

**FACTORS AFFECTING THE CHOICE OF BUSINESS STUDIES IN THE FET PHASE  
IN THREE CO-EDUCATIONAL INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS IN KWAZULU-NATAL.**

**BY**

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## DECLARATION

"I declare that FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE BUSINESS STUDIES IN THE FET PHASE IN THREE CO-EDUCATIONAL INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS IN KWAZULU-NATAL is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references."

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'L. Akerman', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Mrs. L. Akerman

## **DEDICATION**

This work is dedicated to my late mother, Flavia Avain Ressa. Thank you for giving me the gift of learning.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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## **ABSTRACT**

The study population for the research comprised Grade 9 learners attending three co-educational, independent schools in KwaZulu-Natal in order to determine factors influencing the selection of business studies for FET phase. Methodology involved qualitative and quantitative approaches with closed and open-ended questionnaires plus one-on-one interviews. Descriptive statistics were produced and opened ended questions and interviews were examined for trends and influences. Findings reflected wide divergence in factual information, attitudes, and opinions on significant issues such as expected level of difficulty, influence of educators, parents and peers on selection, amount of work required and value of subject for future studies or careers. Conclusions were that there was a lack of completed research indicating a need for future research, greater preparation was required pre-FET level to assist decision making about selection of the subject which should involve parents, educators and input from the business world.

## **KEY WORDS**

Subject choice, subject selection, Business Studies, FET, IEB, Independent Schools, Grade 9, Commercial subjects, career counselling, aptitude, and parental involvement

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

DEECD	Department of Education and Early Childhood Development.
FET	Further Education and Training
IEB	Independent Examination Board
ISASA	Independent Schools Association of Southern Africa
KZN	KwaZulu-Natal
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
NSC	National Senior Certificate

## CHAPTER 1

### OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

#### 1.1 Introduction

The inclusion of Business Studies in a curriculum offers learners an opportunity to deal with real life issues that are current and relevant in the South African context. The curriculum which governs this subject deals with four learning outcomes, namely; Business Environments, Business Ventures, Business Roles and Business Operations (Department of Education, 2008). These four learning outcomes provide the framework for delving further into theoretical and practical components such as leadership, management, strategic planning, business planning, financial analysis, and conflict resolution to name but a few. There are various factors that influence the learners' choices when selecting their subjects in Grade 9. Among the factors, the following has been noted: Business Studies, which is written by the Independent Schools in this study, is an emerging subject within the Independent Examination Board (IEB). 32,1% of all candidates sitting for this certification take Business Studies. This means that of the 8 209 candidates who wrote the IEB Grade 12 examination in 2010, 2 636 wrote Business Studies. This is substantiated when a comparison I made with the number of candidates in IEB Grade 12 examinations in 2010 who wrote Geography (2 797 candidates i.e. 34,1%) and Accounting (2159 candidates i.e. 26,3%) both of which are perceived as being amongst the most popular subjects.

The Department of Education results for 2010 with regards to Business Studies were as follows. Of the 641 533 candidates who sat to write the National Senior Certificate 200 795 wrote Business Studies. This translates to 31,29% which is very similar to the percentage calculated within the IEB of 32,1%. The 2011 DoE results reflect a lower percentage of 30,08%. The comparison between the IEB and DoE reflects that Business Studies is taken by approximately 30% of the total candidates. (Department of Education: 2011)

In Pietermaritzburg and Hilton alone, there are nine Independent Schools which are affiliated to the IEB. These schools are Epworth, St Johns Diocesan School for Girls, The Wykeham Collegiate, St Nicholas, Grace College, Maritzburg Christian School, St Anne's Diocesan College and Hilton College. Only 3 of these schools offer Business Studies. However, all 9 schools offer History, Geography, Physical Science, Life Science and Accounting. There are currently 173 schools throughout the country that write the IEB examinations, and of these, 147 of those schools offer Business Studies, which means 84,97% of all Independent Schools offer Business Studies. The remaining 15,03% have chosen to exclude this subject from their academic realm citing various reasons for their decisions. On the other hand, all 173 Independent Schools offer the subject choices of History, Geography, Physical Science and Life Science.

#### **1.1.1 What is the trend since 2008 of registrations in Business Studies in Independent Schools?**

The central government provides a national framework for school policy, but administrative responsibility lies with the provinces. Power is further devolved to grassroots level via elected school governing bodies, which have a significant say in the running of their schools. Private schools and higher education institutions have a fair amount of autonomy, but are expected to fall in line with certain government non-negotiable – such as the requirements that no child may be excluded from a school on grounds of his or her race or religion, as per statutory law indicated in the South African Schools Act of 1996 and that there should be 200 academic school days in a calendar year. This means that independent schools have the freedom to choose which elective subjects they want to offer in the FET phase of schooling. The growing trend amongst Independent Schools is to offer a more limited range of subjects suited to their staffing capacity. The reason is that the sustainability of a school's financial position needs to be upheld and if fewer learners are taking a subject it costs the school more. The cost per learner increases significantly. Furthermore, the cost of resource and facilities provision may necessitate a substantial increase in school fees leading to a reduction in numbers of learners. Another factor that must be considered is the matter of designated subjects.

Some subjects do not offer any points for admission to University and this may reduce their choice as a FET subject.

Below is a list of the designated subjects.

List of designated subjects:

1. Agricultural Sciences
2. Dramatic Art
3. Music
4. Visual Art
5. Accounting
6. Business Studies
7. Economics
8. Engineering Graphics & Design
9. Geography

(IEB Schools [online] 2010)

However, each University has its own system. For example the University of Johannesburg (RAU), does not distinguish between designated and non-designated subject when calculating the admission point score. Other stipulations and requirements are put in place such as Mathematics being compulsory for all numerate programmes in Engineering, Commerce, Law and Management, and Science at some universities in South Africa.

This study is an attempt to explore and evaluate factors that influence learners' selection of Business Studies at three Independent Schools in the KZN region. Choosing Business Studies as a subject is not done in isolation as there are a wide range of factors that affect this decision. It has become evident that the factors determining the choice of Business Studies as a subject at this stage are many and varied. Research carried out in the United Kingdom in 1979 by Woods and more recently by Davies, Jelhaj, Hutton, Adnett, & Coe (2004) has revealed that social class and gender play a role in subject choice. Teachers' assessment of learners' proficiency

in certain fields and their consequent counseling of learners was also found to have an impact on subject choice.

It is hoped that the present study may reveal further significant factors and variables.

## **1.2 Motivation for the choice of the study**

As the researcher works primarily with Grade 9 learners, and in particular with their subject choices as they enter the FET Phase, it is hoped this research will prove to be practical and current. Access to information and a deeper understanding of the issues involved were readily accessible and hence the desire for further exploration into the matter was stimulated. The fact that Business Studies was chosen is because the researcher is heavily involved with the IEB, both as a senior-sub marker at the end of each year and also as a Regional Moderator of School Based Assessment in KwaZulu-Natal. On a more local scale the researcher is Head of Department in the field of commercial subjects at the Independent school at which she teaches. The researcher also holds a management position and amongst her portfolios are subject choices and pastoral care for Grade 9 learners. Hence, the availability of resources was readily on hand.

Another motivation for the study is that the majority of learners at Grade 9 level have little or no idea of what career they want to follow upon leaving school. The choices that affect learners' decisions intrigued the researcher as they appeared to be making choices from an uninformed basis and relying on feelings and attitudes rather than on facts. Past pupils of the researcher, continually make contact with the researcher and comment on the fact that Business Studies is the only subject that has benefited them in their tertiary studies. The researcher is passionate about learners and the subject Business Studies and wanted to find a definitive answer to the question, "What factors influence learners choice of Business Studies at school?". In this way, further research or strategies could be implemented in order to promote an increase in the number of learners taking the subject.

The relevance of this study is to show what strategies could be put into place to either develop or impede the growth of a subject. This is likely to have considerable impact on

the instructional leadership of schools in terms of planning of timetables and recruitment of teachers in specific subjects.

### **1.3 Statement of the problem**

Business Studies, has grown out of a curriculum where it was previously viewed as suitable only for standard grade learners. A standard grade learner was classified as a learner who could not cope well with higher order thinking skills such as analyzing, synthesizing and evaluating problems.

Business Studies was previously named Business Economics and was provided as an alternative to learners who could not cope with Mathematics (Pullinger: 2008). Classes were often small, learners were not there by choice and in many cases educators were gleaned from other subjects when they had 'spare time' on their timetables (Clark: 2006). The feeling was that anyone could teach it. The standard joke in staff rooms, especially aimed at educators of commercial subjects, was "Those who can, do. Those that can't, teach." Etzinger (2008) asks a pertinent question: "Why would someone with a BCom degree, who could be earning millions in commerce, be teaching Business Studies or Accountancy for a pittance?" The disdain of principals especially, as well as that of Mathematics and Physical Science educators, who would send learners to Business Economics when they were not coping with the 'more difficult' subjects, added to the problem. The rather mundane syllabus, which included copious sections on aspects such as 'filing systems' and 'indexing' (specifically targeted to the type of learner who was battling with Mathematics), did nothing to alleviate the problem (Etzinger 2008). Unfortunately, this perception of the subject is still rife today. (Russell, 2009).

From personal experience as an educator, the researcher has witnessed the influential effect that she has had on learners choosing subjects. By merely boosting their confidence or damaging their confidence one is able to alter their decisions. There are a number of factors that determine learners' choice and this research is attempting to discover some of the significant factors in choosing Business Studies.

#### **1.4 Aims and objectives with the study**

The aim of the study was to identify as many contributing factors to the choice of Business Studies made by Grade 9 learners. The objectives for this study that dealt with Independent Schools in the KwaZulu-Natal area were formulated as follows:

1.4.1 To investigate the factors that influence the choice of Business Studies at independent co-educational schools in KwaZulu-Natal

1.4.2 To identify the factors that negate the growth of Business Studies in Independent Schools.

#### **1.5 Research questions**

The first step in the research planning process is clearly determining what one wants to know, which means developing a good research question (Johnson, 2002:27). The main focus of the research was the identification of the single or combination of factors that mostly impact on Grade 9 learners who attend Independent Schools in the KwaZulu-Natal area when choosing Business Studies as a subject for the FET phase.

The following research questions have guided this study:

1. What are the factors influencing the choice of Business Studies at school?
2. What are the factors that negate the growth of Business Studies in Independent Schools?
3. What strategies could be formulated to advance Business Studies in Independent schools in Kwazulu-Natal?

#### **1.6 Research Design**

This study is underpinned by a positive-interpretivist paradigm. Furthermore, the research methodology used in this study is a combination of qualitative and quantitative research approaches.

### **1.6.1 Population and sampling**

The population for this study consisted of one hundred and four (N=104) Grade 9 Economic and Management Science learners who attend private schools in the KwaZulu-Natal regions. Purposive sampling was used in this research to select private schools, namely, Grace College, South City and St Nicholas College, all Co-educational schools. The schools were purposefully selected because they are co-educational schools and that many similar factors affecting learners may be found in other Independent Schools in KwaZulu-Natal. The researcher also had access to these schools and good working relations with colleagues. Random sampling was also used in this research to select the respondents. The rationale for using random sampling in this study is because all grade 9 learners have an equal chance of being selected from the entire population and no bias is used in the selection method.

### **1.6.2 Data Collection**

#### **1.6.2.1 Pilot Study**

Initially, a pilot study was conducted to provide reliable and valuable insight when formulating open-ended interview questions. This created the opportunity for more variables which might prove to be significant to be revealed. The pilot study included a simple tick list questionnaire which provided options to choose between seven different factors that most affected Grade 9 subject choices. Opportunity was also provided for learners to add their own factors not mentioned in the prescribed seven. The motivation to pilot the questionnaire was to provide an opportunity for the researcher to broaden the pool of questioning. This also allowed for a test trial to see which questions provided little information and a chance to improve upon the questions asked.

These options included factors such as:

- a) parents
- b) teachers teaching the subject
- c) future career requirements

- d) passion for the subject
- e) good at the subject
- f) friends taking the same subject
- g) personal preference
- h) other factors not mentioned.

Ethically there are no circumventing issues as all elements of research afford protection of confidentiality of those who participated in the questionnaires and interviews.

#### **1.6.2.2 Quantitative data collection**

Questionnaires were constructed and used to elicit information from grade 9 learners in each of the purposely selected private school. The learners' questionnaires consisted of two sections, Section A, Section B, Section C and Section D. Section A dealt with demographical information including gender, age and current geographical location. Section B was designed with the use of a 5 point Likert Scale questionnaire, where 1 symbolised a 'strongly disagree' sentiment and 5 equated to a 'strongly agree' answer.

Questions 5 – 17 referred to the learners' feelings, attitudes and values regarding subject choice of Business Studies. Section C, also used the same Likert Scale and questions 18 – 25 focused on factors affecting the choice of Business Studies. Lastly, Section D comprised 7 open ended questions allowing learners to provide alternative factors or offer different views on the topic of subject choice and Business Studies.

#### **1.6.2.3 Qualitative data collection**

Qualitative data was collected through focus group interviews with participants, namely, 20 Grade 9 learners all from Grace College who chose Business Studies as their major. Further qualitative data was obtained from interviews with five Business Studies educators at the relevant Independent Schools.

### **1.6.3 Data Analysis**

#### **1.6.3.1 Quantitative data analysis**

To examine factors that influence the choice of business studies as a subject, descriptive statistics (bar graphs) were used.

#### **1.6.3.2 Qualitative data analysis**

All data collected were transcribed, sorted and typed and saved as a document in a computer. Once this had been done analysis of the findings took place, where common trends and patterns were identified and interpreted. These trends were then thematically structured.

### **1.7 Ethical issues**

Ethics is typically associated with morality, and deals with matters of right or wrong (Babbie, 2007:36). It is therefore essential that all aspects of a research project be critically subjected to a search for any violation of ethical principles. Full attention has been given to this issue in this research (See Appendices D and E).

#### **1.7.1 Ethics regarding actual research**

##### **Research Questions**

The research questions do not deal with any issues that are unethical or unlawful.

##### **Data Collection and Usage**

The data collection was done in an honest and ethical manner so as to validate the research. Data was recorded methodically and accurately.

Respect was also shown by citing references used in secondary research, thus avoiding plagiarism.

##### **Ethics with respect to respondents**

Permission was obtained from Headmasters and Heads of Departments for using learners at the three schools. Confidentiality was maintained as learners did not need to identify their names and purely biographical information was requested. Thus, the

identity of the respondents was protected. Permission was obtained to use information (e.g. school statistics).

In order for this study to be valid, care was taken to avoid any sensitive and confidential issues, such as financial questions.

### **1.8 Limitations of the Study**

There are certain limitations imposed upon this study. The generalizability of the study will thus be limited to KwaZulu-Natal private schools and, to a large degree, to the population group that was sampled. In this case, data was obtained from Grade 9 Independent School learners who chose Business Studies as their major in KZN private schools.

The literature review on this specific study is limited, as Business Studies is not as prevalent as subjects such as History, Geography, Science and Life Sciences. For this reason, literature review that relates specifically to Business Studies has been hard to find. A tangential approach was adopted in this secondary research, investigating what authors who conducted research using a similar topic in other subjects and in other countries or in tertiary education have discovered.

Time constraints of a school day played a negative part in gaining research material as teachers are pressured to get through their syllabus and were unable to find time to help students to complete questionnaires. Long distance correspondence between other schools and supervisors gave rise to time constraints and made communication difficult.

## **1.9 Definitions of key concepts**

The following terms are frequently used throughout the study and have been defined in order to clarify their usage in the study.

### **1.9.1 Business Studies**

According to Russell (2009: 28) Business Studies is one of 29 FET subjects and falls within the group of commercial subjects known in OBE as Economic and Management Sciences (EMS). At the GET and lower levels, learners study EMS to get a commercial grounding, but at FET level they may do any combination of Accounting, Business Studies and Economics as part of their choice subjects.

### **1.9.2 Further Education and Training**

Within this research, the emphasis is on the Further Education and Training (FET) phase which incorporates grades ten to twelve where there is a NCS (National Curriculum Statement) for each subject. This NCS defines the broader LOs (Learning Outcomes) for the subject, and each of these is divided into a number of ASs (Assessment Standards) which provide the various skills, knowledge, attitudes and values which the learner needs to acquire in order to achieve the said outcomes. On achieving this for a total of seven subjects, the learner can attain the NSC (National Senior Certificate) which is the exit-level qualification for the FET. Independent Schools receive the same exit level qualification, namely NSC.

### **1.9.3 Independent Schools**

According to Hofmeyr (2003: 144), the South African definition of Independent Schools is a narrow one compared to other developing countries, especially as it does not include the “public schools on private property”. The term “Independent Schools” has come to replace private schools in many parts of the world.

In this study the words “private school” and “independent school” will be used interchangeably and mean any school that subscribes to the Independent Examination Board.

## **1.10 Organization of the thesis**

This study is divided into five chapters.

### **Chapter 1: Orientation**

The first chapter begins with the introduction and background to the study. The statement of the problem and related research questions, the purpose of the study and the motivation for the study are also highlighted. Limitation of the study and organization of the thesis are also presented in this chapter.

### **Chapter 2: Literature Review**

Chapter two presents the literature of the study and determines what is already known about the issues reflected in the title so that a comprehensive picture of the state of knowledge in this field can be obtained. It helps refine certain parts of the study more especially the problem statement and research design and the process of data analysis.

### **Chapter 3: Research Design and Methodology**

Chapter three provides a description of the research design of the study. Research methods and issues related to valid data collection are discussed.

### **Chapter 4: Data Analysis and Interpretation**

Chapter four presents the interpretation and analysis of data.

### **Chapter 5: Conclusion**

Chapter five presents the summary of findings, recommendations and the conclusion.

In this chapter, the researcher discusses the motivation of the study, the statement of the problem, the aim and objectives of the study and research questions. A brief overview of the type of research, the research design, procedure and strategy, the pilot study, a description of research population, ethical issues and definition of terms are discussed. The chapter ends with overview of the chapters and limitations of the study.

In the next chapter, the review of literature underpinning this study will be discussed.

## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### 2.1 Introduction

This chapter begins with a definition of the key concept central to the study of Business Studies. Business Studies is defined as “The subject Business Studies deals with the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values critical for informed, productive, ethical and responsible participation in the formal and informal economic sectors. The subject encompasses business principles, theory and practice that underpin the development of entrepreneurial initiatives, sustainable enterprises and economic growth”, according to the new educational dispensation in South Africa, Department of Education (2003a:9).

The focus here is on literature identifying the factors that can potentially influence the choice of Business Studies as a chosen subject at school. This chapter also covers literature that identifies how Business Studies has grown as a subject within Independent Schools and discusses some of the reasons for these fluctuations. Contributory factors, including educators, parents, future career, academic ability in the subject, peer pressure, intrinsic motivation, among others are also reviewed. The literature review looks at recruiting strategies in order to promote the growth of Business Studies. Finally, there is a discussion with viewpoints from available literature on whether schools should even offer Business Studies as a choice subject.

This study explores the influential factors that impinge on learners’ selection of Business Studies at 3 Independent Schools in the KwaZulu-Natal region. It has become evident that the factors determining the choice of Business Studies as a subject at this stage are many and varied. The researcher has noted that reasons for such a choice may be inappropriate or even counter-productive. A study of available literature has been made to discover support or refutation of these views.

## **2.2 Factors influencing the choice of Business Studies.**

### **2.2.1 Educators and school managers**

According to Costantino (2008:45), educators are a central factor to learning in the classroom and play the role of mediator in the decisions that learners and parents make. Supporting the viewpoint that educators play an influential role in subject choice decisions, Colley (2003:59) states that learning is a state of becoming, which means that one needs the input from educators to learn, hence, the relationship with and perceptions of the teacher are vital. Teachers adapt their pedagogy to the habitus (rather than general ability level) of their students, but at the same time students' habitus is informed by vocational notions that also influence teachers' discourse. Bearing this in mind, it is clear that the impact that educators have on learners is influential, either positively or negatively (Frykholm & Nitzler, 1993, p. 442). Another finding, contrary to the above, states that friends, parents and teachers are the least influential factors in the decision making process of choosing a commercial subject. The last named research was based on a sample of second year college students in the United States of America in 2009 and complimented the work completed by previous researchers in Australia (Gul, Andre, Leong, and Ismal, 1989). This present research will hopefully provide some answers on the South African context, but will examine the secondary education situation as opposed to the other countries' tertiary research.

According to Davies, Adnett and Turnbull (2003) school managers may believe that they are able to identify certain subjects that are particularly appropriate for the type of learners who attend their school. Due to the structure of the English educational system this may be easier to distinguish them in the South African situation. The English system probably also makes it easier to differentiate between a learner and educator influence. (Davies, Neil, Hutton, & Adnetta, 2009). Most learners in England continue to study from the age of 16 – 19 (which is similar to our FET phase, Grades 10 – 12) and continue to do so at the same school in which they have studied for the three previous years. Research completed by Institute for Education Policy Research in English has shown that those who do switch schools at the age of 16 are less likely to have reliable information about the relative effectiveness of teaching in the subjects. Having said this,

in this research, all the schools being researched teach the learners from grade 7 (age 14) to grade 12 (age 18) which enables the learners to have adequate information on the teacher and subject.

Another factor that impacts on this particular subject selection in South Africa is the fact that the curriculum has changed. Pam Christie's article, "OBE and unfolding policy: Lessons to be learned" looks at change management and how important it is in making a success of any new developments, especially in education (Gultig, Hoadley, & Jansen, 2004: 168–181). This is contrary to the literature review above that implies that school managers may be afraid of change.

### **2.2.2 Parents**

Independent Schools are seeing an increase in the number of entrepreneurial parents who value business as a future prospect for their own children. This may influence learners in their subject choice. "Entrepreneurs whose parents are self-employed are encouraged by the independence and flexibility of self employment to become entrepreneurs themselves. Parents who own their own business can be source of great inspiration for a young child. Entrepreneurial parents provide a strong example and are a source of influence for children" (Co, Mitchell, Nayager, & van Zyl, 2007:48).

Berger (2008) looks at the importance of the relationship between parents and schools. The author suggests that educators need to be taught how to handle this relationship, thus illustrating the absolute importance of the parent in the learners schooling. Parents will always remain the primary educators of their children, and hence have an invested interest in their child's subject choice.

Research into Independent Schools and their career choice procedures has led to the finding that parents should not force their children to do subjects which they consider important or "better" than others. The best choice will always be the subjects with which the child feels they can cope, and those that interest them the most (Subject Choices for Grade 10 [online] 2012). Across the world there is a growing recognition of the

importance of engaging parents, families and communities in raising the educational aspirations and attainment of young people (Department of Education and Early Childhood Development DEECD: 2008). Hopefully, the findings of this research will support this statement.

The empirical evidence shows that parental engagement is one of the key factors in securing higher student achievement and school improvement. This position is held by Desforges and Abouchaar (2003); Harris and Chrispeels, (2006). A review of early childhood literature (Sylva, 2004:4) reinforces the finding that engaging parents in schooling from an early stage leads to more positive engagement in learning processes. The importance of parents' educational attitudes and behaviours on young people's educational attainment has also been well documented, especially in the developmental psychology literature (Birenbaum-Carmeli (1999); Bogenschneider (1999); Catsambis (2001); Fan and Chen (2001); Gonzalez-DeHass, Willems and Holbein (2005); Hoover-Dempsey, Battiato, Walker, Reed, DeJong & Jones (2001); Kohl, Lengua and McMahon (2000), and Spera (2005).

According to Lowe and Simons (1997) most second year university undergraduates ranked parents as not important at all in determining their chosen career paths. It should be noted that the above study deals with students who are at least eight years older than this study's respondents. The following can be deducted from the above research; if parents do not see Business Studies as a worthwhile subject then parents will apply very little influence or pressure to encourage their child to choose this subject. The opposite applies for entrepreneurial parents who understand the benefits accruing from this subject.

### **2.2.3 Social class and gender**

A study produced by Davies et al (2008:235) attempted to identify the effect of social class and gender on subject choice for 14 – 16 year olds in England. Its design and methods investigated the circumstance and probability of a student entering for examinations in the following subjects: Business Studies, French, Geography, German,

History and Home Economics. The study looked primarily at socioeconomic background and gender as determinants of subject choice. The final conclusion to Davies' research is that general ability and aptitude have the strongest influence on subject choice, followed by socioeconomic background. For most subjects, learners' job aspirations and how well they get on at school have significant effects on their choice.

#### **2.2.4 Future Career Requirements**

This issue is a valid one and research completed through the Human Sciences Research Council of South Africa by Erasmus and Breier (2009: Chapter 2) indicates that there is a shortage of skilled professionals in South Africa. Willem van der Post, the National Talent Acquisition Leader at Deloitte in his account states that the South African landscape for training chartered accountants (CAs) is plagued by a significant shortage of suitable, prospective candidates at entry level, and a training regime that is constantly challenged by the need to stay relevant. Therefore one needs to ask why entry level candidates are not suitable. Is it because they took the course for extrinsic reasons and so have no passion for it? Could it be due to the fact that upon entering the commerce route of tertiary study they did not have significant sufficient prior exposure to this field of study? What can schools do to improve the entry level of candidates into the field?

In a media release, CA Training in South Africa, presented by Grey Consulting an accounting, finance and risk recruitment specialist company it is claimed that part of the problem of a shortage of suitable candidates is a lack of understanding of financial skills, business acumen and team-playing roles. All three of these skills are part of the Business Studies curriculum that is offered at FET level. Hence offering this subject at school level means that candidates have already started mapping out their pathway to success. It offers learners the opportunity to delve into business mode thinking – which is where the majority of adults ultimately work. As the economy is part of our lives, then surely we should be preparing learners for their role in the market place.

Learners will be provided with the chance to explain basic concepts of buying and selling and all the management decisions that go into this transaction. Despite the above contention, no university in South Africa states that Business Studies is a prerequisite for admissions into the commerce faculty. For example, at the University of Witwatersrand Johannesburg, one needs an exemption pass with Mathematics and English Home Language at a level 5, and 36 points in total to meet the minimum requirement for a BCom three year degree. This means that Business Studies, although a designated subject that merits the accumulation of points towards entry into university is not a compulsory subject, and so learners may as well choose a subject that is less demanding or a subject that they have a passion for.

### **2.2.5 Passion for the subject**

A study compiled by Davies ((2009), suggests that students obtain higher grades if they are able to choose the subjects they wish to study. The fact that learners compare their achievements with that of their peers, leads them to believe that they are “good at” one subject because they seem to perform relatively better in that subject when compared with others (Marsh,1986 ; Eccles & Wigfield, 2002) This perceived advantage then makes them feel more confident and hence they start enjoying the subject more, thus fostering a passion for the subject. Studies in different countries report the effect of students’ interests and aspirations on subject choice. (For example, Elsworth, 1999; Stokking, 2000; Cleaves, 2005). When students are more highly motivated to study a subject, they are more likely to persevere in the face of difficulties, and be more likely to aim for deep rather than surface learning.

### **2.2.6 Academic ability in the subject**

Students are more likely to achieve higher grades if they are studying subjects to which their capabilities are more suited and if they believe they are likely to be successful (Trautwein, 2005). Students’ capacity to base their choice of subjects on their relative advantage depends on the adequacy of the information they have at the time of making their choices. In South Africa the irony lies in the fact that learners are only partially exposed to Business Studies concepts in the subject of Economic and Management

Sciences (EMS) that is taught from Grade 7 to 9. EMS touches on all three the commercial subjects, Accounting, Economics and Business Studies. This in effect means that learners are relying on thirty percent which reflect the Entrepreneurship part based on the Curriculum Assessment Policy Statements of the assessment in EMS on which to base their decision of subject choice. For example they may be scoring a high eighty percent for an examination in the middle of their Grade 9 year, without having covered the complete curriculum. However, their subject choice which needs to be made prior to the end of the final examination will be on the full curriculum. Unfortunately, the full curriculum only counts the Business Studies aspect as thirty percent (30%) of the final mark. Hence, academic ability in the subject is skewed and does not provide enough grounds on which to make a decision.

In Ireland, due to curriculum changes the situation is the opposite of the South African one. Focus has shifted from Accounting to Business Studies in the JC Business Studies syllabus, which has replaced the previous syllabus known as Commerce. Now, Accounting is not being assessed in examinations and Business Studies is receiving the full focus (Byren, Willis 2003:3). A similar a system could prove advantageous to the promotion of Business Studies in this country.

### **2.2.7 Peer pressure**

Student choice of subject may be influenced by the aspirations of peer groups or through the expectation of that group (Davies, Jelhaj, Hutton, Adnett and Coe, 2004). Peer pressure can be defined as pressure that is applied by one's social group to make one take a certain action, behave in a certain way or conform so as to be accepted by those around you. At high school level, friends play a major role in teenagers' lives. Hence, it is natural that learners may look to their friends and follow the trend just because everyone else does. Peer group effects on pupils' achievement in school have been widely reported (Hoxby, 2000; Robertson and Symons, 2003). These effects on achievement may have a spill over effect on subject choice, as is evidenced in this study.

### **2.2.8 Departmental differences and academic performance**

It has been researched in the United Kingdom that if a student performs well in a subject this is strongly affected by his/her aptitude for the particular subject and hence starts reducing the range of subjects to choose from (Davies, Neil, Hutton, & Adnetta, 2009). By the same token, learners are more likely to choose to be taught by departments that achieve higher grades as this increases their chances of higher attainment.

Research has also found that learners might develop a positive self-concept through comparing their achievements with that of peers, leading to an inference that they are 'good at' one subject because they seem to perform relatively better in that subject when compared with others (Marsh, 1986; Eccles & Wigfield, 2002). Manski (1993) considered that learners' awareness of this relative advantage will improve as they gain more evidence through formal assessments over time. This perceived awareness adds to the expectation of success or failure in a particular subject.

Learners are more likely to achieve higher grades if they are studying subjects for which their capabilities are more suited and if they believe they are likely to be successful. (Trautwein, 2005). Learners may also find a subject more compatible with their interest and ambition, thus leading to a higher motivation. Studies in different countries report the effect of learners' interests and aspirations on subject choice (e.g. Elsworth, 1999; Stokking, 2000; Cleaves, 2005). The more motivated a learner is to study a subject the greater are the chances to excel and persevere through difficulties, which brings about a deeper understanding of the subject.

### **2.2.9 Preconceived ideas**

Smith and Tomlinson (1989:151-153) found that some teachers tend to make erroneous decisions about the suitability of different subject choices for some learners and this may lead those learners to make unfortunate and inappropriate subject choices. For example, a sibling may have received six distinctions in his/her matric year and the

younger sibling is perceived to have the same academic ability. Examples of this lack of discernment have been found in the data collected for this study.

#### **2.2.10 Intrinsic Motivation**

Jackling and Calero (2006) found that the motivation of students to pursue an accounting and or business career was influenced by their intrinsic interest and perceptions. Intrinsic motivation is when one strives inwardly to be competent at something and to consequently reward oneself internally. If learners choose Business Studies because of this inner desire then the motivation is valid. However, if the desire is to receive an outward award, i.e. extrinsic motivation, such as an A symbol in matric, then the validity of the choice needs to be reconsidered.

#### **2.2.11 Research Allocation and Teacher Productivity**

Resource allocation, in terms of an intangible asset such as a trained and skilled educator, also plays a role. Most commercial students at universities pursue careers in commerce and industry rather than in education, as the salaries are more market related. Thus finding commerce teachers is hard and Heads of schools experience pressure in appointing qualified and experienced educators with the correct major for this subject.

Amongst researchers it is a commonly accepted belief in this field that schools need to operate at maximum utility. This suggests it is economically unwise to have a teacher for a class of less than 8 learners in a subject. This means that one would need to employ more teachers to accommodate the smaller classes whilst your number intake remains the same. Optimal maximum is beneficial for a number of reasons. One of the methods that could be implemented to curb fluctuations is to put a minimum embargo on class sizes. This would mean that if less than eight apply for the subject, it becomes unfeasible and the learners need to choose different subjects. This in turn would make teachers realise that their positions in the school can become redundant.

## **2.3 Negative factors affecting the subject choice of business studies.**

### **2.3.1 Gender assumptions**

Ashworth and Evans, 2001 (311-320) produced a cross-section study on modelling student subject choice at secondary and tertiary level. The study provides evidence on factors influencing the decision for learners to study Economics. Business Studies is a commercial subject, so one can assume similarities between Economics and Business Studies. One of the influencing factors on learners choice of a commercial subject were mathematical aptitude and prior knowledge of the subject. Female student numbers were found to increase more rapidly once there were a substantial number of females already taking the subject, hence perhaps alluding to a lack of confidence in this gender? Davies (2008:239) supports the assumption that females adjust their view of their own capabilities in light of external influences and society. Peer pressure and teacher effect also play a noteworthy role. Although a positive role model effect of female teachers does exist, this has not been noted to carry over to decisions to continue in this field in tertiary study.

### **2.3.2 Learners' Backgrounds**

Choices that are made in the subjects studied in senior secondary school influence differences in access to higher education, vocational education and training, as well as to labour market outcomes. Previous studies, (Ashworth & Evans, 2001) have shown that students from higher socioeconomic backgrounds, those from Independent Schools, early high achievers and students from non-English speaking backgrounds are more likely to participate in the courses that are avenues to higher education and the professions. The fourth group, non-English speaking backgrounds seems to be an anomaly, as the other three groups, higher socioeconomic backgrounds, Independent School learners, and high achievers, are what one would expect, whereas students from non-English speaking backgrounds are the exception. Students from disadvantaged backgrounds tend to participate in courses that lead to vocational education and training or more often to enter into the labour market without any further

formal education or training. Hence there are compelling reasons concerned with equity, as well as effectiveness, for monitoring patterns of subject choice among students in Year 12. Although these findings are based on the Australian curriculum, the Independent Schools within my study follow the Independent Examination Board (IEB) which continually looks to Australian strategies and has even adopted the Australian Grade 9 International Bench Mark Test so the findings are likely to be relevant.

### **2.3.3 Parental expectations**

Parents' expectations set the context within which young people develop and shape their own expectations and aspirations. Middle-class families tend to have culturally supportive social networks, use the vocabulary of teachers, feel entitled to treat teachers as equals and have access to childcare and transportation, all of which facilitates parental engagement in schooling. This social capital allows them to construct their relationships with the school with more comfort and trust. Therefore, it would seem that the educational odds are still stacked against children and parents from low-income families and from certain ethnic groups because certain parents actively engage themselves whilst others do not (Harris and Janet, 2008).

## **2.4 Conclusion**

It is evident that there are many variables that affect the subject of Business Studies. The dominant factors emerging from the pilot study have been researched in terms of existing literature. These factors are: parents, peers, academic ability, intrinsic motivation, career opportunities, future study requirements and resource allocation that was not dealt with in the primary research. Negating circumstances come from gender assumptions, background lifestyles and parental expectations. The positive factors are linked to areas of control that schools have such as timetabling, hiring of staff and providing aptitude testing to match the correct subjects to each child. Hence, this research task aims to identify the major contributing factors to learners choosing Business Studies in their final three years of schooling.

## CHAPTER 3

### RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

#### 3.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to provide the rationale for the research design and methodology used to investigate the factors affecting the subject choice of Business Studies. A brief discussion of the data collection tools, population and sample size will be presented, followed by the data analysis techniques utilized.

The research design is aimed at exploring significant aspects of the following questions.

All the questions relate to Grade 9 learners who attend private schools in the KwaZulu-Natal regions.

- What are the factors that influence the choice of Business Studies at independent co-educational schools in KwaZulu-Natal?
- What are the factors that negate the growth of Business Studies in Independent Schools?
- What are the challenges posed by fluctuating registrations in Business Studies?
- What strategies could be formulated to advance Business Studies in Independent Schools in KwaZulu-Natal Schools?

#### 3.2 Research design

Research design is a plan outlining how the researcher will explore the project. It is a summary of how the study will progress and hopefully plan out. This includes information such as the time period, the subjects involved, the conditions under which the data will be collected and collated. The purpose of using a research plan is to map out a path to find evidence to answer the research question. The objective is to ensure that the results are valid and reliable (McMillan and Schumacher, 2006:22). All these processes are linear and keep changing as the environment in which one is working is also constantly changing.

According to Cresswell and Plano-Clark,(2007:12), mixed method research refers to a methodology in which both qualitative and quantitative approaches, methods and procedures are combined or mixed to come up with a more complete picture of the research problem.

As I would be interacting with the learners on a face to face basis this research has a qualitative element. It seeks to identify relationships influencing the subject choice of Business Studies at Grade 9 level. It is accepted that the concepts are generalizations and themes, However, to obtain a more comprehensive study, I used surveys that would provide me with quantitative evidence to support my research, hence the adoption of a mixed method research.

### **3.3 Research methods**

According to Mouton (2001:56) research methodology focuses on the research process and the kinds of tools and procedures to be used. "Methodology is the body of knowledge that describes the method, clarifies its presuppositions and notes its resources as well as its possible consequences and limitations" (Cresswell, 2003:4;)

### **3.4 Population**

Population is defined as the universe of elements from which sample elements are extracted. The population is also the group of elements to which we want to generalize the result of research (Rosnow, 1996: 411). Gay and Airasian (2000:122) define population as a group of interest to the researcher, the group to which he or she would like the result of the study to be generalizable. In this research the area was confined to KwaZulu-Natal which is situated in the South-East of the country and is bordered by three other provinces. Within this province there are 33 private schools that write the IEB (Independent Examination Board). Of these 33 schools, only 8 do not offer Business Studies as a subject of choice (Table 1).

**Table 1: KZN Private Schools**

<b>Name of School</b>	<b>Offer Business Studies at FET phase</b>
1000 Hills College	<b>x</b>
Ashton International College Ballito	✓
Clifton College	✓
Creston College	✓
Deutsche Schule Hermannsburg	<b>x</b>
Domino Servite School	✓
Drakensberg Boys Choir School	<b>x</b>
Durban Girls College	✓
Embury College	✓
Epworth High School	<b>x</b>
Grace College Hilton	✓
Grantleigh	✓
Hilton College	✓
Kearsney College	✓
Maris Stella School	✓
Maritzburg Christian School	✓
Michaelhouse	<b>x</b>
Our Lady of Fatima Convent School	✓
Richards Bay Christian School	✓
Southcity Christian College	✓
St Annes Diocesan College	<b>x</b>

St Benedicts School Pinetown	✓
St Dominics Academy Newcastle	✓
St Henrys Marist Brothers College	✓
St Johns Diocesan School For Girls	✘
St Marys DSG Kloof	✘
St Nicholas Diocesan School	✓
St Patricks College Kokstad	✓
Thomas More College	✓
Treverton College	✓
Waterfall College	✓
Wykeham Collegiate (The)	✓

Representatives from these schools meet together at least twice a year to offer support and development to each other. The number of learners writing Business Studies at Matric level has grown from 2 584 in 2009 to 2 636 in 2010. This subject is the third largest choice subject offered as an assessment subject at the IEB. It is even larger than Accounting, 2 159; and very close to Geography at 2 787. Therefore, the question is why is it growing so quickly, and what are the factors that have impacted on this growth in numbers? This information was provided by the IEB in their annual reports. (IEB Annual report 2010).

### **3.5 Sample and Sampling Techniques**

Sampling refers to the act of extracting or selecting a smaller group from a larger one with the view of representing the larger group adequately through the procedures used for the smaller one (Le Compte and Preissle, 1993:60). According to Rosnow (1996:413) a sample is a subset of the population. The sampling units are the elements

that make up the sample, for example, schools, learners, cities or provinces. In this case, the fact that the subjects have chosen Business Studies as their subject choice for the FET phase is the characteristic.

Purposive sampling was used in this research. According to Rubin (2005:247) this technique is also called judgmental sampling because it is entirely the judgement of the researcher to make sure that a sample is composed of elements that contain the most characteristics, representative or typical attributes of the population that serves the purpose of the study best (Grinnell and Unrau, 2008:153). Purposive sampling was selected as it is information rich and allows for an indepth analysis of a central issue being studied (Commonwealth Educational Media for Asia, [online] 2011). This kind of sampling ensures that no cases are barred from the sample (Patton, 2002:46).

The study involved 104 learners from 3 schools in the KZN region. The schools chosen are co-ed school so that the similar factors affecting learners can be studied. South City, Grace College and St Nicholas have been chosen as the schools.

**Table 2: KZN Independent Schools that offer Business Studies.**

<b>Name of School</b>	<b>Offer Business Studies at FET phase</b>	<b>Co-Ed or Monastic</b>
Ashton International College Ballito	✓	<b>Co-Ed</b>
Clifton College	✓	<b>Boys</b>
Creston College	✓	<b>Co-Ed</b>
Domino Servite School	✓	<b>Co-Ed</b>
Durban Girls College	✓	<b>Girls</b>
Embury College	✓	<b>Co-Ed</b>
Grace College Hilton	✓	<b>Co-Ed</b>
Grantleigh	✓	<b>Co-Ed</b>
Hilton College	✓	<b>Boys</b>
Kearsney College	✓	<b>Boys</b>
Maris Stella School	✓	<b>Girls</b>
Maritzburg Christian School	✓	<b>Co-Ed</b>
Our Lady of Fatima Convent School	✓	<b>Girls</b>
Richards Bay Christian School	✓	<b>Co-Ed</b>
Southcity Christian College	✓	<b>Co-Ed</b>
St Benedicts School Pinetown	✓	<b>Girls</b>
St Dominics Academy Newcastle	✓	<b>Co-Ed</b>
St Henrys Marist Brothers College	✓	<b>Boys</b>
St Nicholas Diocesan School	✓	<b>Co-Ed</b>
St Patricks College Kokstad	✓	<b>Co-Ed</b>

Thomas More College	✓	<b>Boys</b>
Treverton College	✓	<b>Co-Ed</b>
Waterfall College	✓	<b>Co-Ed</b>
Wykeham Collegiate (The)	✓	<b>Girls</b>

### **3.6 Data Collection Instruments**

Various techniques are at a researcher's disposal when collecting data. In this research a questionnaire, interview and document analysis (history from 3 previous years) was used.

#### **3.6.1 Interviews**

An interview is a purposive interaction between two or more persons, with the one, the researcher, trying to obtain information from the other, the participants (Gay and Airasian, 2003:224). Qualitative data was collected through face-to-face semi-structured interviews between participants, namely, Grade 9 learners who chose Business Studies and the five Business Studies educators at the chosen schools. The semi-structured interview (See Appendix C) is sufficiently unrestricted to enable re-ordering, deviation and development whilst exploring new issues and prying further. This took place after school as the learners were busy with their school work. A half hour was set aside with each of the 20 sample population at Grace College only. The other schools used questionnaires.

#### **3.6.2 Questionnaire**

The researcher utilized questionnaires for the two other schools as time constraints and distance were problematic. Close-ended questions, much like a multiple choice questions were used. Multi-chotomous questionnaires, which offer a range of responses, tend to be easier on the respondent and easier for the researcher in terms of interpreting data (Beiske, 2002:4).

### **3.6.2.1 Pilot Study**

A pilot study can be viewed as a dress rehearsal of the main investigation (De Vos, 2005:206). The questionnaire was tested with a sample of 20 learners in Grade 9 in the year 2010. (See Appendix A) Some questions were found to be ambiguous and not clear enough. After the pilot study, the researcher was advised by the supervisor to relook at certain items from the questionnaire such as biographical information, five point Likert scale as well as poorly designed questions which failed to research anything. Changes were made in terms of the layout of the questionnaire and Section A – C was developed. Questions were rephrased using the five point Likert scale in Section B. (See Appendix B). The data collected during the pilot study was therefore not added to the data of the actual study because it served the purpose of altering those questions that proved to be inappropriate.

The pilot questionnaire yielded problems as the learners had rushed through it and had not as yet given much thought to which of the three subjects available for choice, they would select.. The answers that were gathered during this pilot stage proved inadequate and hence another questionnaire had been modified .

### **3.6.2.2 The Final Questionnaire**

The questionnaire is a tool or instrument for collecting data in which the subjects respond to questions asked to elicit their reactions, beliefs and attitudes (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001:194-203). In this research, copies of a questionnaire were distributed to Grade 9 learners at the St Nicholas and South City. The two Business Studies Educators were asked to administer these tests and forward them to the researcher.

The questions were developed and given to one hundred and four (N=104) Grade 9 learners to gather information dealing with the factors that affect their subject choice of Business Studies. Close and open-ended questions were used in this study. Closed questions are those where the respondents choose between pre-determined responses. The questions were structured as follows:

## **Section A: Biographical Information.**

It is customary to start the questionnaire off with biographical information. This tends to be the easiest as the respondents know this information without much thought (Bennett, Glatter, & Levačić, 1994:261). This section consists of Grade 9 learners, their gender, age, school. The reason for seeking biographical information was to find out whether there were similarities among the Grade 9 learners' attitudes towards Business Studies across KwaZulu-Natal.

## **Section B: Grade 9 learners' feelings, attitudes, values, ability and skills**

This section helped to obtain the perceptions of Grade 9 learners in terms of the pressures and factors that affect their subject choices. These questions were based on the learners' feelings, attitudes, values, ability and skills. The Likert-type scale of 1-5 representing the following responses: 1=Strongly Disagree (SD); 2=Disagree (D); 3=Undecided (U); 4=Agree (A); 5=Strongly Agree (SA), was used.

## **Section C: The factors that affect the choice of subjects, in particular Business Studies**

The aim of the questions in section C was to establish which factors most affect the choice of Business Studies as a choice subject. This section aimed at eliciting the most common factor that contributed to the selection of Business Studies. In this section questions were formulated using five point Likert- scale of 1-5 also representing the following responses: 1=Strongly Disagree (SD); 2=Disagree (D); 3=Undecided (U); 4=Agree (A); 5=Strongly Agree (SA).

### **3.6.3 Document Analysis**

Important information documenting the number of candidates choosing Business Studies since 2008 was obtained from the three schools, St Nicholas, Grace College and South City. This method was used in combination with other methods (semi-

structured interview and questionnaires). The Independent Examination Board's (IEB) 2010 annual report was also analysed to see what the trends are nationally.

### **3.7 Reliability**

Reliability refers to the consistency of measurement (McMillian and Schumacher, 2006:183). In the context of this study, reliability was concerned with the question of internal consistency. This was achieved through the same questionnaire being administered, at the same time, at two different schools, namely St Nicholas and South City. All the respondents were given copies of the same questionnaire, which they completed at a specified time with the educator present. Due to the uniformity of the questionnaire, the results were reliable. The data was converted into classified information so that it is easier to interpret and understand at a glance. Deductions were made by viewing the graphical representation of the results of the questionnaires.

### **3.8 Validity**

Validity refers to the degree to which evidence and theory support the interpretations of test scores entailed by specific uses of tests. It is an attempt to check out whether the meaning and interpretation of an event is sound or whether a particular measure is an accurate reflection of what you intend to find out (Durrheim and Painter, 2007:147). A point is further made that educational studies that use measures lacking in validity are likely to produce worthless results regardless of how well sampling, data collection and analysis are carried out. One should be able to say that a measure leads to valid conclusions or that a sample enables valid inferences, and so on. It is a proposition, inference or conclusion that can 'have' validity. (Trochim, 2006)

### **3.9 Trustworthiness**

In this research, three categories of validity were used, namely, content validity, construct validity and face validity. Content validity means that the questionnaire items represent the kinds of material they are supposed to represent, which is usually a basic consideration in the construction phase of any questionnaire. (Rosnow, 1996:130) According to Goddard and Mellville (2001:47) the questionnaire should be

representative of existing knowledge on the subject, the appropriateness of the content is based on expert judgment, item generalization and a priori theoretical efforts (Cargan, 2007:232). In this case, a literature study was undertaken prior to empirical study and it confirmed that the questionnaire and interviews conducted covered the existing knowledge on factors affecting subject choices. Content validity was thus ensured. Construct validity is related to generalizing. It is a type of external validity that refers to the extent to which a study represents the underlying abstraction. Efforts were made in this study to limit generalization to conservative limits, as will be noted in Chapter 5, section 5.5.

Face validity is concerned with how a measure or procedure appears. Does it seem like a reasonable way to gain the information the researchers are attempting to obtain? Does it seem well designed? Does it seem as though it will work reliably? Unlike content validity, face validity does not depend on established theories for support (Fink, 1995). Colleagues from other schools were asked to scrutinize the instruments to ensure it was relevant research of the factors under investigation.

In order to ensure the validity the initial questionnaire was piloted at Grace College. Certain modifications were made to ensure that participants understood the questions and experience considered them as meaningful within the frame of reference (Strydom and Delport, 2005:331; Uys and Puttergill, 2005:125).

According to Cohen and Manion (2000:105) qualitative data display some bias because it is impossible to ensure that the researcher is completely detached from the research, so that absolute validity is not possible. This is essentially the case in most social research (education etc) as opposed to scientific research. For qualitative studies the question of how well the data represent the phenomenon for which they stand should be answered to indicate the validity of the study. Data collected from participants in qualitative research studies are voluminous, non-quantitative and rich in details (Gay and Airasian, 2003:214). It is also replete with relevant information unobtainable from quantitative research.

The researcher employed multiple data collection strategies such as interviews, questionnaire and document analysis. Some participants did not care that much about an answer or tried to give what they thought was “the correct” answer when responding to questionnaires (Goddard & Melville, 2001:48). To ensure validity, the researcher explained the importance of the research to the learners.

Not only the use of different types of data collection methods, but also the use of different methods of analysis was emphasized in this research.

The researcher strove to achieve internal validity by posing the same question to all interviewees at Grace College, whilst at the same time allowing them to offer additional information which might prove invaluable for exploration in later studies. The same method of interviewing and analyzing the results of all interviewees was done. External validity was achieved by generalizing the results to the wider population.

### **3.10 Data Analysis**

#### **3.10.1 Qualitative Data Analysis**

Data was collected through recording all interviews, then transcribed and categorised into themes. Qualitative data analysis is primarily an inductive process of organizing data into categories and identifying patterns or relationships among the categories (McMillian and Schumacher 2006:364). The analysis is a systematic process of coding, categorizing and interpreting the data with the aim of providing an explanation. Analyzing qualitative data (such as the interview) is an eclectic activity. There is no one right way, data can be interpreted in many ways. Interim analysis occurred during the interviews and pilot questionnaires. Upon review of the data both tools were adjusted. The interview was open-ended to allow for flexibility and the pilot questionnaire was redesigned.

The final data analysis took place after the questionnaires and interviews were conducted.

According to Warden and Wong's presentation on qualitative analysis in June 2007 the basic steps include:

- 1) "data collection: gathering information through qualitative methods such as interviews, in the form of focus groups, open-ended responses to surveys and texts
- 2) note taking: taking down notes of main ideas either during interview sessions and or immediately after such sessions
- 3) coding: highlighting ideas, categories or themes that helps to answer predetermined research questions , after recorded data, data was transcribed
- 4) themes: concepts that explain how ideas or categories are connected. Recurring ideas were identified and categorised according to themes.
- 5) illustrative quotes: verbatim text that exemplifies a particular code or theme
- 6) saturation: a point of diminishing returns in the collection and interpretation of data that signals completion
- 7) memoing: noting hypotheses that arise about potential themes or relationships between categories
- 8) sorting: compiling and arranging themes, codes and illustrative quotes into the outline of a narrative that explains "What is going on here?"

The researcher collected data from the sample size of one hundred and four (N=104) Grade 9 learners from 3 independent schools. Secondly, the results of the questionnaires were tallied and graphs were drawn to enable a more visual representation to allow for trends to be identified easier. Coding and themes were identified through the analysis of the results by comparing all the graphs. The open-ended questions were summarised and the general ideas were extracted from these. It became apparent that saturation point was reached quickly when similar and vague responses were given to the questions. Throughout the process of collecting and analysing, common threads were highlighted and noted down.

Twenty learners from Grace College were used for one on one interviews. Their responses were captured verbatim and common ideas were extrapolated from these

interviews. These interviews were then compared with the questionnaires to see if there were similar beliefs.

The interviews with the Grade 9 learners provided substantial data on their perceptions about subject choices. The responses from the open-ended questions were recorded on tape and used to make notes on the common trends and beliefs of factors affecting the subject choice of Business Studies.

In this research the afore mentioned steps were used to simplify data analysis. According to Mouton (2001:6), qualitative researchers verbally analyze data which involves examining and organizing notes from interviews, observations and reducing information into smaller segments from which they can see patterns and trends. In this case the researcher reviewed the data after each and every interview to extract important issues that cropped up during the interview. This helped the researcher to make sure that those issues are prioritized in the subsequent interviews.

### **3.10.2 Quantitative Data Analysis**

Quantitative data was analyzed. The data included statistics such as percentage responses and frequency of identical answers given in the questionnaire. A tally table organizes data using tally marks to show the quantity of each item in the table. Data was analyzed, and common trends were extrapolated. No statistical analysis or tests were used as the data collected was too small.

### **3.11 Summary**

This chapter presented a detailed outline of the research design, methods, data collection and analysis techniques used. The research design was intended to study the factors that affect the subject choice of Business Studies at Grade 9 level. To maximize the research findings both qualitative and quantitative findings were analyzed mutually and will be presented in Chapter 4.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION**

#### **4.1 Introduction**

The aim of this chapter was to identify responses concerning the factors that affect the subject choice of Business Studies. The process of data analysis involves preparing the data for analysis, conducting different analyses, moving deeper and deeper into understanding the data, and making interpretations of the larger meaning of the data (Cresswell, 2003:190).

In this chapter the responses of the learners in three schools, St Nicholas, Grace College and South City were presented and analyzed. Twenty one to one personal interviews were also included in this study to gain a deeper understanding of the factors and perhaps because of the open nature of the interview gave rise to new areas of research. In the resultant presentation, actual comments and statements by the respondents were quoted verbatim to illustrate and emphasize recurring factors. Questionnaires were distributed to the three schools and the current Business Studies educators in those schools handled the administration of these questionnaires. The data gathered from questionnaires were analyzed using a tally table.

Another data collection technique utilized in this study was document analysis, which aimed at reviewing texts, such as the IEB annual reports, in order to strengthen the research.

#### **4.2 Analysis of the Quantitative Results**

##### **4.2.1 Questionnaires**

A structured questionnaire was compiled and used to collect data from all Grade 9 learners in the three participating schools in KwaZulu-Natal. The questionnaire was divided into 3 sections. The first section dealt with the biographical information

regarding learners gender, age and geographical location. Section B focused on feelings, attitudes, values, ability and skills, whilst Section C concentrated on some obvious factors already affecting the choice of Business Studies for a learner. Grade 9 learners were also given the opportunity to answer some open ended questions at the end of the questionnaire. A total of 104 participants from the three schools involved in the research completed the questionnaire.

#### 4.2.1.1 Biographic data

##### Gender of respondents

The respondents differed with respect to gender, as the schools are co-educational schools, and not monastic.

**Figure 1: Gender of respondents**

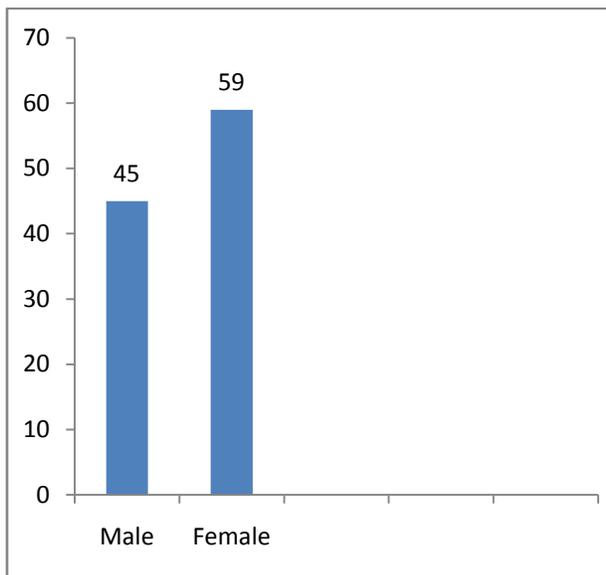


Figure 1 illustrates the total number of respondents who answered the questionnaire proportioned according to gender. Forty-five participants were male learners and fifty nine were female. The sample represented a higher population of females than males, which is a reflection of population and gender demographics of South Africa.

## Age of the learners

The respondents differed in age, as some may have started school earlier or later than others. This data simply identifies the range of age that this study deals with.

**Figure 2: Age of the learners**

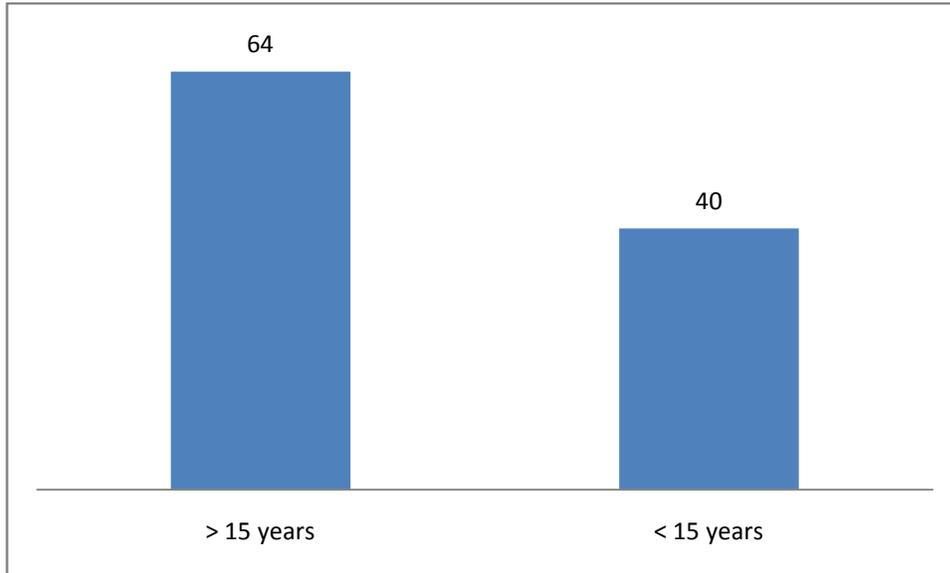


Figure 2 illustrates the age-group representation of the respondents to the questionnaire. A significant majority proportion; 64 of the respondents (61.5%) were younger than 15 years of age. The remaining 40 participants (38.4%) were over the age of 15 but younger than 16 years of age. This suggests that learners are at a very young and impressionable age when they have to make a subject choice which may affect later career paths.

### **Geographical Location**

The respondents differed with regard to geographical location as the schools in this research are situated close to rural and urban areas.

**Figure 3: Geographical Location**

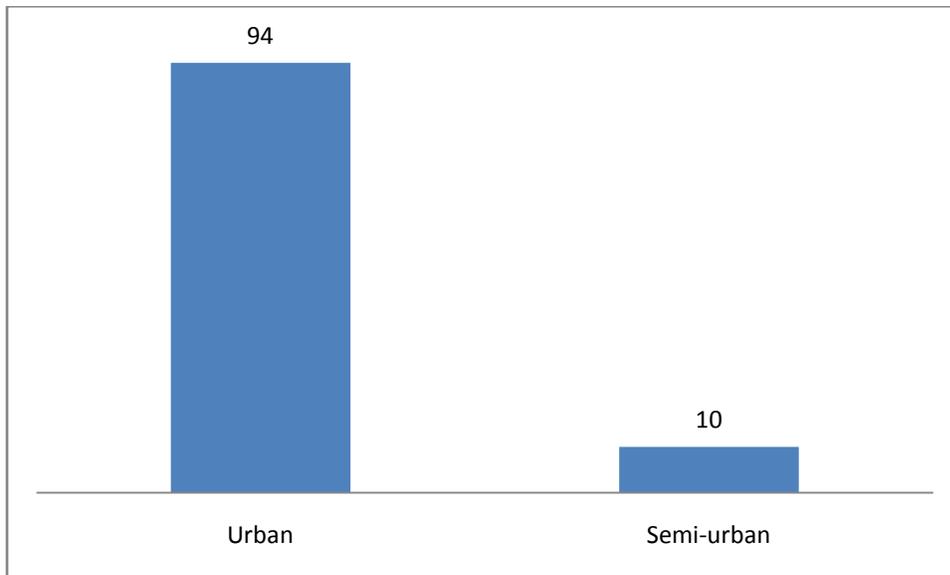


Figure 3 demonstrates that 94 of learners who attend the three Independent Schools in KwaZulu-Natal participating in the research live in urban areas. The remaining 10 are from rural areas, which indicates that bursaries and scholarships are also available to previously disadvantaged learners.

#### **4.2.1.2 Feelings, attitudes and values regarding subject choice of Business Studies.**

This section should answer to the following questions:

- How do teachers stimulate learners' interest in Business Studies?
- How does teaching methodology shape the attitudes of students towards Business Studies?
- Do learners' see any correlation between Business Studies and the present and future career choices?

- What are some of the students concerns regarding the Business Studies and instruction?

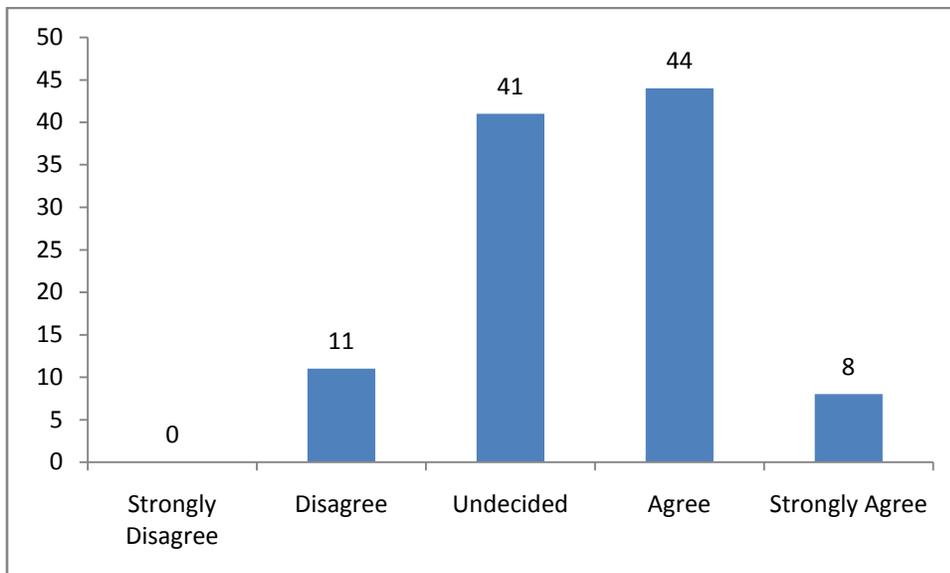
The aim of the questionnaires was to establish what the feelings, attitudes and values were regarding the subject choice of Business Studies. The questions were developed and given to grade 9 learners in the three participating schools to gather information dealing with this theme. It was anticipated the questionnaire would be helpful in determining the current values and opinions of learners.

The questions were formulated using Likert scale of 1-5 representing the following responses: 5=Strongly Agree, 4=Agree, 3=Unsure 2=Disagree, 1=Strongly Disagree. The results tabulated gained from the questionnaire provided insight into the learners enjoyment of the subject.

### **The enjoyment of Business Studies as a subject**

The graph represents the percentage of learners who most enjoy the subject of Business Studies.

**Figure 4: The enjoyment of Business Studies as a subject**



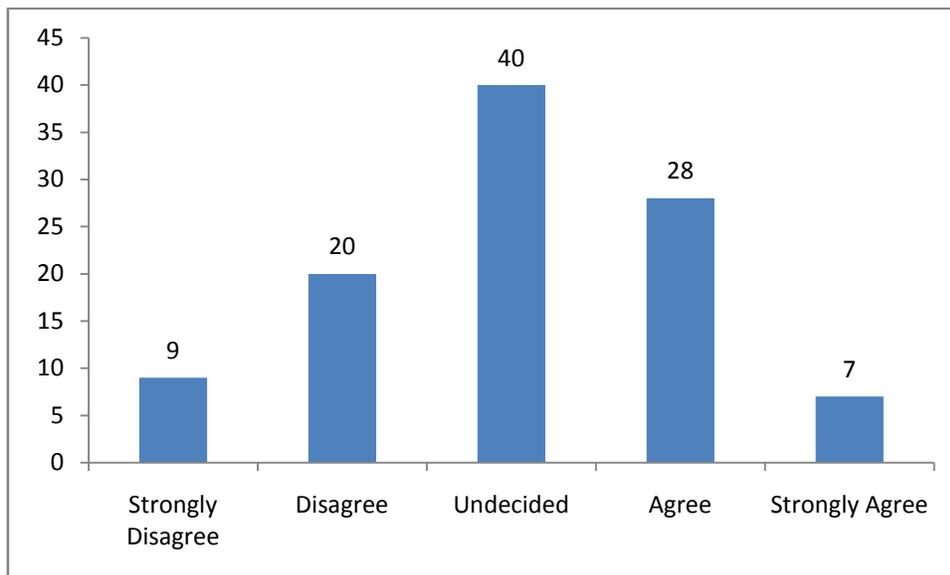
In Figure 4 frequencies were calculated to analyze the level of enjoyment of the subject,

Business Studies. The extent to which learners enjoy the subject can be deduced, as 44 plus 8 do indicate that they do enjoy it, thus making it almost 50% who are positive towards the subject. 41 of the 104 respondents are uncertain as to how they feel about the subject. The graph above shows that most respondents reported a positive liking to the subject. This result should be viewed with caution since a number of factors could have influenced their answers.

### Parents' belief about the subject

The statement asked if parents think Business Studies is an easy subject. This was asked in order to ascertain whether parents do have an influence on the subject choices their children make.

**Figure 5: Parents' belief about the subject**



In Figure 5, statement 6 relates to parents belief about the level of difficulty of the subject. Most of the learners, 38% (40 of the 104 candidates) did not know what their parents thought about the subject of Business Studies. Just over a quarter of the responses (29 of the 104 respondents) indicated that parents did not consider it to be easy and 33% (28 + 7) believe it was an easy subject. The response clearly shows that

parents and learners do not communicate about subjects and have differing opinions. The number of undecided respondents is of special concern. The researcher deduced that this is due to the change in curriculum over the past few years and uncertainty about the future of subjects, as well as a widely held belief that it is primarily the teachers role to guide learners in their choice of subjects.

### Teachers influence

Learners have been found in the past to take subjects because of their attachment of preference for a specific teacher, and vice-versa. This statement sought to dispel or confirm this

**Figure 6: Teachers influence**

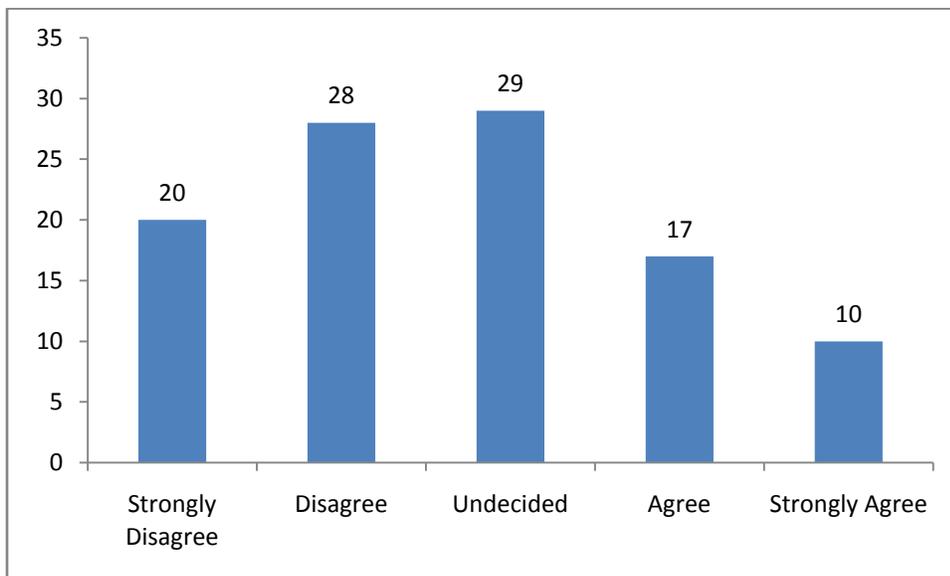
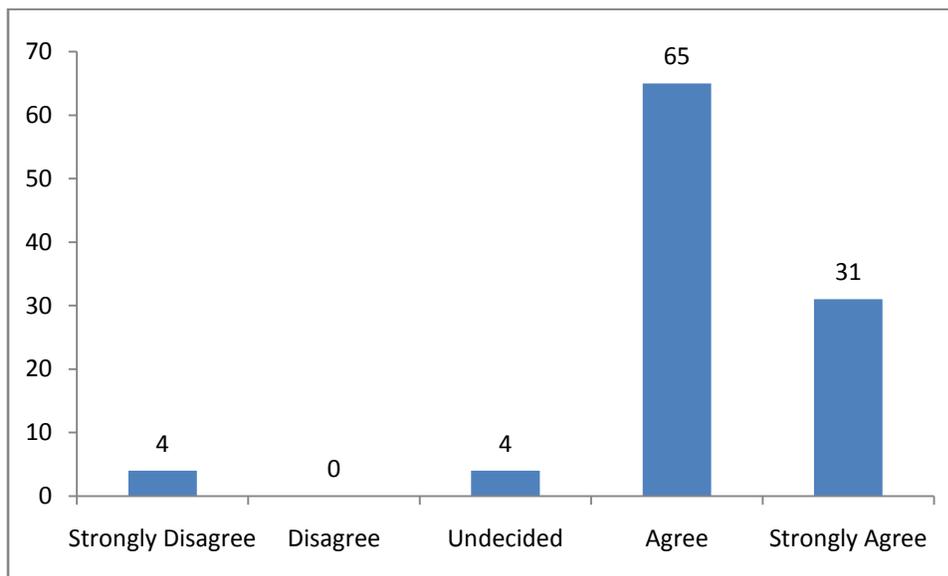


Figure 6 shows that the majority of learners, 29 were unsure that they liked their current teachers. This statement may have been ambiguous and hence the information extracted from this graph cannot really be used effectively. Learners may have felt that perhaps this questionnaire would not remain confidential and this would affect their current situation with their educators.

## Tours offered

Learners are easily swayed by the prospect of taking time out of lesson time to go on excursions and tours. This is often seen as an influential factor in determining which subjects learners are more inclined to choose.

**Figure 7: Tours offered**

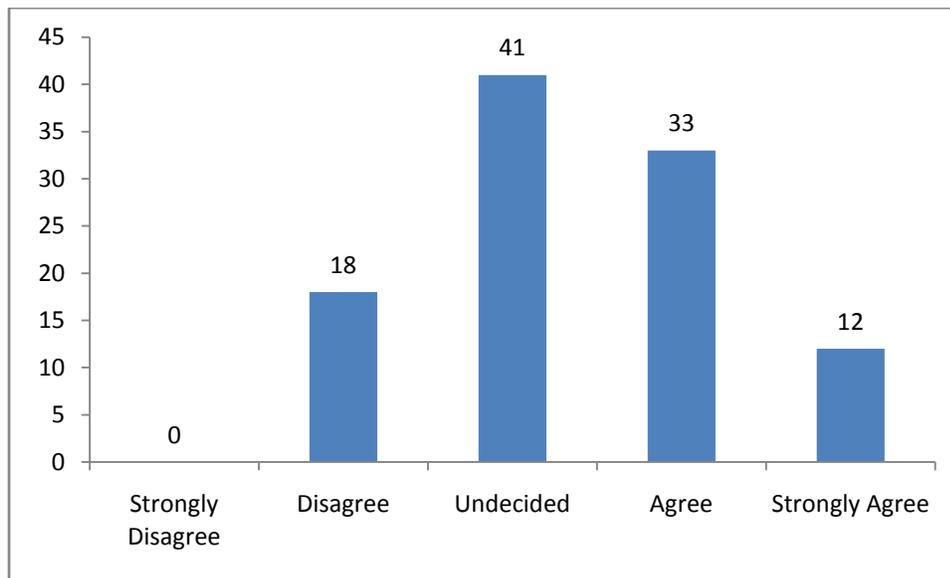


65 of the 104 respondents like the fact that there is a tour offered in Business Studies. This shows that learners are influenced by the possibility of a tour taking place and perhaps make their subject choice based on this one aspect of the subject. Only 4 respondents felt that a tour did not offer any forms of persuasion when making their subject selection. This equates to 3.84% of the total responses and is a small percentage.

### Too much homework

The question of too much homework was asked to see if learners were influenced by the amount of work that needed to be done outside of class time.

**Figure 8: Too much homework**

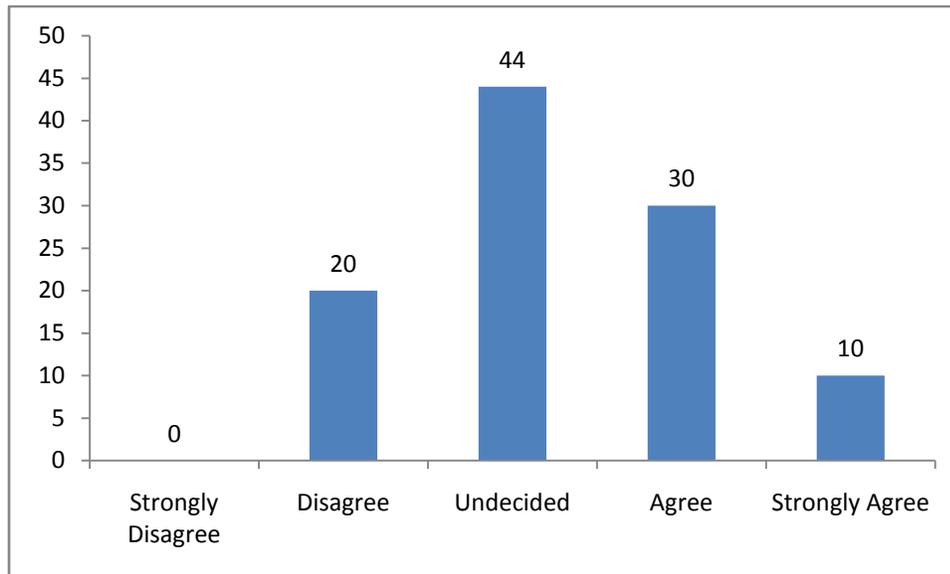


A zero response rate of strong disagreement and a low disagreement rate (18) as compared with the high rates of agreement (33 and 12) suggests that learners supported the belief that there was too much homework. The volume of work is most definitely a factor to consider when learners are making their choices.

## Too many projects

Learners were questioned regarding the amount of projects that were presented to them within the Business Studies curriculum.

**Figure 9: Too many projects**

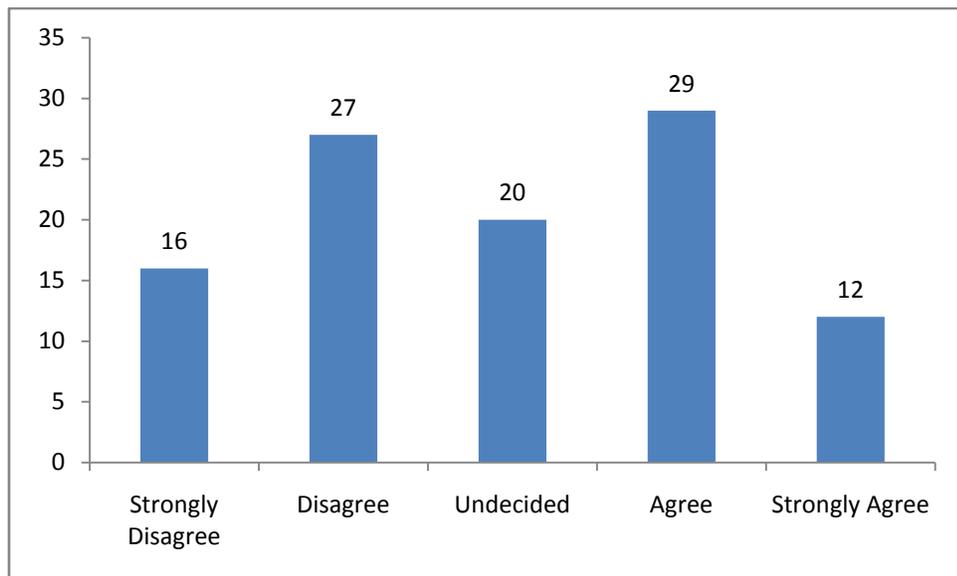


Learners are pressurized at school to take part in co-curricular programmes and the number of projects that are expected is often criticized by learners. 40 of the 104 respondents felt that this statement was true. However, not one respondent disagreed with this statement. However, the majority of respondents were unsure as to this statement. This is obviously because as they have not had experience of the subject in the senior grades.

## The teacher is too strict

Effective classroom management is often maintained by strict teachers.

**Figure 10: The teacher is too strict**



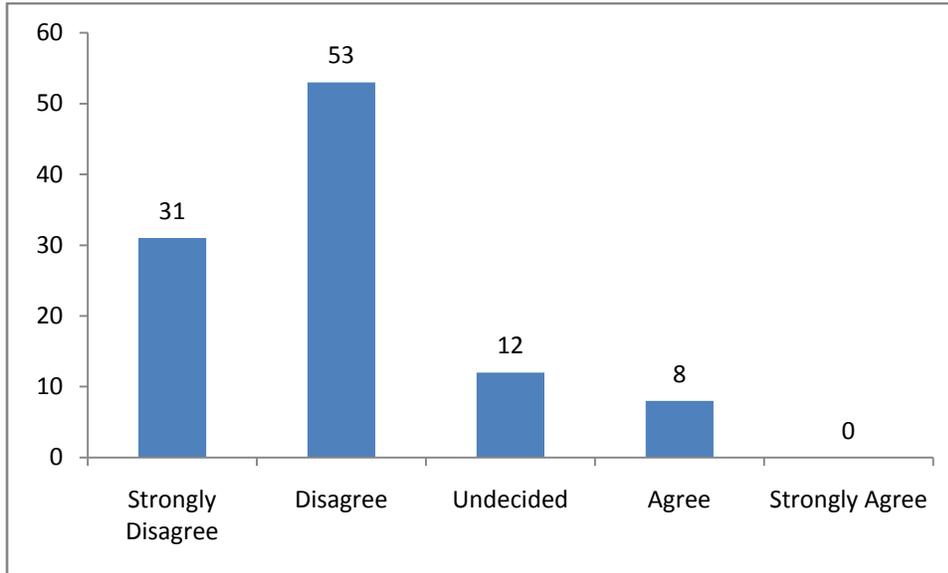
This data reveals that fact that there are different types of teachers, as the data is taken from three different sources, their point of reference is not the same. The fact that the disagree and agreed answers are the same reflect the fact that the teachers classroom management is not a factor that is considered when making a subject choice decision.

A comparison between the schools revealed similar results which proves that strict teachers are found in schools and that learners generally feel the same about these teachers.

## Value of Business Studies

The perceived value associated with choosing Business Studies was tested in the questionnaire.

**Figure 11: Value of Business Studies**

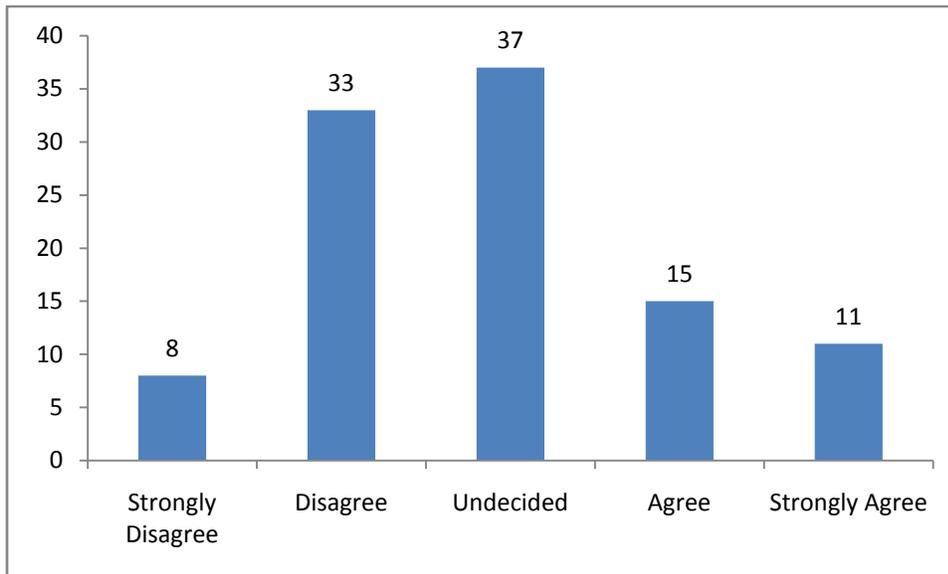


Zero candidates agreed with the statement that there is no value to Business Studies. This is confirmed by the high percentage disagreement with the statement that learners do not see the value of it with over 80% of the respondents (31 plus 53 of the 104 respondents) reflecting this response. The fact that only 12 respondents were undecided is a strong indication that the learners perceived there was merit to the content and skills taught in this subject.

## Business Studies is boring

Learners were asked if the subject of Business Studies was boring, so as to ascertain if this was a contributory factor in the decline or growth of the subject.

**Figure 12: Business Studies is boring**



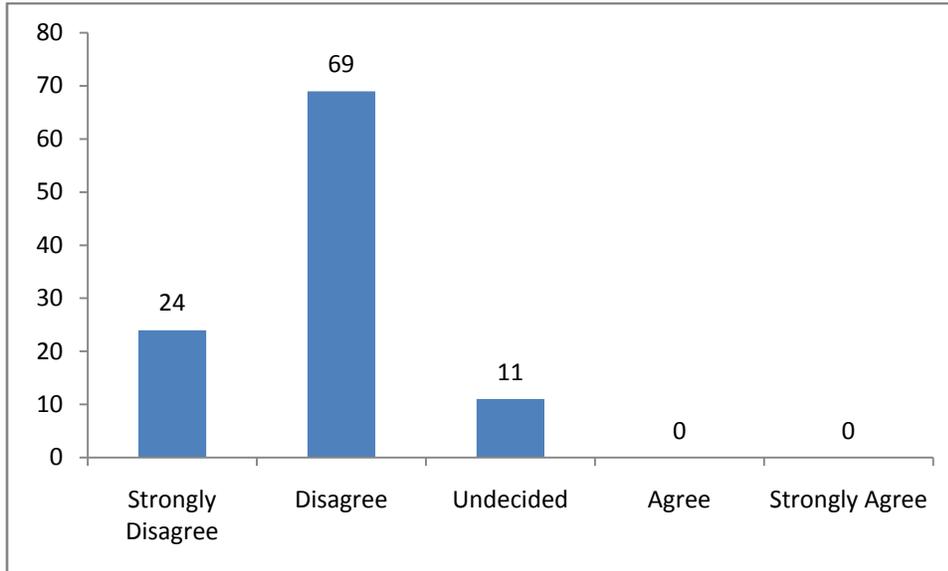
The respondents' answers reflect an array of responses. 8 of the 104 candidates strongly disagreed with the statement that Business Studies is boring. On the other hand 15 of the respondents agreed with the statement that the subject is boring. More than a third of the respondents were undecided on this factor, and 33 of the total 104 respondents, which is just less than a third were in disagreement with the statement that the subject is uninteresting. This information is not useful as there are a number of other variables that may have come into play, for example, the section of the syllabus that had just been taught or the manner in which it had been delivered.

This particular question highlighted some interesting results when compared across the three schools that were researched. Only one school answered with strong disagreement, and another school answered the strongly agreement sentiment. Therefore, there is an indication that other variables such as type of teacher involved and other issues and not just boredom may have been caused by the subject itself.

### Timetable constraints

Timetable constraints and the inability of fitting Business Studies into a learner's timetable was researched.

**Figure 13: Timetable constraints**



It is noteworthy that the learners did not see timetabling as a hindrance to their subject choice. This is a positive aspect, as it illustrates the point that schools are accommodating learners in their choices and are allowing individuals to pursue passions that they may have.

### **Business Studies is beneficial to a career in commerce**

The question of future career requirements and the benefits of taking Business Studies was posed to the respondents.

**Figure 14: Business Studies is beneficial to a career in commerce**

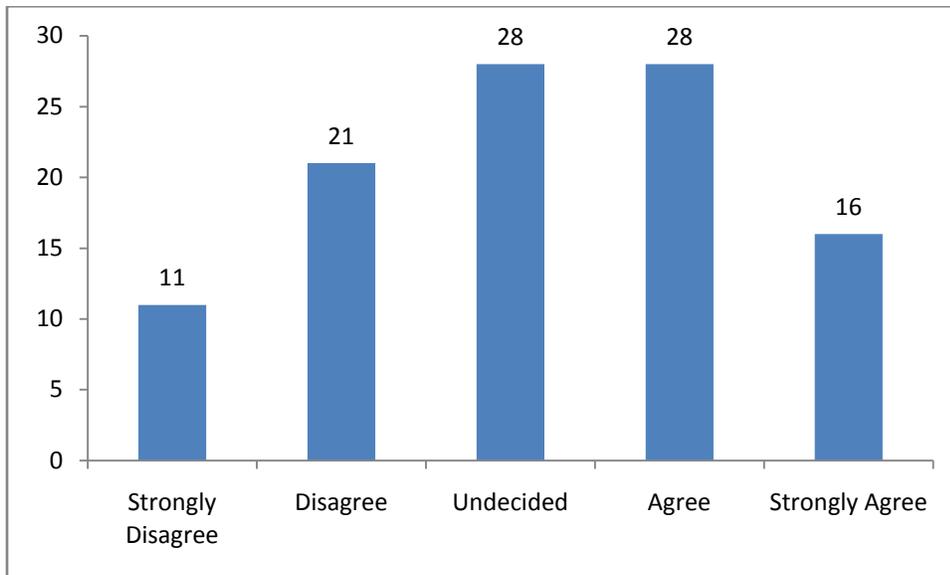
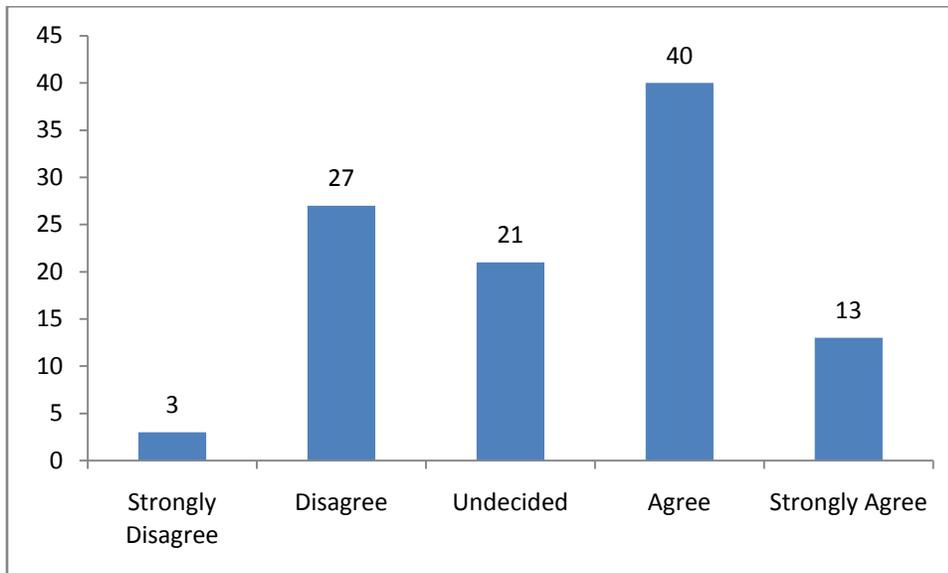


Figure 14, represents an almost perfect bell curve in its shape, showing that most of the learners were undecided as to which career they wished to pursue and hence whether Business Studies would be beneficial to them. The information gathered from this question is not pointing to any direction and thus not useful in this research, except to indicate that one's future career may not be a determining factor in the choice of Business Studies such as the sciences are for many future careers.

### Friends are a pressure point

Friends play an integral part to a teenager's life. Hence, it is necessary that the question of peer pressure to be asked.

**Figure 15: Friends are a pressure point**



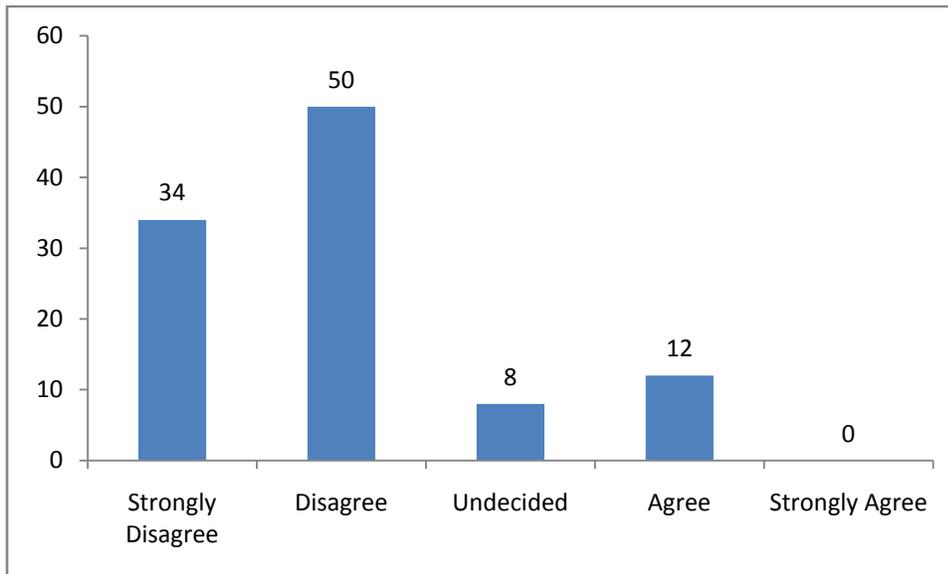
Only three respondents strongly disagreed with the statement that they chose Business Studies because their friends were taking Business Studies. There is also not much difference between the disagreement (27) and agreement (40) responses which indicates that friends do have some influence on whether or not an individual opts to take Business Studies as a subject. Less than a 20% (21) of the respondents were undecided or indifferent in this regard, either signifying that they did not have friends or that they were not affected by what their friends were doing in the senior grades.

Section C looks at factors that affect the choice of Business Studies. There were eight questions in this section which were also rated using the Likert scale. The researcher will plot the graph of the respondents answers to each of these questions and then highlight the deduction made from each one.

### **My parents have made the decision for me**

In conjunction with Figure 15, parents also play an important role in the learners' lives. The extent of their input into subject choice is important in this research.

**Figure 16: My parents have made the decision for me**



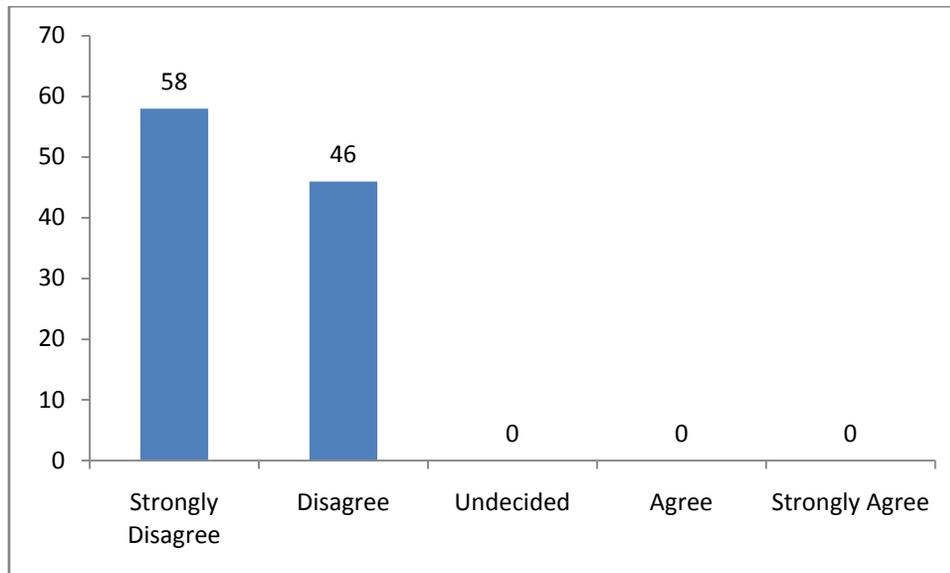
No respondents were fully convinced that their parents had made the decision for them, which is an interesting find. It indicates that parents are allowing learners the freedom to choose at a young age what interests them and what they enjoy. It may also indicate that parents think that teachers and school counsellors are more competent and capable of directing the learners' choices. This is a significant piece of information if we maintain that education is about developing a child in the area of their interest. This data is also supported by the high percentage of strongly disagreed answers and 50 disagreed responses. A handful of eight learners were undecided, this is insignificant and therefore not of relevance. Only twelve parents of the respondents made the decision for their children, which is relatively a small percentage and supports the 0% strongly agreed responses.

A certain amount of caution needs to be observed in complete acceptance of these findings. Learners of this age are often very defensive about their growing independence and the responses may have been affected by this.

### **My teachers have made the decision for me**

As teachers are the most active stakeholders involved in the education of the learners, especially in specialized subjects, this question was raised.

**Figure 17: My teachers have made the decision for me**



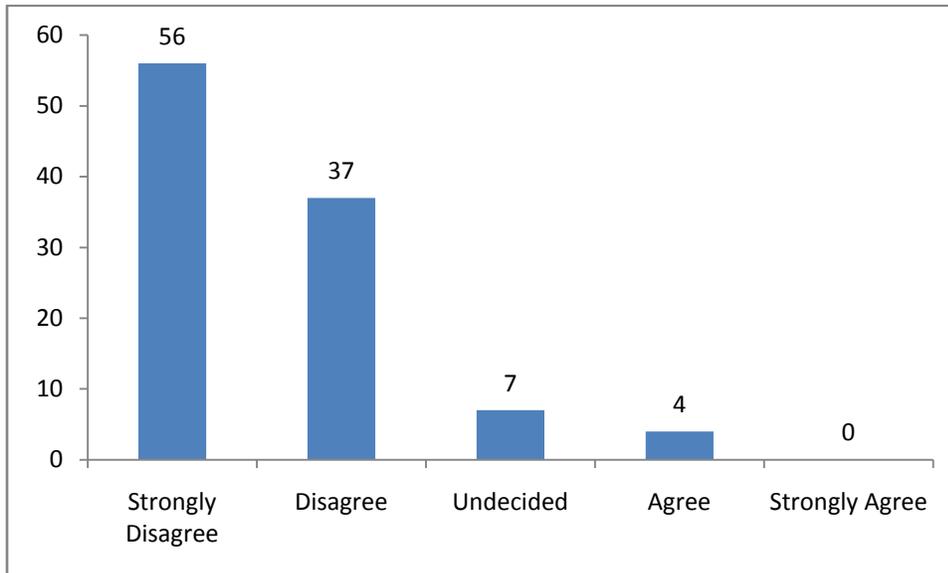
Of the 104 respondents 58 strongly agreed and 46 disagreed that their teacher had no role in deciding whether they should take Business Studies as a subject. There were no respondents who agreed with this statement. It therefore brings to mind the question of a teachers influence in the classroom on the choices that learners make.

The other inference to be drawn is that teenagers like to feel they are able to make choices independent of adult input.

## My friends have pressured me into taking Business Studies

Peer pressure is a real issue in today's world.

**Figure 18: My friends have pressured me into taking Business Studies**

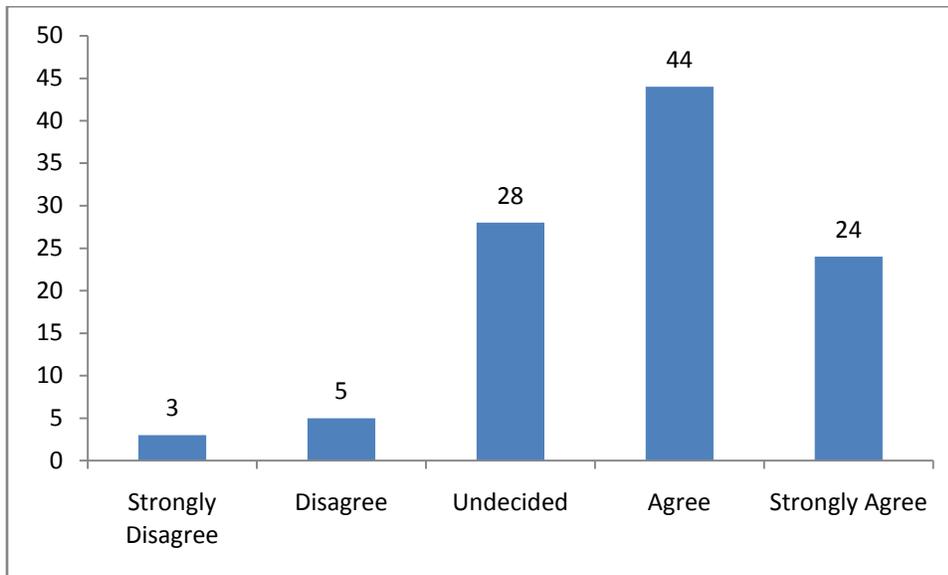


This question has revealed an interesting fact that 56 of the respondents felt that their friends had not pressurized them into taking Business Studies. This is affirmed by the fact that no respondents agreed with the statement. It may seem that learners feel an individual responsibility when choosing their subjects and are not swayed by peer pressure, or do not wish to acknowledge that they are.

### Good results in Business Studies

A learner's academic ability and performance influences a learner's confidence in a subject. This question sought to discover whether when higher results are maintained, learners are more eager to take the subject.

**Figure 19: Good results in Business Studies**



The attainment of good results yielded results that indicated that learners took Business Studies because of their academic achievement in the subject. This is confirmed by 24 respondents that strongly agreed and a further 44 respondents that agreed. Only 3 learners strongly disagreed with the statement along with a further 5 responses that also disagreed. This phenomenon may be due to the fact that academic results are the driving force of entering any tertiary institution and therefore learners are bearing future opportunities in mind.

### **Business Studies is a prerequisite for tertiary studies**

A learner's chosen school subjects are unequivocally important in determining the future areas of study one can follow in tertiary institutions. Commerce faculties in tertiary schooling have certain prerequisites for entering their field of study.

**Figure 20: Business Studies is a prerequisite for tertiary studies**

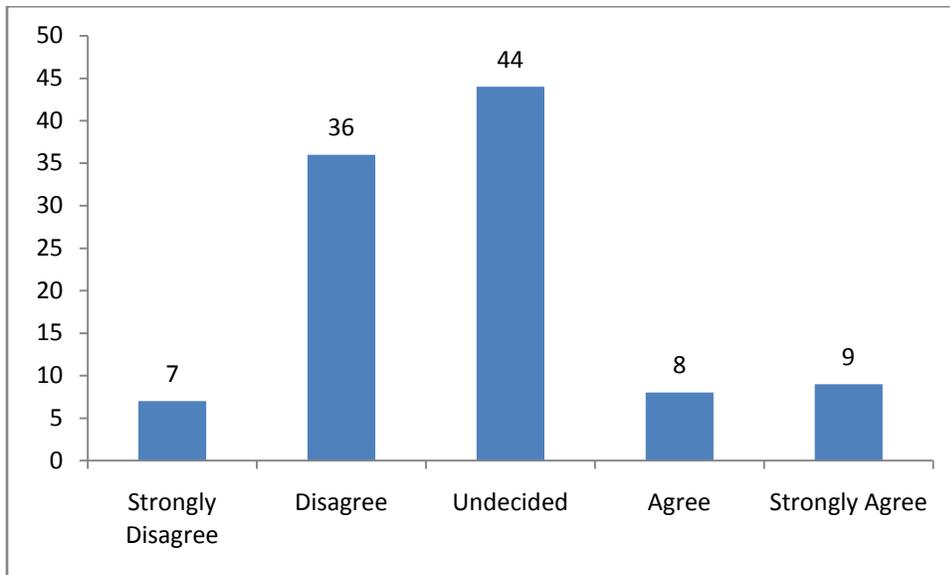
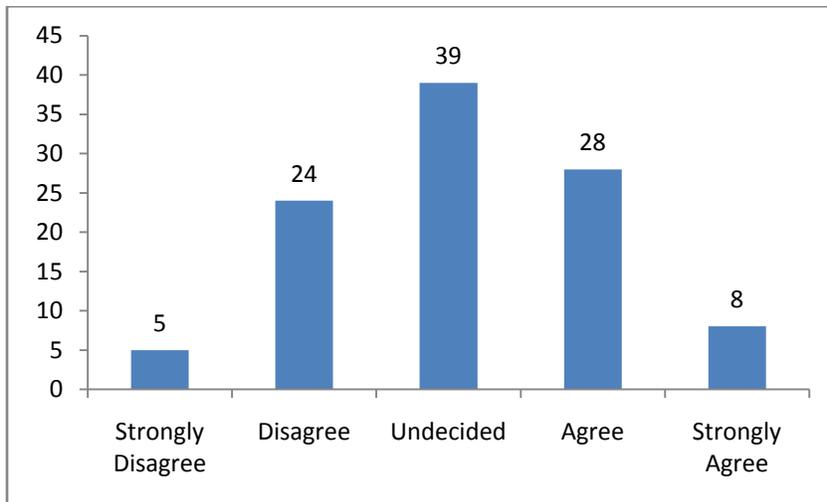


Figure 20 yields the highest undecided result of 44 which establishes the fact that learners did not know if they needed to have Business Studies as a subject requirement for their tertiary studies. It would suggest that learners need to better equip themselves with the demands and requirements for entering into certain faculties and careers. Learners' lack of knowledge in terms of future prospects reflects that many are also unprepared for the future.

**Figure 21: Good ability at writing reports as needed in Business Studies**

Business Studies requires a fair amount of report writing, which includes analyzing, synthesizing and evaluating unseen texts. A learner’s ability to apply this skill may determine his/her inclination or lack thereof towards the subject.

**Figure 21: Good ability at writing reports as needed in Business Studies**

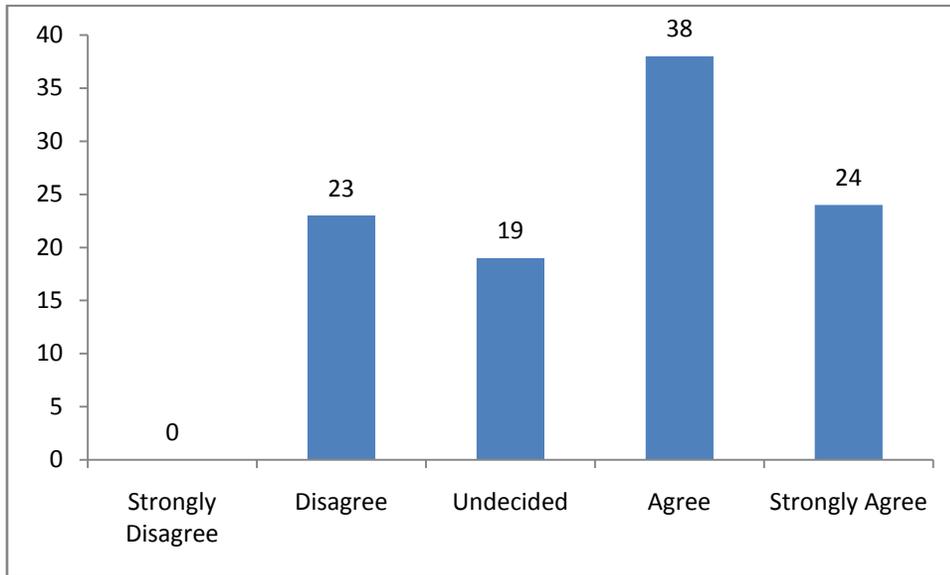


Business Studies requires analytical and critical thinking that is transferred into writing business reports. This exercise accounts for a quarter of the final matriculation mark. The low responses in the strongly agreed and strongly disagreed category indicates that learners may not have been aware of the importance of this skill. This is supported by the fact that highest response falls into the undecided category indicating that learners did not understand the intention of the question.

## There is a limited choice of subjects

Some schools provide limited subjects from which learners may choose.

**Figure 22: There is a limited choice of subjects**



None of the respondents felt strongly that the choice of subjects was limited. Although most learners, as illustrated by the agree and strongly agree bar, found that the variety and selection of subjects to be somewhat lacking in numbers and range. This opens up a whole new avenue in terms of what subjects learners actually want to be taught as opposed to the conventional academic collection now available.

### It is an easy subject in which to obtain high grades

Learners were asked to indicate if Business Studies was an easy subject in which to obtain high grades.

**Figure 23: It is an easy subject in which to obtain high grades**

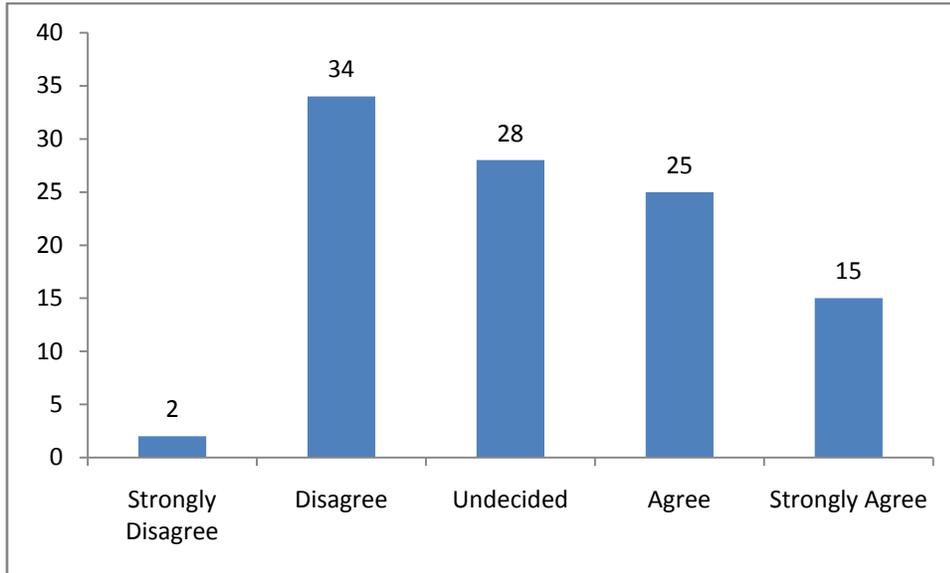


Figure 23 is the respondents' response to the ease of obtaining high marks in Business Studies. Only 2 of the 104 respondents felt strongly that this was not the case, thus alluding to the fact that it may be a difficult subject in which to excel. Over 40 learners had opposing views and saw it as an undemanding subject – as seen by adding the agree and strongly agree totals together. A high portion also reflected their uncertainty about this statement.

Data from the questionnaire were collated to discover whether there were any significant differences in responses between the three schools in the survey. However, no relevant difference was found between the responses from the three sources.

Those responses in which the majority of learners appear to be in agreement, and in which there were few undecided responses were those that affirmed that Business

Studies has value as a subject. (84 of 104 candidates, 80,76%)

The areas where the greatest disagreement was expressed with the statement were those in which information was sought about the influence of parents, teachers and peers. As in the open-ended questions and the one to one interviews the majority of learners expressed with absolute certainty, that these three parties had no part to play in influencing the selection of subjects. This runs contrary to the experience of other researchers. Reference will be made to this in Section 5.2.1.

A disturbing and important manifestation in analysis of the data from questionnaires was the large number of learners who placed responses in the “undecided” category. An example of this is that 41 of the learners (39,42%) were neutral as to whether they like or disliked the subject. Other issues about which they had no opinions were the level of difficulty of the subject (40 undecided responses, 38,46%), their opinion of current teachers of the subject (29 responses, 27,88%), whether they anticipated excessive homework (41 responses , 39,42%), there were too many projects to complete (44 responses, 42,30%) and if the subject might prove boring (37 responses, 35,57%).

This is a disturbingly high percentage which seems to indicate that learners are frequently ignorant about significant factors necessary for making a correct, informed decision.

This may be due to lack of specific career guidance about the subject prior to entering the FET phase, or it may be merely that some of the respondents had no intention or interest in further studies in the commercial field and wanted to follow entirely different professional or other careers. Recommendations 2, 3, 4 and 5 in Section 5.3 refer directly to these issues.

#### **4.2.2 Responses from open-ended questions**

Quantitative results were obtained from the second part of the students’ questionnaire where respondents were required to answer an open ended questions on their reasons

for choosing or not choosing Business Studies as a subject. Interviews were also conducted with learners from Grace College where they were asked similar questions as in the questionnaire. Those who answered it commented as follows:

- *Business Studies will help me later in life*
- *I make my own decision about which subjects I want to take*
- *I chose my subjects based on the amount of fun I have in that class*
- *It will help me start my own business*
- *Business Studies has too much learning*
- *Peer pressure and friends have no influence on my decision*
- *I ask my parents for advice but ultimately make the decision*
- *I will only take Business Studies if I am doing a commerce degree*
- *I base on my decision on whether or not I like the subject*
- *Parents have full say as they pay the school fees*
- *I look at my highest marks and then choose my subject based on that*
- *Teachers have no influence over which subject I choose*
- *My career choice has determined my subject choice*
- *Business Studies bores me, I want to become a Doctor*
- *Teachers, friends and parents are the biggest determinants in my subject choice*
- *I won't take Business studies because I am not passionate about it*
- *The workload does not affect my decision*
- *My dislike or like of the teacher has nothing to do with my decision*

These open ended questionnaires produced both positive and negative elements. A positive opinion expressed by a significant number of learners was that they felt Business Studies would definitely assist them in later life, particularly through the acquisition of life skills which prepared them for those aspects of life requiring economic and business know-how. A relatively high number of learners also mentioned the help it would provide for future entrepreneurial enterprises.

An unexpectedly high number of learners were adamant in their statements that they made their own decisions about choice of subjects for the FET phase. There was very

little acceptance of any element of peer, teacher or parental pressure. Only in a few isolated responses was there an admission that parents had an influence because they pay the school fees.

Some learners stated that they selected the subject because of the prospective element of enjoyment of the subject. There was also the idea that having obtained their best test and examination marks in subjects related to Business Studies, this might be continued if they chose Business Studies for the FET stage.

Future career paths also played a role for some in determining subject choice. Anticipated workload or like or dislike of future educators did not seem to play a role.

Amongst the negative responses recorded were that there was too much “learning” in the subject, the subject was “boring” and that it would not help them in the career they hope to follow.

#### **4. 3 Analysis of Qualitative results**

##### **4.3.1 Qualitative results: Educators**

Prior to conducting the research several Business Studies educators were consulted on the feasibility and practicality of conducting such research. There was a general consensus of opinion that this was a field in which exploration was necessary as very little specific work has been undertaken until now. (cf. Appendix C)

##### **Theme # 1 Choice of Business Studies as a subject**

What do you find to be the most significant determinant for learners choosing Business Studies in Grade 10?

Educator A expressed the view in relation to the above question:

*I feel that the Business Studies syllabus is too long. We have to cover too much and so are just touching the surface of concepts and not exploring them in depth. The learners do not like the fact that there is so much content to learn and this pushes them away from the subject.*

Educator B expressed the view in relation to the above questions:

*There is still the old Business Economics legacy of being a dumb subject. Especially parents or older siblings who took it BE in the past. There is a mindset that it is a lot of work. Maths and Science teachers who tell Grade 9s they are too dumb for their subjects and so must take Business Studies. Lack of understanding for the importance of it as a life skill. Parent perceptions that Accounting is more valuable a subject. The fact that less than 10% of all candidates who write Business Studies in matric through the IEB obtain distinctions. Older siblings also put their younger siblings off. Bad timetabling – often kids are forced to take, or cant as it is in same link as Science etc.*

Educator C expressed the view in relation to the above question:

*I would say that the learners choose the subject mostly based on who is going to teach it. They don't think about the necessity for future studies. It's all about which subject will require the least amount of work, which teacher do I like and will I get a decent mark.*

Educator D expressed the view in relation to the above question:

*They choose Business Studies because they want to go into a business orientated career when they finish school. Others choose Business Studies because of limitations on the choices available.*

Educator E expressed the view in relation to the above question:

*The relevance of the subject and often once parents know what the subject offers, they convince their children to take the subject. Parents often comment that they wish they had taken a subject like Business Studies at school. Some (wrongly) think it is an easy or soft option and that they will easily get an A – which is not the case. Children often choose a subject because they like the teacher. Other learners – Grade 9's often chat to Grade 10-12 about the subject and that could either be positive or negative (in favour of choosing it or they can*

*be advised not to take it). Another factor is that learners often look at their EMS mark and if it is not good, they don't choose Business Studies.*

## **Theme # 2 Challenges posed by fluctuating registrations**

What are the challenges experienced due to fluctuating numbers taking Business Studies?

Educator A expressed the view in relation to the above question:

*Class sizes change annually, and so buying more textbooks that are all the same editions from previous years becomes a problem. The class sizes can sometimes become too large and the school does not employ additional staff because it would not be financially viable to split the class into two.*

Educator B expressed the view in relation to the above question:

Learners who are not coping with Physical Science or Accounting move across during the year. This makes for large classes and additional resources. Year on year there are fluctuations of at least four extra learners into a grade. It just has a ripple effect, from expanding one's mark sheets to making additional copies of work to catching learners up on work missed.

Educator C expressed the view in relation to the above question:

*Timetabling becomes tricky and then teachers who are not trained in the subject are asked to take it as a filler.*

Educator D expressed the view in relation to the above question:

*Our numbers are fairly consistent and we tend to get more boys who change from other subjects during Grade 10.*

Educator E expressed the view in relation to the above question:

*One of the challenges is that you never feel quite secure in your job – if the numbers are too low, my school won't offer it for that specific year and if this*

*continues I will not have a job anymore. When numbers are very low in a particular year – it does create a negative perception of the subject and Grade 9 learners think because numbers are low and no-one wants to take the subject – it must be bad. Another challenge that we are experiencing for the first time this year is the information given by our Life Orientation department to the Grade 9's about overseas universities requiring learners to take one social science if they want to study overseas. This has made a lot of learners choose either History or Geography instead of subjects such as Business Studies, Consumer Studies or French. We have experienced the effect of this information on our numbers for next year. All three of the aforementioned subjects have numbers lower than 12 per class for next year. We are all very concerned about the future of our subjects and the future of our jobs.*

### **Theme # 3 Strategies to support grade 9 learners in their subject choice of Business Studies.**

Do you promote Business Studies to the learners in Grade 9?

Do you promote Business Studies to their parents?

Educator A expressed the view in relation to the above two questions:

*I try and keep up to date with current affairs and make sure that I use a lot of visual clips as the learners engage well with videos. I also start writing positive comments in the Grade 9 learners reports to encourage them to take Business Studies. I present a well planned and creative talk to the parents at the subject choice evenings and hand out a booklet to them with additional information on the importance of Business Studies. I have also started a Twitter account so that learners can engage with me and I tweet interesting articles.*

Educator B expressed the view in relation to the above two questions:

*Grow the subject by having fun aspects such as the outings, JSE game et. Cross curricular links to Geography, Life Orientation, Accounting, English also show the learners who relevant the subject is. Ensure that the speech you give at Careers evening/Subject Choice evening for Grade 9s is exciting and relevant to their*

*world. Employ nice teachers.*

Educator C expressed the view in relation to the above two questions:

*Make sure that your Life Orientation department or Career Counsellor knows the value of the subject and which faculties require this subject. Grow the subject by offering tours to Gauteng, where learners experience the heart of the economy. Start having inter-schools Business Studies competitions to ensure that all learners are extended.*

Educator D expressed the view in relation to the above questions:

*We have a school counsellor who they get advice from as well as doing various tests which assist them with their subject choice. The two Business Studies teachers talk to all the Grade 9s about Business Studies as a subject. We have a meeting with all Grade 9s and their parents where the various subjects available in Grade 10 are presented to.*

Educator E expressed the view in relation to the above question:

*We have subject choices evening – where each teacher presents their subject to interested parents. We each get given two time slots and parents come to our classrooms for a short presentation. However I think all parents must be exposed to presentations by all subjects – they shouldn't be choosing which presentations to attend as they are doing currently at our school. Our Life Orientation department also guide learners in their subject choices. I also refer to some of my past students (who are now studying) and I share their feedback on the relevance of the subject at varsity level with my grade 8s and 9s when I teach EMS. Most parents don't know what Business Studies entail – they think it is the old Business Economics. When I start sharing with them what the subject is all about, they seem very positive about it.*

#### **4.3.2 Qualitative results: Interviews with learners**

Interviews were conducted on a face-to-face basis, where open ended questions were

asked, with 20 learners from Grace College where similar questions as in the questionnaire were posed. Questions 1 to 4 and 6 all relate to the choice of Business Studies as a subject. Question 5 looks at the value of Business Studies as a subject at school level.

Some interviews were short, as the interviewees were not interested in providing more than monosyllabic answers, even after much coercion. Other interviews proved fruitful, as these students appeared to be decisive in their decisions and thoughts.

Below are some of the more useful responses received.

### **Theme # 1 Choice of Business Studies as a subject**

Why would you choose Business Studies as a subject?

Why would you not choose Business Studies as a subject?

What do you understand of the subject Business Studies?

Who or what is your greatest influence in choosing your subjects?

Who makes your final subject choice decision?

Learner A expressed the view in relation to the above questions:

*I want to own my own business, so I think it will help me. Business Studies will give me the knowledge I need to make a success of my own business one day.*

Learner B expressed the view in relation to the above questions.

*If I continue to get good marks then I will take it, if not, I will choose the easiest subject for me to get an A in. I ask my parents for advice but ultimately make my own decision.*

Learner C expressed the view in relation to the above questions.

*Because there is no other subject for me to take on that line. I am forced to take it.*

Learner D expressed the view in relation to the above questions.

*I won't choose it, even if it means having to move school. I hate the subject, I find it boring and uninteresting.*

Learner E expressed the view in relation to the above questions.

*I find the subject interesting, I love the business world. My dad owns his own business and he said I will run it when I am finished school. So I guess I think it will help me to make more money one day.*

Learner F expressed the view in relation to the above questions:

*I make my own decision about which subjects I want to take, my parents have no say in the matter, they let me choose.*

Learner G expressed the view in relation to the above questions:

*I would not choose Business Studies as a subject because the subject and teacher are too demanding of me.*

Learner H expressed the view in relation to the above questions:

*No one influences my decisions. I decided what subjects I want to take.*

Learner I expressed the view in relation to the above questions:

*Although I like the current teacher and that is my reason for choosing Business Studies I know it is not wise as the teacher may leave the school. But that won't stop me.*

## **Theme # 2 Value of Business Studies as a subject**

Do you think Business Studies would add value to your school career?

Why?

Learner A expressed the view in relation to the above question:

*Absolutely, I am hoping to learn as much as possible, so I do not have to go to University and go straight into my own business.*

Learner B expressed the view in relation to the above questions.

*Only if I get an A in the subject and gives me as many points as possible to enter into University.*

Learner C expressed the view in relation to the above questions.

*No*

Learner D expressed the view in relation to the above questions.

*No, because I do not like it.*

Learner E expressed the view in relation to the above questions.

*I am wanting to go and study a BComm so think it will help me get into University.*

Learner F expressed the view in relation to the above questions:

*Not sure.*

Learner G expressed the view in relation to the above questions:

*No, because I can't do the subject. It's too hard for me.*

Learner H expressed the view in relation to the above questions:

*Maybe.*

Learner I expressed the view in relation to the above questions:

*I hope so.*

The face-to-face interview responses produced similar results to the open ended questionnaires with the same common trends emerging. With this adolescent population however, as mentioned above, they were frequently unproductive. Learner C, F, G H and I were typical examples of the non committal responses received. Of the twenty learners who were interviewed, only nine were productive, as the others lacked depth and understanding of the questions. This may have been due to the fact that learners were not familiar with the procedure and therefore, for a number of reasons, not able to make the optimum contribution. Possible other approaches may be required in future research.

As noted in Chapter 2, in any social research, qualitative methodology may produce a wealth of significant information unobtainable through quantitative methods. The

interviews with the five Business Studies educators confirms this. Their intimate knowledge of the subject and their experience with day to day concerns surrounding the subject has contributed considerably to this study, particularly in providing a rationale for some of the quantitative findings and for substantiating most of the recommendations. Some of the areas in which they contributed valuable supportive material were about lack of information as well as misinformation on the part of parents, ill-informed decisions of learners and school administrative being such as effects of fluctuating numbers, time-tabling restrictions and staffing.

#### **4.4 Conclusion**

Presentation and interpretation of data were outlined in chapter four. Results of both qualitative and quantitative data were analyzed. The factors that affect learners choices in subject selection were highlighted. The recurring theme from the questionnaires and interviews is that learners perceive that they have the ultimate say in their subject selection and are ruled mostly by their own desires.

The educators' responses seemed to share the same trend of parents being misinformed, learners making ill-informed decisions and the school restrictions on timetabling being a factor.

The next chapter presents an overview of the study, summary, major findings and recommendations.

## CHAPTER 5

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents a summation of findings, conclusion and recommendations made. This research examined the factors that influence the selection choice of Business Studies at three Independent Schools in KwaZulu-Natal. The factors that were identified were found in review of literature and primary research conducted by means of questionnaires and interviews.

A direct outcome of this research has been that from this year, 2012, the researcher has providing a service to her learners of one to one interviews with professionals from 25 different fields. The aim of the event is to expose learners to the requirements to enter these said fields. This has resulted in the emergence of action research which was not anticipated initially.

#### 5.2 Summary of Main Findings

This section consists of a brief synopsis of each research question that was reviewed and explored. Data for the research questions came from two types of research, primary and secondary. The primary research consisted of a pilot study followed by questionnaires to 104 Grade 9 learners in three independent co-educational schools in the KwaZulu-Natal province, as well as interviews with 20 learners from Grace College, and five Business Studies educators from the three independent schools participating in the research project.

##### **5.2.1 Major findings pertaining to research question 1: What are the factors influencing the choice of Business Studies at independent co-educational schools?**

The following was established on analysis of responses from learners' questionnaires as well as the interviews conducted.

Educators' age, passion, expertise and knowledge were frequently the influencing factors when learners were making their choice of Business Studies. These findings are supported by those of earlier research projects such as Davies(2009), Marsh,(1986) ; Eccles & Wigfield, (2002) as quoted in Section 2.2.5.

Entrepreneurial parents are pushing for the subject to be taken by their children as they see the value of managing businesses of their own. Where parents are themselves entrepreneurs they will generally support Business Studies as a subject choice as they perceive it could make a considerable contribution to future careers. The findings of Mitchell, Nayager and van Zyl (2007:48) on this provide support for this view.

Where parents are not adequately informed about the nature of the subject this is likely to have a major impact on its choice as a subject. Reference to the role of parental engagement as being a key factor in securing higher student achievements and school improvement is found in several research studies – Department of Education and Early Childhood Development DEECD (2008); Desforges and Abouchaar, (2003); Harris and Chrispeels, (2006).

### **5.2.2 Major findings pertaining to trends in the increase/growth in Business Studies in Independent Schools?**

The following trends were identified in the number of learners choosing Business Studies as their subject choice.

Business Studies is one of the 29 designated subjects and hence is important for acceptance into tertiary education.

2001 saw just over 800 learners in South African Independent Schools taking Business Studies.

A curriculum change was implemented in 2005 and by 2008, 2 430 learners had now chosen this subject.

A slow but steady increase has occurred each year, growing to 2 636 learners who choose Business Studies in 2010.

This indicates that there is a sense of value attached to the subject of Business Studies.

Popular subjects such as Accounting and Geography have had higher figures than Business Studies in the past, but in 2010 Business Studies exceeded the number of learners taking Accounting by close on 500 candidates. See Figures 1 – 3 to illustrate these points.

### **5.2.3 Major findings pertaining to current challenges posed by fluctuating registrations in Business Studies?**

The following were identified:

Gender of learners may have an influence on the numbers selecting Business Studies as an FET subject. Some researchers have found that the female students are more likely to choose a subject where there is an already established number of their own gender taking it. (Ashworth and Evans, 2001; Davies, 2008:23). In the present research, within the three schools studies 45 males and 59 females have selected this subject. With this solid basis of female learners it is a likely expectation that the numbers of females will increase in future, thus contributing to a reduction in fluctuation of numbers. Gender assumptions identified that female student numbers only increased when there were already a large number of females taking the subject.

Literature studies have indicated that learners from higher socioeconomic lifestyles were more likely to participate in courses that are avenues to higher education and professions such as medicine, law and architecture. Learners from disadvantaged backgrounds tend to participate in courses that lead to skills training and vocational education. This coupled with the fact that Business Studies is not a pre-requisite for further commercial or business courses at any South African university may affect numbers selecting the course for FET studies.

Business Studies as an FET subject, has evolved from the previously offered Business Economics which was intended primarily for Standard Grade learners. Unfortunately, this perception is still prevalent today amongst both educators and

parents. This may be a deterrent for many to select this subject. Further reference to this is made in Section 5.3.1.

Parental involvement secures higher student achievement and school improvement. Parental expectations set the context within which young learners develop and shape their own aspirations. Hence, if a parent does not have sufficient knowledge of or is not interested in the corporate world, Business Studies will not feature as a prominent subject. Further reference to this is made in Section 5.2.4.

#### **5.2.4 Major findings pertaining to questionnaires answered by the 104 respondents?**

Demographics of the research were found to be consistent with South Africa's population and gender splits.

The majority of respondents were 15 years or younger, 62%

90.38% of respondents live in urban areas, thus indicating a higher level of socioeconomic class.

42.3% of respondents had a healthy enjoyment of the subject.

Most of the learners, 38,46% (40 respondents) did not know what their parents think about the subject of Business Studies

65 of the 104 respondents liked the fact that there were tours offered in Business Studies. This shows that learners are influenced by the possibility of a tour taking place and perhaps make their subject choice based on this one aspect of the subject.

The amount of work that is expected from the learners is a contributory factor influencing learners choice.

40 of the 104 respondents felt that there were too many projects to complete, and this is a negative factor in the selection of Business Studies as a subject.

No candidate agreed that there was any relevance and importance to the subject matter of Business Studies – this is a positive factor that influences more learners to choose this subject.

No students were able to think further than their own world of reference as not one mentioned timetabling constraints placed on the choice of Business Studies.

Peer pressure is a factor to consider as half of the candidates cited it as a reason for taking the subject.

Figure 16, which reflects the response of students to the statement “My parents have made the decision for me” indicates clearly that the majority of learners (84 out of 104) did not believe their parents had decided for them about the choice of Business studies as an FET subject. In the interviews with 20 Grace College learners a high number of respondents were adamant in their statements that they made their own decisions about choice of subjects.

These responses give rise to significant issues. Much of the literature reviewed in Chapter 2, Section 2.2.2 such as Deforges and Abouchaar, (2003); Harris and Chrispeels, (2006); Birenbaum-Carmeli, (1999); and others stress the pivotal role played by parents in securing higher learner achievement and leading to more proactive engagement in the teaching process.

Possible explanations for the unexpected nature of responses in this sample may be that parents are allowing learners the freedom to follow their own interests, or it may merely be that these adolescents value independence and are reluctant to state that their parents play a role. A further and significant explanation may be that parents do not have sufficient in-depth knowledge about the nature of Business Studies and that they are therefore reluctant to enforce their decisions. This should be an important consideration for school counsellors and educators who provide guidance about FET choice of subjects.

58 of the 104 respondents said that their teacher had no role in deciding whether they should take Business Studies as a subject. Hence, the literature reviews that suggested educators play a major role in the learners’ lives may not be entirely true. Alternatively learners may not have been aware of the extent of input of teachers.

The attainment of good results at the Grade 9 level yielded results that indicate that learners take Business Studies because of their academic achievement in the subject. This is a positive influencing factor then.

Future career paths did not seem to influence learners' decisions much because the majority do not know what they want to study at such a young age.

An issue common to all sections of the questionnaire which may be important in future planning is the large number of undecided responses to the majority of questions. A likely conclusion which may be drawn from this is that many learners did not know enough about the issues raised to be able to either agree or disagree with the statements made. This situation provides additional support for Recommendation 1, which concerns that need for parents, learners and educators to be provided with comprehensive information about the nature of Business Studies both prior and after selection of the subject for the FET course.

## **5.3 Recommendations**

### **5.3.1 Recommendations from the Research**

In summary, the major recommendations for the factors that influence the choice of Business Studies in this research are as follows:

#### **Recommendation 1**

**The following recommendation is made with special reference to parental involvement in grade 10 learners decision-making regarding Business Studies as an elective subject for career pathing.**

##### Motivation

From the discussion in this study, it is clear that parents play a vital role in their children's lives. The learners however, feel that this is not the case and assume they have the knowledge and expertise to make important decisions at a young age of 15. All schools should insist that parents have a role in the completion of the subject selection form for their children. Secondly, they should attend at least one career evening to gain as much information regarding possible career paths for their learners. Career guidance should be an ongoing process and parents need to become more involved in the process and play a participatory role.

This is of particular importance in the case of Business Studies which has emerged from a subject previously considered as one suitable only for less academically inclined learners. Parents, as well as educators from other disciplines need to be made aware of the significant upgrading of this subject into an academically demanding one requiring higher order thinking skills.

#### **Recommendation 2**

Independent Schools and parental partnership

##### Motivation

Independent Schools have their own challenges to face, such as shortage of skilled educators, limitations on class sizes, resource allocation, misguided perceptions and financial constraints. Managers of schools should have open communication with all their parents on these broader issues. In particular, the Grade 9 year should have at least three meetings where staff, learners and parents can interact and discuss the subject choices for the following year.

### **Recommendation 3**

Aptitude and interest tests

Motivation

A battery of Aptitude and interest tests should be conducted on all Grade 9 learners prior to their making subject choices. The results thereof need to be discussed in a consultation between parents, teachers and learner to ensure that the best suited subjects are chosen for the individual.

### **Recommendation 4**

Promoting the growth of the subject of Business Studies

Motivation

If the subject is to develop and expand, educators will need to adopt new strategies to attract and keep the right learners. Making the subject a vital, interesting experience will promote the attraction of prospective learners. The five educators interviewed made several valuable suggestions which should be considered seriously. These include, creating relevance of the subject for day to day living, keeping up with current affairs, use of exciting visual and electronic aids, inviting influential guest speakers as well as outing and trips to various significant concerns and agencies, business games and inter-school competitions. Cross-curricular links with other subjects such as Geography, Life Orientation and Accounting will also contribute to raising the status and popularity of the subject.

## **Recommendation 5**

Timetabling

Motivation

The academic timetable for all Independent Schools should only be set once learners have chosen their subjects so as to match each child with the best subjects for them. This individual tailoring may of course incur more costs for the schools.

Much of these suggested recommendations can be achieved through the offering of workshops which can be attended by learners, parents and the appropriate advisers.

### **5.4 Recommendations for Further Study**

Further research is recommended on the following aspects with the view to understanding the factors that influence Grade 9 learners' subject choices.

- Importance of life skills at school level.
- External pressures in decision making.
- Monastic schools versus co-educational schools.
- Parental involvement in subject choice at Grade 9 level.
- Value of Business Studies at school level.
- Adequate pre-selection preparation.
- Exploration of whether small group sessions with which learners are familiar may not be a productive research method to replace the one to one interviews with learners which in this study, proved to be unproductive.
- Research methods may need to be reviewed to discover whether other methodology such as action research which has the advantage of involving learners as co-researchers and which contains reflection and consequent adoption of change in the process, may not be more feasible in a school situation.

- Because perceptions and attitudes about a course of study are liable to change once a learner has commenced a course, a longitudinal study over the three FET years might reveal significant, valuable information necessary for dynamic change and improvement in approaches. This could perhaps be incorporated into the already mentioned action research programme.

## **5.5 Limitations To The Study**

The researcher appeared to place far greater value on the importance of Business Studies as a subject than they did the respondents.

The youthful age of respondents made the research challenging.

Time constraints of a school day played a negative part in conducting research as teachers are pressured to get through their syllabuses and not encourage to complete additional questionnaire sessions.

Long distance correspondence between the various schools and supervisors resulted in time constraints and communication difficulties.

Very little evidence of literature research as specific as this research was found. Literature was found which dealt either with other countries which have different syllabi or with graduate students rather than high school learners.

## **5.6 Conclusion**

In the light of this research, factors affecting the choice of Business Studies in the FET phase in three co-educational Independent Schools in KwaZulu-Natal were found to be inconclusive although certain trends were established. Literature that was found was not sufficiently supported by the answers gained from the respondents in this study. As a result of these findings, it is difficult to pinpoint one major factor that affects the choice of Business Studies, although many trends emerged which require further research.

Finally, it became apparent that subject choice at such a young and impressionable age may be detrimental to a child's tertiary education. Parental and school involvement must be more focused on the individuals' needs.

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## APPENDIX

### Appendix A Pilot study questionnaire

Dear Grade 9 learners

Thank you for assisting me in my Masters research.

Please complete this questionnaire as honestly as possible.

This is all done in confidentiality and there is no need to identify yourself by writing your names.

Tick the most honest answer.

When choosing your 3 subjects which factors most affected your choice.	
1 <sup>st</sup> Subject Choice:	
a) Parents	
b) Teachers teaching the subject	
c) Future – Careers	
d) Passion for the subject	
e) Good at it	
f) Friends taking the same subject	
g) Personal Preference	
2 <sup>nd</sup> Subject Choice:	
a) Parents	
b) Teachers teaching the subject	

c) Future – Careers	
d) Passion for the subject	
e) Good at it	
f) Friends taking the same subject	
g) Personal Preference	
3 <sup>rd</sup> Subject Choice:	
a) Parents	
b) Teachers teaching the subject	
c) Future – Careers	
d) Passion for the subject	
e) Good at it	
f) Friends taking the same subject	
g) Personal Preference	

## Appendix B

### QUESTIONNAIRE

Introduction:

This questionnaire seeks information on Grade 9 learners' subject choice of Business Studies.

The data gathered from this questionnaire is for research purposes only. Information supplied will be treated in strict confidentiality and personal details will be kept anonymous.

- *Please follow the instructions carefully.*
- *Respond to all 25 questions.*

**Instructions: Kindly circle the appropriate number on the questionnaire.**

#### SECTION 1: PERSONAL DETAILS.

1. Your gender:

Male	1
Female	2

2. Your age:

14 – 15 years old	1
15 – 16 years old	2
➤ 16 years old	3

3. Current geographical location:

Urban /Semi-Urban	1
Rural	2

## SECTION B: FEELINGS, ATTITUDES, VALUES, ABILITY AND SKILLS

Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with each statement listed below by circling the number that reflects your view according to Likert's scale:

1	=	Strongly Disagree	SD
2	=	Disagree	D
3	=	Undecided	U
4	=	Agree	A
5	=	Strongly Agree	SA

<b>Items referring to feelings, attitudes and values regarding subject choice of Business Studies</b>		<b>SD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>U</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>SA</b>
5	I like Business Studies as a subject	1	2	3	4	5
6	I feel that my parents think it is an easy subject	1	2	3	4	5
7	I like the teacher taking the subject	1	2	3	4	5
8	I like the fact that there is a tour offered	1	2	3	4	5
9	There is too much homework	1	2	3	4	5
10	There are too many projects	1	2	3	4	5
11	The teacher is too strict	1	2	3	4	5
12	I don't see the value of it	1	2	3	4	5
13	Business Studies is boring	1	2	3	4	5
14	I have no other options due to timetable constraints	1	2	3	4	5
15	I want a career in commerce so I think it would be beneficial	1	2	3	4	5
16	I enjoy the Business component of EMS	1	2	3	4	5
17	My friends are all taking Business Studies	1	2	3	4	5
<b>SECTION C: FACTORS AFFECTING THE CHOICE OF BUSINESS STUDIES</b>						
<b>Items refer to factors that affect the choice of Business Studies</b>		<b>SD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>U</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>SA</b>
18	My parents have made the decision for me	1	2	3	4	5

19	My teachers have made the decision for me	1	2	3	4	5
20	My friends have pressured me into take Business Studies	1	2	3	4	5
21	I am good at it and score high marks in the Business component of EMS	1	2	3	4	5
22	I need Business Studies for my Tertiary studies	1	2	3	4	5
23	I am good at writing reports that are needed in Business Studies	1	2	3	4	5
24	There is limited choice of subjects	1	2	3	4	5
25	It is an easy subject to get good marks in	1	2	3	4	5

**Section D**

1. Why would you choose Business Studies as a subject for the FET phase?

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2. Why would you not choose Business Studies as a subject for the FET phase?

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3. Who determines your final subject choice?

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---



---

4. Why do they determine your final subject choice?

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---

5. How much say do you have in the selection of subjects?

---

---

---

6. What is the biggest determinant in choosing your subjects?

---

---

---

7. What factor is not considered at all when choosing your subject?

---

---

---

Thank you for your co-operation.

## **Appendix C**

### Interview Questions

Structured questions to educators.

1. What do you find to be the most significant determinant for learners taking Business Studies in Grade 10?
2. What other contributing factors affect their specific choice of Business Studies?
3. Do you promote Business Studies to the learners in Grade 9?
4. Do you promote Business Studies to their parents?

Semi-Structured questions to learners

1. Why would you choose Business Studies as a subject?
2. Why would you not choose Business Studies as a subject?
3. What do you understand of the subject Business Studies.
4. Who or what is your greatest influence in choosing your subjects?
5. Do you think Business Studies would add value to your school career?  
5.1 Why?
6. Who makes your final subject choice decision?

## **Appendix D**

### **Letters of Permissions**

The following three signed letters of permission were obtained from the two educators who assisted in my research and my headmaster from Grace College.

**FROM THE DESK OF LISA AKERMAN**

40 Hutchinson Road  
Scottsville  
Pietermaritzburg  
3201  
5 July 2010

Dear Colleagues

**Re: Masters Mini Dissertation**

As you are aware, I am in the process of writing my Masters dissertation which entails a study documenting the factors that affect the subject choice of Business Studies in co-educational independent schools in KwaZulu-Natal.

I hereby request your permission to use your name, as a Business Studies educator at a co-educational independent school in KwaZulu-Natal. Questionnaires will be required to be completed by your Grade 9 learners to assist myself in the research process.

Please return an original signed copy of this letter for inclusion in the appendix of my Masters if you are willing to grant the permission.

Kind regards



Lisa Akerman

I, Tatiana Kotze, grant permission for my name/role as an educator of Business Studies at a co-educational independent school in KwaZulu-Natal to be documented for the purposes of the Masters research conducted by Lisa Akerman



Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: 03/08/2011

**FROM THE DESK OF LISA AKERMAN**

40 Hutchinson Road  
Scottsville  
Pietermaritzburg  
3201

5 July 2010

Dear Colleagues

**Re: Masters Mini Dissertation**

As you are aware, I am in the process of writing my Masters dissertation which entails a study documenting the factors that affect the subject choice of Business Studies in co-educational independent schools in Kwa-Zulu Natal.

I hereby request your permission to use your name, as a Business Studies educator at a co-educational independent school in Kwa-Zulu Natal. Questionnaires will be required to be completed by your Grade 9 learners to assist myself in the research process.

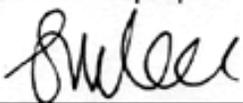
Please return an original signed copy of this letter for inclusion in the appendix of my Masters if you are willing to grant the permission.

Kind regards



Lisa Akerman

I, Sean Moore, grant permission for the name of the school, Grace College, be documented for the purposes of the Masters research conducted by Lisa Akerman.

Signed: 

Date: 30 September 2010

**FROM THE DESK OF LISA AKERMAN**

40 Hutchinson Road  
Scottsville  
Pietermaritzburg  
3201

5 July 2010

Dear Colleagues

**Re: Masters Mini Dissertation**

As you are aware, I am in the process of writing my Masters dissertation which entails a study documenting the factors that affect the subject choice of Business Studies in co-educational independent schools in Kwa-Zulu Natal.

I hereby request your permission to use your name, as a Business Studies educator at a co-educational independent school in Kwa-Zulu Natal. Questionnaires will be required to be completed by your Grade 9 learners to assist myself in the research process.

Please return an original signed copy of this letter for inclusion in the appendix of my Masters if you are willing to grant the permission.

Kind regards



Lisa Akerman

I, Annette Rheeder, grant permission for the name of St Nicholas College to be documented for the purposes of the Masters research conducted by Lisa Akerman.

Signed: ARheeder

Date: 2 May 2012

## Appendix E

### Letter of Consent

LETTER OF CONCENT

**Title: FACTORS AFFECTING THE CHOICE OF BUSINESS STUDIES IN THE FET PHASE IN THREE CO-EDUCATIONAL INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS IN KWAZULU-NATAL.**

I have received the letter of information to participate in the study. The details of the study have been explained to me and have satisfactorily answered all my questions about the study and I understand that I may ask further questions as the study progresses.

I understand that allowing for my responses to be used in this study I am contributing positively to a body of knowledge regarding the factors affecting the choice Business Studies in Co-Educational Independent Schools in KwaZulu-Natal.

I agree to provide information on the understanding that it is confidential; and that it is only to be used in this study.

I, *Tatiana Kotze*  agree / disagree (please circle your answer) to be a co-researcher in this study and administer the questionnaires to the grade 9 learners.

Signature:..........

Date: 11/ 07/ 2011

Please feel free to contact Lisa Akerman should you require any further information.

Cell: 083 796 1870

[akerman.lisa@gmail.com](mailto:akerman.lisa@gmail.com)

LETTER OF CONCENT

**Title: FACTORS AFFECTING THE CHOICE OF BUSINESS STUDIES IN THE FET PHASE IN THREE CO-EDUCATIONAL INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS IN KWAZULU-NATAL.**

I have received the letter of information to participate in the study. The details of the study have been explained to me and have satisfactorily answered all my questions about the study and I understand that I may ask further questions as the study progresses.

I understand that allowing for the questionnaire responses to be used in this study I am contributing positively to a body of knowledge regarding the factors affecting the choice Business Studies in Co-Educational Independent Schools in KwaZulu-Natal.

I agree to provide information on the understanding that it is confidential; and that it is only to be used in this study.

I, SEAN WOODS agree/ disagree (please circle your answer) that Lisa Akerman may administer the questionnaires to the grade 9 learners.

Signature: 

Date: 18.06.2012

Please feel free to contact Lisa Akerman should you require any further information.

Cell: 083 796 1870

akerman.lisa@gmail.com

## Appendix F

### Editorial Certificate

8 Sandringham Avenue

Pietermaritzburg

3201

15 June 2012

**Editing of Proposed Dissertation: FACTORS AFFECTING THE CHOICE OF BUSINESS STUDIES IN THE FET PHASE IN THREE CO-EDUCATIONAL INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS IN KWAZULU-NATAL to be submitted by Lisa Akerman.**

This is to certify that during the month of May 2012 I edited the above dissertation at the request of Mrs Akerman.

The editing took the following form.

1. Correcting of typing, spelling and grammatical errors and suggestions about revising sentences to ensure a better flow and use of more suitable academic language.
2. A few suggestions about relocation of material in order to ensure a more logical progression.
3. Queries about references to ensure that all direct quotes were acknowledged as well as were ideas from the various authors.
4. A few queries regarding intention of Mrs Akerman when certain ambiguities were detected.
5. Detection of a few cases of repetition of material.
6. General suggestions about layout of material, e.g. presentation of tables and their analysis on same page, length of paragraphs, numbering of sections.

Throughout, I was careful to ensure that I did not attempt to alter, amend, embellish or add to the analysis, findings, recommendations or content in general, so that this remained Mrs Akerman's own work.

Yours sincerely



Dr J.M Z Michau

MED PhD (Social Science)

Retired Senior Lecturer

UKZN

## Appendix G

Schedule of interviews with Grade 9 learners.

All interviews were conducted by the researcher, Mrs L Akerman. Each interview was held in classroom 9 for a maximum period of half an hour. The names of the learners are not disclosed for confidentiality purposes.

<b>Date</b>	<b>Time</b>	
Monday August 15 <sup>th</sup> . 2011	15H00	Interview 1
Monday August 15 <sup>th</sup> . 2011	15H30	Interview 2
Monday August 15 <sup>th</sup> . 2011	16H00	Interview 3
Tuesday August 16 <sup>th</sup> 2011	15H00	Interview 4
Tuesday August 16 <sup>th</sup> 2011	15H30	Interview 5
Wednesday August 17 <sup>th</sup> , 2011	15H30	Interview 6
Wednesday August 17 <sup>th</sup>	16H00	Interview 7
Wednesday August 17 <sup>th</sup>	16H30	Interview 8
Thursday August 18 <sup>th</sup> , 2011	10H00	Interview 9
Friday August 19 <sup>th</sup> , 2011	14H00	Interview 10
Friday August 19 <sup>th</sup> , 2011	14H30	Interview 11
Monday August 22 <sup>nd</sup> , 2011	15H00	Interview 12
Monday August 22 <sup>nd</sup> , 2011	15H30	Interview 13
Tuesday August 23 <sup>rd</sup> , 2011	14H30	Interview 14
Tuesday August 23 <sup>rd</sup> , 2011	15H00	Interview 15
Wednesday August 24 <sup>th</sup> , 2011	09H00	Interview 16
Thursday August 25 <sup>th</sup> , 2011	12H00	Interview 17
Thursday August 25 <sup>th</sup> , 2011	14H30	Interview 18
Monday August 29 <sup>th</sup> . 2011	13H30	Interview 19
Tuesday August 30 <sup>th</sup> 2011	14H30	Interview 20