job placements.

1. Introduction

The public Further Education and Training (FET) College sector is in a process of being repositioned to contribute to the development of an effective skills base for advancing the South African economy. Since the decline of the apprenticeship system in the 1980's the relationship between the colleges and the labour market has become increasingly distant. This has resulted in the sector struggling to keep up with the changing demands for skills. The role of FET Colleges in post-school provision of Vocational Education and Training (VET) aims to combine training for higher education, preparing for employment, and education for personal and social growth. The sector increasingly attracts large numbers of young South Africans, providing a general vocational route to careers that is generally more affordable and accessible than private institutions or institutions of higher learning.

This research seeks to make sense of the transitions of young people from school to work and the role that FET Colleges play in preparing young people for the labour market. The research problematises the challenges of youth employability in the South Africa, and analyses the factors that contribute to or undermine successful employment outcomes.

2. Background

As with other sub-sectors of the education and training system, the FET College sector has, over the last 15 years, had to overcome its historical relationship with the apartheid system and adopt a strategy to deliberately increase access for the whole South African population. This has forced the sector to shift its focus away from the narrow demands of white youth in a protected labour market towards the needs of broader-based youth demand for generalised skills and qualifications. The apprenticeship system, which defined the role technical colleges for many years, disintegrated in the 1980's, and young white males were no longer guaranteed a route into trade occupations. Programmes being offered by colleges were no longer directly linked into technical trades. As a result, programme offerings in colleges have been characterised by a bias towards a narrow, theory-driven curriculum with little application, either in a workshop or in a workplace environment.

The transformation of the FET College sector at the institutional level was initiated through a large-scale process of merging, which was undertaken by the Department of Education in late 2001 and early 2002. 152 technical colleges were merged into 50 new FET Colleges in terms of the FET Act (Act 98 of 1998), overcoming past disparities between Historically Advantaged and Historically Disadvantaged institutions, by combining them into "mega-institutions" with consolidated resources, systems and structure.

Since then, the Department of Education has implemented a national programme to recapitalize the FET College sector via three-year grants for infrastructural development. In addition, the new National Certificate (Vocational) has been implemented as of 2007, underpinned by an integration of theoretical and practical learning (in authentic or simulated workplace environments). The new qualifications cover a broad spectrum of key economic sectors and incorporate literacy, numeracy and lifeskills elements, and extend the period required for completion of the qualification. Thus, the programmes form the basis for higher quality skills and knowledge, with a more strategic link into economic growth.

As of 2009, government has split the Education Ministry into the Ministries of Basic Education and of Higher Education and Training. FET Colleges have been located within the

Ministry of Higher Education and Training, along with Higher Education Institutions and Sector Education and Training Authorities (responsible for training in the workplace and previously located with the Ministry of Labour). This attempt at greater alignment of the post-schooling system provides an important context for this study as it tries to understand the dynamics of the youth labour market.

3. Purpose of the Study

This ongoing study on FET colleges and their role in the labour market was prompted by a groundswell in policy debate around the turn of the century regarding the internal inefficiencies in the sector and its lack of responsiveness to the labour market (Kraak and Hall, 1999; NBI, 1999 and 2000a-f). The Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) and JET Education Services embarked on a project in 2000 to investigate the labour market responsiveness of the technical colleges sector (Cosser et al. 2003). The study was initiated as a result of the increased focus on Further Education and Training, both through policy development and donor programmes, and the renewed emphasis on intermediate technical and vocational skills development, through the Human Resource Development Strategy (DoE and DoL, 2001), the National Skills Development Strategy (DoL, 2001) and particularly the introduction of learnerships. In 2003, JET Education Services and the National Business Initiative (NBI) initiated a second phase which forms the basis for this study, exploring the profile of a cohort of students enrolled in the colleges in that year with the intention of tracking them into the labour market.

The HSRC/JET study into technical colleges, published in 2003, raised a number of important policy issues around the rate of employability provided by colleges and the perception of learners regarding the role of colleges in furthering their careers. However, the study also raised a number of conceptual issues regarding the types of questions being asked through the research and the issues that were emerging. This prompted JET and the NBI to collaborate in a further phase of investigation into the role of FET Colleges in order to further interrogate these conceptual issues and the potential policy challenges that they present. This latter investigation has been taken forward in the current study which forms the basis for an ongoing investigation going forward.

In particular this study is concerned with the following issues:

- Exploring the social and economic factors that influence the choice of young to people to study in a FET College. Previous research conducted by Stephen Ball and his colleagues (Reay and Ball, 1997; Reay and Ball, 1998; and Ball, Maguire and Macrae, 2000) have indicated class differences in the way in which choices are made within the family with respect to post-school education and training. A large-scale quantitative study conducted by Sandefur *et al*. (2006) demonstrated the powerful influence of the family context on post-school educational choices.

- Examining the experiences of young people on leaving FET Colleges and during their attempts to enter the labour market. In particular the study seeks to explore what social support mechanisms are in place to assist young people in making the transition from the FET College into the labour market, and how these social support mechanisms operate. There are a range of studies that examine the important effect of social networks (both within the family and beyond the family), especially across different race and class groups, in facilitating access to employment opportunities (Wahba and Zenou, 2003; Stone, Gray and Hughes, 2003; and Battu *et al*, 2004).

- Describing the transition pathways from school to work via FET Colleges. There is increasing emphasis in the literature on the non-linearity of youth transitions in the context of a complex and uncertain environment (Thomson *et al*, 2000). Youth will increasingly be reliant on their individual constellation of social networks to advance their growth and development (Raffo and Reeves, 2000). Through describing these pathways, and analyzing the role of social networks, both within the family and within the broader social context, this study seeks to better understand the factors impacting on youth transitions in a FET College context. The study thereby seeks to extract implications of these findings for the role of FET Colleges in supporting school to work transitions, and maximizing their role in ensuring effective labour market outcomes.

In exploring these issues, the study operates on the basis of the following research question:

What are the factors that contribute to the employability of young FET College learners in South Africa?

Based on findings from the 2001 study, as well as broader findings in the literature, the key hypotheses guiding this study are as follows:

- Parents and other family members of individuals in the sample will play an important role in guiding post-school choices, but ultimately will defer to the individual to choose their pathway because they do not have the necessary information to effectively support the choice-making process
- While family and social networks will provide better access to employment opportunities for individuals in the sample, the limited scope of these networks will often mitigate against employment in a field related to what the individual studied in college
- Moving away from home in a less urbanized area to take up studies in a more urbanized environment does not necessarily broaden access to social networks that can facilitate employment opportunities for individuals in the sample.

These hypotheses provide the basis for making recommendations on the role of colleges in supporting employability and the transition process. Through the voices of the respondents, the particular experiences should point to a particular role for colleges in this regard.

4. Literature Review

4.1 The post-school context in South Africa

It is a well-published fact that labour force growth in South Africa has placed pressure on the labour market, which has been unable to respond with sufficient employment opportunities for first-time entrants (Bhorat and Oosthuizen, 2006). The predominantly young African population represents the group with the lowest rate of employment. The stability in the youth unemployment rate suggests that the economy has not been successful in creating jobs for young people (Burger and Woolard, 2005).

Post-school education and training remains elusive for many young people. A recent study estimated an immediate pool of 750,000 18-24 year olds who have successfully completed a Grade 12 but have not engaged in post-school education (Sheppard and Cloete, 2009). Furthermore, under 10% of all 18-24 year olds are enrolled in either college or higher education, while a further 25% are still trying to complete secondary education.

The large numbers of school-leavers that exit the education system and do not enroll in some form of post-school education and training is a significant challenge for the state, as it has the potential to further entrench long-term unemployment for youth. The literature suggests returns to education for those with post-school training of some type, while those with a only a national senior certificate or lower qualification will have declining returns (Keswell & Poswell, 2004 in Altman and Marock, 2008).

Unemployment amongst 15-24 year olds stood at 50% in 2006, twice that of the general economically active population (Simkins et al, 2008). Expanded unemployment amongst this group (including those who are not actively seeking employment) rose from 53% to 65% between 1995 and 2005. While part of this growth in unemployment is ascribed to weak economic growth, Banerjee et al (2006) suggest that additional factor is the mismatch of skills between those entering the labour market and the demands of employers.

There is a perception that the increasing exposure of the South African economy to the global market has increased the demand for higher-level skills, and low-skilled workers have become increasingly redundant, across a range of economic sectors (Pillay, 2003). Employment creation in the labour market since the onset of democracy has been largely in the tertiary sector, mostly in financial and business services and internal trade (Bhorat and Oosthuizen, 2008). This has been followed by strong job creation in the manufacturing and construction sector, of which the latter requires a mixed set of skills. It is also noted that while there has been contraction in job creation in mining and agriculture, a large number of low and semi-skilled jobs have been created in areas such as office cleaning, security, taxi driving, personal services and restaurants (Altman and Marock, 2008). Therefore, as Kraak (2003) asserts, the increased demand for high skills is not fully diffused across the labour market and traditional labour-intensive work practices continue despite the introduction of new technologies.

The labour market context suggests that African youth feel the pressure of a generally unfriendly youth labour market, perceptions that the quality of education in educational institutions attended by many Africans is low, and a continued bias towards white skilled individuals (Bhorat and Oosthuizen, 2006). As such, inequality continues to be embedded in the labour market. Addressing the lack of access that Africans face with regards to the

labour market will require interventions that enhance the quality of institutions that these young people attend and then changing the perception about the kinds of qualifications they are receiving (Bhorat and Oosthuzen, 2006).

4.2 Education and employment

Youth unemployment and youth underemployment are common features of labour forces worldwide, but are more pronounced in developing countries. Growth in youth populations over the last half-century has been rapid, with Africa having the largest growth trend (O'Higgins, 2003). In addition, youth are invariably the most significant victims of poor economic growth, as their propensity for unemployment is likely to be higher than the general population (Adams, 2007).

In seeking to address the challenge of youth unemployment, skills development[1] is inevitably viewed as the primary solution. While there is evidence to suggest that increased investment in human capital results in increased employment prospects (Wolf, 2002), such investment is masked by a range of factors, including the costs and time involved to complete qualifications (Machin and Vignoles, 2001) and the socio-economic conditions of the individual, which invariably impacts on the types of programmes he or she can access (Ashton and Green, 1996). In addition, from an economic perspective, while governments will invariably look to correlations between education and economic growth to demonstrate value, it is difficult to accurately measure this relationship because of the range of contextual factors that intervene (Ashton and Green, 1996).

As a result, there is still not adequate evidence to draw firm conclusions about the relationship between education and training and employment growth. (Ashton and Green, 1996; OECD, 2001) Despite this, skills solutions continue to be the key strategy to addressing issues of unemployment and social exclusion, particularly amongst youth (McQuaid and Lindsay, 2005).

4.3 Shifts in approaches to skills development

In response to the increasing pressures of globalization, many countries have instituted steps to transform the nature of VET and introduce greater integration of academic and vocational skills, especially at higher levels (Adams, 2007). This has entailed a shift away from a strong focus on practical skills training under the dual-track system, to one in which academic education dominates and vocational education occupies a minor portion of daily instruction. Practical training is then passed onto the enterprises. This move to integration is viewed as inevitable as there is increased demand for generalisable skills and the need for young people to not restrict their options through narrow occupational routes (Raffe *et al*., 1998). This pressure for integration is widespread and even affecting countries that have a strong VET tradition. In addition, there has been an increasing trend in many countries to create articulation between secondary vocational education and higher education, thus seeking to overcome the 'second-class' status of VET (Adams, 2007).

[1] Increasing concern over the nature of skills needed for the knowledge economy has created a shift away from Vocational Education and Training (VET) to the broader term "Skills Development"

A further element of the integration process is to bring education closer to the world of work. Attempts to modernise and expand apprenticeship systems and offer young people more options to access work experience during and/or after schooling have been prominent in many developed countries (Adams, 2007). This process has demonstrated positive labour market outcomes, but mostly for males. Further, this approach appears to have a better result in countries with specific labour market contexts; for example these arrangements have not always been very successful in developing countries because of the predominance of the informal sector and the resultant non-availability of workplaces.

4.4 Defining Employability

Employability has become a central concept in labour market policy in many countries as they seek to find solutions to the complex challenges of unemployment and poverty. While traditional notions of employability have put primacy on individual's skills, employability is now understood as an interaction between the individual and the labour market conditions (McQuaid and Lindsay, 2005).

In the traditional approach, the onus is on the individual to maintain appropriate levels of skills to be able to achieve lifelong employability which is "the capacity to be productive and to hold rewarding jobs during a working life, and to be equipped with up-to-date skills and competences" (Tin, 2006). This requires *generic employability skills* that can be adapted and transferred from on employment situation to another (Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry & Business Council of Australia, 2002). These authors suggest a composite of generic employability skills, which includes basic skills (literacy, numeracy and IT skills), intellectual abilities (thinking skills, contextual understanding and organisational skills) and personal attributes (values and attitude and other affective elements). These apply both to new entrants into the labour market and experienced workers.

A broader approach to employability, however, seeks to understand both the individual and external factors that impact on access to employment. This therefore broadens understanding of barriers employment beyond only looking at skills. The focus is on the interaction between "individual attributes, personal circumstances, labour market conditions and other 'context' factors" (McQuaid and Lindsay, 2005: 207). As such *interactive employability* has become "a defining idea in labour market policy, reflecting an acceptance that employability is about overcoming a broad array of barriers to work faced by individuals and that employability policies should therefore focus not just on individuals." (McQuaid and Lindsay, 2005: 202) The development of employability is viewed as a mechanism for creating access to employment and thereby overcoming social exclusion. The shift to a broader view of employability provides insight into the real factors that impede access to employability rather than a narrow focus on skills.

4.5 The dynamics of post-school choice

Studies on post school choices outlined below demonstrate the important role of parents and families in informing post-school choice. The resources that parents are able to bring to bear, particularly in terms of the availability of information and their perception of post-school education in relation to their own class status and identity, have a substantial effect on the choice that are made.

Studies on families and educational choices have tended to apply a middle-class norm to their theoretical considerations (Reay and Ball, 1997). Working-class families are represented through middle-class values, thus relegating working-class choice-making to an inferior standard. At the same time, working-class families tend to judge themselves by middle-class standards. This perpetuates a differentiated approach to educational choice within the education market where working-class parents are reluctant to engage with the market and tend to be more ambivalent about investing in education. This limits their criteria for choice.

Locality and the destinations of children's friends are key factors in educational choice amongst working-class families, while middle-class families tend to be preoccupied with the characteristics, demographics and philosophy of the institution (Reay and Ball, 1998). Working-class parents will also defer to their children to express their preference for a particular institution without guidance or a sense of the child's future pathways. Working-class parents appear to demonstrate a sense of disempowerment in relation to knowledge of educational options, thus relying on the child's "educational expertise". The external constraints experienced by working-class families also lead to less discussion and negotiation within the family, which encourages less of the traditional power struggles between the parent and child. For middle-class families the concern is with the child's future happiness and the continuation of a particular social status. Middle-class parents are more likely to set limits for choice by pre-selecting institutions based on a hierarchy of concerns, and then create a perception that the child has made the decision. The authors indicate that it is primarily mothers in middle-class families that take on the responsibility of school selection processes.

Ball and Vincent (1998) make reference to "hot" knowledge, in the form of information drawn through social networks or the "grapevine", as a key resource that parents draw on in making educational choices. Local networks provide parents with a mechanism to engage with their local environment and then, depending on their response to the information being gathered, will either accept such information or use additional sources to supplement or back-up the information being received. According to the authors, the response to this information is to some extent class-based, as it will depend on the extent to which parents will feel confident to engage with the education market in order to make choices, or working-class parents will be accepting of information obtained through local networks, possibly because they do not feel equipped to become consumers in the market, and thereby make their own choices.

Reay *et al*. (2001) suggest a range of issues that will impact on higher education choice of working-class youth. Financial constraints will restrict the geographic mobility of youth and will also force students to work continuously while studying. Psychological constraints manifests through self-exclusion from certain types of institution in the belief that the individual would not fit in, or that they are better suited in an institution where he or she would feel safe. Class issues are compounded by race issues as individuals choose to enroll in institutions where similar race and class are represented.

In a review of National Education Longitudinal Survey data, Sandefur *et al*. (2006) found high correlations between parental education and income and the likelihood of attending a post-secondary institution, particularly a four-year college as opposed to a two-year college or certificate programme. In addition, increased parental interest, engagement and expression of expectations also have a positive effect on the chances of college attainment. Enhancements in social capital within the family over time also increase educational

attainment. The authors also found positive effects for social capital outside the family such as school stability, attendance at a Catholic school and parental involvement in school. The authors suggest that it is not useful to examine one or two measures, and consideration of multiple measures is needed to fully understand the role of family resources in improving educational outcomes.

Parental input, particularly in middle-class families, can drive career strategy and may take the form of *mentoring* whereby family members acts as mentors, "supporting their children, giving advice and direction and mediating between them and the educational system" (Croll, 2004: 395) Here parents will use their knowledge of the schooling system and looking at options and thereby take a more strategic approach. Schneider and Stevenson (1999 in Croll, 2004) distinguish between *parent support* and *parental challenge*. The former relates to the strength of relationships in the home while the latter refers to the standards set in relation to the career strategy and aligning these with the demands of the career aspirations.

4.6 Social Networks and Labour Market entry

Wahba and Zenou (2003) investigate the effect of social networks on the chance of finding employment, particularly networks that have "weak ties" (Granovetter, 1973). Such weak ties are seen as critical in providing bridging between strongly knit social networks, thus providing broader access to information. Dense networks limit employment opportunities, as they cause over-reliance on close relationships. Areas with high population density such as cities, allow more opportunities for random acquaintances in a larger network, while in more rural areas individuals will be more dependent on strong ties for employment information. Where unemployment is high, strong ties will not necessarily be beneficial. Therefore, the probability of finding a job increases with higher population density. Drawing from Egyptian Labour Market data, the authors find that if the individual is already employed, the chances of finding employment through personal contacts increases in areas with denser populations than in low density areas. However, this probability decreases if the networks become too large. Furthermore the chance of finding a job through personal networks also decreases if the unemployment rate increases because the quality of the networks is affected. Denser areas negatively affect the chance of finding a job directly. Less educated people are also more likely to use personal networks than well educated individuals.

Similarly, Stone, Gray and Hughes (2003) present a significant set of results around the relationship between networks and job search. Social networks, both formal and informal, enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of job search. For those with limited connections, bonding social capital will be more critical in that it creates access to a high-density network, while for those with more diverse connections, bridging social capital will play a more valuable role particularly in providing access to more professional contacts. The danger here is that social capital may exacerbate or perpetuate socio-economic inequality as "the use of friends and family connections by those from low socio-economic backgrounds for finding jobs is less likely to result in high quality work, than for those from higher socio-economic circumstances, who would be more likely to use professional contacts." (ibid: 23)

Examining search approaches amongst ethnic minorities in the UK, Battu *et al*. (2004) found that less assimilated ethnic minorities were more likely to use personal networks to find a job than well assimilated white and other ethnic groups. In the study concerned, such ethnic minorities are more likely to be unemployed and have lower levels of education. The results

demonstrate, however, that this search method is not necessarily effective in finding employment for any group, and direct approaches to employers seems to be more effective. Direct approaches also lead to higher level positions. Ethnic minorities who got their jobs through personal networks are likely to be lower-level positions which indicate the poor quality of their networks.

Personal networks will operate more effectively for whites and other assimilated groups. The successful use of direct approach and adverts for ethnic minorities increases with years post-migration especially amongst males, with greater assimilation over time. However, reliance on personal networks does not change with time. The findings further support the contention that personal networks are particularly important for individuals with lower levels of education, but they offer narrow search routes. Yet again, unemployment rates will play an important role as higher unemployment results in fewer job places.

Mouw (1999) questions the proposition that good contacts improve labour market outcomes. The author claims there is little evidence that personal contacts lead to higher wages or increased occupational prestige. Rather such connections will only lead to positive outcomes if the contacts concerned are in good quality networks themselves – if personal contacts are better-connected the individual is more likely to benefit from these contacts in finding employment. This is because they will have access to better information and influence.

Bentolila *et al*. (2003) explore the relationship between social networks and occupational choice. Social contacts are viewed as an easy mechanism for finding jobs and individuals may choose to use contacts and get into even where they have a comparative advantage in another occupation.

4.7 Summary and Conclusions

The literature on employability and school to work transitions reflects the complexity of developing effective policy and programmes to support youth, particularly in a developing context. The availability of resources from which young people can draw to make choices and access opportunities will be a key determinant of their achievement of employability. The literature suggests that youth interventions must be informed by a clear understanding of individual, socio-economic and labour market factors which determine the availability of resources. Through investigating the resources currently available to young people and the manner in which these resources support or inhibit their transition, this research identifies some of the critical mechanisms needed to enhance such support.

5. Research Design

The study comprised two phases:

- In-college Surveys conducted in November 2003 and 2009 prior to students undertaking their final examinations
- A quantitative postal survey in September / October 2009 with students who responded to the In-college Survey in 2003.

5.1 Sampling

- *In-college Survey*

For both In-college Surveys, the study adopted a purposive approach to sampling, drawing the sample from colleges within specific geographic localities, using as criteria the geographic location of the colleges and vocational fields.

The in-college survey in 2003 was conducted in 19 colleges across four regions. For the 2009 in-college survey, a deliberate strategy was adopted to sample the same group of colleges to allow for direct comparison across the 2 cohorts. Unfortunately, 2 colleges were unable to participate in the 2009.

Table 1 below lists the colleges which participated in the study:

Table One: Colleges that participated in the In-college survey

Region	College	2003	2009
Gauteng (Johannesburg, Ekurhuleni, Tshwane)	Central Johannesburg FET College	✓	X
	Ekurhuleni East FET College	✓	✓
	Ekurhuleni West FET College	✓	✓
	Tshwane North FET College	✓	✓
	Tshwane South FET College	✓	✓
	South West Gauteng College for FET	✓	✓
Durban (Thekwini) Metropole	Coastal KZN FET College	✓	✓
	Sivananda FET College	✓	✓
	Thekwini FET College	✓	X
Cape Metropole	College of Cape Town	✓	✓
	False Bay FET College	✓	✓
	Northlink FET College	✓	✓
Limpopo Province	Capricorn FET College	✓	✓
	Lephalale FET College	✓	✓
	Letaba FET College	✓	✓
	Mopani South East FET College	✓	✓
	Sekhukhune FET College	✓	✓
	Vhembe FET College	✓	✓
	Waterberg FET College	✓	✓

The sample for the 2003 In-college survey comprised all N3 and N4 Engineering and Business Studies who were available in the colleges on the days they were visited. A total of 10,470 responses were achieved (see tracer study sample below).

For the 2009 survey, the sample comprised students enrolled in NC(V) programmes at Levels 2,3 and 4, and was drawn from 8 of the 14 fields of study, namely:

- Engineering and Related Design
- Electrical Infrastructure Construction
- Civil Engineering and Construction
- Office Administration
- Finance, Economics and Accounting
- Information Technology and Computer Science
- Hospitality
- Tourism

The sample was therefore broadened in 2009 to incorporate students from Information Technology, Hospitality and Tourism. These additional fields are viewed as critical for economic growth, and thereby will be important components of FET College delivery going forward.

Enrolments figures in 2009 were sourced from the Department of Educations' Examination and Assessment Directorate. The data indicated a total enrolment of 51,684 across the 19 colleges and 8 learning fields. The study targeted all Levels 3 and 4 students in these fields and 31% of Level 2 students. This resulted in a total sample of 20,856 students. The sample breakdown was as follows:

Table Two: Sample for 2009 In-college survey

Field of Study	**Level 2 (31%)**	**Level 3 (100%)**	**Level 4 (100%)**
Engineering and Related Design	1848	1997	565
Electrical Infrastructure Construction	1861	1741	348
Civil Engineering and Construction	1029	951	223
Office Administration	1441	1790	337
Finance, Economics and Accounting	942	976	206
Information Technology and Computer Science	1079	1045	223
Hospitality	455	584	182
Tourism	503	412	118
Total Sample	**9158**	**9496**	**2202**

Tracer Study

The 2003 in-college survey yielded the following responses.

Table Three: 2003 In-college survey returns

Field of Study	**N**
Business Studies	3361
Engineering	6520
General Education	12
Missing Data	439
Utility industries	138
Grand Total	**10470**

Of the 10,470 responses received across the 19 colleges, 9,921 of these were valid. The database of 9,921 valid responses from the 2003 in-college survey provided the sample for the tracer study component of this research.

5.2 Instruments

The 2003 in-college surveys comprised a self-administered questionnaire consisting of 51 primarily closed-ended questions, categorized into three areas:

- Personal Information, including details on family context and province of origin
- Current Studies, including course in which they were enrolled, factors influencing choice of programmes and rating of quality of college
- Plans for the Future, including work or study plans and mechanisms for finding work.

The 2009 in-college instrument tackled the same three areas, but the questions were refined and therefore reduced to 44 questions.

The tracer study instrument similarly comprised a self-administered questionnaire consisting of 39 primarily closed questions, categorized into the following areas:

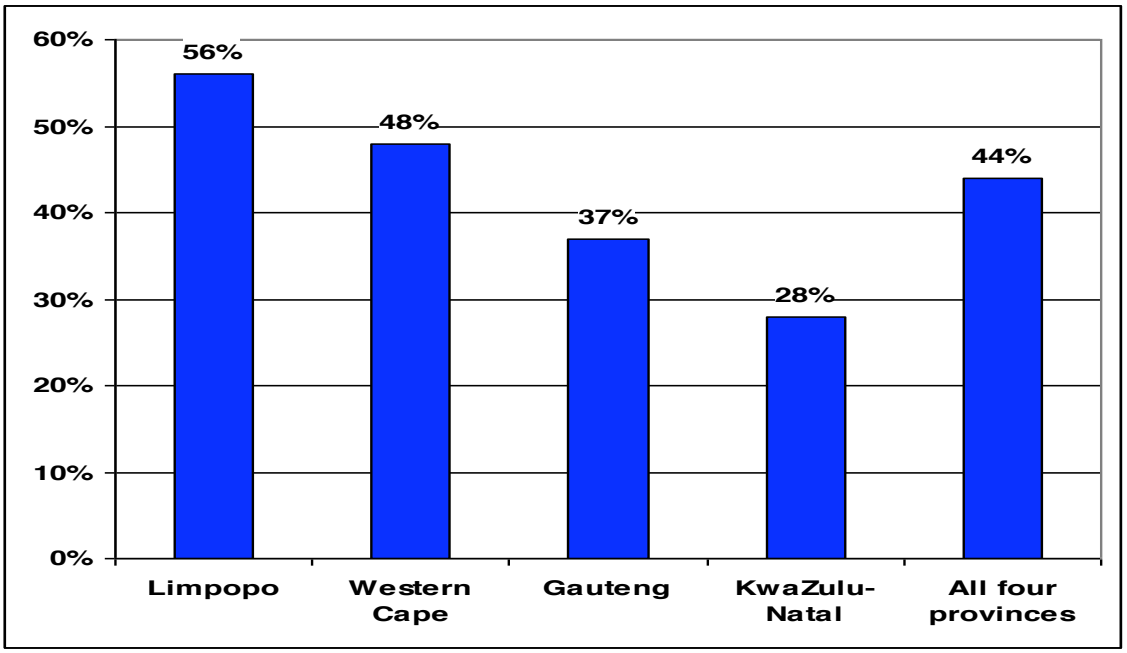
- Biographical information, including contact details, movements since completing studies and highest qualification to date.
- Changing employment status since 2003, including how they went about finding their first and, if applicable, second job, and if they had changed jobs, why they had they done so.
- Current employment and earnings status, and relationship between work and what they studied
- The role of college in preparing them for the labour market and supporting their transition
- Reasons for being unemployed (if applicable)
- Nature of further studies (if applicable)
- Plans for the future

6. Profile of Respondents

6.1 Returns for In-college Surveys

Figure One provides the total returns for the 2009 cohort by the provinces in which the colleges are located. The returns rates are based on the number of students who were available in the colleges when the surveys were distributed. As the students were busy preparing for examinations, many were not attending college consistently. The largest response rate was achieved in Limpopo, while the lowest response rate was achieved in KwaZulu-Natal.

Figure 1: Total Returns for 2009 In-college Survey

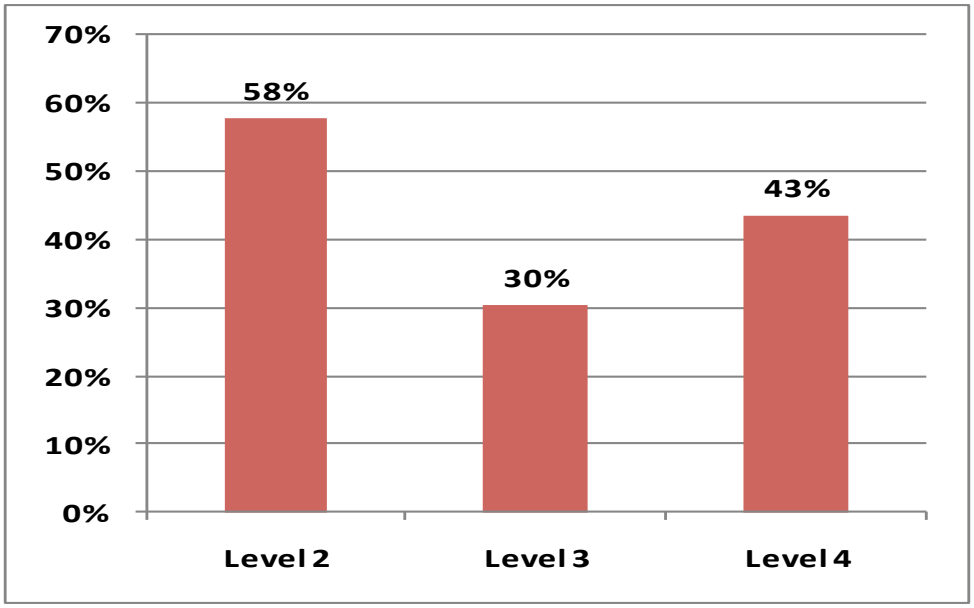


Province	Total targeted	Returns for L2, L3 and L4	% returns
Limpopo	7224	4059	56%
Western Cape	2393	1158	48%
Gauteng	8311	3073	37%
KwaZulu-Natal	2926	833	28%
All four provinces	20854	9123*	44%

*429 respondents did not indicate which level of study they were enrolled in.

As illustrated in Figure Two below, the largest concentration of returns was in Level 2. While all Level 3 and 4 students were included in the sample, there were lower numbers of Level 3 and Level 4 students available in the colleges. The 7224 Level 2 learners that were targeted in the study represented 31% of the total number of Level 2 students in the 17 colleges. Therefore, the return rate for Level 2 was 58%. A total of 9156 completed surveys were received but 229 of respondents across the 8 fields did not indicate the NC(V) level.

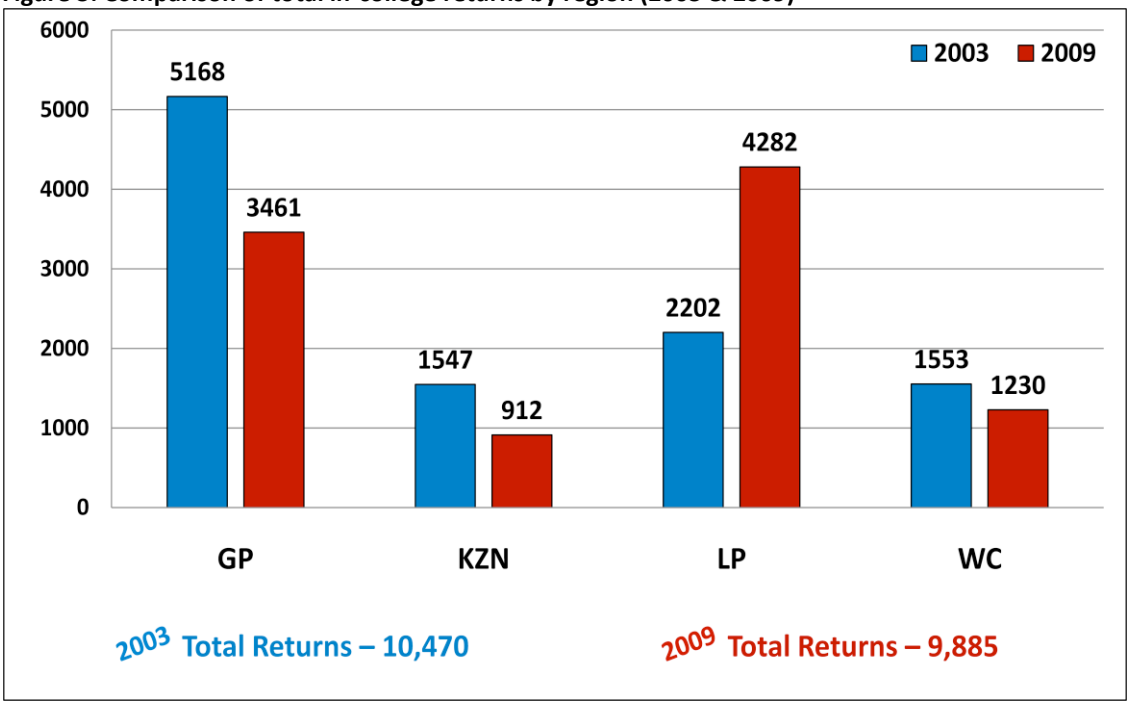
Figure 2: Total Return rates in 2009 by Level of Study



NC(V) level	Population – Total targeted	Sample	% returns
L2	9156	5283	58%
L3	9496	2884	30%
L4	2202	956	43%
Total	20854	9123	44%

The breakdown of returns by province differs substantially from the returns obtained in 2003. Limpopo colleges featured more strongly in 2009, while the returns were biased in favour of Gauteng in 2003. Overall, responses from metropoles made up 57% of the total responses in 2009, while the metropoles made up 79% of the returns in 2003. Therefore, the 2009 responses allow for more balanced analysis of the urban-rural dynamics.

Figure 3: Comparison of total in-college returns by region (2003 & 2009)



A total of 122,921 students were enrolled in NC(V) (Level 2-4) programmes in 2009. The 17 colleges represented 40% of this total enrolment (49,137 enrolments).

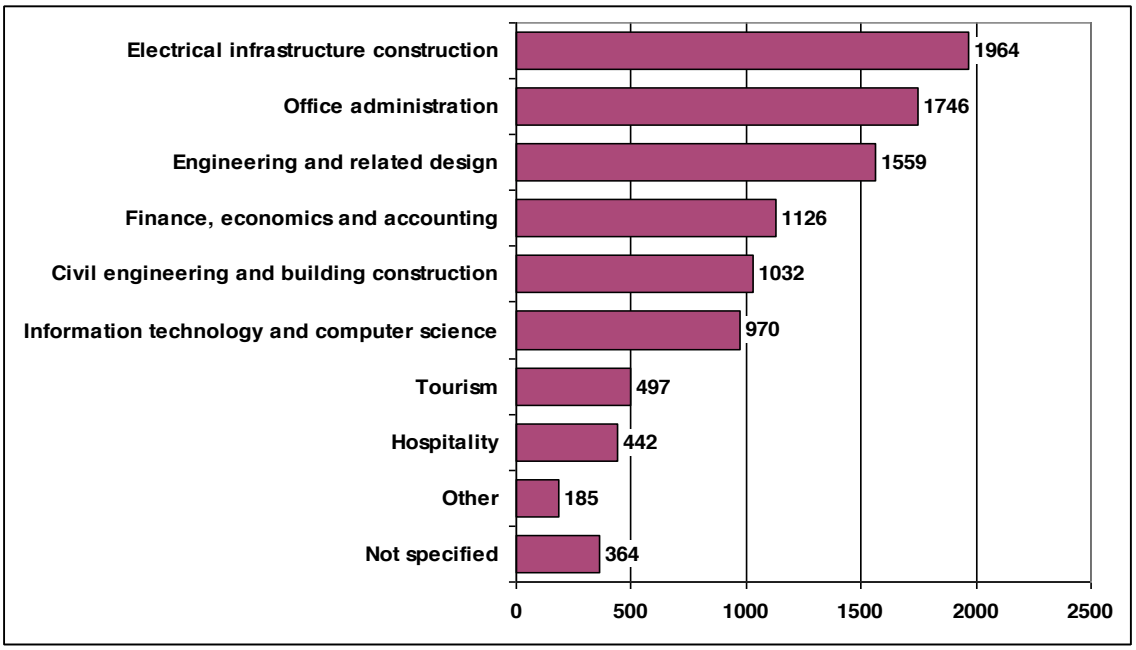
The sample of students for the in-college survey was drawn from 8 of the 14 fields of study available in the NC(V) qualification. The 9,885 returns therefore represent 26% of the total enrolments in these 8 fields in the 17 colleges, and 7% of the total enrolments in NC(V) programmes nationally.

When broken down by NC(V) Level, the response rates against the total enrolments in the 8 fields of study in the sample colleges are as follows:

Table Three: Response rates for 2009 in-college survey for sample colleges

	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4
Responses	**5463**	**2956**	**974**
% against total enrolments in the 8 programmes in sample colleges	**20%**	**34%**	**48%**

Figure 4: In-college respondents by field of study

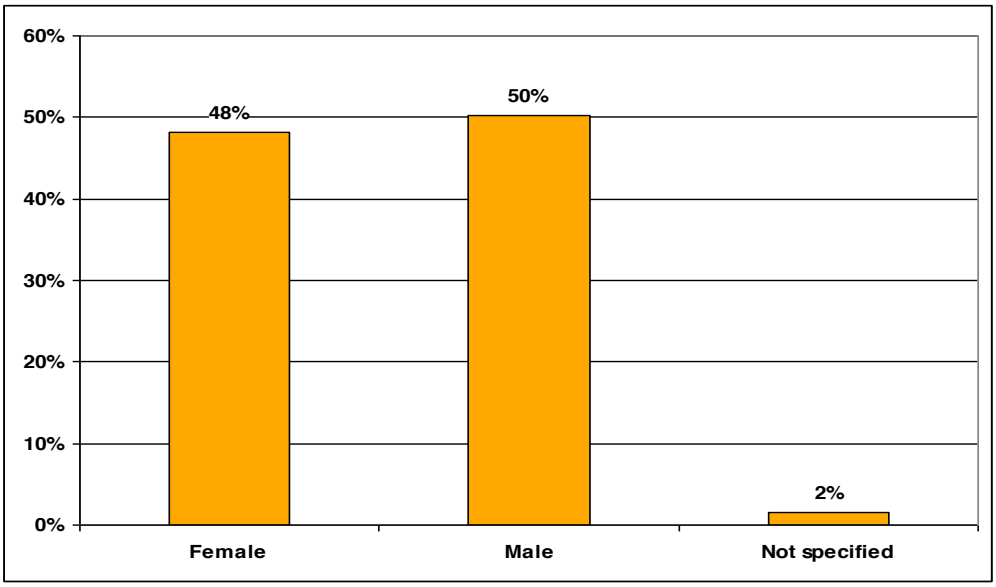


There is a predominance of engineering learners in the sample. As demonstrated in Figure Four above, 46% of the respondents were enrolled in engineering programmes. In total, 44% of the students enrolled in the 17 colleges were in engineering programmes. Office administration also features strongly, making up 18% of the responses and 14% of enrolments in the sample colleges.

There is some variability in enrolments for respondents from different regions. While 54% of respondents from Limpopo province were in engineering programmes (the highest of all the regions), only 23% of respondents from KwaZulu-Natal were in engineering. While there was a strong bias toward business programmes in KwaZulu-Natal, Construction programmes feature more strongly in Limpopo, and IT programmes feature lower than other provinces.

As indicated in Graph 5, the respondents were almost equally split in terms of gender.

Figure 5: Gender split of 2009 respondents



However, when the gender split is analysed by field of study, it is evident that there is a predominance of males in engineering programmes and IT, while females are in the majority in business –related programmes, hospitality and tourism.

Table Five: Gender split by field of study for 2009 respondents

Field of Study	Gender	%
Civil Engineering and Building Construction	Female	37%
	Male	63%
Electrical Infrastructure Construction	Female	34%
	Male	66%
Engineering and Related Design	Female	23%
	Male	77%
Finance, Economics and Accounting	Female	67%
	Male	33%
Hospitality	Female	69%
	Male	31%
IT and Computer Science	Female	41%
	Male	59%
Office Administration	Female	78%
	Male	22%
Tourism	Female	64%
	Male	36%

Figure 6 below indicates the racial breakdown of the respondents.

Figure 6: Racial Profile of 2009 respondents

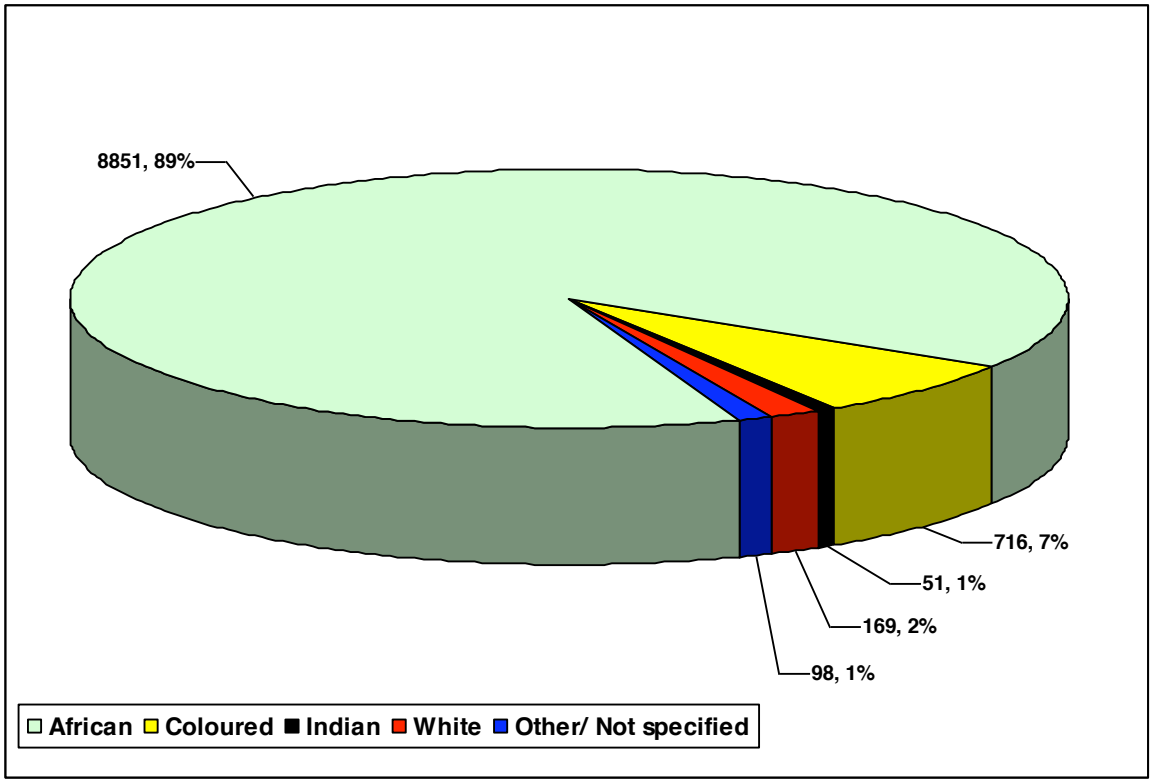
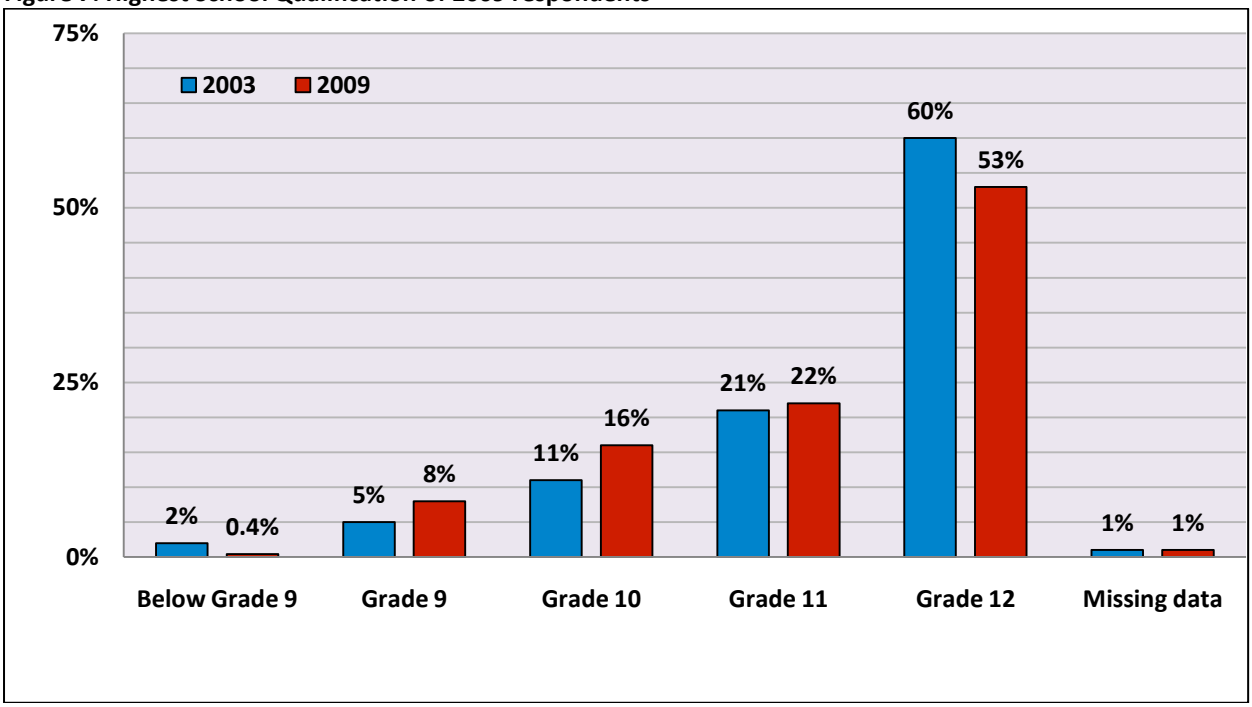


Figure 7 illustrates the highest school qualification of the respondents for the 2003 and 2009 cohorts. Over half the current NC(V) students have a Grade 12 certificate, compared to 60% in 2003. Both these results, however, indicate that colleges are being treated a post-school option rather than an alternative route for school drop-outs.

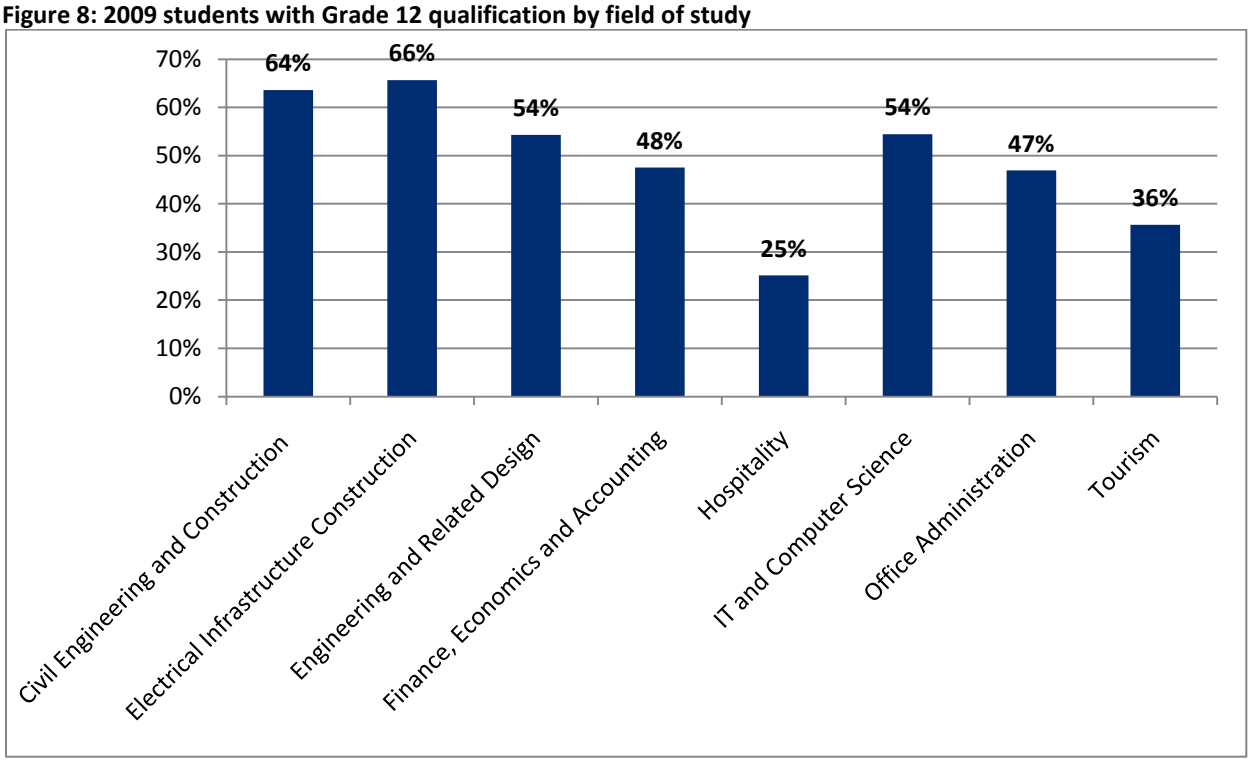
A large number of the 2003 respondents were enrolled in N4 and above qualifications, which were considered to be higher education qualifications, and if the student was coming into a N4 straight from school, he or she would need to have a Grade 12 certificate in order to do so. However, the introduction of the NC(V) qualification at levels 2-4 of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) was a deliberate attempt by policy-makers to draw more students who were not coping in the schooling system into the FET College post Grade 9. These figures appear to indicate that this has not happened and the shift to a younger group of enrolments has not appeared to have taken place.

Figure 7: Highest School Qualification of 2009 respondents



When disaggregated by field of study, however, there is a clear discrepancy across fields with respect to entry qualifications. Whereas the engineering and IT fields are attracting more school leavers with Grade 12 certificates, the business-oriented fields and, more noticeably, hospitality and tourism are attracting more pre-matrics. This is a relative shift from past trends, where because engineering was concentrated at FET levels it would attract more pre-matrics, while business studies, which was concentrated at HE levels, would attract more post-matrics.

Figure 8: 2009 students with Grade 12 qualification by field of study



This profile of students suggests that the capacity of the students to cope with the demands of the curriculum in these fields should be higher.

Figure 9: highest school qualification for 2009 students by province

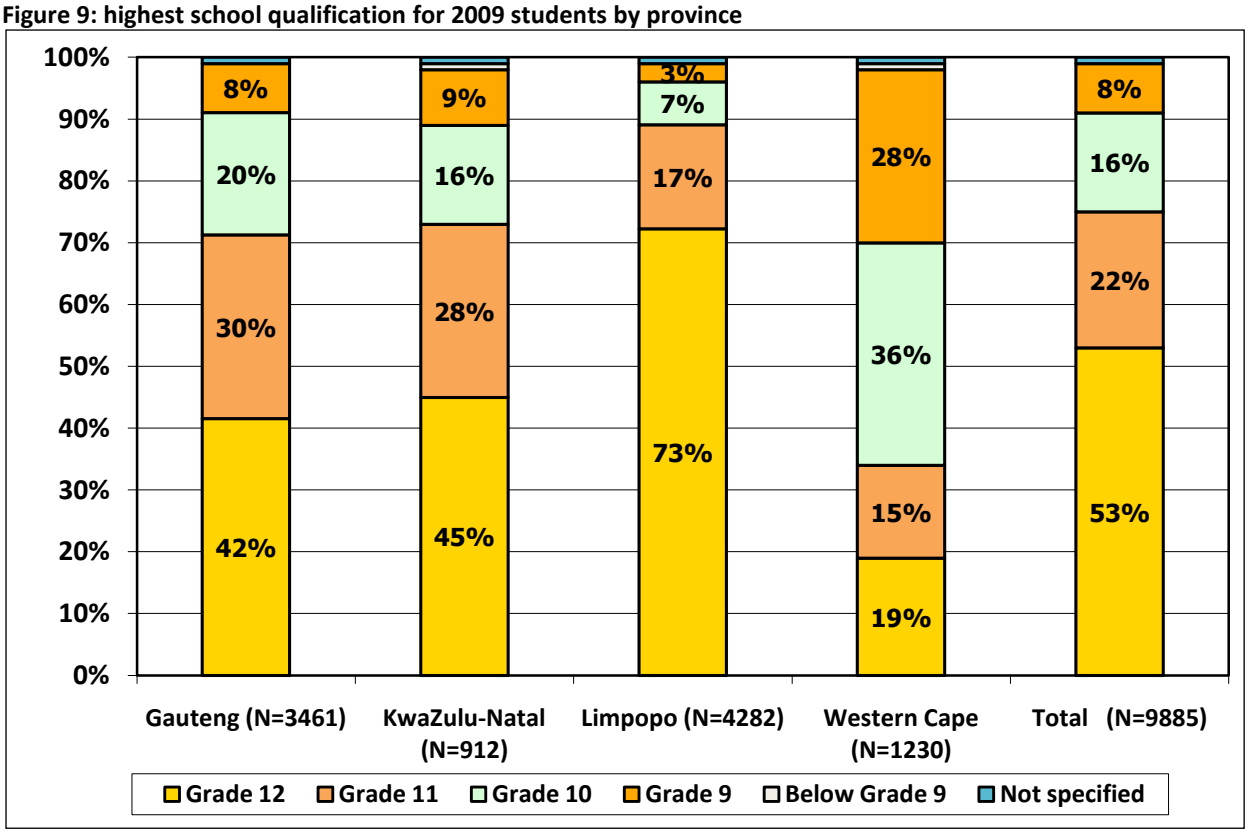
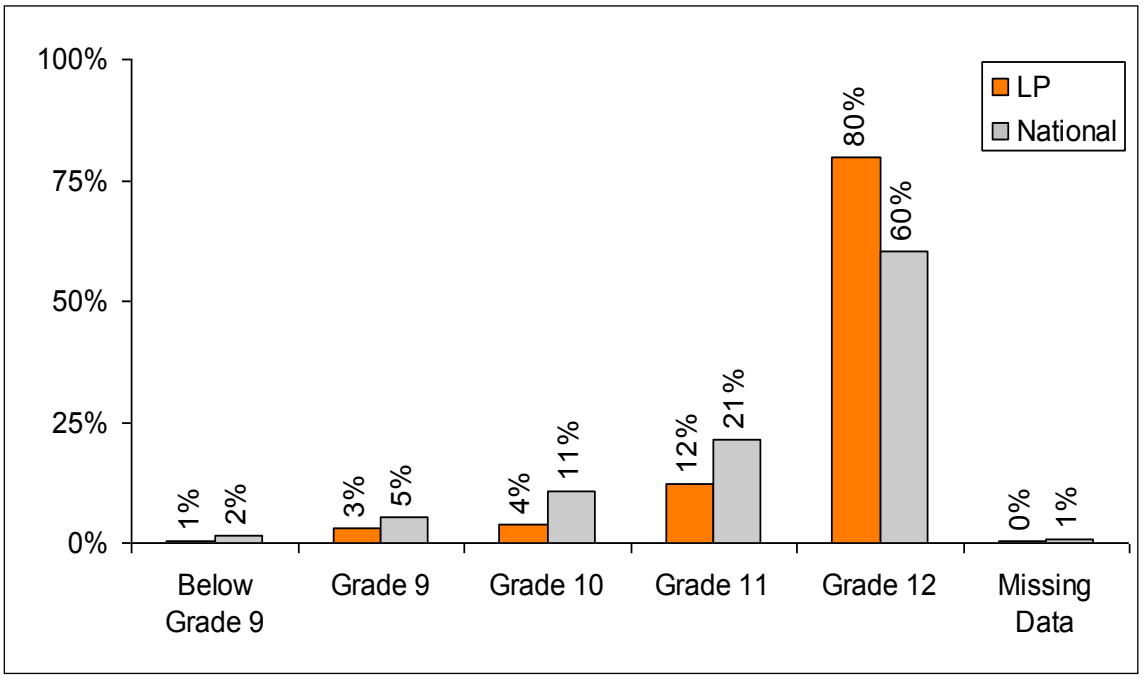


Figure 9 above indicates the discrepancies in highest school qualification across the regions. While students from the Gauteng and KwaZulu-Natal colleges have similar numbers of students with Grade 12 qualifications (42% and 45% respectively), colleges in Limpopo are attracting students who mostly have Grade 12 qualifications. Colleges in the Cape Metropole appear to have a substantially lower percentage of students with Grade 12, suggesting they are attracting students who have not completed high school.

The profile of students in Limpopo is consistent with that of the 2003 cohort. In 2003, 80% of Limpopo students reported having a Grade 12. The other three provinces all experienced a general decline in the number of students who had Grade 12. For both Gauteng and KwaZulu-Natal, the decline has been 22% and 13% respectively, while the Western Cape experienced a decline from 43% in 2003 to 19% in 2009. This decline is most likely explained by the shift towards younger enrolments through the introduction of the NC(V) in 2007. This qualification has deliberately been pitched at pre-Grade 12 school leavers. The Western Cape has actively promoted the NC(V) for young school leavers, while in Limpopo it would seem that students are committed to completing Grade 12, probably because this is viewed as critical for longer-term career prospects.

Figure 10: highest school qualification for 2003 students: Limpopo vs National



Those who had Grade 12 certificates in 2009 comprised 48% males and 51% females. 62% of those who had a Grade 12 certificate completed their schooling in the 2007/2008.

The highest concentration of students is in the 18-23 age range. The large numbers of students in the 22-25 range who are enrolled in Level 2 qualifications suggests that they had not completed their schooling in the expected time of 18 years.

Table Six: Age ranges of 2009 respondents

	Age									
NC(V) level	**<=17**	**18-19**	**20-21**	**22-23**	**24-25**	**26-27**	**28-29**	**>=30**	**Cannot determine/ not specified**	**Total**
Level 2	346	1586	1953	879	345	137	68	81	68	5463
Level 3	139	481	1028	665	328	130	51	90	44	2956
Level 4	18	143	331	261	113	49	16	27	16	974
Not specified	25	116	172	89	42	16	7	11	14	492
Total	**528**	**2326**	**3484**	**1894**	**828**	**332**	**142**	**209**	**142**	**9885**

In fact, 550 (63%) of the 22-23 year olds in level 2 qualifications had completed their Grade 12 in 2007/2008, and 200 (58%) of the 24-25 year olds in level 2 qualifications had completed their Grade 12 in 2006/2007. This supports the suggestion that they had these learners had been between 20 and 23 years old when they completed their Grade 12.

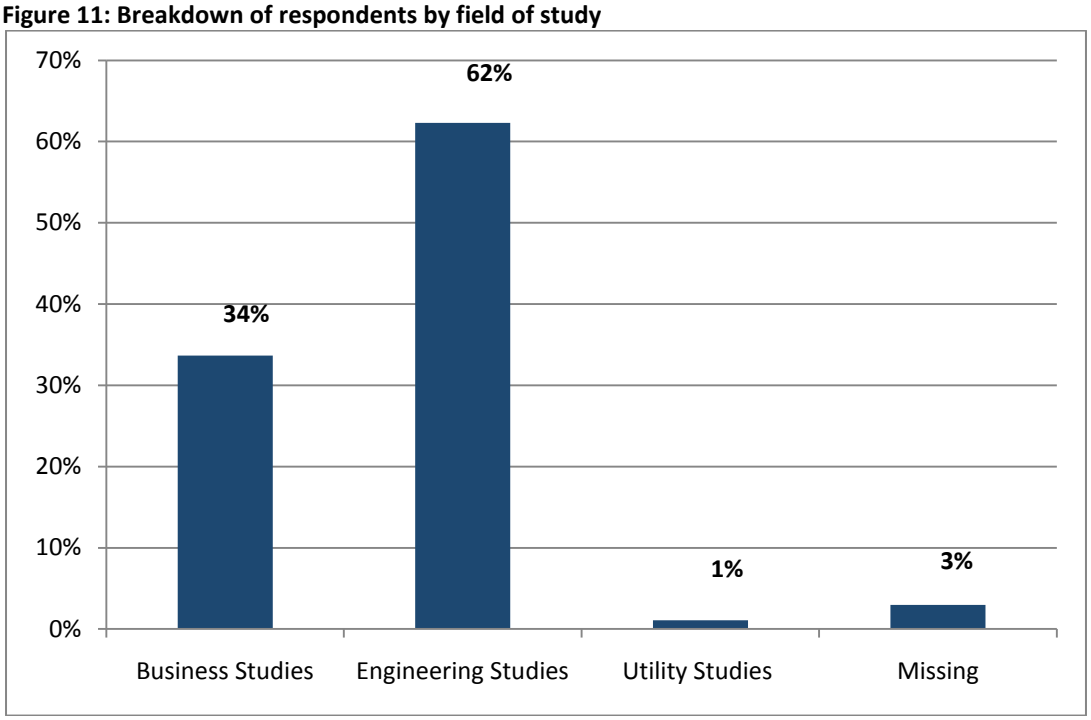
6.2 Returns for Tracer Study

The 2003 database produced 9,921 valid addresses off a total of 10,470. Respondents to the 2003 in-college survey had been asked to provide “current address” and “home address”.

Postal surveys were sent to all valid "current" addresses, and where no current address was provided, the surveys were sent to the home address. The respondents were asked to complete the survey and return it by self addressed envelope (supplied with the survey), or by fax or by e-mail.

A total of 1,218 (12.3%) responses were received. However, it is difficult to clearly establish how many of the postal surveys reached the intended recipients, considering it was 6 years since the original survey had been done. At least 679 surveys were returned by the post office with incorrect addresses. In a few cases, surveys had been completed by young people who were not on the initial database, and therefore the responses had to be excluded.

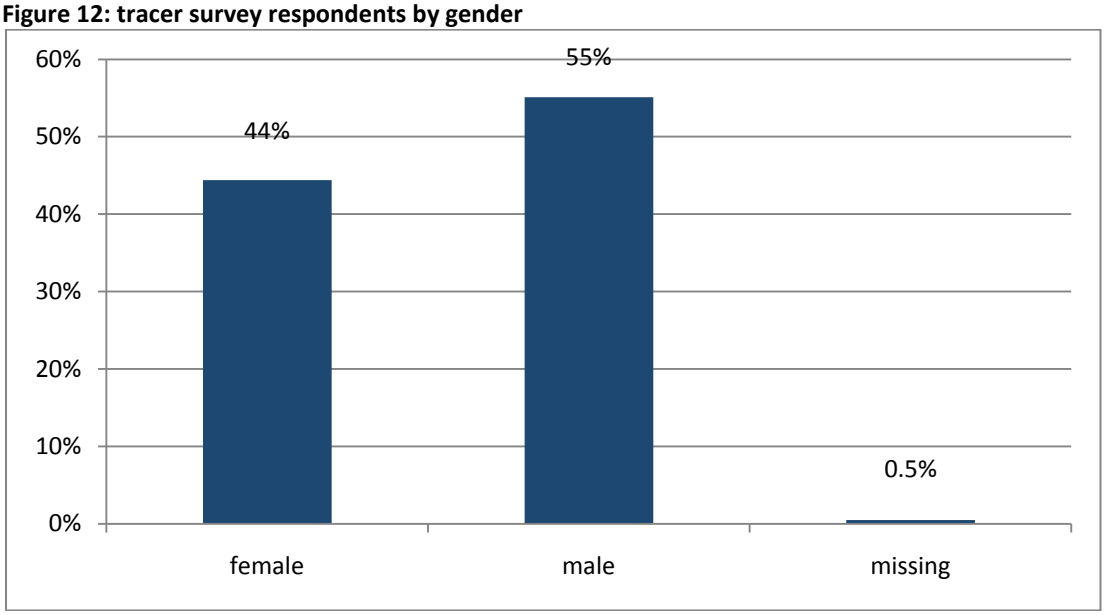
Figure 11: Breakdown of respondents by field of study



The breakdown of the tracer survey respondents in terms of field of study largely mirrors the profile of the 2003 sample as a whole. Of the 9,921 respondents, 32% were in Business Studies in 2003 and 64% were in Engineering Studies.

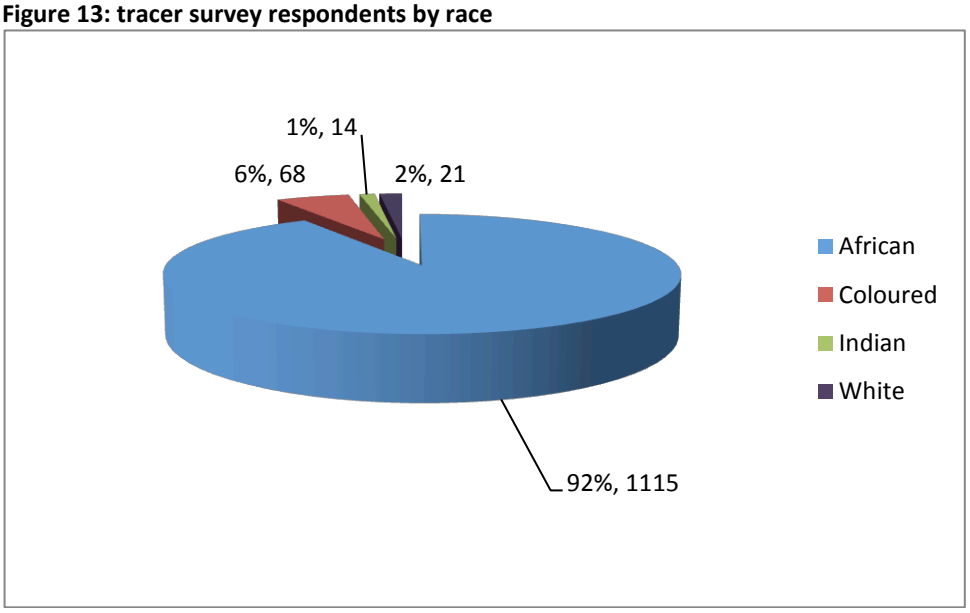
Of the 1,218 responses, 541 (44%) were female and 671 (55%) were male.

Figure 12: tracer survey respondents by gender



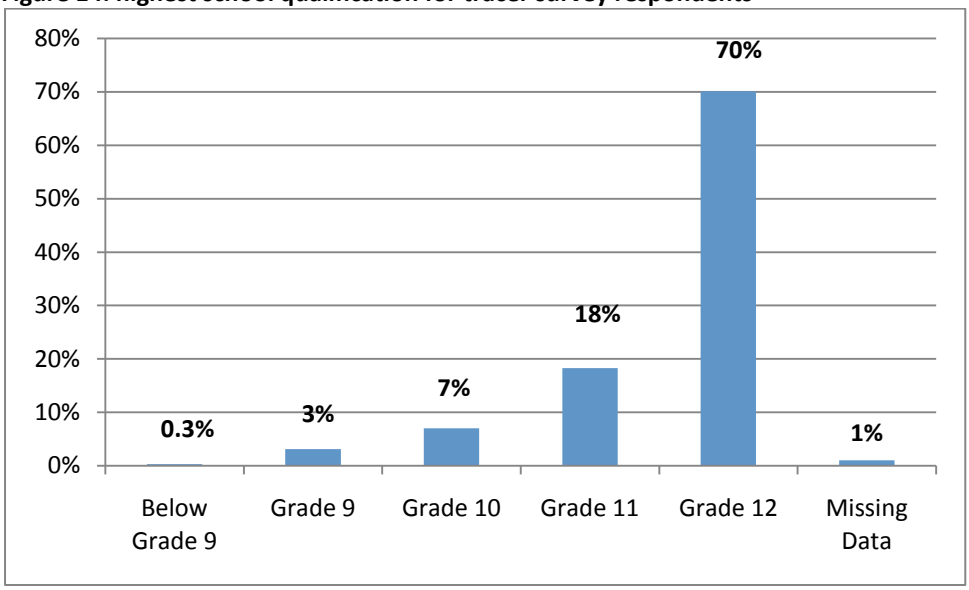
As with the in-college survey, the large majority of the respondents (92%) to the tracer study were predominately African.

Figure 13: tracer survey respondents by race



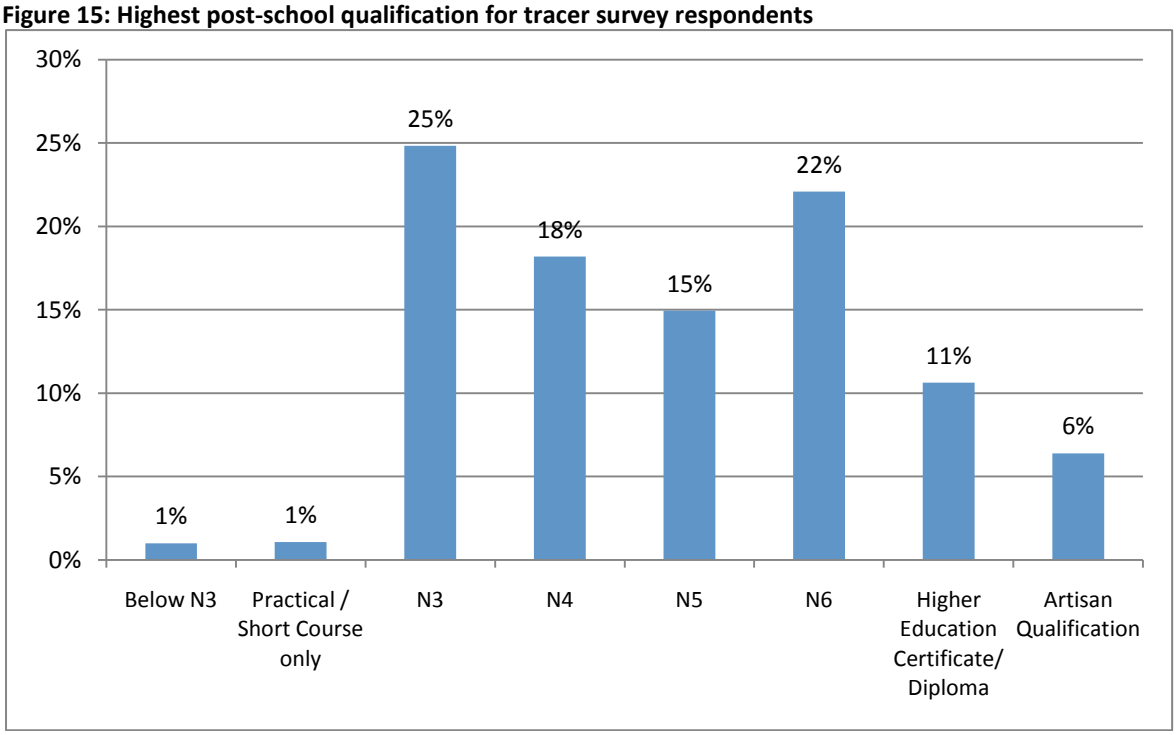
In addition, 70% of the respondents to the tracer survey had achieved a Grade 12 qualification at school

Figure 14: highest school qualification for tracer survey respondents



However, despite the majority having achieved a Grade 12 certificate, many of the respondents did not succeed very far with their post-school studies. Only 22% managed to complete their N6, and only 11% managed to attain a certificate or diploma from a higher education instituion. Only 6% achieved artisan status despite the high concentration of engineering students in the group.

Figure 15: Highest post-school qualification for tracer survey respondents



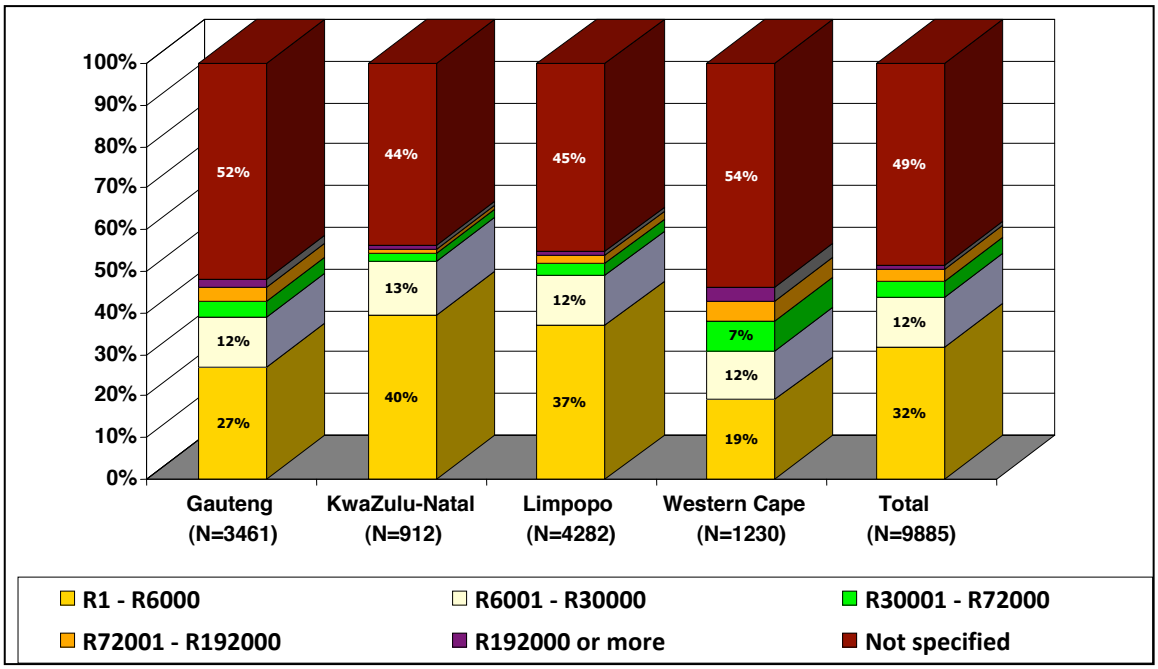
7. Findings from the in-college surveys

7.1 Choosing a post-school educational path

The literature points to the interaction of class and parental role in educational choice. The role of family in this choice-making is critical, but socio-economic conditions may undermine effective consideration of choices. (see Reay and Ball, 1997 and 1998; Croll, 2004). According to the literature, the capacity of parents to access the necessary information to adequately guide decision-making on educational and career pathways appears to be substantively linked to the general resource base of the family.

In order to assess the socio-economic status, respondents were asked to report on their annual household income. Only 54% of the 2009 in-college sample was able to report on their annual household income. 32% reported that their household survived on less than R6000 per annum while a further 12% reported an annual household income of between R6001 and R30,000. For the 2958 students who were living in a household with an annual of less than R6,000, the average number of people living in these households was 6.4, suggesting high levels of poverty. There is some suggestion of a higher level of affluence amongst the Western Cape respondents although the low percentage of responses limits any firm analysis.

Figure 16: Annual household income of respondents



The socio-economic conditions of the respondents are also expressed through the employment status of parents. In many cases respondents were unable to report on the employment status of their fathers, while the frequency of responses on their mothers' employment status was substantially higher. Around a third (29%) of the respondents reported that their mother was unemployed. It is possible that many of the respondents are

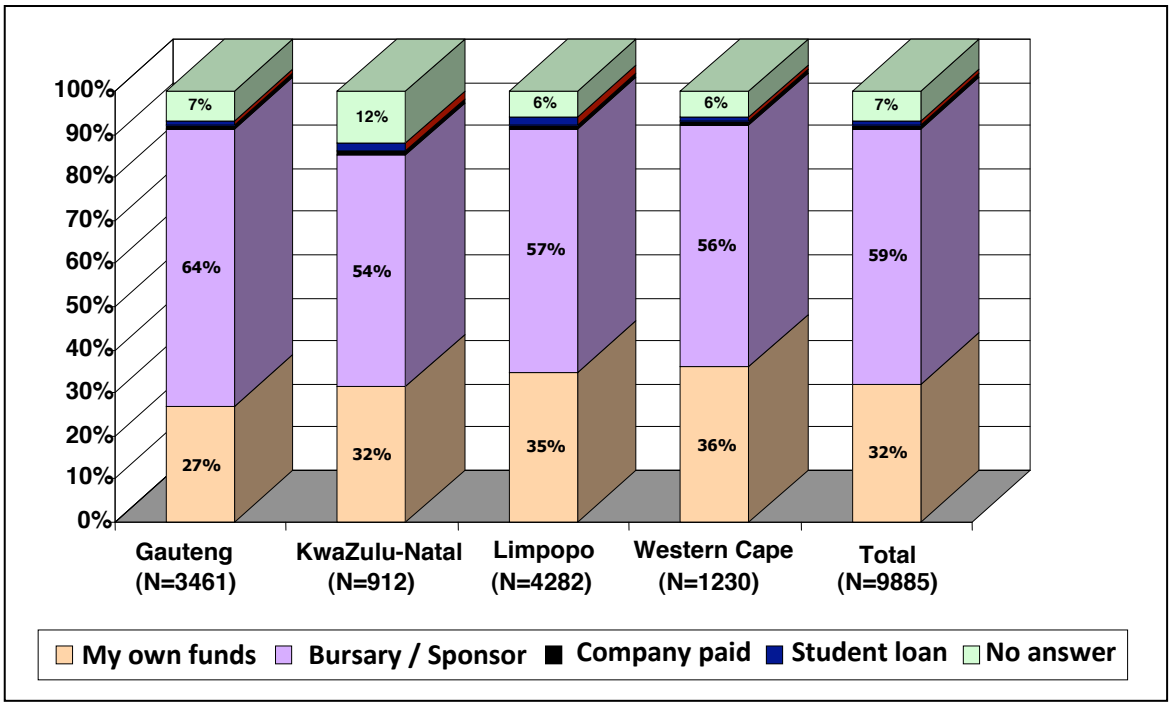
living with only one parent, and the father is absent. Between 8% and 12% of parents were professionals, while 15% to 16% were in elementary to intermediate occupations.

Table Seven: Employment Status of Parents of 2009 In-college respondents

Employment	Father	Mother	Guardian
Professional (e.g. nurse, teacher)	8%	12%	4%
Employed in office/shop/factory	16%	15%	5%
Self-employed	7%	7%	1%
Unemployed	11%	29%	5%
Pensioner	6%	6%	5%
No answer	52%	31%	81%
Total	100% (N=9885)	100% (N=9885)	100% (N=9885)

In addition, large numbers (59%) of respondents financed their studies through the bursaries offered through the Department of Education. As the colleges applied a means test for applicability for the bursary, the findings suggest that large number of students could not afford to go to a college without the bursary (despite the relatively low fees).

Figure 17: Source of funding for college studies for 2009 in-college respondents



With respect to the qualifications of parents, while many respondents were not able or declined to report on this, of those who did report, the majority reported that their parents had Grade 12 or less education, with many not completing secondary schooling.

Table Eight: Highest Qualification of Parents of 2009 In-college respondents

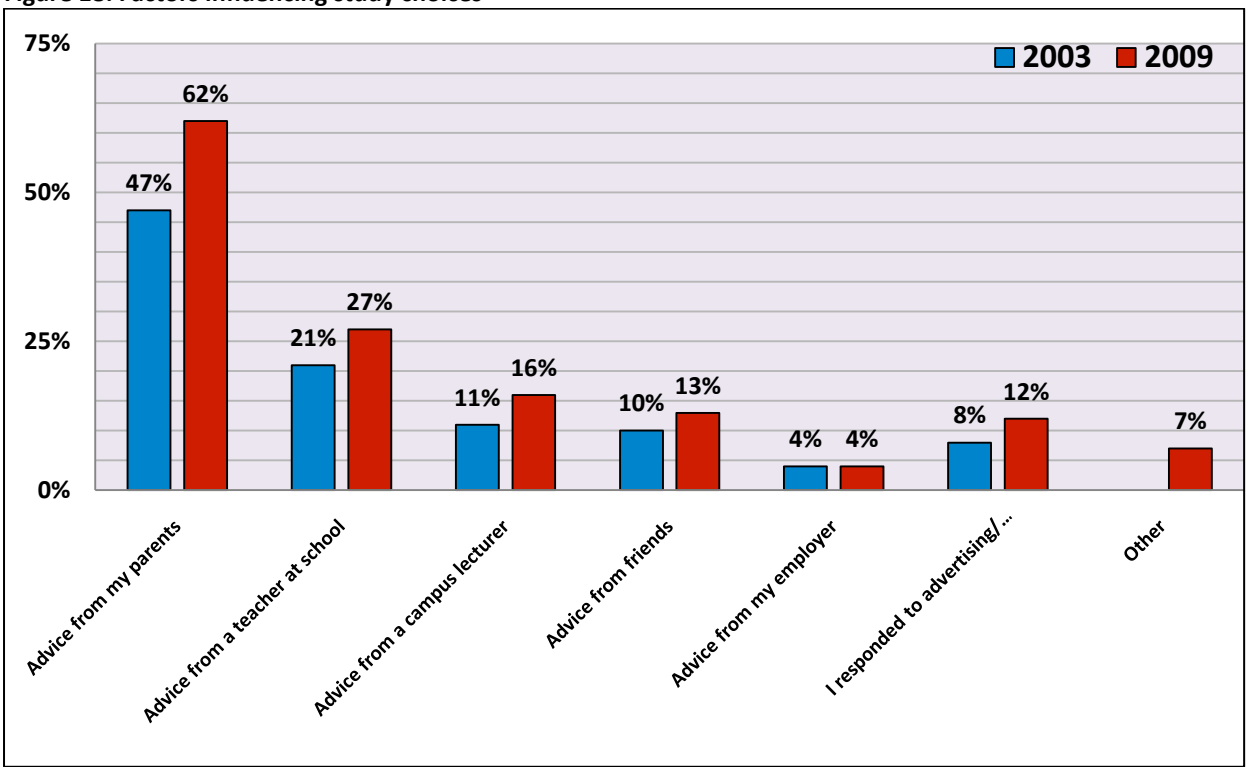
Qualification	Father	Mother	Guardian
Primary school or less	**6%**	**10%**	**2%**
Some secondary schooling	**12%**	**18%**	**3%**
Matric	**10%**	**16%**	**4%**
College certificate	**4%**	**5%**	**2%**
Technikon/ university diploma	**4%**	**5%**	**2%**
Technikon/ university degree	**3%**	**4%**	**2%**
I do not know	**18%**	**16%**	**8%**
No answer	**44%**	**26%**	**76%**
Total	**100% (N=9885)**	**100% (N=9885)**	**100% (N=9885)**

All of these factors suggest poor socio-economic conditions, combined with low availability of resources to draw on within the family to guide post-school choices. Based on previous educational experience and employment status, the resources that parents are able to bring to bear, particularly in terms of the availability of information and their perception of post-school education in relation to their own class status and identity, have a substantial effect on the choices that are made. In such a context, choices are likely to be made on the basis of financial considerations and convenience (Ball, 2003 in Croll, 2004). This is in contrast to middle-class families, where broader access to information combined with wider choices will allow more selectivity.

When asked what the primary influencing factor had been in their decision to study at a FET College, advice from parents featured as the most frequently reported influence at an aggregate level for both 2003 and 2009.

The responses from the 2003 and 2009 groups follow similar trends.

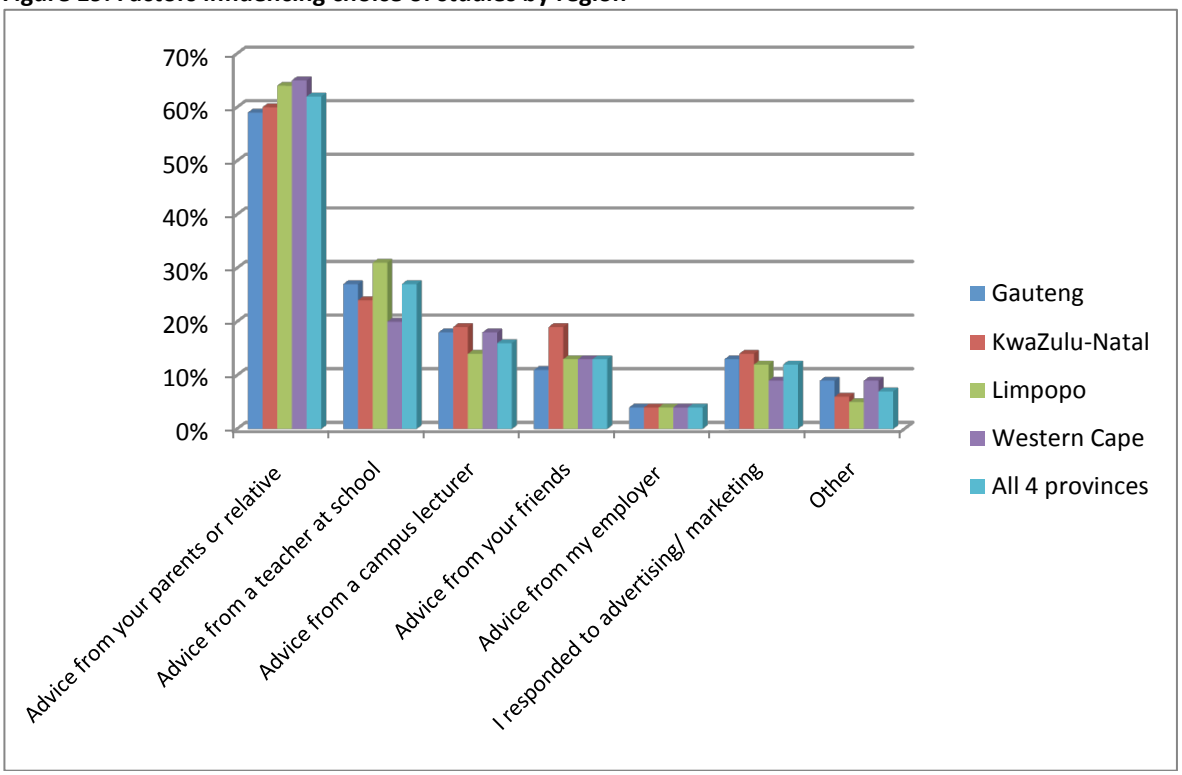
Figure 18: Factors influencing study choices[2]



The trends appear to be consistent across the regions. However, teachers from Limpopo appear to particularly influential, while teachers in the Western Cape are reportedly least influential (see figure 17 below). Relatives also are rated slightly higher in the Western Cape than elsewhere.

[2] The 2003 and 2009 had different formulations in that in 2009 the respondents were allowed to selected multiple answers while the 2003 group could only choose one. Therefore the 2009 responses do not add up to 100%.

Figure 19: Factors influencing choice of studies by region



Three factors appear inform decision-making:

- Interest in the field of study
- Locality
- Affordability

Despite the strong influence of family in making choices, recommendations from family do not seem to be a primary feature in the choice of institution. Individual interest in the field of study appears to be the defining issue, balanced with accessibility and affordability. The one exception is the Western Cape where personal choice predominates.

These results seem to support the finding in the literature that working-class families will be more concerned with issues of affordability and locality, than with issues of quality or the value-add that the particular institution provides.

However, affordability is balanced off against the particular interest of the individual in a particular field of study. Therefore, while the issue of affordability will be paramount in the consideration of institutions, the preferences of the individual will be given a high level of consideration.

Table Nine: Reasons for choosing to study by province in a FET College for 2009 In-college respondents

Contributing factor	% of valid total who selected the contributing factor				
	Gauteng	KwaZulu-Natal	Limpopo	Western Cape	All 4 provinces
Particularly interested in my field of study	42%	32%	39%	60%	42%
Was not sure what I wanted to do	3%	4%	2%	6%	3%
The campus is near my home	31%	38%	34%	22%	32%
My family recommended that I study here	23%	22%	25%	24%	24%
My friends recommended that I study here	3%	4%	2%	7%	3%
I could not go to university/ university of technology	23%	23%	18%	15%	20%
The fees were affordable	33%	35%	42%	20%	35%
There is a placement service in the campus	5%	4%	5%	3%	5%
The campus offers extra-mural activities	9%	10%	8%	5%	8%
Valid total	3308	855	4116	1187	9466
Did not complete question	153	57	166	43	419
Grand total	3461	912	4282	1230	9885

Affordability was of particular concern to respondents from Limpopo colleges, while Gauteng respondents were more concerned with extra-mural offerings at the colleges. This suggests that respondents from urban colleges had more choice available to them. More respondents from Gauteng and KwaZulu-Natal also listed the fact that they could not get into university or university of technology as an important factor in institutional choice, suggesting that these respondents had been able to give more consideration to a wider range of institutional options.

The locality of the institution was viewed as important for respondents from both urban and rural colleges. Obviously, for families from poorer socio-economic situations, issues of affordability also extend to the cost of transport. Therefore, working class families will invariably choose institutions that are easily accessible (Reay and Ball, 1998).

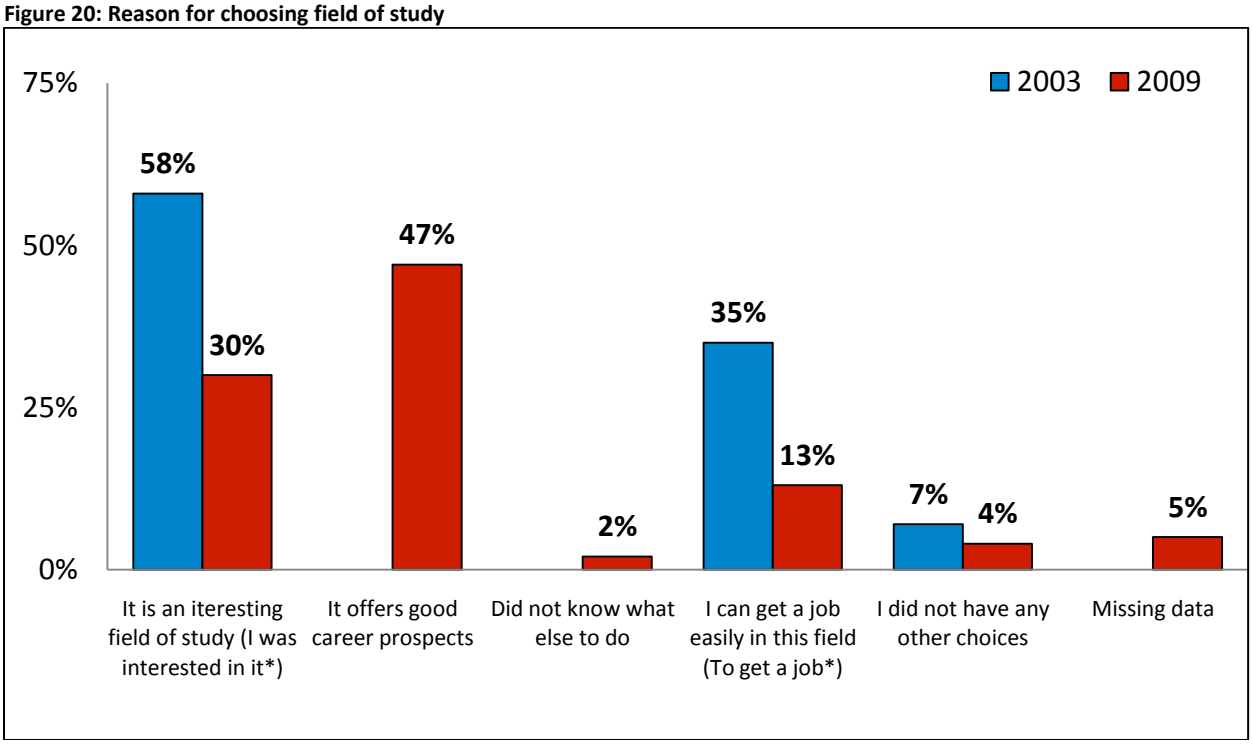
Yet again, however, the Western Cape goes against this trend, and there is less concern about affordability or locality and more with individual choice. The Western Cape respondents also appeared to be less concerned with not being able to access higher

education. This latter finding may be because many of the respondents from the Western Cape do not have a Grade 12 qualification, and are therefore not focusing on higher education but deliberately seeking to enter FET Colleges.

Respondents were asked why they had chosen to enroll in a particular field of study. The analysis for this question focuses on three dependent variables:

- Regional context,
- Field of study and
- Gender.

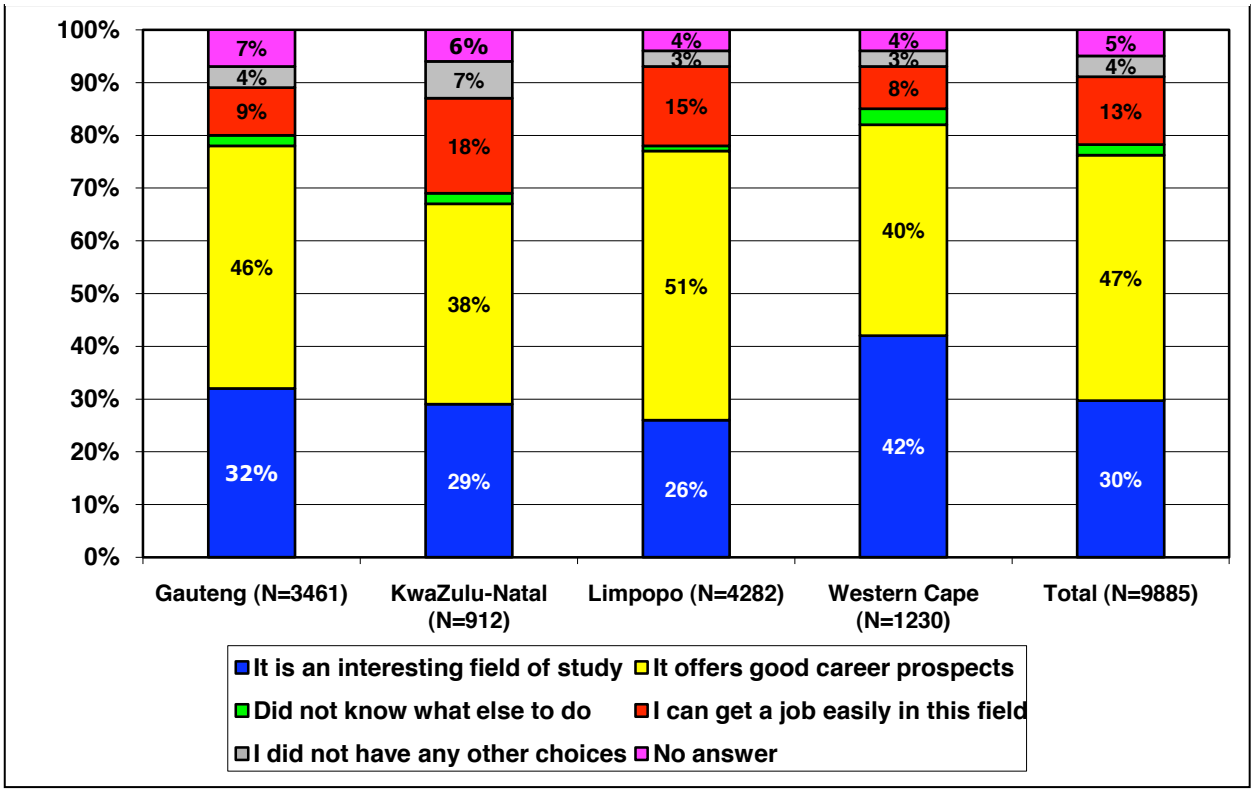
Figure 20: Reason for choosing field of study



With respect to regional context, the most pronounced discrepancy in responses was as follows:

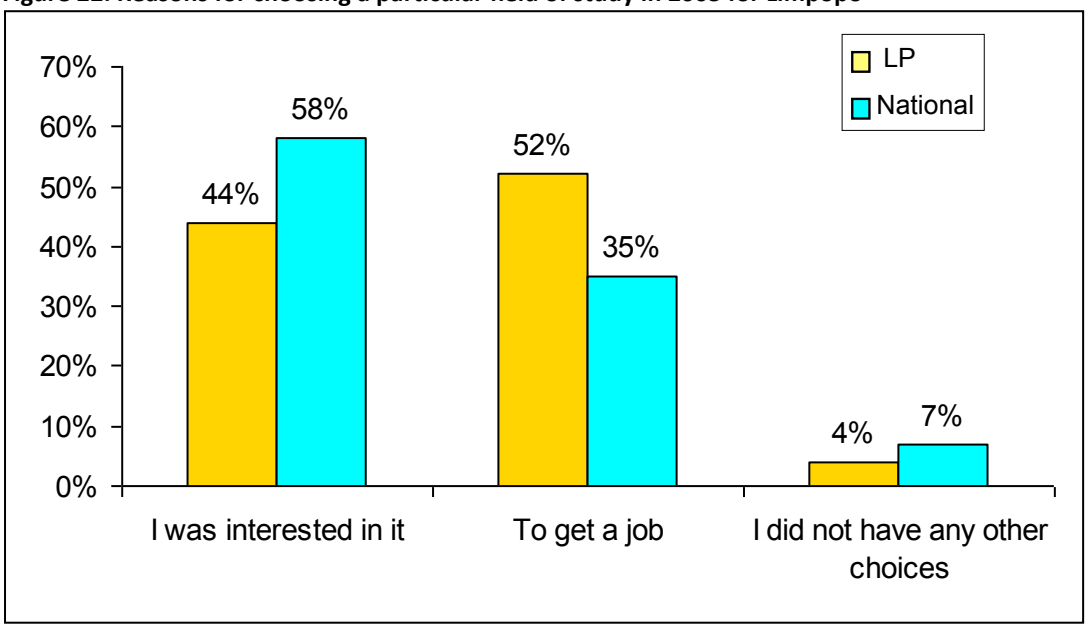
- In the Western Cape, a higher percentage of students reported choosing their field of study out of an interest in the field than the other three provinces. This is probably reflective of the relatively young age of the students in this province.
- In Limpopo, higher numbers of students choose their fields because they offer good career prospects.

Figure 21: Reasons for choosing a particular field of study for 2009 in-college students by province



This represents a marked shift from responses in 2003 where Limpopo students were more concerned with getting a job. The motivation behind choosing FET Colleges as a post-school pathway is now more predominately about career prospects than about easy access to the job market.

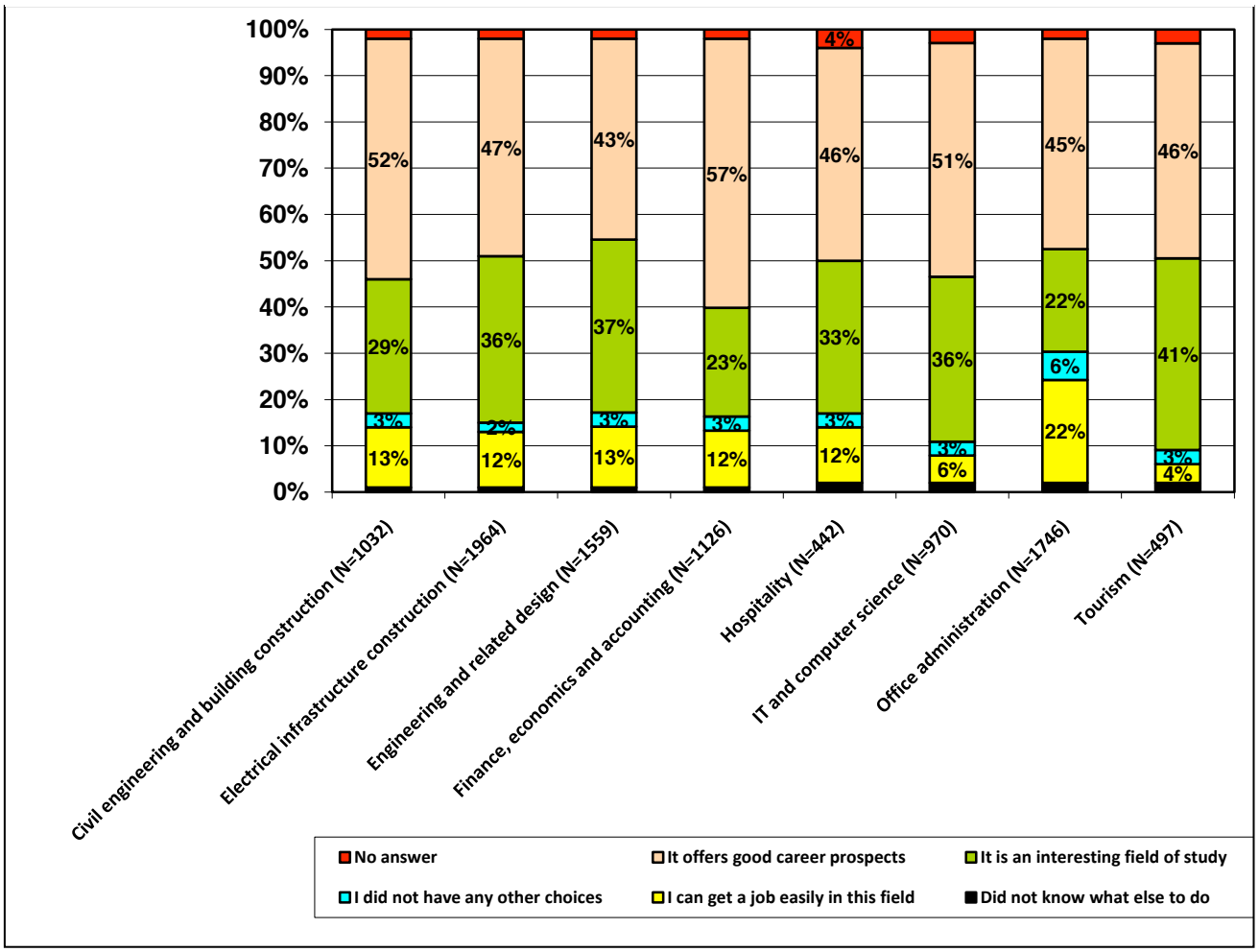
Figure 22: Reasons for choosing a particular field of study in 2003 for Limpopo



There are also noticeable differences in responses from learners in Business-orientated s fields (such as Office Administration and Finance, Economics and Accounting) and those in

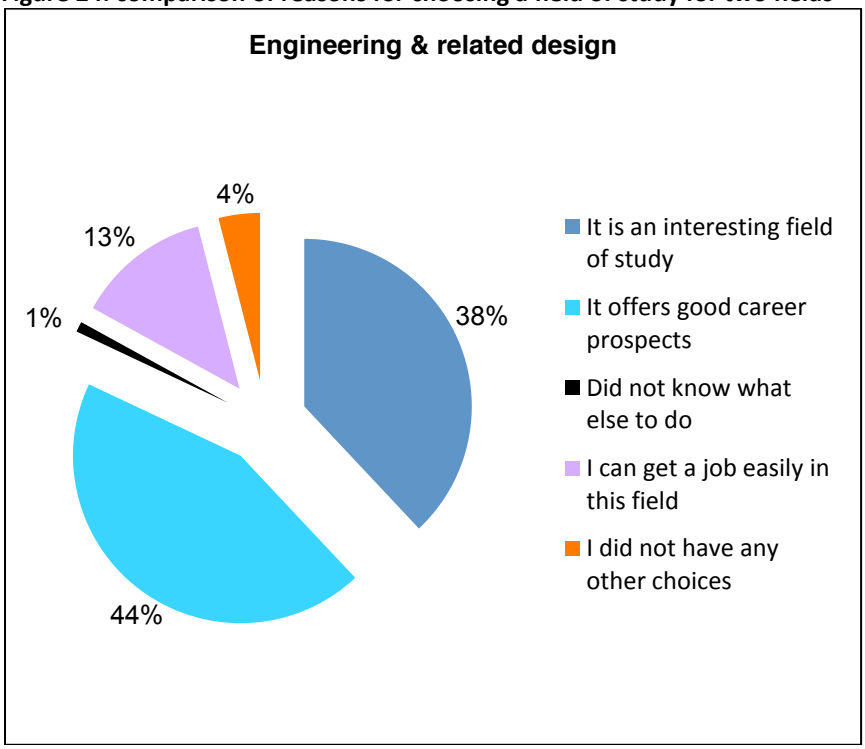
Engineering fields (Electrical Infrastructure Construction and Engineering and Related Design). Whereas Engineering learners are more concerned with following a field of study, Finance, Economics and Accounting students are more concerned with career prospects and Office Administration students are more concerned with getting a job.

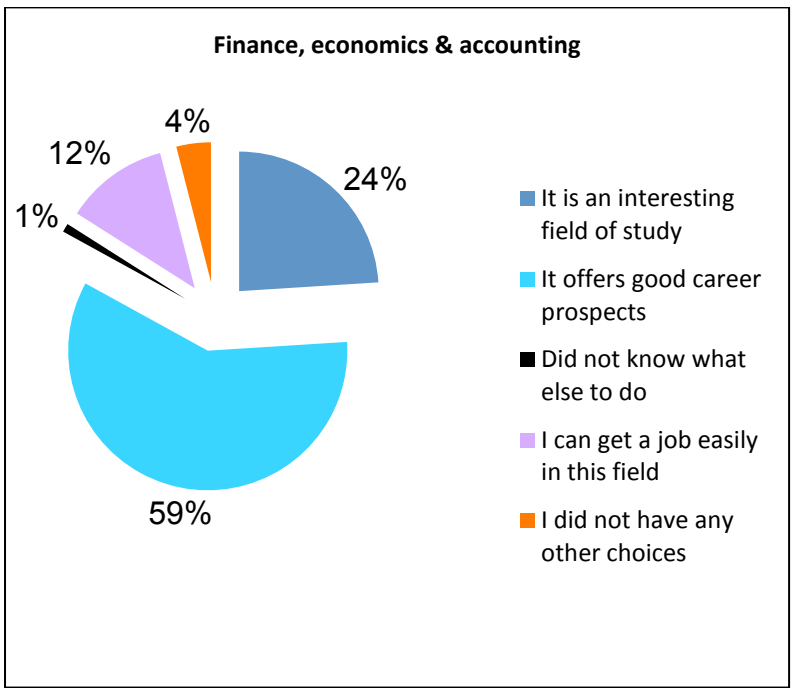
Figure 23: Reasons for choosing a particular field of study for 2009 in-college respondents by vocational field



This is illustrated more starkly in the graphs below which show the different motivations behind choice to study Engineering and Related Design and the choice to study Office Administration.

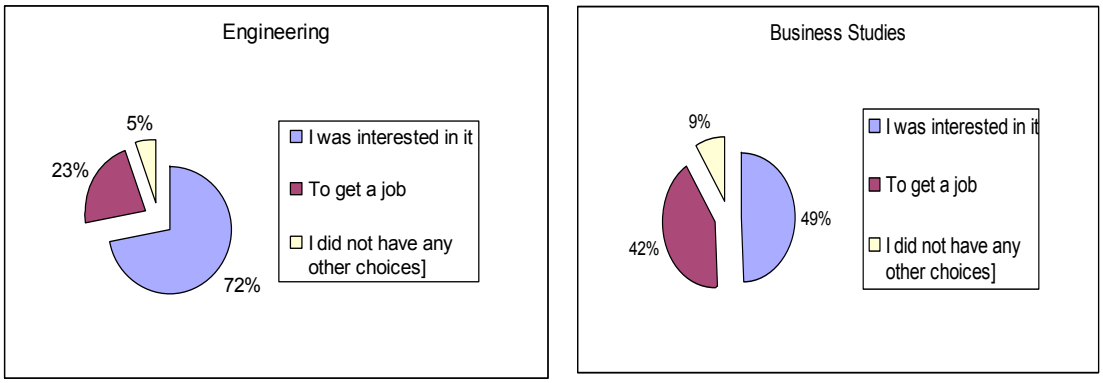
Figure 24: comparison of reasons for choosing a field of study for two fields





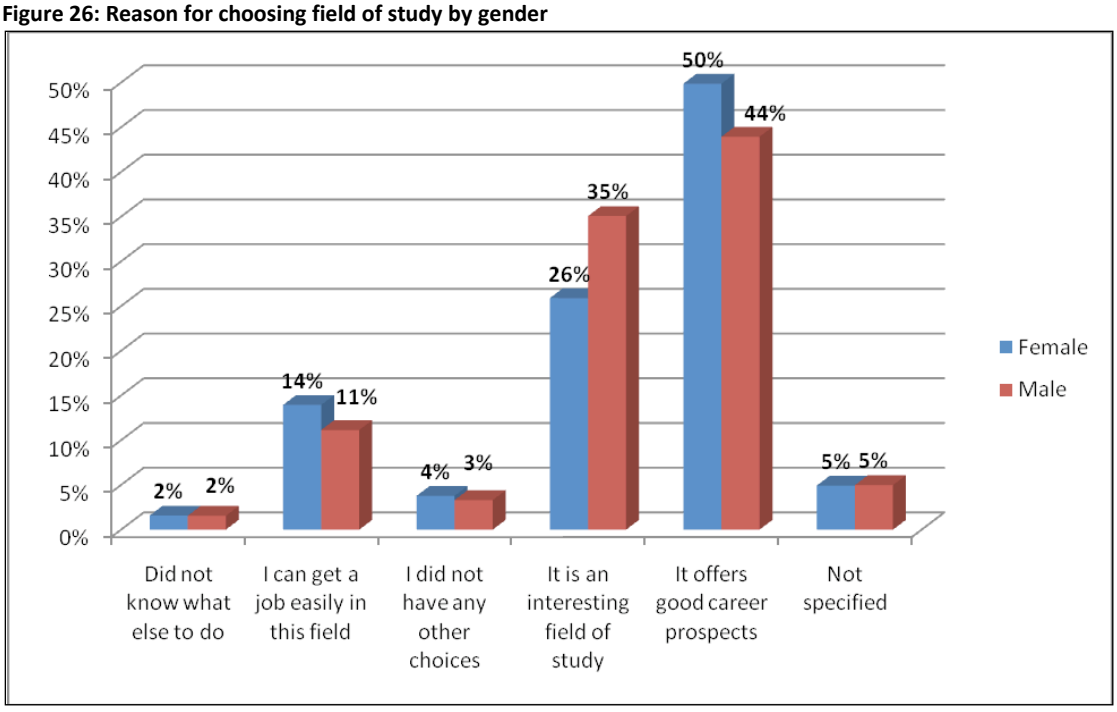
A similar result was achieved in the 2003 study, as demonstrated in the graphs below, where Engineering students were motivated by an interest in the field and Business Studies students were more concerned with finding a job.

Figure 25: Comparison of reasons for choosing a field of study for 2003 respondents for two fields



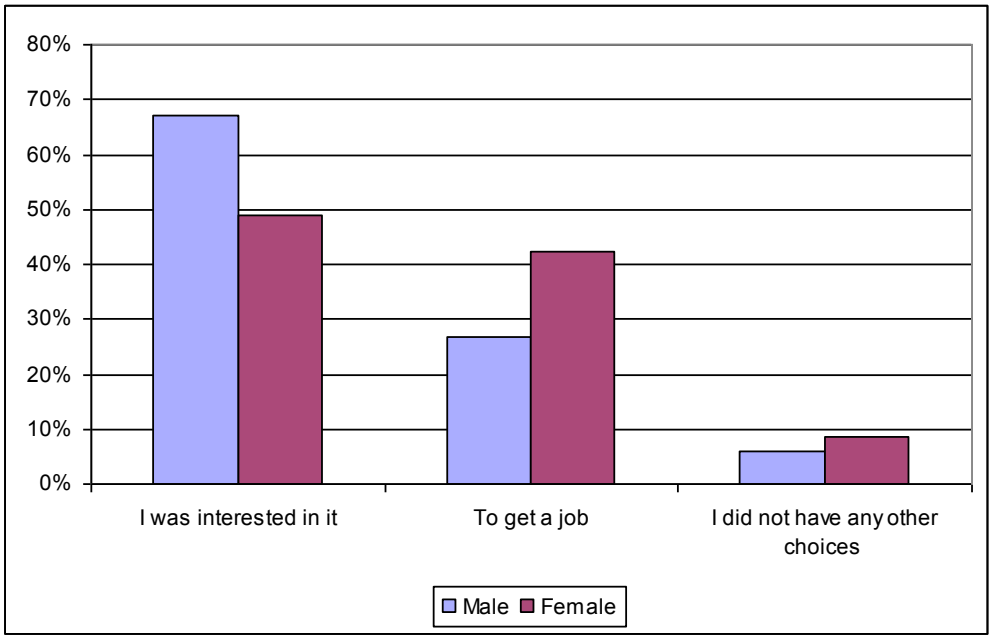
These results are also linked to gender differences, considering that 81% of females were enrolled in Business Studies and 58% of males were enrolled in Engineering. The graph below indicates the effect of gender on reasons for studying in a particular field. Males are more concerned with pursuing an interest in the field of study (more likely engineering), while females are more concerned with career prospects and a field of study that will get them a job.

Figure 26: Reason for choosing field of study by gender



Again, this follows a similar trend in 2003, where females were overwhelmingly more concerned with finding a job while males were following an interest in the field of study. It is possible that there is an expectation within the family that females need to get a job and earn money rather than follow a career. This would need to be tested further.

Figure 27: Graph Fourteen: Reasons for choosing a particular field of study in 2003 by Gender



Summary

The data appears to support the findings in the literature that young people from socio-economically deprived environments have to make choices on their own, with little information resources to guide them. While parents and family provide support, they are unable to guide the final choices. Some of the support comes from the schools, but the quality and impact of this support is difficult to measure. This raises important issues around the level of support needed by young people to make better post-school choices, and suggests that such support needs to start in the home. More targeted interventions in this regard are probably needed to empower parents to more effectively support their children in this process.

7.2 Learner Migration

In the 2003 study it had been found that a large proportion of Gauteng learners had migrated from Limpopo Province to study at FET Colleges in Gauteng. In addition, those that had migrated intended to stay in Gauteng to look for work. The issue of migration was further investigated in the 2009 in-college survey, further analysing how this manifested across different regions, and on what basis learners were choosing to migrate or not migrate for study purposes.

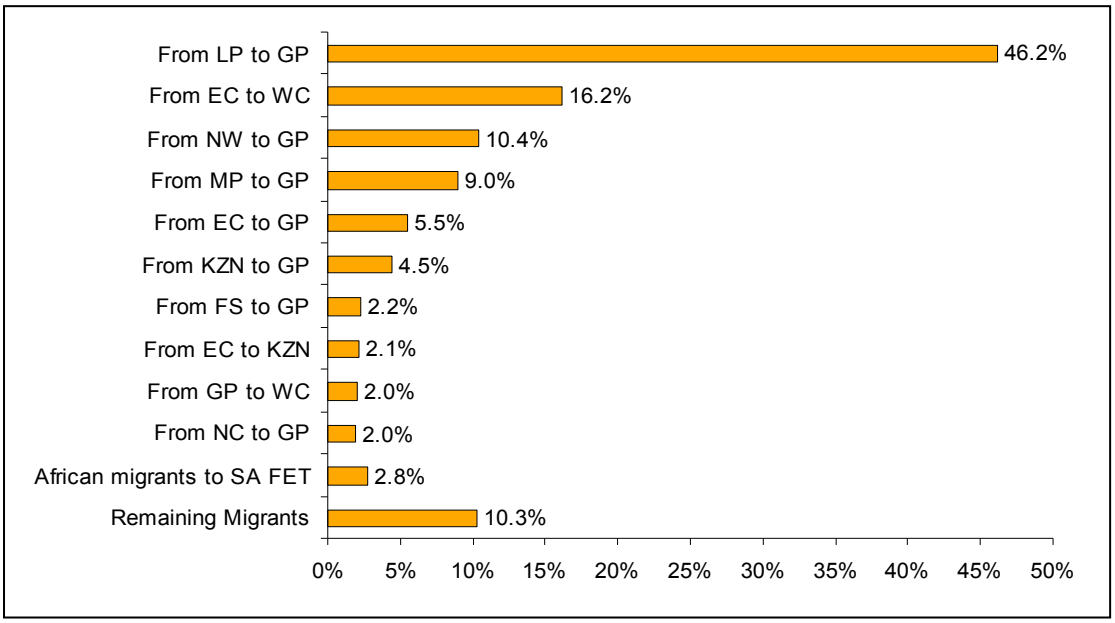
36% of the in-college respondents in 2003 reported that they had migrated from one region to another in order to study in a FET College. This percentage varied from region to region as follows:

Table Ten: Breakdown of Migration Rates per region (2003)

Region	% Migrated to this region
Gauteng	55% (of which 57% from LP)
Durban Metro	11% (of which 51% from EC)
Cape Metro	31% (of which 69% from EC)
Limpopo	6% (of which 38% from MP)

The table above presents important migration patterns. As would be expected, large numbers of learners from rural areas are being attracted to urban areas. In particular, large numbers of young people from Eastern Cape and Limpopo appear to be migrating to adjoining provinces to study. The most noticeable migration is happening between Limpopo and Gauteng, and between Eastern Cape and Western Cape, as demonstrated in Graph Sixteen below.

Figure 28: Patterns of migration of FET College across different regions (2003)



In 2009, there was evidence of less movement between provinces for study purposes, although 41% of students in Gauteng had originated from other provinces, mostly Limpopo (19%) and Mpumalanga (9%). Western Cape also had migration of 13% of students from Eastern Cape. KwaZulu-Natal and Limpopo do not experienced much migration from other provinces for study purposes. However, the data does not reflect the level of internal migration from rural to urban areas within the provinces.

Table Eleven: Breakdown of Migration Rates per region (2009)

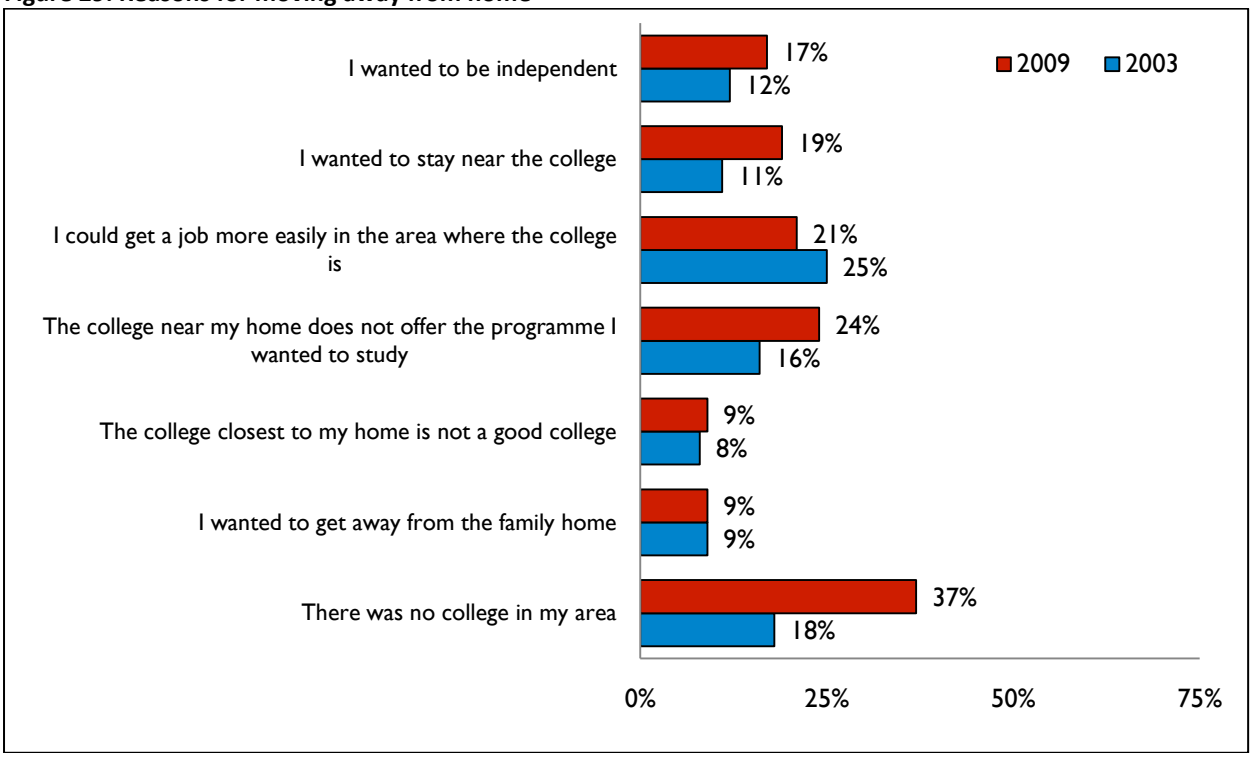
Province of origin	Province where FET college is located				Total
	Gauteng	KwaZulu-Natal	Limpopo	Western Cape	
Eastern Cape	3%	3%	0%	13%	3%
Free State	1%	0%	0%	0%	1%
Gauteng	59%	2%	1%	2%	21%
KwaZulu-Natal	3%	92%	1%	1%	10%
Limpopo	19%	0%	94%	0%	47%
Mpumalanga	9%	0%	4%	0%	5%
North West	3%	0%	0%	0%	1%
Northern Cape	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Western Cape	0%	0%	0%	79%	10%
Other country	1%	2%	1%	1%	1%
Not specified	1%	1%	9%	2%	1%
Total	100% (N=3461)	100% (N=912)	100% (N=4282)	100% (N=1230)	100% (N=9885)

Gender also does not appear to play a significant role in decisions to migrate, with equal percentages of males and females choosing to migrate.

The primary reason for migrating in 2009, as reported by the respondents, was because there was no college in the area from which they originated. Considering the wide spread of colleges across the country, with around 263 campuses nationally, it is unlikely that there was not a nearer college in their area. For Limpopo, Eastern Cape and Mpumalanga, from where the majority of migrant students originated, around 30% of respondents reported migrating because there was no college near their home.

In addition, there was a high frequency of respondents reporting that they moved from their home province because the college near their home does not offer the programme they want to study. This response, combined with the former response raise issues about the accessibility of colleges, particularly for people from more rural provinces, who then choose to migrate to urban areas to find a college. These two reasons for migrating also featured strongly in 2003, which suggests that this challenge has persisted over the last 6 years.

Figure 29: Reasons for moving away from home

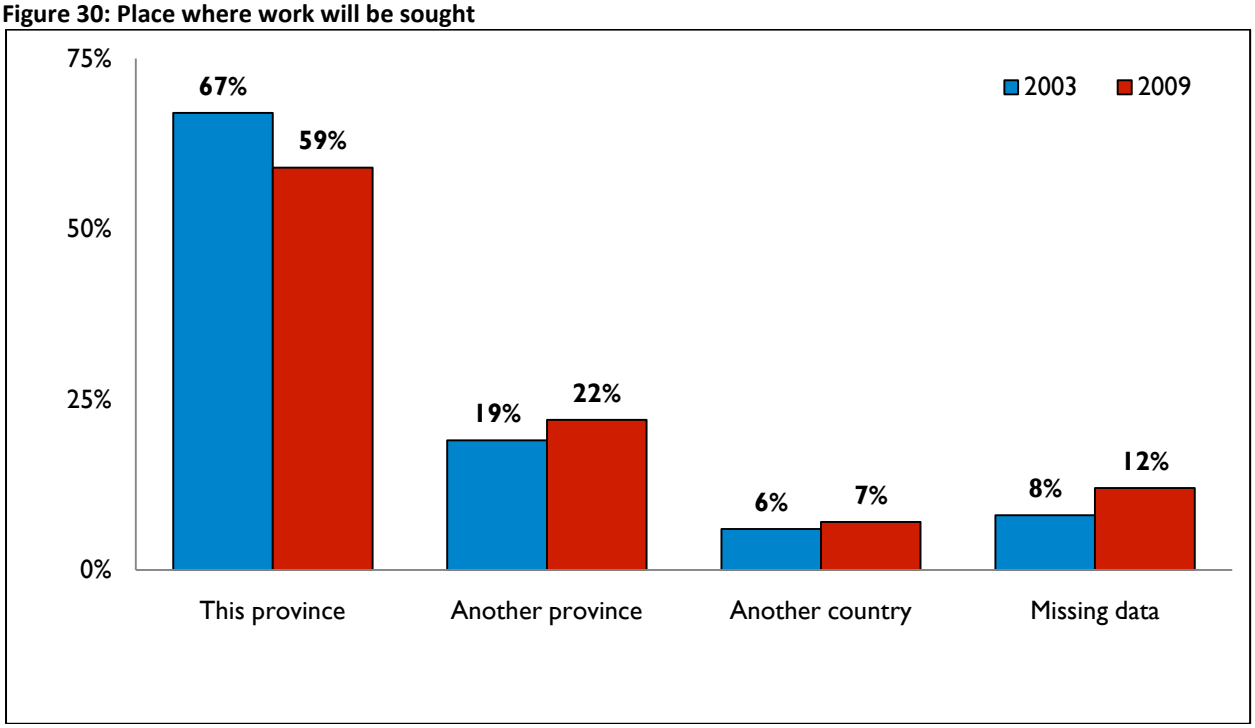


There is an important shift between 2003 and 2009 in the reasons for migrating. In 2003 the primary reason why learners chose to migrate was the belief that they could get a job more easily in the area where the college is located. While this reason persisted in 2009, it was not as prominent. This suggests that youth may have been more concerned with where they could find the right college, rather than finding a job.

However, the migration to major urban areas in anticipation of being able to find employment is of particular interest in this study. Considering the findings around the role of families in providing the necessary access to information to support decision-making, the decision to migrate to a major urban environment for these students is based on the belief that such migration will allow access to broader networks that can open employment opportunities.

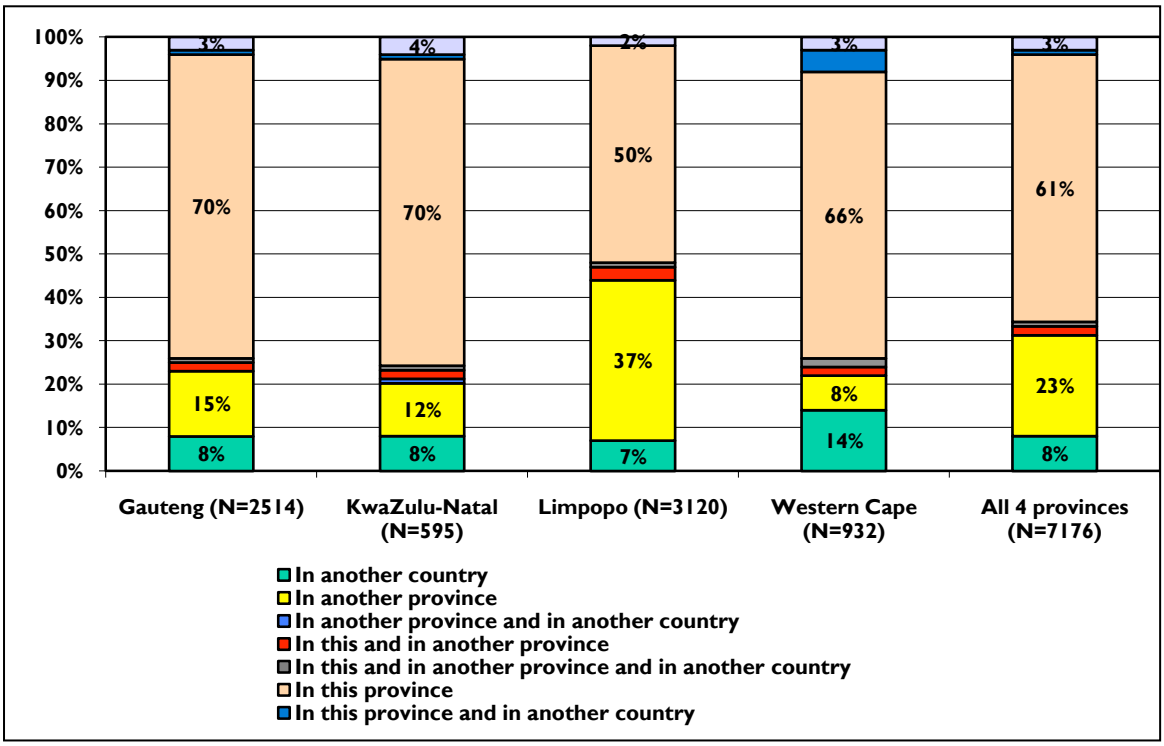
Both the 2003 and 2009 respondents were asked where they were going to look for jobs and the majority of students indicated that they would be looking in the province in which they studied.

Figure 30: Place where work will be sought



In 2009, this trend is consistent across Gauteng, KwaZulu-Natal and Western Cape. However, in Limpopo, only 50% of students were intending on looking for work within the province. It is likely that the large majority of those from Limpopo who intended looking for work outside of the province, intended doing so in Gauteng. Therefore, in addition to the large numbers of students who migrated from Limpopo to Gauteng to study, and who then stay there to look for work after they complete their studies, there are also a large number of students from Limpopo who intend going to Gauteng to look for work.

Figure 31: Place where work will be sought

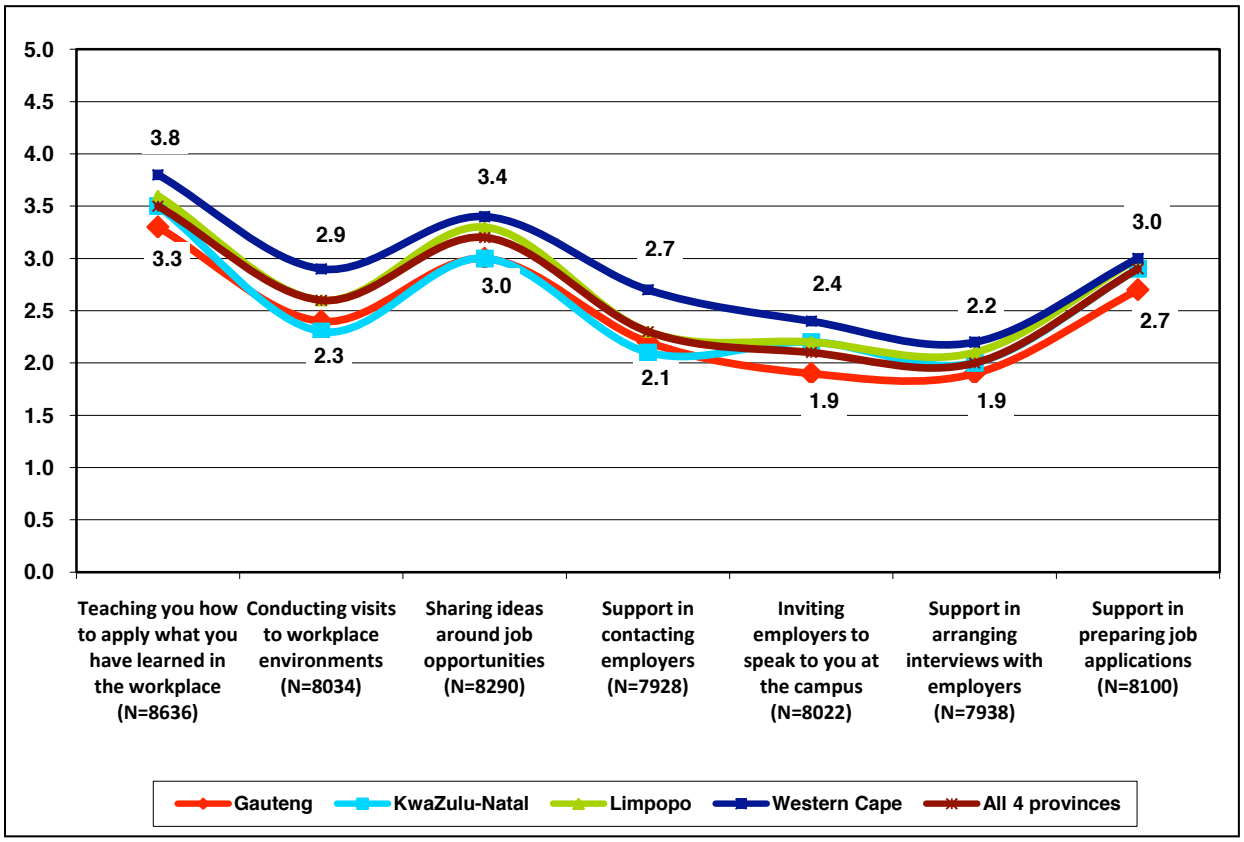


The extent to which the migration to major urban areas does in fact improve employment chances is explored under the tracer study section.

7.3 Preparing youth for the world of work

Respondents were asked to rate on a 5-point likert scale the general value provided by the college staff towards preparing them for the world of work. These ratings measured preparation in the classroom, through guidance and lifeskills teaching, as well as practical linking to the workplace either by visiting workplaces or having employers come to the college.

Figure 32: Role of College in preparing students for world of work (2009)

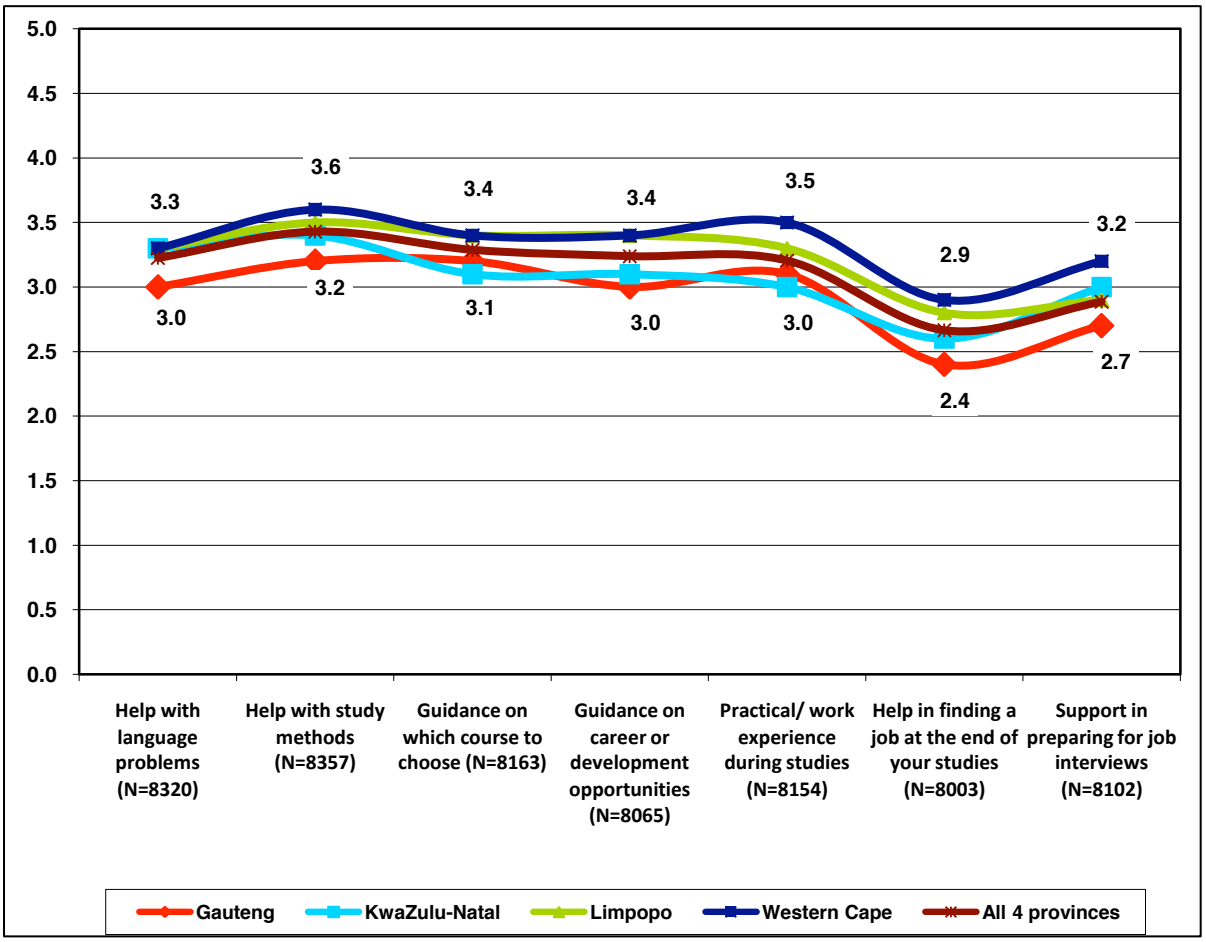


On average the colleges scored higher on support in the classroom aimed at preparing students for the labour market, by linking what the students were learning to the workplace and sharing ideas about job opportunities. However, colleges were reportedly weak in exposing students to workplaces and were reportedly particularly weak in creating opportunities for students to meet with or be interviewed by employers. The ratings on these various aspects seemed to vary across provinces, with Western Cape colleges performing the best, and Gauteng colleges generally performing worst. Limpopo colleges appear to operate along the mean, despite the fact that there is less industry or formal employment opportunities around Limpopo colleges. The poor performance of Gauteng and KwaZulu-Natal colleges, despite the high level of industrial activity around these colleges, raises important concerns around the extent to which these colleges are actively engaging with their local economic environment.

In addition, students were asked to rate the support offered by the college staff towards optimizing their experience in the college. While the colleges were rated fairly flat on all aspects of support, on the critical support feature of assisting in find work the colleges were all rated below average to poor. Yet the Gauteng colleges fared worst, particularly in assisting students in finding work, despite access to industries nearby the colleges.

Therefore, for students migrating to Gauteng in the hope of accessing better employment opportunities, they are unlikely to get support from the colleges in this regard. Considering the limitations on accessing networks if coming from a socio-economically disadvantaged environment, the colleges, particularly in Gauteng, do not appear to be contributing to enhancing access to networks that could facilitate greater employment opportunities.

Figure 33: Quality of learner support offered by colleges (2009)

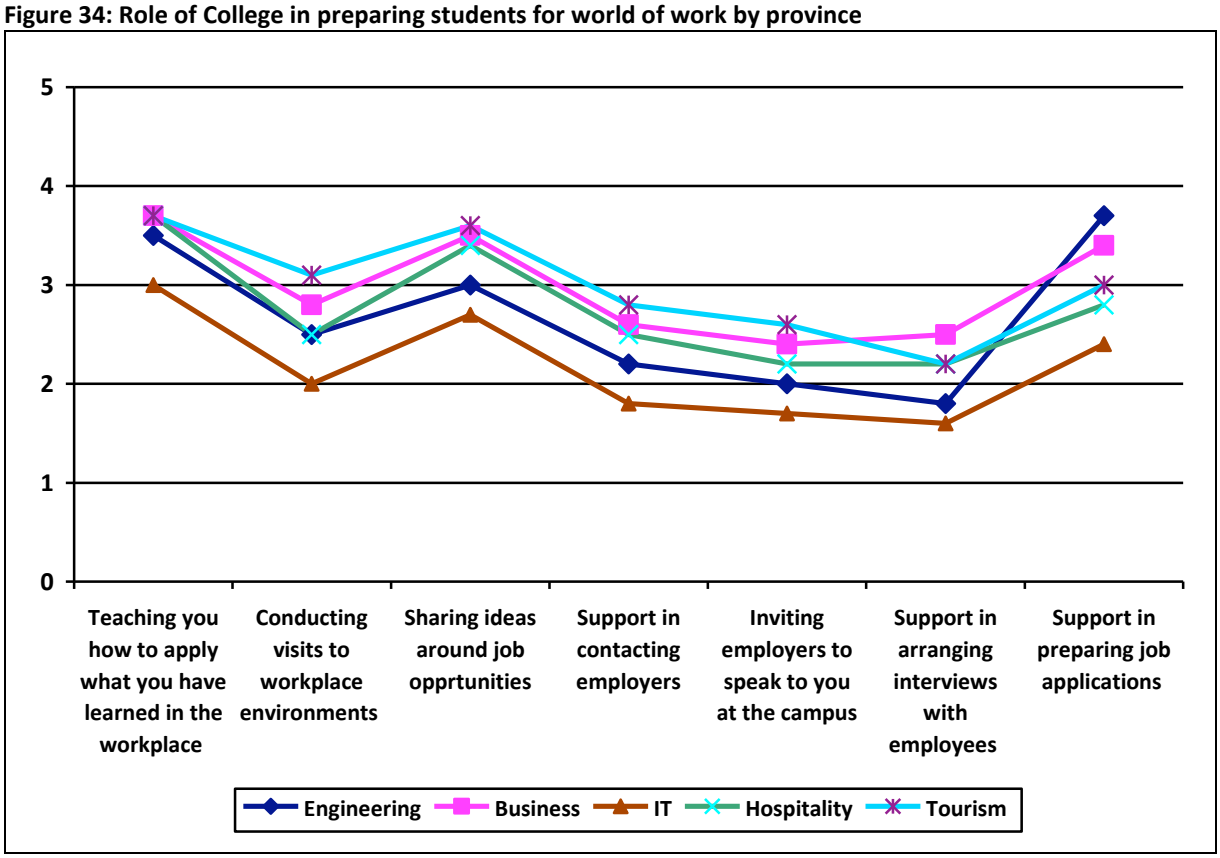


The variability across the regions suggests that more investigation is needed into the expectations of the students regarding student support. It may be that Gauteng students have different expectations from colleges regarding student support based on their understanding of the local labour market.

The graph below portrays the perceptions of particular strengths and weaknesses of FET Colleges in Gauteng across different fields. As indicated by the graph, Gauteng colleges appear to be better at linking students from service industries (business, hospitality and

tourism) than in engineering or IT. This suggests that they are finding easier to access employers in these industries.

Figure 34: Role of College in preparing students for world of work by province



Practical application of skills within a simulated workshop environment in viewed as a critical component of the NC(V) curriculum. This is viewed as an important shift from the old "Nated"-programmes, as was in place in 2003, which focused solely on theory and did not dictate access to practical application. Colleges were granted R1.9billion by The Treasury to upgrade their infrastructure and make it more conducive to high quality practical training in line with industry standards. Despite this significant investment, colleges are reportedly still not succeeding in giving students sufficient access to practical workshops, as indicated in the responses below. This has the potential to undermine the effectiveness of the qualification in preparing students for the workplace. Colleges are more successful in creating access to IT, particularly in Western Cape.

Table Twelve : Access to Resources by province (2009)

Province	Access to practical workshops		Access to computers	
	Number of responses	Average rating (1-5)	Number of responses	Average rating (1-5)
Limpopo	3692	3.2	3779	3.4
Western Cape	1120	3.5	1121	3.8

Gauteng	**2944**	**3.1**	**3059**	**3.5**
KwaZulu-Natal	**705**	**2.8**	**755**	**3.7**
All four provinces	**8461**	**3.2**	**8714**	**3.5**

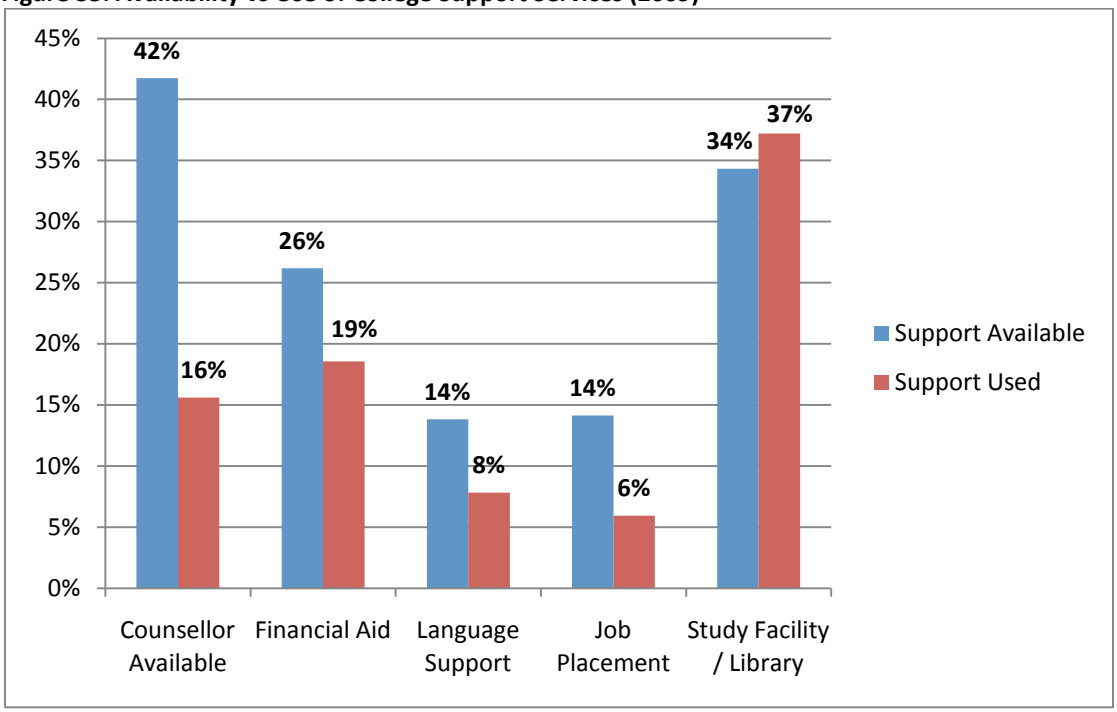
Access to workshops for engineering students averaged around 3.42 (on a scale of 1-5), with Engineering and Related Design being a particular problematic in this regard. This may be due to the capital intensive nature of engineering design and application tools. Despite the recapitalization grant from Treasury, colleges were not necessarily equipped to accommodate all learners in an engineering workshop, due to the complexity of the machinery and the number of students who can be taught in one class.

For Finance, Economics and Accounting; Office Administration and IT, the mean access to workshops sits around 3. These programmes require a different kind of workshop to those provided by the engineering or IT fields, as it requires the college to simulate an office environment where students deal with the challenges of making a business succeed. Here again colleges are reportedly not being optimally effective in achieving this.

The in-college survey also asked students to rate the availability a variety of student support services on the campuses. While many reported that there are counseling services available, very few are making use of the service. Language support and job placement were rated particularly low in terms of availability and were not being used. The lack of both of these services is a serious challenge for the sector. Students who leave the schooling system lack the language skills needed to cope with the vocational curriculum, even if they have a Grade 12 qualification. This potentially has a significant impact on their capacity to pass the curriculum. Job placement has historically been a weakness in colleges and reflects the poor ratings above on preparation for the world of work and helping students find a job at the end of their studies.

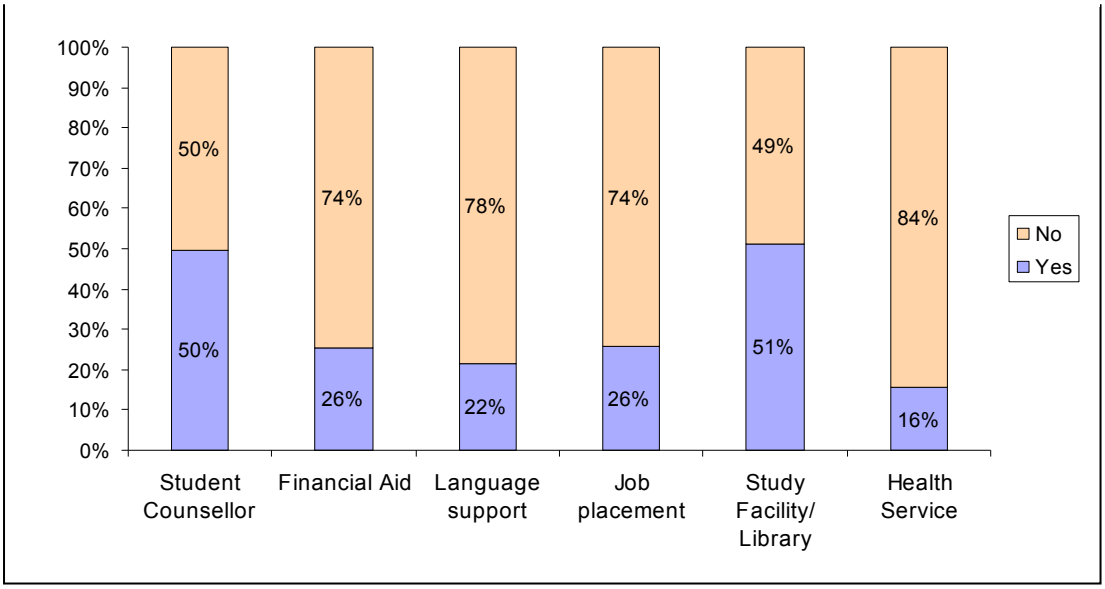
Despite 60% of students relying on bursaries to fund their studies, financial aid is not viewed by many as being available. It is not clear whether or not this refers to additional financial aid for transport or other expenses not covered by the bursary scheme. The study facility or library is the most used service in the colleges.

Figure 35: Availability vs Use of College Support Services (2009)



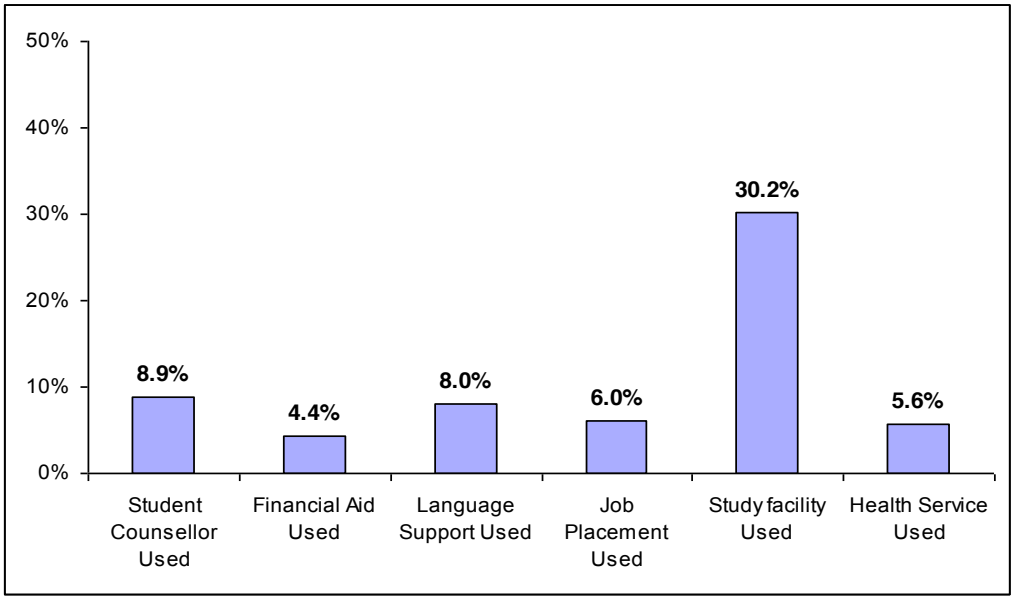
Responses to the same question in 2003 followed a similar trend, although language support and job placement services appeared to have declined over the last six years.

Figure 36: Use of College Support Services (2003)



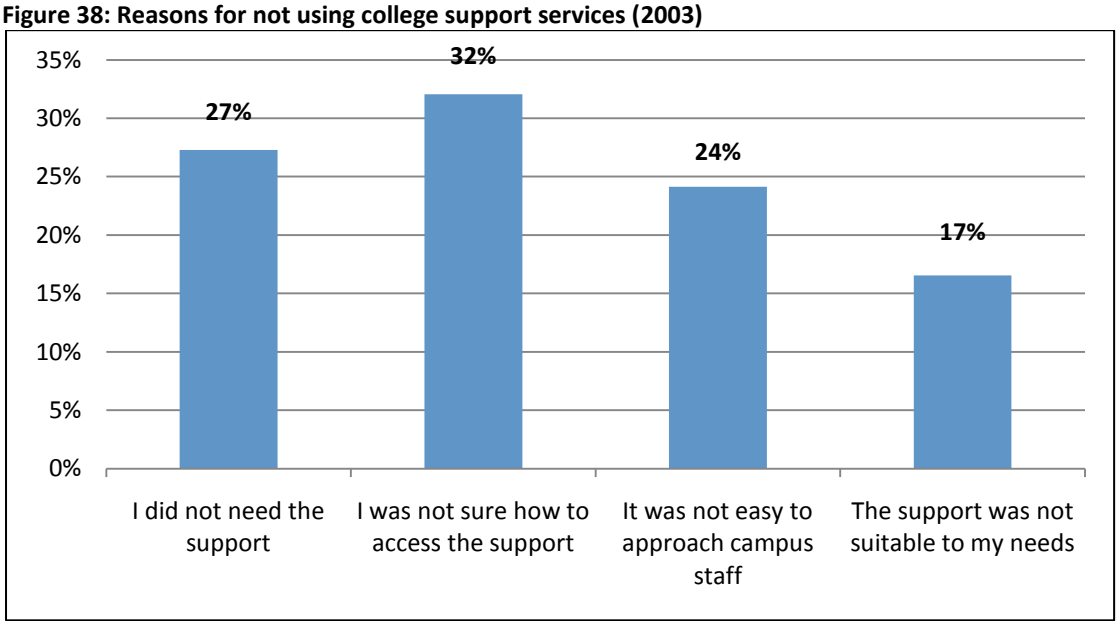
Similarly, use of the services followed a similar trend, although counsellors and financial aid seem to be more utilised services in 2009 than was the case in 2003.

Figure 37: Frequency of use of support services (2003)



The two most frequently reported reasons for not using the support services were that they were not needed or the learners were unsure how to access the support. This suggests that the support services are not being optimised, and colleges are not actively promoting the use of such services to their learners.

Figure 38: Reasons for not using college support services (2003)



The extent to which students are prepared for the workplace is also expressed in whether they had some form of access to workplace experience during the course of their studies. More than half of the respondents reported having no access to workplace experience. Where they were able to access workplace experience, it was primarily as part of a learnership or apprenticeship. This form of delivery would inevitably enable access to the workplace for extended periods of time and would place learners at an advantage. This is particularly apparent in the Western Cape.

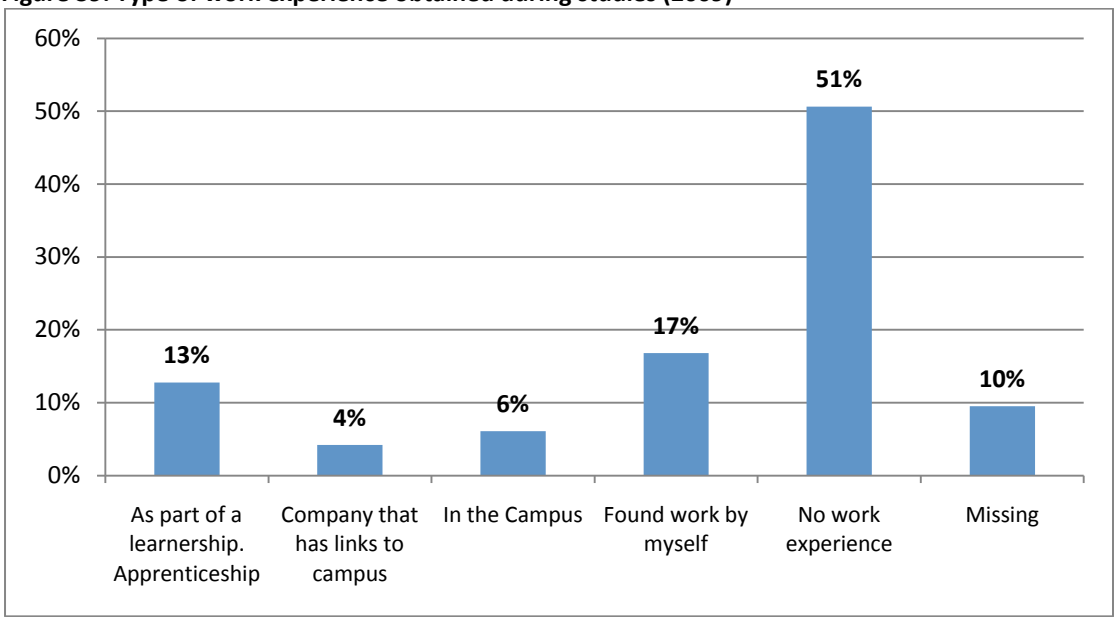
Learnerships and apprenticeships would most likely be initiated from outside the colleges, and the college would be delivering the theory, and not necessarily managing the workplace component. In only 10% of cases did learners report getting access to the workplace through college links. In Western Cape and KwaZulu-Natal students appear to be taking greater initiative in finding workplace experience than in the other two provinces

Table Thirteen: Type of work experience obtained during studies (2009)

Kind of experience	% of valid total who selected the experience listed				
	Gauteng	KwaZulu-Natal	Limpopo	Western Cape	All 4 provinces
Part of a learnership/ apprenticeship	21%	19%	21%	31%	22%
Through a company with college links	9%	8%	11%	9%	10%
I found a company that took me in for work experience	13%	17%	13%	19%	14%
No work experience	57%	60%	58%	41%	56%
Other	7%	3%	6%	8%	6%
Valid total	2910	711	3659	1078	8358
Did not complete question	551	201	623	152	1527
Grand total	3461	912	4282	1230	9885

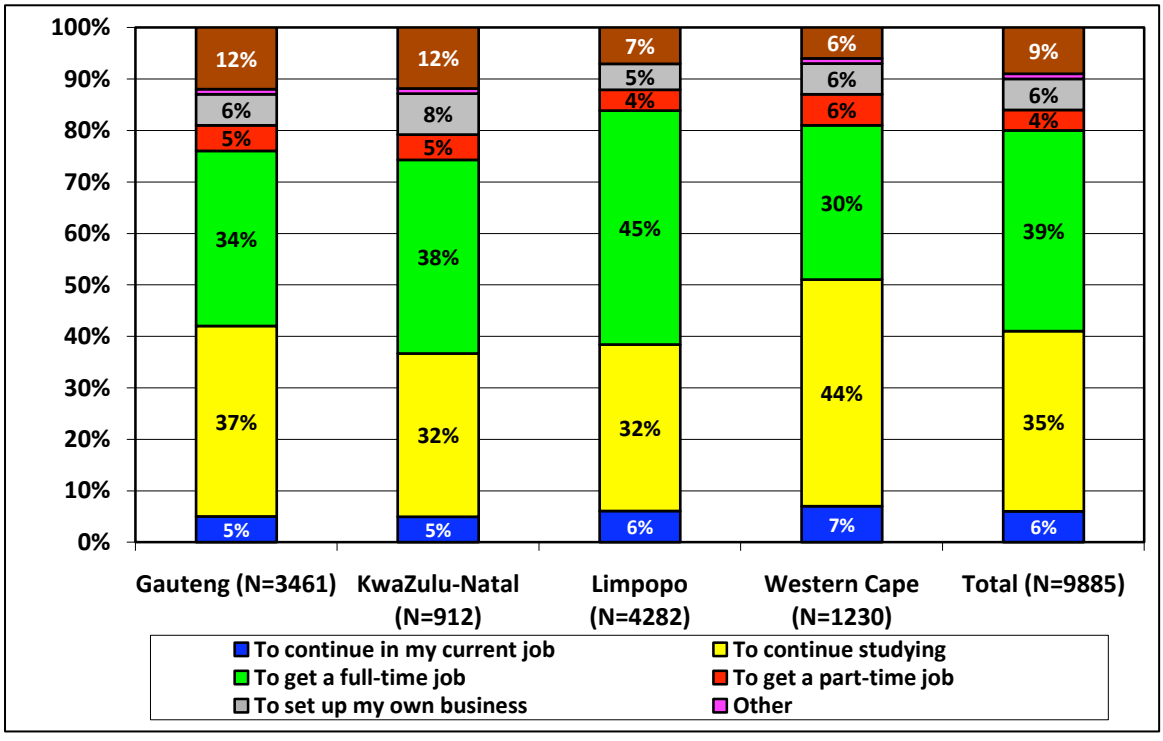
Learnerships and apprenticeships also featured relatively strongly in 2003, but it would seem that there has been a substantial increase in learnership/apprenticeship activity since then. There also appears to have been an increase in the availability of workplace experience through college links, with only 4% having such access in 2003. However, as with 2003, individual initiative appears to be a more successful way to get workplace experience than relying on the college. Obviously, this would negatively affect students who do not have access to workplaces because of weak networks or because of their locality.

Figure 39: Type of work experience obtained during studies (2009)



The introduction of learnerships and the recent reintroduction of apprenticeships seems to have provided a route for entry into the workplace for FET College students, particularly those in technical trades. The increasing number of students who claim to have been part of a learnership or apprenticeship should be in an advantageous position when completing studies.

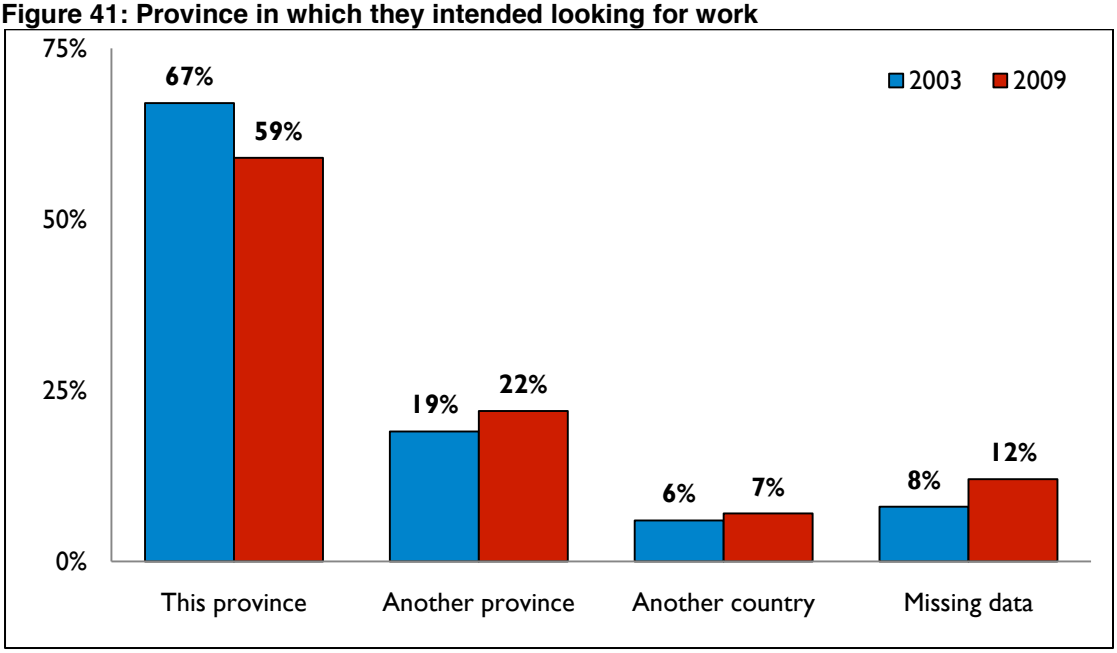
Figure 40: Plans for the following year by province (2009)



Respondents were split in terms of what they were planning to do after completing their NC(V) qualification. In total, 39% aimed to get a full-time job while 35% aimed to continue studying. The Western Cape differed substantially from the other three provinces, in that 44% of respondents intended studying further. This is most likely due to the fact that the students are younger and do not have a Grade 12 qualification. These students would be more inclined to study further than those who have a Grade 12 qualification and have additionally completed a NC(V) qualification.

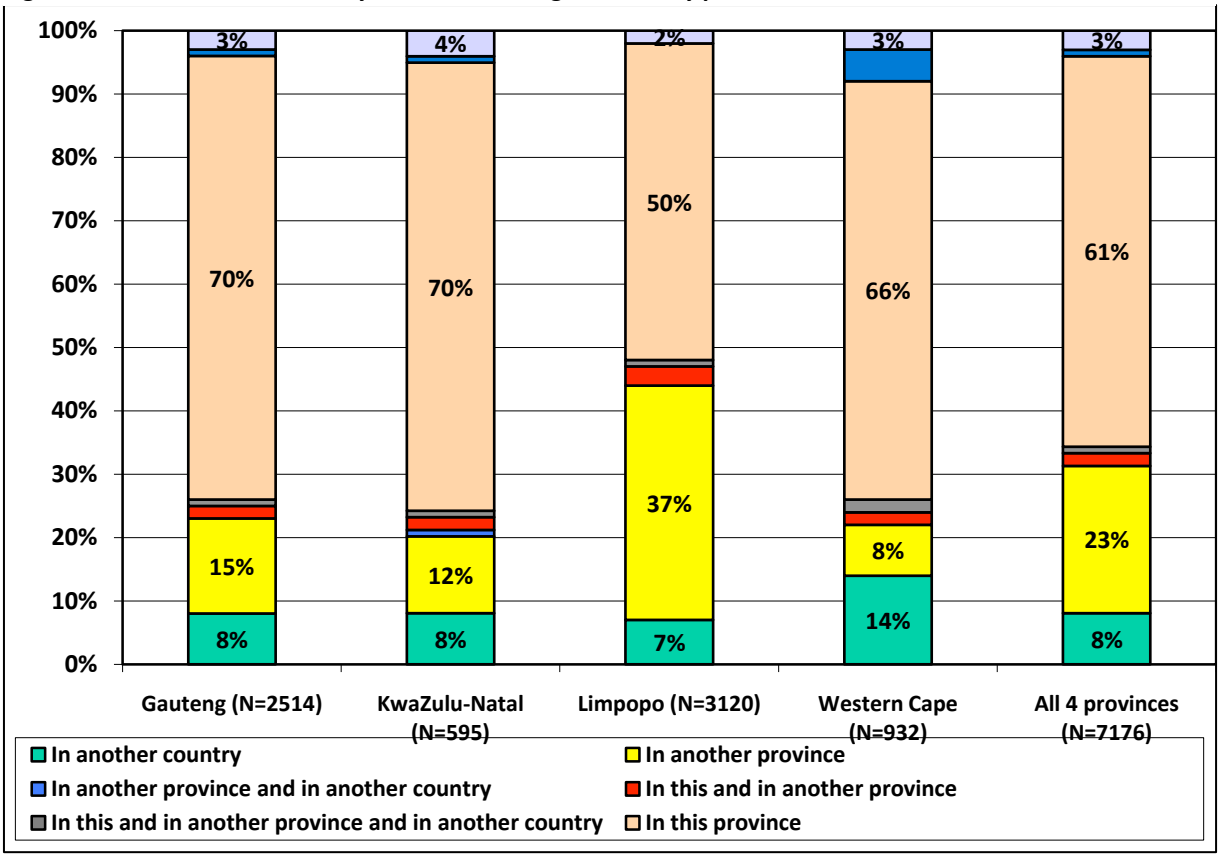
However, the large number of respondents across the board who indicated they would be studying further suggests that there is further commitment to developing their skills, rather than moving into work. Considering that the NC(V) is a three-year qualification, this commitment to study further is important for career development.

Figure 41: Province in which they intended looking for work



For those that were looking to get a job, the majority were intending to find work in the province in which they had studied. Therefore the large numbers of respondents who had migrated to a metropolitan area intended staying there to find work, rather than returning to their home province.

Figure 42: Province in which they intended looking for work by province



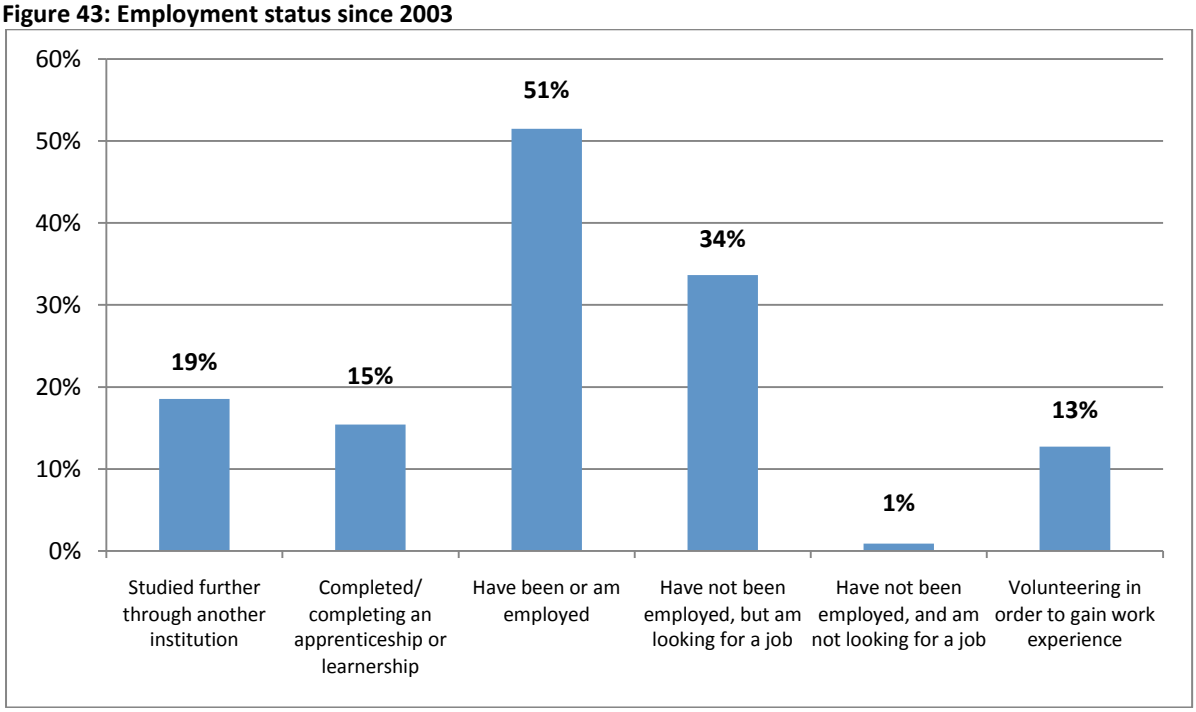
In addition, however, more Limpopo respondents intended looking for a job in another province, most likely Gauteng. Therefore, in addition to the students who were migrating to Gauteng to study and then remaining there to find work, large numbers also intended moving to Gauteng from Limpopo to look for work after their studies. This suggests increasing pressure on the Gauteng labour market to cope with the influx of young people looking for work.

8. Findings from the Tracer Study

8.1 Employment Status

Respondents were asked to report on what they had done since leaving the FET College in which they were enrolled in 2003. Just over half of the students reported that they had been employed and/or were still employed during the 6-year period. One third of respondents reported not having been in employment, while a smaller portion reported they had been volunteering in order to gain experience. While 34% of respondents reported studying further after 2003 or completing a learnership or apprenticeship, only 37% of these went onto find employment.

Figure 43: Employment status since 2003



With respect to employment status in 2009, 585 or 48% reported being employed by a company or organization while a further 104 reported either being self-employed or helping someone else in their small business. Considering that only 51% report having been employed during the six month period, it is not clear if some of the respondents who claimed to have been employed at the end of 2009 also included those that were in apprenticeships and/or learnerships and/or volunteering.

Table Fourteen: Employment Status as of November 2009

Employment Status	N	%
Employed by company/ organisation*	585	48%
Work for yourself	50	4%
Assist someone else in his/her small business	54	4%

There seemed to be no noticeable difference in employment between respondents who had studied business studies and those that studied engineering with respect to getting employment. In both cases around half of the respondents reported being in employment at some time during the six year period.

Table Fifteen: Employment Status as of November 2009 by field of study

Have been / am employed by field of study		
Field of Study	**N**	**%**
Business Studies	205	50%
Engineering Studies	397	52%

There was a higher frequency of males being employed than females, as illustrated in the table below. The significance of this difference is tested under the section "Factors impacting on employment outcomes" below.

Table Sixteen: Employment Status as of November 2009 by gender

Have been / am employed by gender		
Male	367	55%
Female	257	48%
Total	**624**	

Most of the respondents had changed jobs once or twice in the 6 year period. When asked why they had changed jobs, more than one-third stated that they had moved jobs because they had been in a temporary or part-time job and therefore are more likely to be mobile.

Table Seventeen: Number of time have changed jobs

How many times changed jobs since 2003	
0	98
1	172
2	221
3	122
4	45
5	21
6	4

The other prominent reason for changing jobs was due to the respondents having found a better paying job. However, only 12% had changed jobs because they found a job more related to their qualification and few were able to access promotions.

Table Eighteen: Reasons why changed job

Why changed jobs?	
It was a temporary/part-time job only	36%
I was promoted	3%
I found a better paying job	21%
I found a job that better suited my qualifications	12%
The company I worked for closed/moved	8%
I started studying	6%
Family responsibilities	6%
I was retrenched	6%

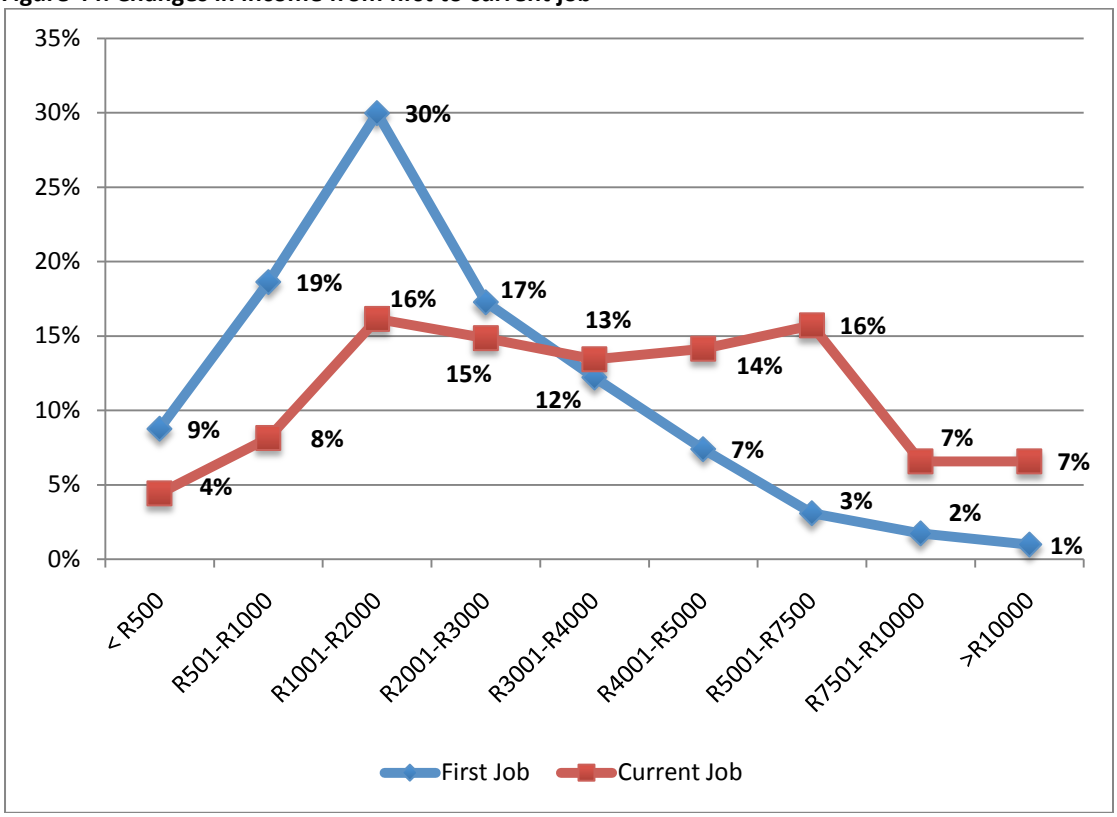
However, as of 2009, only 35% of those still employed were employed in a position that was related to what they studied.

Table Nineteen: Appropriateness of employment to studies

Appropriateness of employment to studies	
yes	35%
no	65%

Despite this, however, there has been a general increase in earnings over the 6 year period. Most respondents earned in the R501 to R3000 range in their first job. However, with their current jobs, as of 2009, the number of respondents who were earning above R4000 had increased from 13% to 44%. It is still concerning, though, that more than half of the respondents that were employed were still earning below R4000 per month five to six years after completing their college qualification.

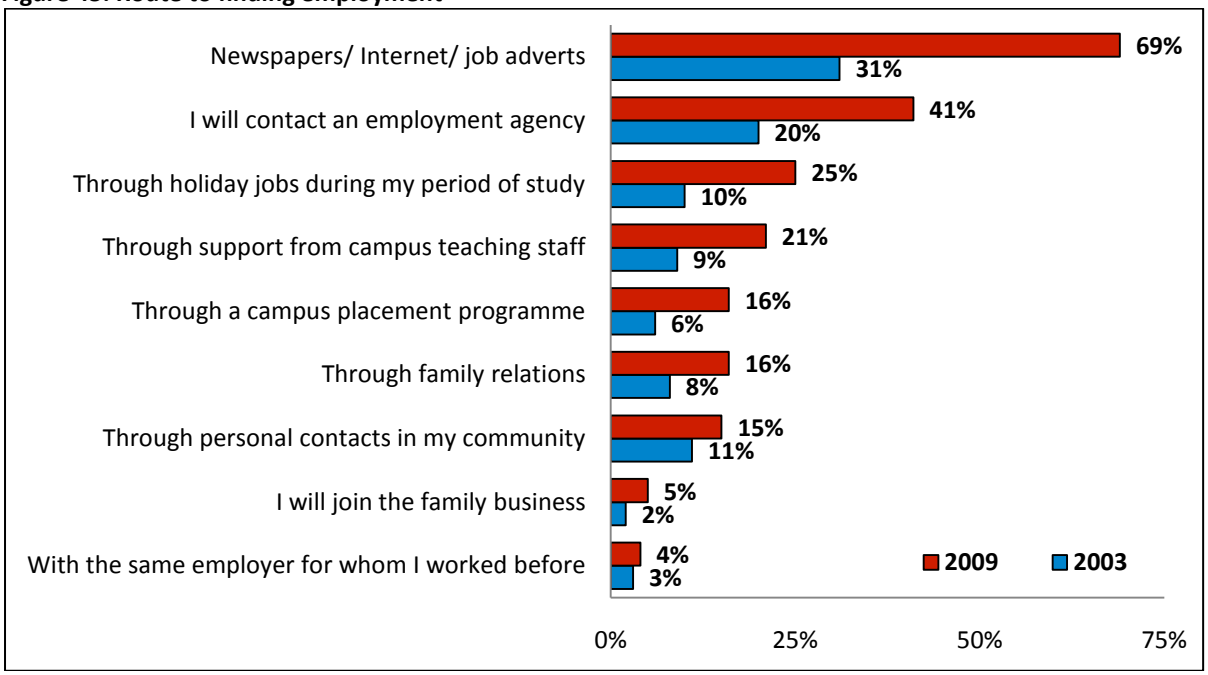
Figure 44: Changes in income from first to current job



8.2 Routes to Employment

When completing the in-college surveys, those students who intended looking for employment were asked how they intended accomplishing this. Both cohorts reported advertising (both electronic and in published media) and employment agencies as the predominant mechanisms for finding work. Holiday jobs were viewed as an important route, particularly in 2009, as was support from campus staff. While personal contacts were rated highly in 2003, this was lower in 2009, probably because of the larger contingent of Limpopo students in 2009 (see below). Family relations also did not feature strongly in either group.

Figure 45: Route to finding employment



As is illustrated in the table below, there is some discrepancy across provinces with respect to preferred routes to finding employment. While advertising and employment agencies predominate in all cases, family relations and holiday jobs appear to play a more important role in the Western Cape. In Limpopo, students view both family relations and personal contacts as having little value as a route to employment, relative to other provinces, while campus staff is rated more highly. Advertising is rated particularly highly in Limpopo as a route to employment.

Table Twenty: How intended to find first job, by province

Approach	% of valid total who selected the plan listed				
	Gauteng	KwaZulu-Natal	Limpopo	Western Cape	All 4 provinces
I will contact an employment agency	42%	32%	42%	43%	41%
Through family relations	17%	16%	11%	30%	16%
I will join the family business	5%	6%	4%	9%	5%
Through personal contacts in my community	17%	14%	11%	21%	15%
Through holiday jobs during my period of study	28%	27%	21%	32%	25%
With the same employer for whom I worked before	4%	4%	3%	6%	4%

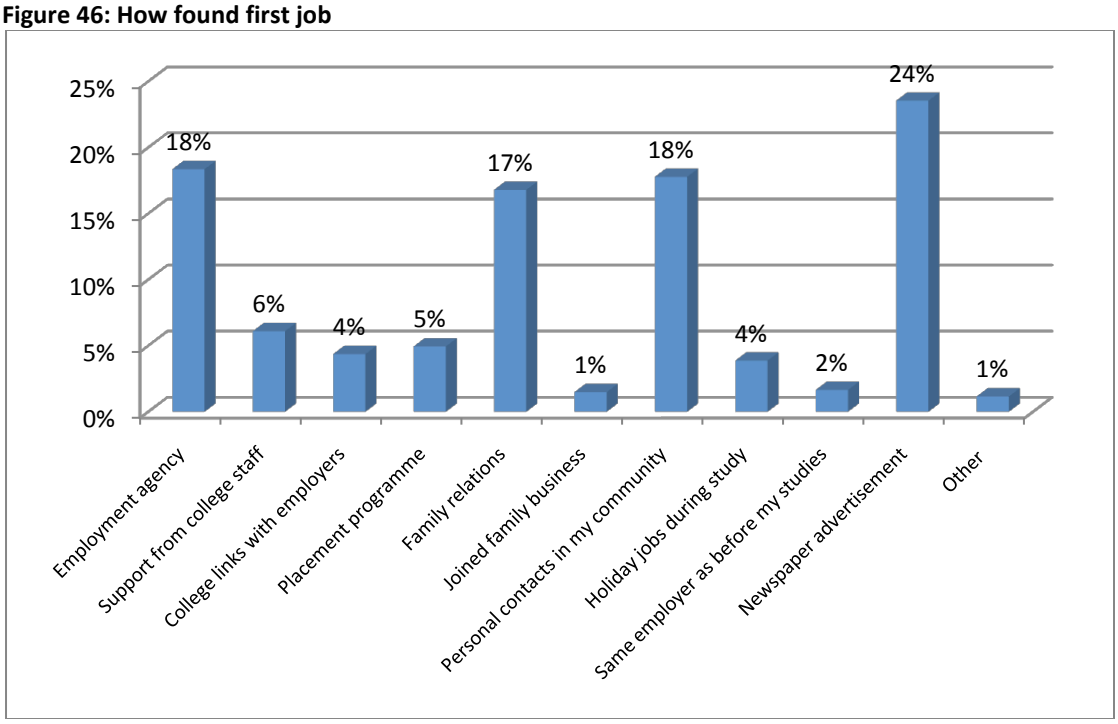
Approach	% of valid total who selected the plan listed				
	Gauteng	KwaZulu-Natal	Limpopo	Western Cape	All 4 provinces
Through support from campus teaching staff	21%	19%	23%	20%	21%
Through a campus placement programme	17%	13%	16%	16%	16%
Newspapers/ Internet/ job adverts	67%	68%	74%	55%	69%
Valid total	2420	573	3045	894	6932
Did not complete question	94	22	75	38	229
Grand total	2514	595	3120	932	7161

When asked which route they had used in finding their first job, four routes emerged as important:

- Advertising and employment agencies were confirmed as the most important routes to finding their first job
- Personal contacts and family relations accounted for 35% of the responses, suggesting they play a more important role than the students anticipated.

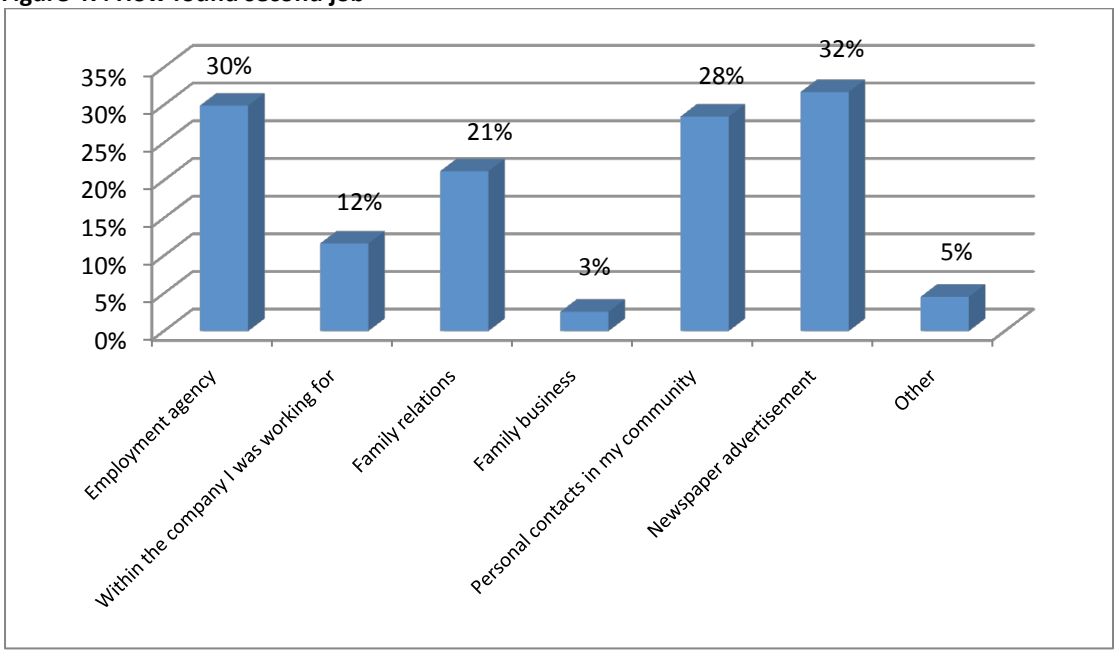
Holiday jobs and support from college staff did not feature as strongly as had been anticipated.

Figure 46: How found first job



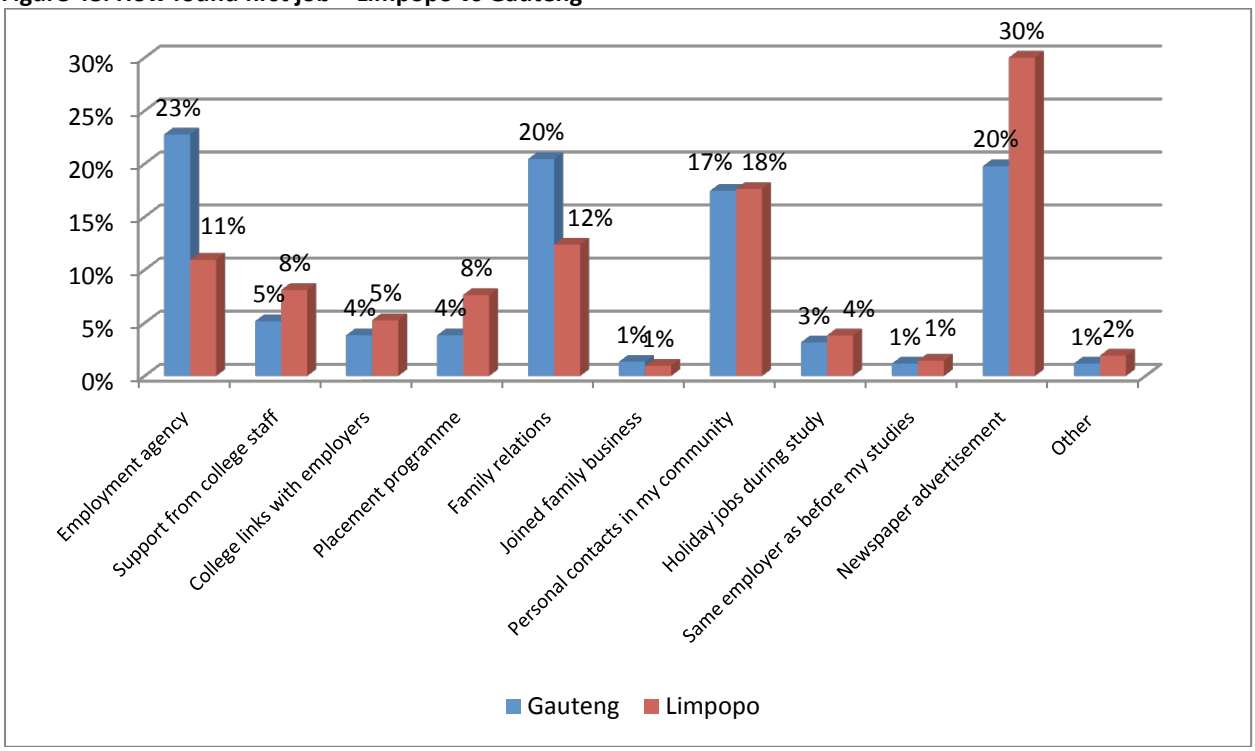
Similarly, employment agencies and advertising continue to play a prominent role in finding their second job (up to 62% of respondents reported using these routes in finding their second job), while personal contacts appear to have become more important than family relations. Only in very few cases did the respondents find their second job within the company in which they had been working.

Figure 47: How found second job



As indicated in the graph below, employment agencies feature more strongly in Gauteng while advertising features strongly in Limpopo. Considering the dense industry in Gauteng, it is understandable that employment agencies would be more active there, while Limpopo youth would have less access to these services and so would have to rely on newspapers and the internet to find jobs.

Figure 48: How found first job – Limpopo vs Gauteng



8.3 Factors that impact on employment outcomes

The findings around employment suggest that around 50% have been in some form of employment over the 6-year period, but of those who are in employment, only 35% are in employment which is related to what they studied.

The analysis thus far suggests the following factors relating to finding employment:

- The majority of students have achieved a Grade 12 qualification prior to entering into the college, suggesting that they enter with a foundation of cognitive skills.
- While students are likely to move to major urban areas to study, they are not likely to move back to less urban areas to find employment
- Colleges are providing little assistance to students in gaining exposure or access to the workplace
- There is a higher frequency of employment amongst males than females, while there does not seem to be any difference between the two fields of study with respect to employment
- Advertising and employment agencies are the routes of choice to finding employment, but personal contacts and family relationships are playing and equally important role in finding employment.

In order to assess the relative effect of these different factors on employment outcomes was conducted, using three dependent variables:

- Employed/not employed at time of study
- Employed in a relevant occupation to what was studied

- Employed in part-time or full-time employment

In order to conduct this analysis the factors above are measured through the following variables:

- Gender
- Vocational Field of study
- Geographic location where studied
- Mobility (did they move away from home to study elsewhere)
- Work experience during studies
- Highest Post-school qualification

In the first instance, a chi-square test was conducted for each independent variable against the dependent variable. The chi-square test is a non-parametric test of statistical significance for use with categorical variables. The purpose of the chi-square is to test the null hypothesis that the two variables being compared are not related. It aims to establish whether sufficiently dependent to suggest that the one is contingent on the other, and thereby reject the null hypothesis.

Secondly, these independent variables, with some additional variables, were then used to perform a regression analysis, in order to assess whether the statistical relationships demonstrated through the chi-square test still holds true when controlling for other related variables. Through using variables that appear to be related, based on the hypothesis for the study, the analysis assists in building a model of factors contributing to employability.

Dependent variable 1: employed/ not employed

When measured against the first dependent variable, the following results emerged.

Table Twenty-one: Significant variables – dependent variable 1

Variable	Significant
Gender	✓
Vocational Field	✓
Work experience during studies	×
Mobility	×
Province in which studies	✓
Highest school qualification	✓

These results suggest that there is a strong and significant relationship between each of the four variables (gender, vocational field, province and highest school qualification) and the dependent variable. This suggests that being employed is contingent on each of these variables independently.

When controlling for the three core variables – vocational field of study, province and gender, the following results emerge.

Table Twenty-one: Regression results – dependent variable 1

Employed	Odds Ratio	Std. Err.	Z	P>z	[95% Conf. Interval]	
Gender-Male	**2.020251**	**0.2733657**	**5.2**	**0.000**	**1.549626**	**2.633806**
Vocational training-Engineering	0.9640147	0.1353137	-0.26	0.794	0.732158	1.269294
Province of qualification-Gauteng	**1.782673**	**0.2813176**	**3.66**	**0.000**	**1.308418**	**2.428829**
Province of qualification-KZN	**1.758146**	**0.3686395**	**2.69**	**0.007**	**1.165679**	**2.651738**
Province of qualification-WC	**2.414972**	**0.5747247**	**3.7**	**0.000**	**1.514746**	**3.85021**

The table above indicates significant results for both gender and province, but not for field of study. These results can be expressed as follows:

Gender

The model shows that after controlling for the other two factors included in the model that is field of study and province where they studied, males are twice (OR 2.02) more likely to be employed compared to their female counterparts.

Province of qualification

All the provinces were significantly different from Limpopo. Those who studied in Western Cape were 2.4(OR 2.41) times more likely to be employed compared to those who studied in Limpopo. Whereas for those who studied in Gauteng, the odds of being employed increased by 78% (1.78%) compared to respondents from Limpopo and for KZN, the odds increased by 76% (OR 1.76).

When all six independent variables outlined above are included in the regression, the following results emerge.

Table Twenty-two: Built regression results – dependent variable 1

Employed	Odds Ratio	Std. Err.	z	P>z	[95% Conf. Interval]	
Gender-Male	**1.867853**	**0.26813**	**4.35**	**0.000****	**1.409785**	**2.474757**
Vocational training-Engineering	1.091239	0.1633141	0.58	0.560	0.813823	1.463222
Province of qualification-Gauteng	**2.22849**	**0.4100587**	**4.35**	**0.000****	**1.553758**	**3.196231**
Province of qualification-KZN	**1.769813**	**0.3882569**	**2.6**	**0.009****	**1.151312**	**2.720582**
Province of qualification-WC	**2.649271**	**0.6952359**	**3.71**	**0.000****	**1.58398**	**4.431016**
Work experience-Had some form of work experience	1.020613	0.1380696	0.15	0.880	0.782906	1.330493
Mobility-Did not move from my province	**1.607442**	**0.2491555**	**3.06**	**0.002****	**1.186309**	**2.178074**
Highest school qualification-Grade 9	2.534879	2.649596	0.89	0.374	0.326764	19.66438
Highest school qualification-Grade 10	1.714642	1.759518	0.53	0.599	0.229453	12.81307
Highest school qualification-Grade 11	1.983426	2.023059	0.67	0.502	0.268662	14.64288
Highest school qualification-Grade 12	3.570343	3.902218	1.16	0.244	0.419167	30.41118

The regression analysis indicates that, controlling for the other factors, highest school qualification and vocational field had no significant effect on employability.

The following variables did provide a statistically significant result.

Gender
The model shows that after controlling for the other five factors included in the model, males are almost twice (OR 1.87) more likely to be employed compared to their female counterparts.

Province of qualification
All the provinces were significantly different from Limpopo. Those who studied in Western Cape were 2.6(OR 2.64) times more likely to be employed compared to those who studied in Limpopo. Those who studied in Gauteng were 2.2(OR 2.23) times more likely to be employed compared to those who studied in Limpopo. Whereas for those who studied in KZN, the odds of being employed increased by 77%(1.77%) compared to respondents from Limpopo

Mobility between provinces
Those who have not moved between provinces had an increased odds of 61%(OR 1.61) of being employed compared to those respondents who moved from their home province.

This latter finding suggests that moving to a major urban area does not significantly increase one's chances of finding employment.

Dependent variable 2: CURRENT employment is appropriate to job or not

The same six variables were measured against the second variable, being whether the individual was employed in a job that was appropriate to what they studied.

Table Twenty-Three: Significant variable – dependent variable 2

Variable	Significant
Gender	×
Vocational Field	×
Work experience during studies	✓
Mobility	×
Province in which studied	✓
Highest school qualification	✓

Based on the analysis above the data suggests that the employment in a job appropriate to qualifications is contingent on having work experience during studies, province in which they studied and highest school qualification.

When controlling for gender, province of qualification and field of study, the following results emerges.

Table Twenty-four: Regression results – dependent variable 2

Current job appropriate to qualifications	Odds Ratio	Std. Err.	Z	P>z	[95% Conf. Interval]	
Gender-Male	1.070417	0.2461352	0.3	0.767	0.682063	1.679891

Province of qualification-Gauteng	0.7483852	0.2087282	-1.04	0.299	0.433233	1.292794
Province of qualification-KZN	**0.4724967**	**0.1791491**	**-1.98**	**0.048**	**0.224731**	**0.993426**
Province of qualification-WC	**2.917857**	**1.087053**	**2.87**	**0.004**	**1.405877**	**6.055929**
Vocational training-Engineering	1.022587	0.2427552	0.09	0.925	0.642141	1.628432

Province of qualification

Respondents who studied in WC are almost 3 times (OR 2.91) more likely of being in an employment appropriate to the qualifications compared to respondents from Limpopo after controlling for gender and vocational study. However, respondents who studied in KZN had 63% (OR 0.47) reduced odds of having a job appropriate to qualifications compared to Limpopo.

For the built-up regression, the following variables were included:

- Gender
- Province attended college
- Qualification/vocational field
- Had some form of work experience whilst studying
- Mobility
- Highest school qualification
- Current job earnings
- First job earnings
- Found first job through employment agency
- Found first job through family relations
- Found first job through personal contacts
- Found first job through newspaper advertisements
- Found first job through college links

The following results were produced.

Table Twenty-five: Built regression results – dependent variable 2

Current job appropriate to qualifications	Odds Ratio	Std. Err.	z	P>z	[95% Conf.	Interval]
Gender-Male	0.8729261	0.2390016	-0.5	0.62	0.510416	1.492901
Vocational training-Engineering	0.8866661	0.2554688	-0.42	0.676	0.504092	1.559591
Province of qualification-Gauteng	0.7428649	0.2894035	-0.76	0.445	0.346179	1.594112
Province of qualification-KZN	0.5200026	0.2459702	-1.38	0.167	0.205766	1.314131
Province of qualification-WC	1.927827	0.9250386	1.37	0.171	0.752718	4.937467
Had some form of work experience whilst studying-yes	**1.824073**	**0.4572261**	**2.4**	**0.016****	**1.116036**	**2.981304**
Mobility-moved provinces	1.270785	0.3734632	0.82	0.415	0.714361	2.260614
Highest school qualification-Grade 10	1.538972	1.194818	0.56	0.579	0.336031	7.048256
Highest school qualification-Grade 11	0.754519	0.5474786	-0.39	0.698	0.181986	3.128251
Highest school qualification-Grade 12	0.8657219	0.5973761	-0.21	0.834	0.223883	3.347611
Current job earnings-R3001-R5000	**2.273851**	**0.7354622**	**2.54**	**0.011****	**1.206275**	**4.28625**
Current job earnings->R5000	**3.57186**	**1.19952**	**3.79**	**0.000****	**1.849438**	**6.898412**
FIRST job earnings-R3001-R5000	0.875445	0.2747057	-0.42	0.672	0.473294	1.619299

Current job appropriate to qualifications	Odds Ratio	Std. Err.	z	P>z	[95% Conf.	Interval]
FIRST job earnings->R5000	1.929943	1.009339	1.26	0.209	0.692429	5.379151
Found first job through employment agency – Yes	0.5939953	0.1913361	-1.62	0.106	0.315934	1.116785
Found first job through family relations – Yes	1.207725	0.3752807	0.61	0.544	0.656858	2.220573
Found first job through personal contacts – Yes	1.579298	0.4686729	1.54	0.124	0.882798	2.825315
Found first job through newspaper advertisement – Yes	1.215007	0.3390155	0.7	0.485	0.703192	2.099346
Found first job through college links-Yes	1.488624	0.7682329	0.77	0.441	0.541385	4.093208

Had some form of work experience whilst studying

Those that had some work experience from college had an increased odds of 82%(OR 1.82) of having a job appropriate to qualifications compared to those that had no experience from college.

Current job earnings

As the salaries increases, the odds of having an appropriate job also increases. Respondents who are earning R3000-R5000 are twice more likely to have a job appropriate to their qualifications compared to those earning less than R3000 Respondents who are earning R5000 and above are three times more likely to have a job appropriate to their qualifications

The routes taken to finding a job did not emerge as significant factors in finding appropriate employment when controlling for the other variables. In their own right, though, finding employment in an appropriate job is contingent on two key routes: employment agencies and support from college staff.

Table Twenty-six: Significant Variables – how found first job

How did you go about finding your first job	Significance
Through employment agency	0.021**
Through support from college teaching staff	0.037**
Through college links with employers	0.484
Through placement	0.484
Through family relations	0.521
I joined family business	1.000
Through personal contacts in the family	0.11
Through holiday jobs during my period of study	0.308
I worked for the same employer before my studies	0.075
Through a newspaper advertisement	0.788

Of the four primary routes to finding employment (employment agencies, newspaper agencies, personal contacts and family relations) only employment agencies are able to achieve the necessary match to appropriate employment. Employment through college teaching staff was not reported to be a prominent means of finding employment. However, the analysis suggests that if this route were enhanced, it would add value to enhancing employability.

Dependent variable 3: permanent vs part-time employment

Finally, the following variables were measured against whether the individual was in permanent or part-time employment.

Table Twenty-seven: Significant variables – Dependent Variable 3

Variable	Significant
Gender	×
Vocational Field	×
Work experience during studies	×
Mobility	×
Province in which studied	✓

As illustrated, only province in which they studied featured as an important factor in whether the students got permanent or part-time employment. More specifically, having studied in the Western Cape seems to improve chances of finding a full-time job, when controlling for gender and field of study.

Table Twenty-eight: Regression results – dependent variable 3

Having Fulltime or part-time employment	Odds Ratio	Std. Err.	z	P>z	[95% Conf.	Interval]
Gender-Male	1.2801	0.2815605	1.12	0.262	0.831803	1.970005
Province of qualification-Gauteng	1.203038	0.3200243	0.69	0.487	0.714246	2.026331
Province of qualification-KZN	1.541243	0.5483486	1.22	0.224	0.767411	3.095384
Province of qualification-WC	**4.84374**	**2.365021**	**3.23**	**0.001**	**1.860245**	**12.61222**
Vocational training-Engineering	0.8895208	0.2054785	-0.51	0.612	0.565626	1.398888
Vocational training-Utilities	0.263549	0.2382346	-1.48	0.14	0.044815	1.549899

In addition, the built-up regression for this dependent variable used the following variables:

- Gender
- Province attended college qualification/vocational field
- Had some form of work experience whilst studying
- Mobility
- Found first job through employment agency
- Found first job through family relations

- Found first job through personal contacts
- Found first job through newspaper advertisements
- Found first job through college links

The following results were achieved.

Table Twenty-nine: Built-up regression results – dependent variable 3

Having Fulltime employment	Odds Ratio	Std. Err.	z	P>z	[95% Conf. Interval]	
Gender-Male	1.541721	0.3713925	1.8	0.072	0.961514	2.472041
Vocational training-Engineering	0.730816	0.1863793	-1.23	0.219	0.44333	1.204729
Province of qualification-KZN	1.951386	0.7557745	1.73	0.084	0.913422	4.168835
Province of qualification-Gauteng	1.40829	0.4338839	1.11	0.266	0.769915	2.575972
Province of qualification-WC	**6.783161**	**3.959205**	**3.28**	**0.001****	**2.160736**	**21.29426**
Had some form of work experience whilst studying-yes	0.7911804	0.1737901	-1.07	0.286	0.5144	1.216886
Mobility-stayed in the same province	1.276279	0.3227794	0.96	0.335	0.777448	2.095174
Found first job through employment agency-Yes	0.6646955	0.1728751	-1.57	0.116	0.399246	1.106636
Found first job through family relations-Yes	**0.5543757**	**0.140709**	**-2.32**	**0.02****	**0.337098**	**0.9117**
Found first job through personal contacts-Yes	**0.4977042**	**0.1243275**	**-2.79**	**0.005****	**0.305028**	**0.812088**
Found first job through newspaper advertisement-Yes	1.263032	0.3333184	0.88	0.376	0.752973	2.118601
Found first job through college links-Yes	1.760021	0.9982375	1	0.319	0.57908	5.3493

The table above indicates the following factors as being significant.

Province of qualification
Only WC was statistically significantly different from Limpopo after controlling for all the other 9 factors in the model. Respondents who studied in WC were almost 7 times(OR 6.78) more likely to be in a full-time employment compared to those who studied in Limpopo. However, respondents from GP and KZN were not significantly different from Limpopo.

Found first job through family relations
Finding a first job through family relations reduces the odds of being in fulltime employment by 45% compared to those who don't use family.

Found first job through personal contacts
Finding a first job through personal contacts reduces the odds of being in fulltime employment by 50% compared to those who don't use personal contacts.

Therefore, family relations and personal contacts feature more prominently as routes to part-time rather than full-time employment, which supports the hypothesis that the networks provided within one's immediate environment, where that environment is relatively deprived, are not effective in accessing meaningful employment.

9. Discussion of Findings

The study set out to explore the contextual factors impacting on the school-to-work transitions of young FET learners and to assess the particular role of FET Colleges in enhancing employability and successful labour market outcomes. The study is located in a context of social inequality which invariably impacts on both the post-school choices that young people make, and the manner in which they are able to access labour market opportunities.

In doing so the study sought to test three key hypotheses:

- Parents and other family members of individuals in the sample will play an important role in guiding post-school choices, but ultimately will defer to the individual to choose their pathway, because they do not have the necessary information to effectively support the choice-making process
- While family and social networks will provide better access to employment opportunities for individuals in the sample, the limited scope of these networks will often mitigate against employment in a field related to what the individual studied in college
- Moving away from home in a less urbanized area to take up studies in a more urbanized environment does not necessarily broaden access to social networks that can facilitate employment opportunities for individuals in the sample.

The nature of post-school choice

The study illustrated the important role of family in supporting post-school choice. However, in the context of socio-economic deprivation, largely through the legacy of apartheid, access to information and a sense of disempowerment limits the capacity of families to support such choices in a strategic manner. As such choice of field of study is invariably deferred to the young person who has limited tools at his or her disposal to make such choices. School teachers appear to play some role in this regard but there is little support available beyond the home and the school.

Choice is then based on individual preference, balanced against financial resources and geographic accessibility. Simultaneously, however, movement to a major urban area for those from less urbanised environments seems to be an important component of this choice, because the colleges in these major urban environments are more well-known and there is a belief that such environments offer more chance of finding a job.

The results suggest the need for more effective career guidance and support prior to the individual completing schooling . More effective resources are needed in the schools and in the home to provide the necessary information that can assist effective choices.

In addition, however, it would seem that colleges in less urbanised environments are not proactively marketing themselves and attracting local students. The perception that there is no college near their home or that the college near their home does not offer the required programmes, suggests that young people are not fully aware of the availability of institutions and programmes, considering that colleges are widely spread throughout the country and all colleges offer similar programmes. It would seem that the dominant perception is that institutions in major urban areas will invariably offer better quality by virtue of their locality.

The perception that moving away to a major urban environment to study will increase chances of finding employment, and particularly the need to address this perception, is tackled below.

The role of networks in supporting labour market access

The tracer study set out to determine two things – had students been in employment during the six year period since completing their studies, and what was the nature of such employment (was it sustainable and appropriate to what they studied). The study suggests that around half of the respondents had been in some form of employment since completing studies. However, for many the employment has been temporary and relatively low-paying. In addition, of those who were employed at the end of 2009, a large majority were in jobs that were not related to what they studied.

The key factors that appear to impact on achieving meaningful employment include having work experience during studies and residing in a major urban environment. Employment agencies (in major urban areas) and college teaching staff provide the most effective routes to finding meaningful employment. However, students are highly dependent on personal contacts, family relations and newspaper advertisements (particularly in the less urbanised areas). These latter routes appear to be ineffective in leading to meaningful employment and will more likely lead to employment that has nothing to do with what they studied.

As suggested in the literature, young people from socio-economically disadvantaged environments will be highly reliant on immediate networks to gain access to employment opportunities. There is restrictive access to employment agencies and there is limited support from college teaching staff.

However, considering that these two avenues seem to be the most the most effective, it would seem advantageous to focus strongly on developing these two avenues further. Mechanisms would be required to enhance the role of employment agencies in placing young college leavers. At the same time, colleges need to play a more proactive role in creating links with employers. The data suggests that colleges are limited to passive approaches to preparing their students for the workplace, focusing on simulated and abstract activities rather than assisting students to gain direct access to employers and the workplace. Supporting students to gain practical exposure to the workplace during the course of their studies would seem to be an important strategy for enhancing employability.

Migration and employment opportunities

The data illustrates the high levels of migration from less urban areas to major urban areas for study purposes, and then they are likely to remain in these areas once their studies are complete. In addition, many students from less urban areas report that they will be looking for work in another province, most likely a province which has more industrial activity. This places substantial pressure on labour markets in major urban areas to absorb young people.

As it happens, the data supports the obvious perception that more jobs are available in these dense urban areas. However, although jobs are more available in major urban areas, moving to one of these dense urban areas in order to find work does not seem to improve the young person's chance of getting a job. Young people in less developed areas are caught in a double bind – staying in the province does not result in employment opportunities, and moving to urban areas does not enhance their employment opportunities. Therefore, it would seem that alternative strategies are needed for stimulating access to employment in

the less urbanised environments. Colleges would need to find creative mechanisms for finding opportunities for students to access workplace environments, be they less formal and in different sectors to those available in denser urban areas.

10. Conclusions

The findings above indicate clearly that employability in the context of social inequality requires deliberate interventions to enhance access to the workplace. In the absence of effective support around post-school choice and effective social networks, achievement of employability for young people from socio-economically disadvantaged environments is severely impeded. Despite the accessibility and relative affordability of FET Colleges, providing young people with post-school education opportunities is not sufficient for enhancing employability.

As illustrated in this study, many young people in South Africa face two key challenges – they lack resources to support their post-school choices, and they lack access to resources that can facilitate access to employment. The study suggests that it would be necessary to tackle both of these aspects in order to achieve optimal employability. For the former it would seem that more effective career guidance in schools and colleges.

For colleges to make a meaningful contribution to employment growth, their role has to be one of facilitating access to workplace environments for practical experience and job placements. The new curriculum demands that colleges bring in experiential training as an integral part of programme delivery. By enhancing their facilitation role, the new curriculum faces a greater chance of succeeding in its objectives.

One issue that warrants investigation is the extent to which employer perception of the quality of college delivery impacts on the employment outcomes of college students. A survey of employer perceptions may provide some indication of whether employers value the college qualification and would use it as an indication of employability. This survey may also inform the types of interventions needed to develop the relationship between colleges and employers and enhance employers' perception of the college qualification.

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