CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

5.1 Introduction

This study investigated factors which are important to students and parents during their college selection. It also examined the levels of satisfaction of these students and their parents towards their chosen college.

This chapter offers a discussion of the results, outlined in the preceding chapters in two subsections: (1) the descriptive results of the degree of importance of the Institutional and Individual Choice Factors, and the satisfaction levels on these choice variables in relation to the chosen college (2) the inferential results according to each of the research hypothesis posited. Subsequently, the limitations of the study are presented.

5.2 Discussion of the Descriptive Findings of the Survey

The following section discusses descriptive findings of both the degree of importance and satisfaction of choice factors.

5.2.1 Discussion on the Importance of Choice Factors Considered by Students and Parents

The degree of importance of the respective choice factors derived from the means ratings together with its standard deviations are discussed.

For easy reference purposes, the three most important factors rated by students and parents are presented again in this section. Table 5.1 summarises these findings:
Table 5.1 The Three Most Important Choice Factors by Ratings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student</th>
<th>Parent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Choice Factor</td>
<td>Type of Factor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(1) Quality of Lecturers</td>
<td>Institutional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2) Student’s Decision</td>
<td>Individual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(3) Reputatiion of Twinning University</td>
<td>Institutional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(3) Reputation of Programme of Study</td>
<td>Institutional</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As presented in Chapter 4, results in terms of degree of importance shows that students in this study have regarded the “Quality of Lecturers” (Institutional Factor) as the first most important choice factor in their college selection process. Many previous studies of college choice, most notably the studies by Wanat and Bowles (1989) on high ability students, and the analyses on students of different academic ability by Annis and Rice (1993), Krukowski (1985), Coccari and Javalgi, (1995), and Braxton (1990) indicated “Quality of Faculty” to include qualified and experienced faculty, good teaching, and lecturer’s approachability. In their studies, this variable is most often selected as the primary reason for institutional selection. The present study which appears to be consistent with past research, suggests that “Quality of Lecturers” seems to be the most important choice factor in a student’s college selection process.

In this study, “Student’s Decision” (Individual Factor), is second in importance for students. In examining the degree of influence by significant others, both studies by Annis and Rice (1993) on students of varied academic abilities and by Wanat and Bowles (1989) on high ability students showed that despite students receiving different degrees of influence from various sources, the final decision of a college choice rests on
students. This consistency between previous studies and the current findings seems to suggest that most students of this generation appear to possess decision-making ability and hence they have been given the decision-making role to select a college of their choice.

"Reputation of the Twinning University" (Institutional Factor) and "Reputation of Programme of Study" (Institutional Factor), received the same ratings by respondents, and are third in importance to students in this research. There are important differences between these two factors as described in the survey questionnaire. While "Reputation of Twinning University" contains items such as "the University is well known, lots of research publication by its faculty staff and quality of its faculty staff", "Reputation of the Programme of Study" includes "prestige, good career prospects, alumni attained high societal and career status, high rate of acceptance into good postgraduate schools". As off-shore offerings of programme of study are limited compared to those offered by the main campus, there might be a tendency for local students to correlate the two factors. Consequently, the same ratings on these two factors are likely to be the result of the perceived association between these two factors by students. Previous studies by Chapman (1979), Krukowski (1985), Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching (1986) on different academic ability students and Wanat and Bowles' research (1989) on high achievers showed that students desired reputable institutions which were high in ranking for prestige, recognition of the institution name and of its excellent teaching faculty, research publications, good track records of desirable job placement and high admission rates into graduate schools for its graduates. Although previous studies did not separate these prestige-related items, all these institutional selection criteria are included in the measurement of the "Reputation of the Twinning University" and the "Reputation of the Programme of Study" in this study. Hence, consistency is noted between the past studies and the present research. This could suggest that
"Reputation of the Twinning University" and the "Reputation of Programme of Study" are among the most important choice factors considered by students in their college choice process.

Considering the ratings by parents presented in the preceding chapter, parents in this study have indicated "Quality of Lecturers" (Institutional Factor) to be the most important choice factor in considering a college. Previous research by Bowers and Pugh (1973), Litten and Brodigan (1982), Litten and Hall (1989), and Quade (1994) showed the same findings that parents of all educational and socioeconomic levels, are most concerned about value of education or academic quality with an emphasis on faculty capability in teaching and accomplishments. This consistency between the present and past findings highlights "Quality of Lecturers" as the essence of relating good knowledge to students and is indeed the most important factor regarded by parents in their college selection process and in their advice to students in selecting a college.

"Reputation of the Programme of Study" (Institutional Factor), second in importance to parents in this study, is supported by Krukowski's findings (1985) that parents were concerned about the prestige associated with their children's college education and what graduates could achieve after graduation. This is consistent with the present finding that parents regard "Reputation of the Programme of Study" as one of the most important choice factors, which entailing the same items as described in Krukowski's (1985) study on 'prestige'.

To parents, the third most important choice factors appear to be both the "Reputation of the Twinning University" (Institutional Factor) and the "Child's Decision" (Individual Factor).
In terms of the parent ratings of importance on the "Reputation of Twinning University", previous studies by Bower and Pugh (1973), and Quade (1994) are consistent with the current findings. Bower and Pugh (1973), and Quade (1994) stated that parents were most concerned about academic quality with focus on teaching, academic standards and other general qualities which are consistent with the measurement of the "Reputation of the Twinning University" in this study.

The very close ratings between the "Reputation of the Twinning University" and "Reputation of the Programme of Study", may again be the result of the perceived association between the twinning university and the programme of study of a twinning university as described in the preceding section. There is consistency between the present and past findings of parents regarding the status of a graduate and academic quality as the important choice factors in their college choice process. The status of a graduate and academic quality are measured in this research paper under "Reputation of the Twinning University" and the "Reputation of the Programme of Study".

Past literature on factors influencing the college choice process of parents did not research much into the importance of 'student's decision'. Only two past researchers have studied the significance of 'student decision' as regarded by parents. These findings by Wanat and Bowles (1989), and Annis and Rice (1993) had shown that the final decision of a college choice rested with students despite parents playing a pivotal role in influencing students in the College Choice Process. This is consistent with the present finding that parents regard their child's decision to be one of the most important factors in deciding a college. It could be that parents and students in this study have discussed the various choice factors along the College Choice Process and since students will be doing the study, their parents have left the final choice to them.
A comparison between the degree of importance regarded by students and by parents on the choice factors shows that these two samples regard the same choice factor, "Quality of Lecturers", to be the most important factor. Although the order of the second and third most important choice factors rated by students and parents was different, both students and parents had considered the following choice factors: "Reputation of the Twinning University", "Reputation of the Programme of Study" and "Student's/Child's Decision" to be the second and third most important factors in their institutional selection process. It is interesting to note the same choice factors have been considered as the three most important to both students and parents. Similarity could arise through discussions between students and their parents, or students could have relied on parental guidance, or vice versa. This has led to both students and parents in this study sharing similar opinions of what is important in a college and the selection process. These results are interesting in that they identify this large area of congruence.

Present findings differ from the previous results of Bower and Pugh (1973), Litten and Brodigan (1982), Krukowski (1985), Litten and Hall (1989), and Quade (1994) in terms of the differences between parent and student importance ratings. Previous research indicated that parents were more concerned about educational quality and academic outcomes, whilst students were more interested in quality of life issues (social) and the immediate benefits associated with college attendance. However, the present findings show that students, like their parents, are equally concerned about academic quality.

In terms of similarity between parent and student consideration of importance, results of the present study are supported by both Krukowski's (1985) and Quade's (1994) findings, which suggested that students and parents were equally concerned about prestige associated with their or their children's college education. In Malaysia, the
great value and significance attached to education makes it more likely that students and parents would place emphasis on prestige.

5.2.2 Discussion on the Least Important Choice Factors Regarded by Students and Parents

In terms of the least important choice factor, both students and parents in this study have considered the "Availability of Dormitory" as the least important choice factor. Examining the degree of importance of "Availability of Dormitory" by past researchers, Aniss and Rice (1993) showed that this was the second most important choice factor, while Galotti and Mark (1994) in their gender difference study suggested that female students had indicated the importance of the "quality of residence hall" and "diversity of residential options". These past studies are somewhat contradicted by the current findings, especially noting the fact that College A does not provide accommodation. It could be that the majority of the respondents of this study do not need to worry about accommodation while studying at College A. Results in the preceding section show that 64.1% of student respondents resided with parents, relatives and friends while the rest (35.9%) rented a room at the time of this research. This also suggests that those who rent a room are more concerned with other choice factors or it could be that an abundance of places are available for rent in the vicinity of College A.

5.2.3 Discussion on the Importance of the Five Local Choice Factors Rated by Students and Parents

An examination of the five choice factors which have not been researched before, and which are included in the present study, shows that both "Recognition of Programme of Study" and "Reputation of the Twinning University" have registered ratings above 4.0 (between "Quite Important" and "Very Important"), whilst "Availability of 3+0 Option", "Timing of the Starting of Programme", and "Country of the Twinning
University” have recorded ratings above 3.0 (between “Important” and “Quite Important”) by both students and parents. This implies that the above five local choice factors are quite important to students and parents in this study.

The importance of “Recognition of the Programme of Study” cannot be denied in this country. For graduates, in order to work in the local Government sectors or in some of the more established multinational organisations, the programme which they have graduated from must be recognised by the Ministry of Education and the Jabatan Perkhidmatan Awam (Public Services Department). Hence, the non-recognition of the programme of study can indeed restrict the career opportunities of its graduates in Malaysia. The importance of this factor is evident in the exploratory interview responses of Parent 1: “I considered whether the course is recognized by the Ministry of Education and JPA (Jabatan Perkhidmatan Awam = Public Services Department). To me, reputation of the university is not so important so long as the programme of study is recognised by local authorities because my child is going to work in Malaysia”.

As for “Reputation of the Twinning University”, the status of a university has significance in the recognition of the degrees conferred upon its graduates. A prestigious university degree tends to provide its graduates an edge in being accepted by more established organisations and with better remuneration. The importance of this finding is supported by the exploratory interview responses of Student 3: “the University of Wollongong Twinning Programme which I will be studying is a prestigious one and this is important to me”. Also, students and parents could have selected a private college because of its offer of a particular twinning programme from a particular twinning university. The exploratory interview responses put forth by Student 8 reveals this fact: “I wanted to continue my studies after my Accountancy Diploma…….., because RMIT twinning programme is reputable and since this is
offered at Metropolitan College, I chose this College". From these interview responses, students and parents appear to be aware of the distinction between "Reputation of the Twinning University" and the "Reputation of the College". From the results of the survey and the exploratory interviews, students and parents perceive the "Reputation of the Twinning University" to be a more important choice factor than the "Reputation of the College", and they tend to select the "twinning university" before deciding on the "college where the twinning programme is offered" in their college selection process. This is evident by the present findings that both students and parents have rated the "Reputation of Twinning University" higher than the "Reputation of College". Hence, the emphasis placed on the "Reputation of the Twinning University" by the local students and parents is clearly evident.

The "Availability of 3+0 Option" allows the financially less privileged to gain a foreign degree without having to go abroad for their undergraduate studies, thus reducing the cost of study. This choice factor is indeed important at least to certain segments of the population, namely the middle and lower income groups. The importance of the "Availability of the 3+0 Option" is supported by the exploratory interview responses offered by Student 1: "APIIT has a 3+0 degree programme with University of Staffordshire, UK.... The tuition fee is not too expensive and I can complete the whole course in Malaysia to save cost.". Results of the survey and the exploratory interview responses appear consistent and support the importance of the "Availability of 3+0 Option" to some local students and parents.

As explained in the preceding chapter, "Country of the Twinning University" entails two aspects of concerns: distance from home country and the currency exchange rate of the twinning university. Many students, and especially their parents are concerned about this factor as the majority of parents and some students will prefer a country which is
closer to home and a country with a lower currency exchange rate. As evident in the interview responses indicated by Student 9 on the significance of currency exchange rate of the twinning university: "I will consider country of the twinning programme.....

Since the currency exchange rates of the three countries I have mentioned are lower compared to some other countries, the tuition fee of these countries' twinning programmes and the tuition fee at the twinning university during the second part of the twinning course, should be cheaper". In addition to students' concern over this financial aspect, a previous study had shown that as parents are normally the key financiers of their children's education, they will probably rule out a programme of study if they cannot afford the tuition fee (Hossler and Schmit, 1992). Past research and the results of the present survey and exploratory interviews appear to support the financial aspect of the "Country of the Twinning University". As highlighted above, another aspect of the "Country of Twinning University" concerns the distance between the home country and the twinning university. The importance of this aspect is evident by the response of the exploratory interview offered by Student 6: "...... I prefer to go to Australia, it is not too far from home." Hence, the importance of the "Country of the Twinning University" as supported by the finding of the survey and the exploratory interviews cannot be denied in Malaysia.

In terms of the "Timing of the Starting of the Programme", both students and parents generally do not wish to waste time waiting for the next course of study to commence. This is supported by the interview responses of Student 6: "Sunway-Monash next intake was in February, the following year. Both Charles Sturt and RMIT would commence their programmes in September which I did not have to wait too long......". Consequently, it reflects this choice factor is indeed an important choice factor considered by students and parents locally.
As the above five local choice factors have not been researched in the past, it is impossible for the researcher to make any comparison. Nevertheless, the above findings suggest that the five local choice factors are indeed important variables considered by the local students and parents in their college selection process.

5.2.4 Discussion on the Ranking of the Three Most Important Choice Factors by Students and Parents

From the ranking of the three most important choice factors by students, it appears that "Student's Decision", "Tuition Fee", and "Quality of Lecturers" are regarded as the three most important choice factors to students.

This study shows that in general, students are most concerned about making their own decision as they are the ones who will go through the studies.

In terms of "Tuition Fee", previous studies appear to substantiate the present findings. Paulsen's (1990) findings, supported by Annis and Rice (1993), Galotti and Mark (1994), and Braunstein et al. (1999) showed that this is indeed one of the important factors considered by students in the institutional selection process. Annis and Rice (1993) further revealed that 43.9% of the respondents in their survey turned down Calvin College's offer due to the high cost of study at the Institution. Hence, "Tuition Fee" as one of the three most important factors seems to be consistent with previous research and it is a significant factor of college choice among students in this study. The importance of tuition fee cannot be denied as one will eliminate a college from the selection pool despite his or her liking it if he or she cannot afford the tuition fee.

"Quality of Lecturers" has been ranked as the third most important factor by students. This finding is supported by Krukowski (1985), Wanat and Bowles (1989), Braxton
(1990), Annis and Rice (1993), and Coccari and Javalgi (1995). A good teaching faculty is indeed important, as they are the instrument of knowledge transfer to students. Moreover, a student's potential could be better realised if he or she was under the guidance of quality faculty.

As presented in Chapter 4 on rankings by parents, the following are the three most important choice factors: "Tuition Fee", "Reputation of Programme", and "Reputation of Programme".

In terms of financial consideration, past studies have shown the impact of this variable on parents. Krukowski (1985), and Hossler and Schmit (1992) suggested that parents first weighed their affordability on tuition fee in deciding which institution to rule out. This finding by Krukowski (1985), and Hossler and Schmit (1992) is consistent with the present finding that parents consider "Tuition Fee" as one of the most important choice factors. Hence, it is not surprising that in Malaysia, courses are offered with a range of tuition fees by different private colleges, to cater to the different socioeconomic levels of the population.

"Reputation of Programme of Study" was ranked as the second and third most important factor by parents. As described in the preceding section, this finding is supported by Krukowski's study (1985) that parents emphasised on prestige associated with their children's college education and the education outcomes. In view of parents being the financiers of their children's education in most cases (except scholars and financial aid recipients), it is understandable that great emphasis is placed on the value of education by parents in Malaysia, as it is believed to translate into career opportunities for their children later.
Except for "Tuition Fee", it is important to note all the above factors ranked by students and parents have also been rated as most important. Although a comparison with the ratings of importance by students and parents show that "Tuition Fee", has not been selected as one of three most important factors, however, the ranking has picked up this choice factor. While ratings of importance present the three highest mean scores on specific choice factors rated by respondents, rankings require the respondents to choose three factors from the 29 choice variables presented. These two measures capture different aspects of importance considered by respondents. The combination of these two measures is intended to make the study more complete in capturing all choice factors regarded as important to students and parents. The findings on "Tuition Fee" indicate that individually it is rated as important, yet when ranked in comparison, it emerges as the factor of second ranked importance for students and first ranked importance for parents. This suggests that while "Tuition Fee" is an important choice factor for both students and parents, other factors such as "Student's Decision" and "Quality of Lecturers" are considered more important in the College Choice Process. It is interesting to note that "Reputation of Programme" and "Student's Decision" have appeared as the three most important choice factors by rating and by ranking. This shows that these three are also common important choice variables as the significance of the importance is reflected and confirmed by both measurements of rating and ranking.

5.2.5 Conclusion on the Importance of Choice Factors Considered by Students and Parents

From the findings on the three most important choice factors, the present study has found that students and parents in this research are serious about the choice of college education with an emphasis on academic quality. This, in turn, is reflected by their concern about the benefits of college attendance. Also, parents in this study appear to
have confidence in their children's choice of a college and hence, they appear to have
left the college decision making to their children.

Additionally, findings by rankings further suggest that certain segments of the student
and parent population do seriously consider finance and whether programmes offered at
a particular college are recognised by local authorities.

The above findings indicate that academic quality, prestige, student's/child's decision,
and tuition fee are indeed criteria considered by the students and parents during their
institutional selection process.

5.2.6 Discussion on the Degree of Satisfaction with the Chosen College

This section examines the respondents' awareness of the availability of college
resources and their satisfaction levels with the chosen college.

As described in Chapter 4, frequency distribution and percentage of the responses were
used to examine the respondents' awareness towards the availability of the college
resources.

The high percentage (student: 93.8%, parent: 100%) recorded for the awareness of
the "Availability of Programme of Study" indicated that College A's Marketing
Department has created great awareness of the programmes offered by the College and
the promotional strategies for this aspect of the College A's programmes appear to have
reached the public very well.

In terms of the awareness of the "Availability of 3+0 Option", a high percentage of
students (87.3%) and parents (96.6%) are aware of this option of study being available
at College A for certain fields of studies. However, some students (12.7%) and a small percentage of parents (3.4%) need to be informed of the availability of this cost-saving option of study. This may increase the student population in higher years of studies as some may decide to complete the entire course of study at College A instead of transferring to the twinning university in Years 2 or 3.

A fairly large percentage of students (70.7%) and parents (71.4%) are aware that College A provides scholarships/financial aids to its students. Yet considering the importance of this factor, it is surprising that a substantial number of students (29.3%) and parents (28.6%) are yet to be informed of the scholarships awarded by and the financial assistance provided by College A to its students. The substantially high level of unawareness of the scholarships/financial aids may have affected the satisfaction levels indicated by some parents and their children who are academically eligible but financially needy. However, it could be that this 29.3% of students and 28.6% of parents are those who do not need external financial assistance and hence, have not made an effort to find out about this offering. Nevertheless, an increase in the awareness of this aspect of resource availability will enhance the College's image and student population.

As for awareness of "Availability of Dormitory", a high percentage of students (88.0%) and parents (87.7%) are informed that the College does not provide hostel facility. This implies that at least a small number of students (12.0%) and parents (12.3%) in this study are not aware that College A does not provide dormitory facility and which in turn, suggests the fact that this small percentage of students and parents indeed do not need such a facility.
As there is no previous research published on the measure of resource availability, this aspect of study cannot make any comparison with the past.

The following section discusses the degree of satisfaction of the three most important choice factors of the chosen college rated by students. Using means and standard deviations derived from statistical tests, satisfaction levels of respective choice factors are compared. Table 5.2 below summarises the three most satisfactory choice factors of the chosen college rated by students.

Table 5.2 Summary of the Three Most Satisfactory Choice Factors of the Chosen College Rated by Students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Choice Factors</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(1) Student’s Decision</td>
<td>4.05</td>
<td>0.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2) Reputation of the Twinning University</td>
<td>3.95</td>
<td>0.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(3) Country of the Twinning University</td>
<td>3.93</td>
<td>0.88</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Students in this study appear to be most satisfied with their own decision of choosing College A. This is followed by their satisfaction shown towards the "Reputation of the Twinning University". This finding shows that students after learning more about their twinning university through their studies at College A, still feel positive about their twinning university in terms of its status, faculty staff and research publications generated by its faculty members. The positive image shown towards their twinning university could be the result of the twinning university's faculty staff being at College A every semester to deliver 33% of the course content of a semester. Also, it could be due to College A's effort in highlighting its partner university's reputation. The third most satisfactory choice factor rated by students is the "Country of the Twinning University". As both programmes under study are Australian Programmes, it implies
that students in this study are satisfied with College A’s choice of offering twinning programmes with Australian universities and that they prefer to go to Australia to complete the second part of their studies rather than any other countries. Or students could have preferred to gain an Australian qualification, or the currency exchange rate of Australia is lower compared to those of many other countries, thus making the Australian Programmes more affordable to students.

The following section discusses the three most satisfactory choice factors of the chosen college rated by parents and the results are summarised in Table 5.3 below.

Table 5.3 Summary of the Three Most Satisfactory Choice Factors of the Chosen College Rated by Parents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Choice Factors</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(1) Child’s Decision</td>
<td>4.09</td>
<td>0.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2) Recognition of the Programme of Study</td>
<td>4.05</td>
<td>0.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(3) Reputation of College</td>
<td>4.02</td>
<td>0.74</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Parents in this study have indicated their highest degree of satisfaction with their children’s decision on College A. “Recognition of the Programme of Study” appears to be the second most satisfactory choice factor among parents. This implies parents in this study are aware that programmes of study pursued by their children have been approved by the local authorities and hence, they are satisfied that College A offers programmes of study which are recognised by the relevant authorities. The third most satisfactory choice factor rated by parents is “Reputation of the College”. This finding reveals that College A appears to be quite highly regarded by parents whose children are currently studying at this college.
Comparing mean scores of satisfaction levels between students and parents, it is interesting to note that both students and parents have regarded the same choice factor to be the most satisfactory variable, that is "Student's / Child's Decision". From the preceding section of importance, the same choice factor has also been regarded by both students and parents to be one of the three most important choice factors. It appears that both students and parents not only consider it important that children should select the college but they seem to be most satisfied with the decision as well.

Incidentally, while students in this study are more satisfied with the twinning university in terms of its reputation and country, parents are more satisfied with issues concerning local conditions such as the recognition of programmes offered at College A by the local authorities and the status of the College.

Using one-way ANOVA, the satisfaction means of student and parent ratings of the various choice factors were compared. As depicted in Table 4.4, significant difference is found only on the "Reputation of College" with parent ratings significantly higher than those of the students'. It could be that students learning at College A have found that the College has not completely met up to their expectation. Hence, parents in this survey are more satisfied with the status of College A than students. Apart from this, students and parents in this study appear to hold similar opinions on their satisfaction towards other choice factors of College A.

From the student and parent mean ratings of 3.55 and 3.70 respectively on the overall satisfaction of College A, this indicates that students and parents are satisfied with the College on the whole.
Discussion on the three Least Satisfactory Choice Factors of the Chosen College Rated by Students and Parents

Table 5.4 below summarises the three least satisfactory choice factors of the chosen college regarded by students and parents.

Table 5.4 Summary of the Three Least Satisfactory Choice Factors of the Chosen College Rated by Students and Parents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student</th>
<th>Parent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Choice Factor</td>
<td>Mean</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(1) Scholarship / Financial Aid Amount</td>
<td>2.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2) High School Counsellors Influence</td>
<td>2.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(3) Tuition Fee</td>
<td>2.79</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Comparing the means of satisfaction levels of students and parents, students in this study indicate “Scholarships/Financial Aid Amount” to be the least satisfactory choice factor. This is followed by the “High School Counsellor Influence” as the second least satisfactory choice variable. The third least satisfactory choice factor rated by students is “Tuition Fee”.

An examination of the satisfaction ratings by parents shows that parents in this study indicate the least satisfactory choice factor to be the “High School Counsellor Influence”, followed by the “Scholarships/Financial Aid Amount”. “Alumni’s Influence” has been recorded as the third least satisfactory factor perceived by parents.

Comparing the mean scores of student and parent ratings on satisfaction, it is interesting to note the parity between student and parent ratings in terms of the least and second least satisfactory choice factors: while the specific order of these factors is different, the two least satisfactory choice factors are the same: “Scholarships/Financial Aid
Amount" and the "High School Counsellor Influence". As presented in the preceding section, 29.3% of students and 28.6% of parents are unaware that College A offers scholarships/financial aid. The less satisfaction expressed by students and parents on the "Scholarships/Financial Aid Amount" could be due to the unawareness of the availability of the scholarships/financial aid, or dissatisfaction with the financial aid amount that is already available.

The indication of less satisfaction with the "High School Counsellor Influence" rated by students and parents could be that information provided by the high school counsellors is inaccurate or irrelevant to their college selection and that they could have finally relied on other sources of information or influence to decide on the present college. According to the Marketing Department of College A, until September, 2002, they had not conducted any school visits to meet and provide high school counsellors with information on the College and courses offered. Prior to September, 2002, College A's marketing strategies had focused on other promotional activities which they believed to be more effective. This survey was conducted between March and April, 2002, which was before College A paid any visit to high schools' counsellors. Hence, it could be that the high school counsellors, due to lack of information provided by College A, had not informed students and parents about College A and its courses in the past. Consequently, these students and parents who finally joined College A and had participated in this survey, indicated less satisfaction towards the "High School Counsellors' Influence".

The more interesting finding is that it is students and not the parents who are third least satisfied with tuition fees. This could be because students have found that their learning experiences at College A did not match their expectations in terms of value for money. Further research is needed to identify reasons for this dissatisfaction.
The "Alumni's Influence" has been rated as the third least satisfactory choice factor by parents in this study. While the reason behind the low ratings on this choice factor is less obvious, it could be that parents have not had much opportunity to contact College A's alumni for feedback on the twinning university and programmes, and feedback on College A for their consideration during the college selection process. The Marketing Department confirms that College A has not so far arranged for alumni to meet up with prospective students or parents of potential students. The lack of contact from this source of influence could have resulted in parents indicating less satisfaction on this choice factor.

As there has not been any research found on the assessment of comfort levels on the chosen college, the researcher of this study is unable to make comparison.

5.2.8 Discussion on the Satisfaction of the Four Local Choice Factors Rated by Students and Parents

The satisfaction ratings on the four local choice factors are summarised in Table 5.5.

Table 5.5 Summary of the Satisfactory Ratings on the Four Local Choice Factors Rated by Students and Parents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student/Parent</th>
<th>Choice Factor</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Dev.</th>
<th>Choice Factor</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Dev.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student</td>
<td>(1) Reputation of Twinning University</td>
<td>3.95</td>
<td>0.83</td>
<td>(1) Reputation of Twinning University</td>
<td>3.97</td>
<td>0.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(2) Recognition of Programme of Study</td>
<td>3.82</td>
<td>0.92</td>
<td>(2) Recognition of Programme of Study</td>
<td>4.05</td>
<td>0.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(3) Country of Twinning University</td>
<td>3.93</td>
<td>0.88</td>
<td>(3) Country of Twinning University</td>
<td>3.93</td>
<td>0.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(4) Timing of the Starting of Programme of Study</td>
<td>3.51</td>
<td>0.94</td>
<td>(4) Timing of the Starting of Programme of Study</td>
<td>3.69</td>
<td>0.86</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As described in Chapter 4, the "Availability of 3+0 Option" is rated for its awareness but not satisfaction as this is a discrete variable. Hence, only the satisfaction means of the remaining four local choice factors are compared. These four choice factors are: "Reputation of Twinning University", "Recognition of Programme of Study", "Country of Twinning University", and "Timing of the Starting of Programme of Study".

An examination on the student mean ratings shows that students are satisfied with the four choice factors with all four registering a rating above 3.0. In fact, as described in the earlier section of this chapter, "Reputation of the Twinning University" and the "Country of the Twinning University", are rated second and third most satisfactory by students.

As for parents, they are satisfied with the above four variables, especially with the "Recognition of Programme of Study". While parents are "Satisfied" with the "Reputation of the Twinning University", "Country of the Twinning University" and the "Timing of the Starting of the Programme of Study", they are most satisfied with the "Recognition of Programme of Study".

From the satisfaction findings regarded by students and parents, it is suggested that the two samples are satisfied with the twinning university which College A has collaborated with in terms of prestige and the location of the university. Parents' expression of high satisfaction with the "Recognition of Programme of Study" is consistent with the fact that all programmes offered at College A are approved by the local Statutory Bodies. In terms of timing, both students and parents are satisfied with the starting time of the programme of study.
Comparison between the four satisfaction means of students and parents using one-way ANOVA has not detected any significant differences as shown in Table 4.4. This indicates that students and parents in this study do not differ in their levels of satisfaction with the four locally relevant factors of their chosen college.

As satisfaction levels with the chosen college regarded by students and parents have not been investigated in the past, no comparisons can be made.

5.3 Discussion of the Inferential Findings of the Survey

The following section discusses the inferential findings of this study according to each of the research hypothesis.

5.3.1 Discussion of the First Hypothesis

**Male and female students do not differ in their emphasis on Institutional and Individual Factors during college choice process.**

Using one-way ANOVA, the means of the male and female students' ratings on the 29 choice factors were performed and compared. Significant differences between male and female students were found for four Institutional Factors, namely: "Availability of Field of Study", "Reputation of the Programme of Study", "Extra-Curricular Activities", and "Quality of Lecturers". No significant differences were found between male and female students' ratings on the Individual Factors. Therefore, the hypothesis is rejected.

Differences exist between male and female students' perception on the importance of four Institutional Factors, but no significant difference was detected between these two samples in the Individual Factors. In terms of previous research on gender-based differences in the college choice, Quade (1994) found no significant gender differences.
in terms of cognitive and affective factors considered by male and female students. According to Quade, her definitions of 'cognitive' and 'affective' are as follows: "if information about the item could be gleaned from written description of the campus or attained from other objectives sources, the item was considered to be cognitive. If the student needed to make a judgement call regarding the particular item, such as the ability to establish relationships on the campus, the item was labelled as affective" (Quade, 1994: 40). Quade's 'cognitive' factors seem to refer to 'objective' items which are similar to the definitions of Institutional Factors in the current study. In this sense, Quade's (1994) study seems to support the current findings in that significant differences are only found in the 'objective' variables between males and females.

In the present study, male and female students appeared to hold different opinions on the importance of four institutional factors. Female students perceived "Availability of Field of Study", "Reputation of Programme of Study", and "Quality of Lecturers" as more important than do males while male students placed higher emphasis on the "Extra-Curricular Activities" than do females. The first three institutional factors stated are academic and prestige related in nature whilst "Extra-Curricular Activities" entails campus-organised athletic and social activities. The academic-related aspects of the current finding on the three institutional factors emphasised by female students seem to gain support from Quade (1994). Quade's (1994) study showed significant differences between men and women in the ratings of 'Faculty' with women rating 'Faculty' higher and than did men. According to Quade (1994), 'Faculty' contains items regarding quality of programme and faculty members, which are academic in nature. Hence, past findings by Quade (1994) seemed to be consistent with the present study. Another study conducted by Litten and Hall (1989) to examine the importance of academic and prestige related items such as teaching faculty and outcomes of graduates' educational attendance showed more males ranked 'well-established faculty' and 'success of
graduates’ as very important compared to females. Hence, contradiction in the past findings between Quade (1994), and Litten and Hall (1989) does not seem to consistently support the results of the current study, that is, the three academic and prestige related institutional factors being regarded as more important by female students.

In terms of “Extra-Curricular Activities”, Galotti and Mark (1994) suggested that females placed more emphasis than males did on ‘on-campus cultural events’ and ‘social atmosphere’. Although ‘on-campus cultural events’ and ‘social atmosphere’ are parts of “Extra-Curricular Activities”, however, the measure of “Extra-Curricular Activities” in this study has included campus-organised athletic activities in addition to social pastime. As “Extra-Curricular Activities” in this study has encompassed a wider scope of items, hence Galotti and Mark’s (1994) findings, though somewhat contradictory to the current study, are not exactly comparable to the results of the present research. Hence, it is difficult to conclude whether males or females will place more emphasis on this factor, although the current findings indicate male students regard “Extra-Curricular Activities” to be more important than do females.

While female students’ ratings on the three academic and prestige related institutional factors are higher than those of males, a closer examination on the mean scores of males shows that male students have rated both “Reputation of Programme of Study” and “Quality of Lecturers” above 4.0 and “Availability of Field of Study” close to 4.0 (3.92). This shows that while there are significant differences in the importance of institutional factors between males and females, male students in this study do place emphasis on the academic and prestige related issues, although lower than that of the females. The higher ratings on “Extra-Curricular Activities” indicated by male students
could be that males, being generally more extrovert by nature than females, tend to regard this attribute as being more important than do the female students.

Although no consistent findings between the present and past are found in terms of specific choice factors preferred by males or females, this study shows that male and female students do differ in their emphasis on institutional factors during college choice process.

5.3.2 Discussion of the Second Hypothesis

Students of different age groups do not differ in their emphasis on Institutional and Individual Factors during college choice process.

This hypothesis was tested using one-way ANOVA, comparing the means of student ratings from the three different age groups for each of the choice factors.

As described in Chapter 4, student composition in terms of age groups were different for both Programmes I and II. Hence, one-way analyses of variance were performed separately on the means of student ratings of these two programmes.

Results of Programme I reveal significant differences between five means, indicating students of different age groups do show different preferences in the choice factors. Four of the five choice factors registering significant differences are Institutional Factors, namely: “Availability of Field of Study”, “Availability of 3+0 Option”, “Availability of Dormitory”, and “Class Size”, while the fifth choice factor is an Individual Factor, being “Alumni’s Influence”.

Younger students from Programme I appear to emphasise on the importance of the “Availability of Field of Study”. This could be attributed to the fact that older students
who, being more advanced in their levels of studies have decided on the specialisations which they intend to pursue. While some younger students are still ambivalent about the directions of career goals, they feel the importance of the availability of ‘field varieties’, in case they should decide to switch their specialisation. In terms of previous studies on the ‘field of study’, Kohn (2000) found this variable had no influence on the selection of a college. Instead, ‘career goals’ and ‘vocational identity’ have an impact on the ‘field of study’. In this regard, Kohn’s findings (2000) seem contradictory to the findings of this study. Students in this research probably have chosen College A due to their preferred fields of studies being available at this College. Some younger students who have not decided on a specific field of study, and who probably have indicated the higher importance of “Availability of Field of Study”, may have chosen this college as they notice their probable field of study is available here. Comparing to situation abroad or to local public universities, local private colleges have a very limited range of course offerings. Therefore, students need to be fairly certain of their specialisation before entering a college. In spite of this, the results suggest that younger students are still ambivalent about their choice.

As there is no past research conducted to investigate the importance of ‘field of study’ as a function of age group, hence, no comparison can be made. —

Older students from Programme I regard the “Availability of 3+0 Option” to be more important than younger students do. Older students who have participated in this study are probably those in their third year of study and are currently under the 3+0 study structure. While students in a twinning programme generally hope to pursue their final part of the degree study at the twinning university in Australia, the financial standing of the family plays a deciding role to determine whether students get to complete their degree locally or abroad. Normally most freshmen (younger students) will indicate a
preference to pursue their final stage of studies in Australia. However, many are later compelled to complete their degree at College A as their families’ financial position does not allow them to continue their second stage of the degree study abroad. Consequently, older students who are unable or perceive themselves to be financially unable (Years 2, 3 and 4 students) to continue their studies abroad realise the importance of the availability of the 3+0 option. The 3+0 option is another avenue for such students to gain the same foreign degree as their course mates who are privileged to complete their final stage of the degree study at the twinning university. As there is no past research conducted to examine the importance on the “Availability of 3+0 Option”, the researcher is unable to present comparative studies on this area of study.

There is no consistent pattern of preference noted for the availability of dormitory for students of different age groups. The youngest age group of 17 to 19 and the oldest age group of 22+ appear to regard this choice factor to be much more important than the middle age group of 20 to 21. Among students from outstation who need hostel facility are the youngest students who are still new to College A vicinity and probably feel the importance of the availability of this resource. However, it is difficult to explain why the oldest age group regarded this choice factor as important as the youngest age group, while the middle age group did not perceive the same. A comparison between these three age groups in terms of types of residence and hometown does not reflect a correlation between these two variables. In terms of renting a room, the middle age group of 20 to 21 is higher in percentage than the youngest age group, and it is only slightly lower than the oldest age group. This pattern of renting a room (the importance of the availability of dormitory) is consistent with the demographic data of student hometown, with the highest percentage of oldest age group coming from outstation, followed by the middle age group, and the least from the youngest age group. Hence, it is uncertain why the middle age group does not regard the availability of dormitory to
be as important as the youngest and oldest age groups. Table 5.6 summarises the types of residence students were staying in and their hometown at the time of survey.

Table 5.6 Summary of Types of Residence and Hometown by Age Group

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Age Group 1</th>
<th></th>
<th>Age Group 2</th>
<th></th>
<th>Age Group 3</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>17 – 19 years old</td>
<td></td>
<td>20 – 21 years old</td>
<td></td>
<td>22+ years old</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RESIDENCE WHILE ATTENDING COLLEGE</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents’ House</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>68.4</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>56.2</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>54.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relatives’ House</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friend’s House</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Renting a room</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>26.3</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>37.5</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>40.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HOMETOWN</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Klang Valley (*)</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>57.9</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>54.2</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>42.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outstation (**)</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>42.1</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>45.8</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>57.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(*) Klang Valley consists of: Wilayah Persekutuan and Selangor

(**) Outstation consists of: Perak, P.Pinang, N. Sembilan, Melaka, Johor, Pahang, Kelantan, Terengganu, Sarawak, Sabah, Indonesia

In view of the relatively low rating by the three age groups on importance of "Availability of Dormitory" (Youngest 17–19: 2.18; Middle 20-21: 1.72; Oldest 22+: 2.17), and the relatively high percentage of students actually staying in rented premises (Youngest: 26.3%; Middle: 37.5%; Oldest: 40.0%), this seems to suggest that abundant rented premises are available in the surrounding areas of College A and that students can easily find accommodation.
As there is no past research to investigate the importance of the availability of
dormitory as a function of age, the current findings have no basis for comparison.

In terms of "Class Size" the youngest age group appears to regard this choice factor to
be much more important than the middle and oldest age groups. Students from the
youngest age group are generally in the lowest level of studies where class size is
usually much larger than higher levels of study. For every level of study, the number of
students in each class drops due to attrition and the splitting up of students according to
their fields of studies. Consequently, students of the youngest age group are generally
placed in larger classes. These students have probably indicated the importance of
smaller class size for better interaction, quality teaching and learning purposes. There is
not much difference in terms of importance of class size regarded by the oldest and
middle age groups although the oldest age group has indicated "Class Size" to be
slightly more important than the middle age group. In terms of previous research on the
importance of class size, Galotti and Mark (1994) suggested that class size had been
reported as one of the criteria used in an institutional selection decision. Also,
Krukowski (1985), Carnegie Foundation for Advancement of Teaching (1986), and
Coccari and Javalgi (1995) showed that students preferred small classes for
individualised attention and favourable student teacher ratio, attributes which are
essential for quality teaching and learning. However, none of these previous researchers
had examined 'class size' as a function of age, hence, there is no direct comparison
between current findings and previous studies in terms of age group differences.
Nevertheless, present findings seem to be consistent with past results in that "Class
Size" does appear important to students in this survey.

Significant differences are noted in terms of the importance of "Alumni's influence"
regarded by different age groups. The youngest age group appears to regard this
Individual Factor as more important compared to the middle age group, which in turn rates this as more important than does the oldest age group. In terms of past research, Litten and Brodigan (1982), Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching (1986), and Wanat and Bowles (1989) suggested that alumni were frequently sought by potential students for information on a particular college. These researchers had not examined the effect of alumni’s influence as a function of age. However, in a later study by Thou (2000), he showed that older students tended to make college decisions on their own compared to the younger ones. Based on the past studies by different researchers and viewing these findings collectively, the current findings are consistent with previous research - the youngest age group tends to rely on ‘influence’ and regards “Alumni’s Influence” as most important compared to the middle age group, which in turn rated this factor as more important than the oldest group.

As there is no past research conducted to examine the importance of these five factors as a function of age group, there is no basis for comparison to be made.

As significant differences are found between the importance of Institutional and Individual Factors perceived by students of different age groups, the hypothesis is therefore rejected. Hence, students of different age groups from Programme I do show differences in their preference for Institutional and Individual Factors. Students of different age groups have regarded one Individual and four Institutional Factors to be of different degrees of importance.

Findings derived from one-way ANOVA on Programme II students show no significant differences between the importance of the Institutional and Individual Factors as a function of age groups. Hence, the hypothesis which posits “students of different age
groups do not differ in their emphasis on Institutional and Individual Factors during college choice process” is therefore accepted for Programme II students.

Findings on Programmes I and II which consist of students of different age group compositions show no consistency in the effect on the importance of Institutional or Individual Factors during college choice process.

5.3.3 Discussion of the Third Hypothesis

Students of Year 1 do not differ from students of higher levels (Years 2, 3, and 4) in their emphasis on Institutional and Individual Factors during college choice process.

This hypothesis was tested using one-way ANOVA, comparing means of student ratings on each choice factor for the different year-of-study students.

As described in Chapter 4, student composition in terms of year-of-study was different for both Programmes I and II. Hence, one-way analyses of variance were performed separately on the means of student ratings of these two programmes.

Results of Programme I show significant differences between two means, indicating students of different year-of-study do show preference for two of the choice factors. These two are Institutional Factors, namely: “Availability of Field of Study”, and “College Environment”.

In terms of “Availability of Field of Study”, Year 1 students regard this factor as more important than students from higher levels do. The explanation here is that some of the Year 1 students may not have decided on their fields of specialisation and hence, they
feel the importance of this factor more than do higher levels of students. This is the same explanation for the importance of “Availability of Field of Study” as presented in Hypothesis 2. Generally, students in Year 2 and above would have decided on their major and hence, the impact on the importance of this choice factor might be less for Years 2, 3, and 4 students. In terms of previous studies on the ‘field of study’, Kohn (2000) found this variable had no influence on the selection of a college. While Kohn’s study seems contradictory to the current findings, students in this study could have interpreted the importance of “Availability of Field of Study” to mean that if the field of study they intended to pursue was not available in the first instance, they would not have enrolled at College A. Also, it could be that the local private colleges have a very limited range of course offerings compared with overseas institutions and the local public universities. Hence, students enrolling at local private colleges need to be certain about their specialisation. Despite this, results suggest that some Year 1 students are still uncertain about their fields of specialisation. As Year 1 students have just completed their college selection process, choice factors which they have considered in the institutional selection process should be clearer in their minds than those of students from higher levels of studies (Quade, 1994). Thus, it could be that Year 1 students’ ratings of the importance of “Availability of Field of Study” are in many ways a better representation of students’ preference. As there is no past research conducted to investigate the importance of “field of study” as a function of year-of-study, hence, there is no basis for the current research to compare its findings with.

Year 1 students in this study consider the “College Environment” to be more important than do students of higher levels. In terms of previous research, Galotti and Mark’s study (1994) had shown that ‘campus atmosphere’ was one of the criteria students used in their college decision making. Litten and Brodigan (1982), Krukowski (1985), Wanat and Bowles (1989), and Weiler (1994) found that another aspect of “College
Environment" important to students in their institutional selection was 'student composition'. As "College Environment" in this study has included other items such as safety and cleanliness in addition to 'types of students', it is natural for Year 1 students to regard this factor as "Quite Important", as they realise that they still have a few more years to go through the same environment until they graduate. Hence, current findings appear to be consistent with previous research as Programme I Year 1 (4.20) and Years 2, 3, and 4 (3.89) students in this study regard "College Environment" as "Quite Important" and "Important" respectively. As there is no previous research carried out to measure the importance of college environment versus year-of-study, the current study does not have a basis to compare its findings with.

In terms of Individual Factors regarded by different year-of-study students, no significant differences are detected. In this survey, students of different year-of-study from Programme I appear to hold similar opinions on the importance of Individual Factors.

Since no past studies have been conducted to examine the importance of choice factors as a function of Year-of-Study, there is no basis for the current research to make a comparison.

As significant differences are found in the importance of two Institutional factors, but not in the Individual Factor by Programme I students of different year-of-study, the hypothesis is therefore rejected. Hence, Programme I students of Year 1 differ from students of higher levels (Years 2, 3, and 4) in their emphasis on Institutional and Individual Factors during college choice process.
Findings derived from one-way ANOVA performed on Programme II students show significant differences between three means, indicating students of different year-of-study do show different preferences for two Institutional and one Individual Choice Factors. The two Institutional Factors are the “Availability of Scholarship/Financial Aids” and “College Environment” while the Individual Factor is “High School Counsellor Influence”.

Year 1 students in Programme II consider “Availability of scholarship/Financial Aids” to be more important than do students in Years 2, 3 and 4. With regards to past research on the influence of ‘financial assistance and scholarship’ on college choice, Chapman (1979), Wanat and Bowles (1989), Braxton (1990), Annis and Rice (1993), and Braunstein et al. (1999) had shown ‘financial assistance and scholarship’ to be one of the important components related to financial consideration during the institutional selection process. These researchers suggested that students and their families weighed the relative benefits of accepting financial packages and that their final decision was influenced by the college which could provide the highest financial assistance. In terms of the impact that the relative amount of financial aid has on an accepted applicant to enrol at any institution, both studies by Jackson (1978) and Braunstein et al. (1999) suggested an 8.5% increase and an 1.1% to 2.5% increase respectively in likelihood of enrolling a financial aid recipient. It could be that College A, knowing the significance of scholarships/financial aids, incorporates the implication of past findings to one of its scholarship criteria. College A Scholarships are to be awarded to prospective or Year 1 students (The Handbook of College A’s Scholarships, 2001). Consequently, Year 1 students of Programme II have indicated significant importance (3.37) of this choice factor in their college selection as they are still eligible for this scholarship offer. On the other hand, students of higher levels in Programme II rate “Availability of Scholarship/Financial Aids” as “Slightly Important” (2.84), which is lower than that of
Year 1 students and which is also lower than the average mean score of 3.0. Thus, the criteria stated above might have affected Years 2, 3, and 4 students of Programme II to rate this factor lower than it could have been rated if the survey had been conducted during their first year of studies. As no previous research had focused on the impact of 'scholarships or financial aids' as a function of year-of-study, the researcher cannot make a direct comparison of the findings in this study with any previous studies.

Consistent with the findings on Programme I students, Programme II Year 1 students appear to be more concerned with the “College Environment” than Years 2, 3, and 4 students. Year 1 students from Programme II had rated this factor between “Quite Important” and “Very Important” (4.40) while Years 2, 3 and 4 had rated the same variable as “Quite Important” (4.00). Same as the explanations offered for the importance of “College Environment” for Programme I students, it is natural for Year 1 students to regard “College Environment” to be more important than students from higher levels as they have to stay in the environment for a few more years until graduation. As for previous research examining the same choice criteria, Litten and Brodigan (1982), Krukowski (1985), Wanat and Bowles (1989), Galotti and Mark's study (1994), and Weiler (1994) had suggested 'campus atmosphere' and 'student composition measured by 'academic ability' to be important criteria students used in their college decision making. Similar to attributes defined in the studies by Litten and Brodigan (1982), Krukowski (1985), Wanat and Bowles (1989), Galotti and Mark (1994), and Weiler (1994), items measuring “College Environment” in this study are types of students in terms of academic ability, safety and cleanliness of the college. In general, current findings appear to be consistent with previous studies as Programme II students appear to regard “College Environment” to be “Quite Important”.  

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However, as there is no previous research specifically conducted to measure the importance of college environment as a function of year-of-study, current findings of Programme II students do not have a basis to compare its findings with.

In terms of Individual Factors, Programme II Year 1 students have considered “High School Counsellors’ Influence” to be significantly more important than do students from higher levels. With regards to past research on the influence of ‘high school counsellors’, previous studies have not reached a conclusive finding. Litten and Brodigan (1982) and Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching (1986) suggested high school counsellor’s to be influential on students in their college choice process as they normally serve as sources of information. However, contrary to the findings by Litten and Brodigan (1982), and Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching (1986), Annis and Rice (1993) indicated that half of the respondents in their study had not received any help from the high school counsellors. Previous studies appear to be supportive of current findings in that students from Programme II had rated this factor to be only ‘slightly important’ with Year 1 student ratings being 2.78 and Years 2, 3, and 4 student ratings being 2.28. This implies that students in this survey do not find “High School Counsellor Influence” to be very influential compared to other factors. Nevertheless, some of the student respondents in this study could have consulted their high school counsellors for course information. As no previous study had examined the effect of “High School Counsellor Influence” as a function of year-of-study, hence, it is difficult for the current research to make a comparison on this aspect of study.

Significant differences are detected between preference of Institutional and Individual Factors by students of different year-of-study in Programme II, therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected. Hence, Year 1 students of Programme II differ from students of
higher levels (Years 2, 3, and 4) in their emphasis on the Institutional and Individual Factors during their college selection process.

Except for "College Environment" which is regarded by both Year 1 students of Programmes I and II to be more important than do students from higher levels, the findings on Programmes I and II which consist of different student composition in terms of year-of-study show no consistency in their emphasis on the same Institutional or Individual Factors during institution selection process.

5.3.4 Discussion of the Fourth Hypothesis

Significant differences do not exist between the ratings by students of different academic ability on Institutional and Individual Factors.

This hypothesis was tested using one-way ANOVA, comparing means of student ratings of different academic ability for each of the choice factors. A statistically significant difference was found in "Availability of Dormitory", an Institutional Factor. However, no significant difference was detected in Individual Factors. Therefore, the hypothesis is rejected.

It is interesting to note that students of "Poor Academic Ability" seem to consider the "Availability of Dormitory" as more important than do "Average Students", who in turn have placed more emphasis on this choice factor than do students of "Good Academic Ability".

As described in the preceding section, previous researchers, Annis and Rice (1993), Galotti and Mark (1994) had examined the importance of 'Dormitory' and found this variable had impact on students' institutional selection process. While Annis and Rice
(1993) showed that this was the second most important choice factor for different academic ability students, Galotti and Mark (1994) suggested that female students placed more emphasis on the "quality of residence hall" and "diversity of residential options" than males did. However, from different ability students' ratings on "Availability of Dormitory" in this study, previous findings are somewhat contradicted by the present study. In this study, while significant differences are found in the importance of this variable among students of different ability, these students do not regard this choice factor to be as important as those of other choice factors in this study and those of past studies as well. "Good Students" (1.97) regard this variable as "Not Important" while students of "Average Academic Ability" (2.15) and 'Poor Academic Ability" (2.78) consider this choice factor as "slightly important". Consistent with earlier findings in the preceding section, "Availability of Dormitory" is the least important choice factor regarded by students. As described earlier, this could be due to housing, either with parents, friends or private rental being abundantly available in the vicinity of College A. Hence, students do not expect the College to provide dormitory.

Consequently, based on the importance ratings on this choice factor, no consistency between the current study and previous research has been detected in terms of the emphasis placed on this choice factor.

Also, in terms of past research investigating the effect of different academic ability on students affecting their consideration on 'dormitory', no such study has been found. Hence, the current findings do not have any basis to compare its findings with.

Comparing the ratings of the most important choice factor among different academic ability students, it is interesting to note that students of different academic ability concur in their choice of the most important choice factor. In this study, "Good", "Average", 195
and "Poor" students consider the "Quality of Lecturers" as the most important choice variable. Past studies by Wanat and Bowles (1989), and Fink (1997) suggested that high ability students preferred institutions which were high in ranking, with reputable academic faculty. On the same measure, Annis and Rice (1993), Krukowski (1985), Coccari and Javalgi (1995), and Braxton (1990) had shown that students of different ability had regarded the 'quality of teaching faculty' as one of the most important factors in their college selection process. Consistent with past findings, the current study shows that "Good", "Average" and "Poor" students regard this choice factor to be "Quite Important" with ratings above 4.0. It is interesting to note that students of "Poor Academic Ability" have considered this choice factor to be more important than "Average Academic Ability" students, who in turn regard this variable as more important than do the "Good Academic Ability" students. These findings suggest that not only do students of different academic ability place strong emphasis on "Quality of Lecturers", it appears that students of lower abilities appear to be more concerned about the quality of the teaching faculty than do high achievers. This could be that lower ability students feel that they need more and better guidance from good teaching faculty.

Conversely, the least important choice factor regarded by both the "Good" and "Average" academic ability students is found to be "Availability of Dormitory". To students of "Poor" academic ability, "High School Counsellors' Influence" is least important. As described in the preceding section, the importance of 'dormitory' examined by Annis and Rice (1993) showed that this variable was the second most important choice factor whilst Paulsen (1990) showed that the cost of dormitory had an impact on student evaluation of college choice. Galotti and Mark (1994)'s study suggested a gender difference in the ratings of this variable with females placing more emphasis on this factor. However, past research has not investigated the effect of this
factor as a function of student academic ability. Therefore, the current research does not have a basis to compare its findings with. In terms of "High School Counsellors' Influence", as presented in the preceding section, past research on the influence of 'high school counsellors' has not reached a conclusive finding. However, a previous study by Annis and Rice (1993) appears to support the current findings in that students of "Poor Academic Ability" had rated this factor to be only 'slightly important' (2.52). This implies that students of "Poor Academic Ability" in this survey do not find "High School Counsellor Influence" to be very influential compared to other choice factors.

Like 'dormitory', the effect of "High School Counsellor Influence" has not been examined by previous researchers as a function of student academic ability, hence there is no basis for the current findings to make a comparison with.

This section shows significant differences are found between the ratings by students of different academic ability on the institutional and individual factors, hence, the hypothesis is rejected. Students of different academic ability place different emphasis on Institutional and Individual Factors during their college selection process.

5.3.5 Discussion of the Fifth Hypothesis

Significant differences do not exist between student and parent ratings of Institutional and Individual Factors.

This hypothesis was tested using one-way ANOVA, comparing means of student and parent ratings for each of the choice factors. A statistical significant difference was found on one of the Institutional Factors namely, "Country of Twinning Programmes". No significant difference was detected in the Individual Factor. Therefore, the hypothesis is rejected.
As presented in the preceding section, parents (3.88) seem to regard the “Country of the Twinning University” to be more important than do students (3.57). As explained in the preceding section, the two aspects of concerns of this choice factor are distance from home country and the currency exchange rate of the twinning university. From the difference in the ratings by students and parents, these two aspects appear to concern parents more than students. Generally, parents prefer a country that is not too far from home with affordable cost of living and tuition fees. This survey examines students pursuing twinning programmes and their parents, and hence the majority of the students will study their final part of the degree studies at the twinning university. Hence, the distance between home the twinning university and the currency exchange rate are important to the respondents of this study, especially for parents who are the financiers of their children’s education in most cases. Parents too are concerned about the well being of their children when they are away from home. To the parents, if the distance between home and the twinning university is shorter and the cost of living is not too high, they can afford the airfare and a short stay at the city of the twinning university, should the need arise to pay their children a visit when they are studying there.

As this choice factor has not been examined by past research, the difference in the importance regarded by students and parents on “Country of the Twinning University” does not have past studies to make a comparison with.

Students and parents in this study seem to place different emphasis on “Country of the Twinning University” with parents showing more concern than do students. No other significant difference is found in other Institutional Factors. On the other hand, students and parents do not indicate any difference at all in their preference for Individual Factors. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected. Hence, significant differences exist
between student and parent ratings on the Institutional Variable, although not the Individual Factors.

5.3.6 Discussion of the Sixth Hypothesis

Institutional and Individual Choice Factors do not Contribute to Student and Parent Total Satisfaction with Their Chosen College.

Multiple regression technique was used to assess the extent to which Institutional and Individual Factors contribute to Total Satisfaction.

From the results of Coefficients derived from student samples, choice factors which register significant differences (P<0.05) are “Recognition of the Programme of Study”, “Family Members’ Influence”, and “Peers’ Influence”. Hence, this indicates that the “Recognition of the Programme of Study”, “Family Members’ Influence”, and “Peers’ Influence” are significant predictors of total satisfaction of students.

As presented in the preceding section, students in this study regard the “Recognition of the Programme of Study” as “Quite Important”. Being aware that the Government sectors and most established multinational organisations consider programme or degree recognition as one of the recruitment criteria, students place high emphasis on this choice factor as it relates to their career prospects. From the results of this study, students appear to be satisfied with the recognition of programmes by the Statutory Bodies at College A. An examination on the ‘status of recognition’ of programmes indicates 100% of the programmes offered at College A have been approved by the Statutory Bodies (Enrolment Department of College A, 2002). This fact explains why students are satisfied with this choice factor of College A and it supports current findings that “Recognition of the Programme of Study” is indeed a good predictor of student total satisfaction.
As for "Family Members' Influence", past studies conducted by Annis and Rice (1993) on ordinary students and by Wanat and Bowles (1989) on high achievers showed that 'family member influence' such as that of siblings and extended family members, had an impact on students' college selection process. Annis and Rice (1993) indicated that the third most influential person to a student was a family member other than parents, whilst Wanat and Bowles (1989) further revealed that a student tended to select a college if members of the family had attended the same college before. Past research seems to support current findings as students in this survey regard "Family Members' Influence" to be important (3.0). Students in this study appear to have been influenced by family members during their college selection process and that they are satisfied with this source of influence. "Family Members' Influence" seems to contribute to the student total satisfaction.

It is interesting to note that "Peer Influence" is a predictor of the total satisfaction. In terms of past research, Annis and Rice (1993) and Weiler (1994) suggested that peers were found to be influential and they served as sources of information. Contrary to this, Jackson (1978), and Gilmour et al. (1978) suggested that 'peer influence' had little impact on the type of institution selected. Hence, no conclusion could be drawn from past research on the impact of 'peer influence'.

Comparing past findings by Annis and Rice (1993), and Weiler (1994) with the current study, results seem to be consistent with the fact that peer influence does have some impact on student college choice process. Students in this study appear to have consulted their peers during college selection in the past and they have found this source of influence to be satisfactory. Hence, "Peer Influence" has contributed to the total satisfaction of students in this study.
Findings from the Student Model seem to suggest that students are generally satisfied with the following aspects in relation to college A: "Recognition of Programme of Study", "Family Members’ Influence" and "Peers’ Influence".

As for the measurement of the contribution of institutional and individual factors to parent total satisfaction, the same statistical technique, Multiple Regression was used.

From the results of Coefficients obtained from the Parent Model, none of the choice factors has recorded any significant difference (P<0.05). This seems to suggest that all the choice factors are not good predictors of Parent Total Satisfaction. The results from the Parent Model appear to be different from those of Student Model, none of the choice factors seem to be a good predictor. This could be due to the small sample size of the parents (N=58). Hence, it is difficult to conclude that choice factors are not good predictors for Parent Total Satisfaction.

Results of Multiple Regression show that the importance of three choice factors are good predictors of student total satisfaction. Students appear satisfied with "Recognition of the Programme of Study", and with the influence they received from family members and peers regarding College A during their college selection process.

Whilst none of the choice factors has appeared to be good predictors of parent total satisfaction, probably due to the limited parent sample size, the findings on the extent to which institutional and individual factors contribute to parent total satisfaction remain inconclusive.
The null hypothesis is therefore partially rejected. Some Choice Factors do contribute to the total satisfaction of students and hence, are good predictors of Student Total Satisfaction with their Chosen College. The results of Choice Factors as predictors for Parent Total Satisfaction is not conclusive.

5.4 Limitations of the Study

The College Choice Student Survey and the College Choice Parent Survey were created through exploratory interviews with local respondents as well as an analysis of relevant literature. For this research, as comprehensive an array of choice factors as possible was used on students and parents in their institution selection process. However, there could be others which have not been included in these survey questionnaires for the assessment of their impact on the college choice process.

The choice factors under the Individual Factors have not included other sources of influence such as media, college published promotional materials, university published programme materials and others. While the above sources of influence have shown effect on the college choice process of students and parents, the current study intended to focus only on the impact of the influence by significant persons. Hence, this study has not incorporated certain sources of influence for investigation. One point to note is that the influence of ‘Admissions Officer/Course Counsellors’ does not appear under the section on ‘Sources of Influence’. This choice factor is examined under the section on ‘Institutional Characteristics’ as “Friendliness of Enrolment Counsellors”.

The Student Survey does not measure “how many siblings are currently in or have graduated from the same college”. Hence, the significance of “Family Members’ Influence” on student college selection process in Hypothesis 6 cannot determine
whether the effect of this choice factor is the result of siblings' attendance at the same college, that is, the College A.

The 18% of response from parents (58 parents responded out of 327 questionnaires distributed) in this survey is low and consequently, the parent respondents may not be representative of a true random sample of the parents of students at College A. The parent respondents in this research probably represent parents whose children possess the initiative to pass on the questionnaires for their participation, as well as those who wished to express their opinion regarding their children's choice of college or who play a more active role in the college choice process of their children. Hence, findings from this research cannot be generalised. A larger and more representative sample is needed in future to allow some generalisation to be made. While the number of parent respondents participating in the survey is quite small, it is hoped that the initial study of parental influence has given some insight into their role in the college choice process.

College A offers only Business and Information Technology-related disciplines of study. Like most other private colleges in the country, the majority of its student is of Chinese ethnic background. Hence, student samples drawn from College A consist of students pursuing Business and Information Technology-related courses and the majority of them are Chinese. Thus, findings from this study may not be generalised to include other ethnic groups or students taking other fields of studies. Also, the student participation rate of 30% in this survey is low (260 respondents versus 867 undergraduates) and the nature of sampling which was pre-determined by College A, may not have generated student samples which were true random samples of undergraduates at College A. A larger and more representative sample is recommended for future study in order for its findings to be generalised. While the student samples in this survey may not be representative of College A's undergraduate population, it is
hoped that this study of institutional and individual factors has provided some insight into the effect of such variables in the college choice process.