



**EDUCATING FOR A PROFESSION: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL
CASE STUDY OF PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE PREPARATION
FOR NURSING FROM A SOCIOCULTURAL PERSPECTIVE**

A thesis submitted by

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Abstract

This thesis reports a study concerning a professional education program and involving 61 members of a cohort of nursing students and 13 nursing academic staff members working at a multi-campus university in Australia. The goal of the study was to investigate the essence of lived experiences in professional practice preparation, to construct theoretical understandings of the relevance of such experiences to future practice. Using the education of nurses at an Australian university as a case study, the research investigated the problem, “What does it mean to prepare for professional practice?”

The theoretical framework that informed the study engaged with complementary constructs of learning and development from a sociocultural perspective, and professional education, as understood through the thinking, respectively, of Lev Vygotsky (1978) and his followers, and Lee Shulman (2005) and his colleagues. The methodological approach deployed phenomenological case study research - a *fusion of hermeneutic phenomenology and case study methodologies*, specifically conceived for this investigation. Visual, written, spoken and observed data were analysed using an approach called a *phenomenological case study data analysis spiral*, also purposely developed for this research. Such methodological and analytical approaches enabled access to the complex and often tacit nature of the phenomenon under investigation, and they provided a means of interpreting participants’ lived experiences of preparing for professional practice.

The thesis explicated the social conditions needed and the distinctive characteristics of learning contexts that shaped and facilitated the students’ learning of professionally valued understandings, skills and dispositions. Four interrelated themes were revealed in the study, which represented key elements that influenced and enhanced the preparation of students for professional practice, namely: 1) the student and his/her personal qualities influenced educational outcomes; 2) bounding aspects of regulatory importance influenced the make up and administration of an academic program; 3) the social environment influenced and enhanced the learning journeys of students; and 4) domain-specific pedagogies influenced and enriched the professional formation of students. All four themes were interrelated and represented an aggregate of all participants’

interpretations and elements that they experienced as embodying their experiences of preparing for professional practice. Each theme contributed to a deeper understanding of the significance of experiences of preparing for professional practice at university, and the significance of such experiences for the contemporary enactment of professional practice in a professional field.

The thesis presented a sociocultural view of preparing for professional practice that may be used to develop further the process of engaging in professional practice preparation and, more broadly, the professional development of not only students but also of teachers and clinical facilitators.

Keywords: Australian university, communities of practice, data analysis spiral, higher education curriculum, nurse education, methodological fusion, nurse education, pedagogies for the profession, phenomenological case study, practice fields, professional education, signature pedagogies, sociocultural theory

Certification

This thesis is entirely the work of Nona Ida Press except where otherwise acknowledged. The work is original and has not previously been submitted for any other award, except where acknowledged.

Student and supervisors signatures of endorsement are held at USQ.

Patrick Alan Danaher
Principal Supervisor

Dolene Rossi
Associate Supervisor

Coralie Graham
Associate Supervisor

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Finally, I also acknowledge gratefully the invaluable support of the Australian Commonwealth Government Research Training Program (RTP) Fees Offset scheme during my candidature.

Dedication

It is with gratitude, love and affection that I dedicate this thesis to my eldest sister, *Mary Ann Vergara Querubin*, whose love for and dedication to her siblings, and whose belief about the emancipatory aspect of education have always shone glowingly, and without whose efforts and sacrifices during my formative years I would never have attained such an educational opportunity and accomplishments.

Her encouraging words like “Mag aral kang mabuti, Bong” [Study well Bong (my family nickname)] accompanied me throughout my educational endeavours as a lifelong learner. And more recently, her words that I cherish most are “Malayo na ang narating mo, Bong” [You have come a long way Bong], because I know that my sister is deeply proud of my educational achievements and of whom I have become as a person.

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List of undefined abbreviations

The following abbreviations were used in the data identification coding system:

CE-T	Casually employed teacher
DE	Distance education
FG	Focus group
FT-T	Fulltime teacher
I	Interview
OC	On campus
S	Student
T	Teacher

Publications and presentations related to PhD research

I published regularly in the process of framing my research problem and in the early part of my candidature, as the research problem took shape. My recent publications arose directly from my PhD research agenda. The following are my selected publications directly related to the thesis.

The following peer-reviewed paper was accepted at a premiere higher education conference in Australia, arising directly from my PhD research about the theme of professional education curriculum:

Press, N. & Padro, F. (2017). Educating for a profession: Curriculum as transformation and curriculum transformation. In *Curriculum Transformation, Proceedings of the 40th Annual Conference of the Higher Education Research and Development Society of Australasia*, 28-30 June. Sydney: HERDSA.

The following publications stemmed from my PhD research, in particular the idea and use of “Methodological Fusion” in interdisciplinary research, which I developed in the thesis:

Press, N. Rossi, D. Graham, C. & Danaher P. A. (forthcoming). Commonalities and variations in understanding doctoral supervision in two Australian universities: A collaborative autoethnography and an interdisciplinary, phenomenographic case study. In T. M. Machin, M. Clarà, & P. A. Danaher (Eds.), *Traversing the doctorate: Reflections and strategies from students, supervisors and administrators*. Proposal submitted to Palgrave Macmillan.

Kek, M., Hammer, S., **Press, N.**, & Stagg, A. (2016). How conceptions and experiences of design shape the development of academic developers' professional practice: A case study. *International Journal of Design Management and Professional Practice*, 10(1), 1-11.

The publications and the related outputs from the following highly successful funded research project, which I led, have played a significant part in cementing the direction of my PhD research to focus on professional education in higher education context. Please note that I was previously known as **Nona Muldoon**.

Muldoon, N., Kofoed, J. (2011). Exploring the affordances of Second Life machinima as an anchor for classroom-based apprenticeship, *International Journal of E-Learning*, 10(4) 419-439.

Muldoon, N. & Kofoed, J. (2009 July). Cognitive apprenticeship in accounting education: Preparing students for the profession. In *The Student Experience, Proceedings of the 32nd HERDSA Annual Conference* (pp. 296-305). Darwin: HERDSA [[Edith Cowan University Best Paper Award on Authentic Learning](#)]

Muldoon, N. & Kofoed, J. (2009 June). Second Life Machinima: Creating new possibilities for curriculum and instruction. In *Proceedings of World Conference on Educational Multimedia, Hypermedia & Telecommunications* (pp. 2243-2252). Hawaii: AACE [[EDMEDIA Outstanding Paper Award](#)]

Muldoon, N., Jones, D., Kofoed, J., & Beer, C. (2008 December). Bringing 'second life' to a tough undergraduate course: Cognitive apprenticeship through machinimas. *Hello! Where are you in the landscape of educational technology. Proceedings ASCILITE Melbourne 2008* (pp. 653-657.)

The following examples of research and scholarly work have likewise foregrounded and/or influenced my PhD research agenda, all of which concerned the education of future practitioners. Hence, my research and scholarship have always been in partnership and collaboration with experts in different disciplinary fields:

Bricknell, L. & **Muldoon, N.** (2013). Rethinking online teaching and learning: A case study of an approach to designing an online learning environment. *The International Journal of Technology, Knowledge and Society*, 8(4), 33-48. [[Environmental Health Education](#)]

Ralph, N., Birks, M., Chapman, Y., **Muldoon, N.**, & McPherson, C. (2013). From EN to BN to RN: An exploration and analysis of the literature. *Contemporary Nurse*, 43(2), 225-236. [[Nurse Education](#)]

Purnell, K. & **Muldoon, N.** (2012). Informed prescription and informed professionalism in geographical education. *Geographical Education Vol 25, 2012*, 29-38. [[Geographical Education](#)]

Parkes, R.J., **Muldoon, N.** (2010). The tutorial as cognitive apprenticeship: Developing discipline-based thinking". In R. Cantwell and J. Scevak (Eds.), *An Academic Life: A handbook for new academics* (pp 55-64). Camberwell, VIC: ACER Press. [[Teacher Education and Accounting Education](#)]

Muldoon, N. & Lee, C. (2008), Formative and summative assessment and the notion of constructive alignment. In S. Fracklad (Ed.), *Enhancing learning and teaching through assessment: Deriving an appropriate model* (pp. 99-143). Dordrecht: Springer. [[Accounting Education](#)]

I also presented and sought feedback about my PhD research at various higher education symposia and professional education summits.

Prologue

I would like to open this thesis by sharing my brief biography as a researcher. In doing so, my affiliation with the research and my motivation for undertaking this project are illuminated.

My doctoral research project symbolised a significant personal milestone that began when I was encouraged by a well-respected Professor in Education over a decade ago to seek out a career in academia. Being an academic, the good Professor explained, would allow me to fill the gap in my then professional role because belonging to an academic community would legitimise my interest in scholarly work in pursuit of a substantive research agenda. It turned out that this advice was messianic zeal-like, the fruits of which I continue to enjoy today. Indeed, my doctoral research project and this thesis embodied what being an academic and belonging to an academic community meant. Together they symbolised a solid manifestation of the title of “academic” because undertaking the doctoral research and completing this thesis represent my personal development as a scholar and a sense of belonging in the academy as a *bona fide* academic taking part in a discourse of societal importance.

But why this research project? My interest in pursuing this research stemmed from trying to make sense of my own development in my field of practice, as I observed the development of students in their chosen disciplines. My studies in education have focused on post compulsory education and I have specialised in curriculum and pedagogy in higher education. During this time, I frequently thought about my own development as a professional I wondered about questions such as: “What did the teachers do to shape my identity in my chosen vocation?”; “Did I shape my own identity – when did it start shaping and where?”; and “What were the influences of how I was taught on the ways that I now act and perform as a professional?”. Intuitively, I felt that my development was something that was greatly influenced by me and my environment – that the ideas that I learned and consequently applied in practice were mediated in environments of which interactions with others were a constant part, and that language and sense making were important aspects of being part of that environment.

The validation of my intuition occurred while completing my Master's degree, when I was introduced to the perspectives of Lev Vygotsky (1978) and the notion of sociocultural theory. As is discussed in Chapter 3, my subscription to this school of thought provided me with a lens for viewing the world, for understanding human development and learning from a particular perspective and, importantly, for understanding the pedagogy of my own practice as a professional in higher education.

After my formal entry to the role of academic, my passion to understand how learning happens for students and their development as future practitioners has intensified. My affiliation with the academy has affected me both personally and professionally. It has provided me with an academic identity, opened up an area for me to enact my interest in teaching and learning and given me valuable insight into the possibilities and challenges of higher education curriculum and pedagogies, and in assisting teachers in developing their ways of teaching. While enacting and performing my role in curriculum design and development, including the design of teaching, learning and assessment in various fields of practice-oriented disciplines, I often reflected upon the students' learning journeys in their chosen vocational paths. In particular, I wondered what students really need in their ongoing development towards professional practice, and I questioned the balance between developing discipline knowledge and other aspects of preparation for professional work, such as ways of *thinking, doing and acting* and *being and becoming* in a profession. My reflection motivated me to consider more deeply the problematic on which I have been pondering – i.e., how students' development towards their future professional identity ought to be guided, and what should be taught and how. My reflections had consequently ignited a burning desire within me to discover the hallmark of professional education.

Leading up to undertaking study for this thesis, my successes in gaining research funds enabled my ongoing exploration of professional education and empirically forged the reaffirmation of my belief about the transformational nature of education (please see the list of publications related to this thesis on pp. xvii-xviii). My research has also highlighted that there is so much that I need to understand and

to learn more deeply about in preparing students for professional practice, such as the extraordinarily complex and fascinating role of teachers in improving the ability of individuals to contribute to societal good, and in helping individuals to position themselves at strategic vantage points in search of paths towards self-actualisation.

Given that educators are held accountable for the development of students' proficiency - i.e., by facilitating and inculcating the growth in theoretical knowledge, practical skills and professional judgment deemed valuable by society (Shulman, 2005b) – I believe that understanding how educators develop such proficiency and what works well for student learning are an important area of inquiry. Hence, the motivation for my current research endeavour has centred on understanding how a university and its teachers involved in educating students for a profession shape the professional and lifelong habits of future practitioners. As Shulman (2005b) aptly pointed out, “The way we teach will shape how professionals behave – and in a society so dependent on the quality of its professionals, that is no small matter” (p. 59).

Chapter 1 | Introduction to the study

Education is not a preparation for life; education is life itself.
~ John Dewey (1859-1952)

1.1 Chapter introduction

This chapter provides a background to the study and places it in the context of the research problem presented and investigated for the thesis. In doing so, the chapter presents an introductory exploration of key concepts in a way that contemporary issues associated with the research problem — preparing for professional practice — are scrutinised. It is worth noting that “professional education” situated in higher education is the educational context in which the ideas of “curriculum” and “pedagogy” are focused and discussed in this study as regards professional practice preparation. I make this important clarification as the use and application of the curriculum and pedagogy depend upon the historical and cultural traditions and contexts (cf. Smith, Edwards-Groves & Brennan Kemmis, 2010). Notwithstanding, an inference from the literature is that preparing students for professional practice is a challenging enterprise that is predominantly influenced by information and knowledge explosion, and by changes to new technology, coupled with societal expectations of the values and practices of the professions and their professionals. Claims about the challenges and the complex nature of professional education provision and these circumstances are characteristic of scholarly writing in this area, and these claims are briefly considered in the current chapter and also extended in Chapter 2.

Thus, following this introductory section, Section 1.2 outlines the background to the study and the concomitant biography of the problem. The section that follows, Section 2.3, introduces the theoretical basis for the study. Section 2.4 presents the focus and the context of the study, as well as the overview of the research design. The contribution and significance of the study are discussed in Section 2.5. Finally, sequenced in alignment with my learning journey as a doctoral candidate, the organisation and structure of the thesis are presented in the concluding section of this chapter.

1.2 Preparing students for professional practice

Preparing students for professional practice is a challenging enterprise, which relates to the nature and characteristics of paid employment that is constantly transforming owing to continual changes in increasingly complex work environments (Barnett, 2004, 2011, 2012; Barnett & Coate, 2005; Billett, 2010; Jackson, 2011) or what Barnett (2015) referred to as a “world of supercomplexity” (p. 31). Such complexity exists because of the presence of ambiguities, contradictions, paradoxes and uncertainties generating challenging contexts along with competing values, diverging contingencies and unpredictability in the world in which we live, work and learn. For students undertaking professional education, it is indeed complex, requiring a lifelong and lifewide educational involvement (Jackson, 2011).

Within the realm of professional education, preparing for professional practice refers to the ways in which students build their cognitive, practical, emotional and social capacities and capabilities to engage immediately and effectively in their chosen professional settings. It involves the mastery of a body of systematically produced knowledge and the development of skills and techniques (Kemmis, 2005), the aim of which is to induct students into their future professional identities, and to enable them to gain an understanding of the values and practices of the profession (Billett, 2010). In any given professional field, professional education and training programs tend to be common both across and within any institution. Hence, all students aspiring to a professional career will likely to encounter similar curriculum and pedagogy, regardless of the educational institution that they attend or of the educators from whom they model and learn (Shulman, 2008).

Shulman (2005a) pointed out that “professional education is not education for understanding alone; it is preparation for accomplished and responsible practice in the service of others...” and it “must measure up to the standards not just of the academy, but also of the particular professions” (p. 53). As professionals act for the benefit of others and not simply their own, they are deemed bearers of the trust of those who depend on their knowledge, skill and judgment (Wilkerson, 2010). Thus, graduates of professional education programs are typically deemed to have a good understanding of the cultural, intellectual, social and practical aspects of professional identity, and

they are considered to have met the standards of technical competence (Colby & Sullivan, 2008).

To recapitulate, it is evident that the purpose of professional education is to socialise aspirants into their future professional identity, and to enable them to gain not only theoretical understanding but also understanding of the values and practices of the profession. However, in an age of *supercomplexity*, constant changes and unpredictability, the journey towards becoming members of a professional community, such as medicine, accounting, nursing and law, engenders a complicated and multifaceted process of educational involvement, whereby the students are *learning for an unknown future*. As Barnett (2015) observed:

What is it to learn for an unknown future? It might be said that the future has always been unknown but the matter surely takes on a new pedagogical challenge, if not urgency, in the contemporary age. The proposition ‘for’ in our opening sentence carries weight here. It implies an education in which a sense of an unknown future is evidently present, or at least serves as a major organizing principle in the design of the curriculum and in the enacting of pedagogy. (p. 220)

Herein lies the rationale and motivation for pursuing the current research, as it became apparent that examination of the lived experiences of those involved in professional practice, and of the forms of teaching and student learning in a professional field may shed light on the central problem pursued in this research and pave the way for understanding how an educational institution involved in professional education moves aspiring professionals along a continuum from their role as students to that of emerging practitioners (cf. Shulman, 2008), bringing into focus the purposes of higher education and its role in preparing students for professional practice.

1.2.1 Higher education and its educational purpose

Practice-based or occupation-specific programs are the higher education’s key educational purpose (Billett, 2010), which highlight the role of higher education in

developing forms of knowledge that aspirants to a profession learn for effective professional practice. According to Billett (2010) the main purpose of higher education is to secure “the forms and kinds of knowledge required for a smooth transition into an effective performance in the kinds of occupations that universities prepare for and develop further” (p. 101). With this line of thought, critical questions become apparent and are worth reflecting upon: What does learning to become a professional look like in higher education? What are the roles that curricula, pedagogies and student development have in professional education? What does student transformation look like for professional practice preparation?

These questions interrogate the process of becoming a professional within higher education institutions. The questions also relate to the notion of being a professional following professional education – namely, how the learner practises and represents the knowledge, skills and values of the profession. Here, the longitudinal program of research, undertaken at the Carnegie Foundation and entitled the *Preparation for the Professions Program (PPP)*, is a useful point of reference. The Carnegie Foundation’s senior scholars Anne Colby and William Sullivan (2008) contended that the educational preparation for professional practice in higher education is essentially formative and extends beyond gaining technical knowledge and skills, and cognitive development. The professional preparation ought to incorporate the development in students of a thorough and systematic understanding of a profession’s overarching purposes and standards, as well as the formation of professional identity. Central to such preparation is the profession’s purposes and standards (Eraut, 2007). This perspective brings into focus the nature of educational practices in higher education, and the quality of graduates entering a profession.

1.2.2 Curricular and pedagogical practices

In this thesis, *curriculum* is understood as the planned learning opportunities for learners and the experiences that learners encounter upon its implementation. Thus, the idea of curriculum includes phenomena such as the curriculum-as-planned and the curriculum-in-action (Barnett & Coate, 2005). That is, the curriculum-as-planned organises *what should be learned*, while the curriculum-in-action enacts *how learning should happen* for students. As such, I refer to the idea of curriculum as the means

for students and teachers to interact with each other to achieve stated educational outcomes. Shulman (2008) observed that the nature of curriculum design and the types of pedagogies employed in professional education make a difference in shaping future performance and in nurturing the values and aspirations of the members of professional fields. Similarly, Barnett (2015) explained that values, beliefs and principles pertaining to learning, understanding, knowledge, disciplines, individuality and society are realised through the curriculum.

Studies of the professions and professionalism suggest a social contract and responsibility for those who aspires entry to, and membership of, a professional field (Friedson, 2001). The premise in this thesis was that pedagogies that forge connections between theoretical knowledge and effective professional practice characterised by integrity and a commitment to ethical, responsible service have the potential to facilitate a holistic preparation of future professionals. Thus, the term *pedagogy* is another key concept in this research. Since authors draw upon different inherited uses of this term, its use and application depend upon the respective historical and cultural traditions and contexts (e.g., Smith, Edwards-Groves & Brennan Kemmis, 2010; Yates, 2009). For the purpose of this research project, pedagogy is understood as embodying certain societal aims that are guided by moral intentions (Ponte & Ax, 2008), the enactment of which is focused on the relationship and interaction between the teacher and the student. As Yates (2009) contended, pedagogy can encompass “attention to the person and subjectivity, and the world and culture, and even policy and institutions, but it seems to put the emphasis particularly on the interpersonal instructional (or facilitative) act” (p. 20). Such an act involves all encounters and dealings of the teacher with students concerning the students’ development, growth and wellbeing. From this perspective, an integral part of the notion of pedagogy is the relational, emotional, moral and personal dimensions of the educative process (cf. van Manen, 2002).

It has been observed for some time that “the relationship between schooling, society or culture and the development of individuals and groups [have] sometimes been named as ‘curriculum’ and sometimes as ‘pedagogy’, while sometimes too these terms have been seen as much narrower and more technical in scope” (Yates, 2009, p. 20). Notwithstanding these diverse interpretations, curriculum and pedagogy are

undeniably concerned with tackling *what matters*. And a core aspect that matters in higher education, it seems, is the quality and readiness of graduates for professional practice.

Graduate quality has been written about, often relating to concerns surrounding preparation and acquired work-ready skill-sets and providing competing ideas about how to succeed. In the area of professional education curricula, the literature poses questions about the quality of educational outcomes and influencing factors – e.g., the limitations of existing curricular and pedagogical practices, the impact of prescriptions, standardisation, professionalism, learning and teaching transactions, etc. With the emergence of the information and technological revolution, education has tended seemingly towards a skills-driven product while reducing the time available for learning activities to develop professional understandings, practice skills and, of equally critical importance, normative purpose and capacity for professional judgment (e.g., Benner et al., 2009; Colby & Sullivan, 2008; Eraut, 2009; Sullivan et al., 2007, Wilkerson, 2010). As regards these curricular and pedagogical matters, Yates (2009) stated that “the concerns were particularly about the way curriculum and pedagogy differentially served different social groups and social interests within a national configuration... concerns about whether the familiar curriculum and pedagogy of schooling [are] adequate to the changing world” (p. 20)

On a related note, McKernan (2008) pointed out that “education is worthy in its own right, not because it leads extrinsically towards the realisation of some end-in-view, or serves some ‘instrumental’ purpose” (p. xv). However, it is widely observed in the literature that learning has become institutionalized whereby the prevailing pedagogies and learning and teaching approaches are grounded in a kind of curriculum that is reductive in character (e.g., Barnett & Coate, 2005; Biggs & Tang, 2011). To put this assertion in perspective, the evolution and contemporary changes occurring in professional work have had significant curricular and pedagogical implications. Let us consider for example the situation in the nursing discipline. Like many other professional education curricula, the curriculum in nurse education is “groaning at the seams” (Griffiths, Speed, Horne, & Keeley, 2012, p. 121), or, as Benner et al. (2009) put it, the changing landscape of professional work has created a rather lengthy to-learn list. Similarly, other commentators refer to nurse education

curriculum as jam-packed (Benner et al., 2009; Keating, 2014) and as additive (Ironsides, 2008; Tanner, 2004) whereby the approach is simply incorporating more rather than reworking the material to reflect current practice (Keating, 2014). The overarching concern is that the curriculum is basically over-crowded and unmanageable so that learning and teaching practices overlook pedagogies that enable the holistic development of students in their future professional practice. Benner and her colleagues (2010) have called for a radical transformation relating to an integrative approach to curriculum and pedagogies. In a recent article, Benner (2015) outlined the findings of the Carnegie National Nursing Education Study in the United States which identified five major shifts in curriculum development and ways of teaching students (pedagogies), *viz*:

1. From superficial descriptive knowledge to teaching our students how and when that knowledge is relevant.
2. Integrating knowledge acquisition and knowledge use.
3. From emphasis on critical thinking to multiple ways of thinking.
4. Socialisation and formation with a focus on an active student participation in formation.
5. Using knowledge requires situated thinking that is productive. (p. 2)

These issues are not restricted to nurse education alone. The literature in all fields of professional education raised similar concerns about the limitations of current educational practices in professional education — for example, medical education (e.g., Cooke, Irby, & O'Brien, 2010), legal education (e.g., Sullivan, Colby, Wegner, Bond, & Shulman, 2007), engineering education (e.g., Sheppard et al., 2008), business education (e.g., Sykes, Freeman, Simpson, & Hancock, 2010; Wilkerson, 2010) and the education of clergy (e.g., Foster, Dahill, Golemon, & Tolentino, 2006). Barnett and Coate (2005) shared the same observations and posed questions of critical relevance to the education of future professionals:

Perhaps the key question [posed] by the idea of curriculum is: what is higher education for? Or more precisely: in which directions should a student's experience be pointed? Or, more precisely still: what kinds of

human development are being promoted through a curriculum, what are the elements in the curriculum that are assisting that development and what are their relative weightings? (p. 26)

In terms of the holistic preparation and development of future professionals, specific aspects that should be learned are well documented in the literature, as evident. The question of "What?" is more straightforward to address. The profound question of "How?" is the one that is integral to "What?", and it is about determining the sorts of educational experiences that will best promote and result in the holistic development of a person entering a profession. The current research addressed a gap in the literature within the Australian context, specifically in relation to understanding the characteristics and forms of educational practices that promote and nurture the development of professional identity and the dimensions of professional work. Through lived experiences, the research sought to understand the critical role of curriculum and pedagogies in shaping the character of aspiring professionals and their future practice, and in representing the values and hopes of their chosen profession.

1.3 Theoretical considerations

Preparing for professional practice is inherently social and encapsulates learning and development processes. Thus, the research made connections across the philosophical works of Vygotsky (1978), Bruner (1991), Bandura (2012), Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner (2015), and others whose work relates to the sociocultural views of human learning and development. Such connection was to try to understand students as knowers – the ways that they develop epistemological and practical knowledge, as well as an ontological awareness of themselves in the world around them – through the lens of sociocultural theory. This section demonstrates that concepts developed in professional education can be grounded in the perspectives espoused in sociocultural theory - a developmental theory conceptualised by the Russian psychologist Lev Vygotsky (1896-1934).

Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory posited that social interaction plays a fundamental part in cognitive development; that humans use tools developed from a culture, such as language and cultural artefacts, to mediate and navigate through their

social environments; and that higher mental functions are developed through social interactions where the more knowledgeable, skilful others guide such development. This builds the capacity of less experienced individuals to operate within their zone of proximal development. The developing individuals draw on others' experiences of the world, within which development and learning are embedded in social events, as they interact with people and objects in the environment.

Central to the premise enumerated in this theoretical framework is that the often tacit thinking processes and skills involved in undertaking complex tasks are brought into the open and made more visible as novice participants observe, enact and practise them with help from those who have expertise (Herrington, Reeves, & Oliver, 2010; Parkes & Muldoon, 2010). Participation in practice is therefore the main activity through which meaningful learning and understanding occur (Wenger, 1998).

In the growing body of literature in professional education, many expositions bear remarkable similarity to the perspectives espoused in sociocultural theory that clearly demonstrate that human learning and development are located in co-participation in cultural practices. Likewise, the view espoused in professional education is that co-participation and situating the learning and development of future professionals in real world practices enable them to think, do and value what practitioners in the profession are thinking, doing and valuing (Foster, Dahill, Golemon, & Tolentino, 2005; Shulman, 2008). In the context of preparing students for professional practice, the idea of *knowing* relates to what a person can *do*, whereby knowing is entrenched in the cultural practices of a profession. Knowing how and being able to do something therefore influence the formation of identity and are central requirements of professional work.

As is explored in Chapter 3, applying the sociocultural perspective in professional education settings suggests that learning is embedded in the social contexts of practice, allowing the aspiring professional to move from observation to limited participation to full participation and responsibility, under thoughtful modelling and meaningful supervision. Shulman's (1998; 2005a, 2005b, 2008) writing on professional education and the notion of signature pedagogies aligns with this assertion when he explained that "learning from practical experiences is the major

contributor to creating and testing theories of practice which are the defining constructs of professional knowledge and learning” (1998, p. 523).

It is from these conceptual understandings that the learning and development of aspiring professionals were documented, analysed and theoretically understood in this thesis. Drawn together as a unified approach, the application of Vygotsky’s (1978) and Shulman’s (1998, 2005a, 2005b, 2008) theoretical perspectives in this research project formed the conceptual basis that guided the investigation. The conceptual framework was deployed for the critical examination of the development of students preparing for professional practice and in the investigation of the curriculum intent and the pedagogies employed by teachers in professional education. These are discussed in detail in the analysis sections of the thesis (Chapters 6, 7 and 8), which enabled the building of theoretical understandings pertaining to the preparation of students for professional practice.

1.4 The focus and context of the study

The research presented here represents an empirical approach to the study of the preparation of students for professional practice. The point of departure of the research is its attempt to understand the phenomenon of preparing students for professional practice, through an investigation of how students are inducted into the practices, beliefs and values of a professional field. Through a focus on lived experiences by a selected group, this study offers an insight grounded in a theoretical framework for understanding the mechanism underlying professional education. Accordingly, the central question for the investigation is: *What does it mean to prepare for professional practice?*

In order to investigate this research problem, I utilised the education of nurses at a multi campus Australian university as a case study, the purpose of which was to advance understandings of professional preparation in nurse education, and its philosophy, principles and practice. The research aimed to investigate the characteristics and forms of pedagogies in educating for the nursing profession, and to inquire into approaches to teaching and student learning in this professional field. Such an examination required a phenomenological investigation of lived experiences

in learning and teaching, and involved exploring the contexts, thinking, relationships and actions of many stakeholders.

1.4.1 Research objectives

Drawing on the learning and teaching experiences in nurse education at the selected Australian university, the premise of this research project was that acquiring informed understanding of sociocultural context of nurse education can help to enhance the capacity of educators and stakeholders alike to prepare nursing students well for professional practice. To this end, the research objectives have focused on:

1. establishing the essence of lived experiences in nurse education.
2. investigating the educational contexts of nurse education.
3. gaining an understanding of the relevance of curriculum and pedagogies in nurse education and of the preparation of future nursing professionals.
4. examining factors that influenced the preparation of future nursing professionals.

1.4.2 Guiding questions for the research

The following questions guided the research and, at the same time, provided structure to the thesis. The questions were purposely sequenced, to build theoretical understandings of nurse education in a systematic fashion:

1. How do the university and its nursing students engage in professional practice preparation? (RO 1 & 2)
2. What does the engagement mean for the students becoming professionals? (RO 1, 2 & 3)
3. What factors influenced and enhanced the preparation for professional practice as they have emerged? (RO 1, 2, 3 & 4)

1.5 Overview of the research design

The qualitative empirical inquiry presented in this thesis was oriented to the constructivist tradition and followed the methodological paths of phenomenology and case study research. The fusion of these two methodological traditions was useful for

examining contemporary events and experiences in real-life contexts. Lived experience is both the preliminary point and the end point of phenomenological research (van Manen, 1997), within which formative relations between being and acting are created. This premise opened up possibilities for understanding the lived experiences of participants in this research, and in uncovering how individuals make sense of, and interact with, their social worlds. The three distinguishable approaches inherent in phenomenological research were drawn upon in the investigation – i.e., 1) describing the experiences of interest to the research; 2) investigating those experiences; and (3) analysing and reflecting on the themes that emerged from the study (van Manen, 1997).

From this phenomenological orientation, the professional education of nurses at an Australian university was utilised as an embedded case study and enabled the investigation to proceed. Processes for preparing students for professional practice were documented and scrutinised, and the experiences of those involved in the undergraduate program were captured and analysed. The participants included students and teachers in the Bachelor of Nursing program.

The case study method (Creswell, 2012; Yin, 2014) provided an opportunity to approach the research with a pragmatic methodological lens for understanding professional education as a complex social endeavour, and it enabled the integration of a number of approaches to explore and investigate the research problem. As noted in Chapter 4, the case study allowed the gathering and examination of a wider array of data from multiple qualitative sources and enabled me to examine and understand the participants' lived experiences. Data collected included visual, written, spoken and observed data.

The phenomenological orientation of the embedded case study gave voice to participants by studying the instances as encountered in their lived experiences. Hence, the relationships between the individuals and their levels of participation in sociocultural activities were the primary basis for analysis (Barab & Plucker, 2002). One of the benefits of the methodological fusion between phenomenology and case study methods arose from its emphasis on the uniqueness of the case, and the participants' subjective experiences of that case. As is discussed in Chapter 5,

analyses of focus group and interview data were woven into analyses of field notes from observations in both virtual and physical learning and teaching spaces, as well as analyses of curriculum documents and other learning and teaching artefacts. Data analysis was informed by the phenomenological and case study spiral analysis method, which involved several stages that included coding, thematic analysis, making interpretations, linkages and reflections, and relating findings to previous research and/or commentaries in the literature.

1.6 The significance of the study and contributions to knowledge

In this phenomenological case study research, the exploration and analysis of lived experiences and of the extant curriculum and pedagogies offered a vision of the “how” and “why” aspects of nurse education. Subsequent research findings illuminated insights into the processes of, and the approaches to, teaching and student learning that potentially promote and nurture the aspirations of the nursing profession.

The significance of this research for nurse education in particular, and for professional education in general, was to engage with the debates surrounding the currently limited understandings of the philosophy, theory and practice of professional education. The research problem was significant as there was little precedence for systematically inquiring into the lived experiences of curriculum and pedagogies in nurse education in Australia.

The goal was to contribute to theoretical understandings of the experiences in professional practice preparation, and the characteristics of curriculum and pedagogies for the professional education of nurses, by examining and explaining how and why these elements interact and influence educational outcomes. Such theorising, as revealed in Chapters 6, 7 and 8, yielded a positive contribution to rethinking educational practices that can address the fundamental curricular and pedagogical challenge in educating for a profession.

A critical outcome of this research project was conceptualising a theoretical understanding of the relevance of the experiences in professional practice preparation for the enactment of the contemporary nursing profession. As is shown in Chapter 8, the

current research achieved its intention to contribute theoretical, methodological, political and practical insights and recommendations for strengthening the role of professional education in promoting and nurturing the integrity of the nursing profession.

Communicating the understandings generated in this phenomenological case study research can contribute to better understanding and theorising of cases concerned with nurse education specifically and professional education generally.

1.7 Chapter summary and overview of the thesis

The introductory nature of the current chapter is designed to illuminate insights into the research problem. Doing so has allowed me to highlight aspects of professional practice preparation in the context of contemporary expectations and challenges in professional education. This has also enabled me to present briefly the focus of the study and the congruent theoretical and methodological perspectives that guided the investigation. I also outlined the significance of the study and the contributions to knowledge arising from the thesis.

This thesis consists of eight chapters, including this introductory chapter. Each chapter contains a specific focus representing my research journey that relates directly to the research problem and to the methodology and methods applied to address specific research questions.

Chapter 1 | Introduction

The current chapter provided a backdrop to the issues underpinning the research problem, and briefly outlined the theoretical and methodological orientations that guided the study. The significance of the research and its contributions to knowledge in advancing the theory, principles and practice of professional education in general and nurse education in particular have also been established in this chapter.

Chapter 2 | Genealogy of the research problem

This chapter presents a review of the literature relevant to this research, through a discussion of the elements of professional education research and key themes. It also discusses a number of associated topics that ‘set the scene’ and that helped to define the parameters of the research presented in this thesis.

Chapter 3 | Framing the theoretical bases of the study

A conceptual foundation is illuminated in this chapter that brings theoretical resources to my investigation of the problem underpinning this study. The conceptual framing was based on Vygotsky's (1978, 1981) theories of development, emphasising aspects of sociocultural theory that have direct relevance to professional education and the idea of signature pedagogies in the professions. The aim here is to construct a theoretical foundation for professional education practices by locating the connection of these practices with concepts in sociocultural theory and learning models grounded in sociocultural perspectives.

Chapter 4 | Research design and methodological considerations

This chapter describes a qualitative study designed to link the study's concept–context interface methodologically. The chapter begins with a review of the research methodology used in the current study and illustrates its fitness for the research project. The methodological fusion of hermeneutic phenomenology and case study design is presented as a suitable approach for the study. Based upon what count as data within the methodological fusion approach, the research methods are described briefly, along with procedural, analytical, ethical and political considerations that ensured the responsible conduct of the research.

Chapter 5 | Enacting the methodological fusion

This chapter illustrates the enactment of the methodological fusion formulated in the present study. The chapter demonstrates how the combined methodological techniques of hermeneutic phenomenology and case study provided a means for examining the case in depth and for building a rich understanding of lived experiences in the professional education of nurses. Further, the chapter discusses the manner in which the essences and meanings of lived experiences of preparing for professional practice in this context were examined, analysed and reflected upon.

Chapter 6 | Engaging in education for future practice (RQ1)

This chapter is the first of two analysis chapters. It presents a brief profile of the case study and it provides background information about the Bachelor of Nursing program. The two sections that follow are interrelated sections, which present and discuss the findings that encapsulate key elements of preparing for professional

practice. Finally, the chapter summary section summarises critical learning as regards Research Question One.

Chapter 7 | The emerging landscape for professional practice preparation (RQ2)

This is the second analysis chapter, which addresses Research Question Two. The chapter investigates the ways in which the participants engaged in educational activities to determine what counts as forming part of professional practice preparation, and integral to this line of inquiry was the influence that engaging in educational activities has on shaping future practice and developing professional identity. In recapitulating this chapter, critical learning is reflected upon pertaining to Research Question Two.

Chapter 8 | Synthesising the emerging landscape for professional practice preparation (RQ3)

Addressing Research Question Three, this final chapter presents critical findings from the two data analysis chapters, and synthesises the significance of the research and the implications of the study for students' preparation for professional practice. It also explores the implications that such findings may have for contributing to conceptual, methodological, policy and practical knowledge about this problem, its theoretical framework and its research design.

Chapter 2 | Genealogy of the research problem

An investment in knowledge always pays the best interest.

~Benjamin Franklin (1706-1790)

2.1 Chapter introduction

It was noted in the previous chapter that this study was concerned with preparing students for professional practice in Australian higher education. In that chapter, the research was introduced by establishing its general background and the biography of the problem that inspired the research, along with the objectives and aim, and the research strategy of the study. The purpose of the current chapter is to examine the scholarly literature relevant to the focus of the problem being investigated.

This chapter is organised into three sections. Following the introduction to the chapter, the second section, Section 2.2, outlines a number of key themes to tease out the biography of the problem, the aim of which is to explain the current academic thinking about the expectations of the professions and the society as a whole, and the concomitant nature of the preparation of students for professional practice in higher education settings. The discussion draws upon scholarly work and practices in professional education mainly in Australia, the United Kingdom, the United States of America and Canada. In doing so, the third section of the current chapter, Section 2.3, explores recent research into professional education – in particular preparing students for the new world of work. The goal is to establish an empirical base upon which the findings of the current research can build. The fourth and fifth sections of this chapter, Section 2.4 and Section 2.5, are focused respectively on professional education curricula and pedagogies, and their relevance to preparing students for professional practice. The aim of these final two sections is to explore recent thinking and empirical work concerning curricula and pedagogies for professional practice preparation, and to determine how they have been researched and understood prior to this investigation. The chapter concludes with a synthesis of the current understanding of professional practice preparation, and how such practice is currently being conceptualised, contextualised, shaped and envisioned (cf. Higgs, Loftus & Trede, 2010).

2.2 Relevant themes for professional practice preparation

The rationale for this research project is derived from considering the significance of prevailing educational practices concerning the preparation of students for professional practice. Hence, it is pertinent to explore relevant themes associated with the notion of professional practice, such as professions, professionals, professionalism, practice-based disciplines and professional education — encapsulated in these themes is the notion of professional identity. Providing an overview of these phenomena aids in gathering insights into, and determining critical connections with, the topic being examined. Importantly, building a fundamental understanding of these phenomena is instrumental in locating the origin of the current research problem, and in establishing an empirical base for this phenomenological case study research.

2.2.1 The nature of professions and professionals

A key outcome that most, if not all, graduates seek upon completing their professional education program is to enter their chosen *profession*, become *professionals* and commence *professional practice* upon completing their professional education program. *Professions* can be understood as a group of occupations with shared characteristics and common processes (Brint, 1996). Professions are essentially the knowledge-based category of occupations (Colby & Sullivan, 2008; Evetts, 2003), which usually follow a period of tertiary education and practical training and experience.

From a sociological point of view, professions are seen as the structural, occupational and institutional arrangements for managing the work of *professionals*, which often involve the uncertainties of contemporary lives in risk societies (Evetts, 2003; Freidson, 2001). Professionals, such as doctors, lawyers, nurses, teachers and engineers, possess disciplinary knowledge, skills and dispositions and are often extensively engaged in handling risk. They deal with risk assessment and, through the use and application of expert knowledge, they enable clients to deal with uncertainty (Eraut, 1994, 2007; Shulman, 2008). Here the role of professionals is clear: they “are central to performing in the public’s interest...” within which they “provide services

and uphold values that benefit the entire public” (Sullivan & Benner, 2005, p. 80). In other words, professionals are bound by the profession’s codes of conduct and ethics.

Drawing upon contemporary and historical literature, Shulman (1998) theorised about the nature of professions and professionals, referring to John Dewey’s writings and to early studies of professionals conducted by teams of researchers at the Carnegie Foundation. He identified a set of attributes that characterise all professions, and he explained that the method in which these attributes are realised is unique to each profession:

- the obligation of *service* to others, as in a “calling”;
 - *understanding* of a scholarly or theoretical kind;
 - a domain of skilled performance or *practice*;
 - the exercise of *judgment* under conditions of unavoidable uncertainty;
 - the need for *learning from experience* as theory and practice interact; and
 - a professional *community* to monitor quality and aggregate knowledge.
- (Shulman, 1998, p. 516; *emphasis in the original*)

Historically, professions have focused on promoting a sense of vocation and civic responsibility, rather than on economic gains (for example, please see Evetts, 2003, 2011; Sullivan, 2005). This remains true today, and the close association among the roles of professions, social values and cultural acceptance is apparent. For example, the contemporary conceptions of the professions afford professional education clear and important descriptions of the shared practices that have long been part of professional education. Thus, professional education programs consist of common elements both within and across institutions, whereby the notion of professional practice preparation draws on educational experiences that facilitate the formation of a professional identity and the adoption of common professional values (Dall’Alba, 2009).

2.2.2 The importance of professionalism in professional practice

The character and quality of professional work and the conduct and standards that guide action therefore constitute *professionalism* – commonly referred to as *social*

trustee professionalism (Brint, 1996; Evetts, 2011; Sullivan, 2005). The concept of professionalism pertains to expert knowledge and moral virtue, which is influenced by the importance placed on the civic responsibility over the personal benefits of the practitioner (Colby & Sullivan, 2008).

Evetts (2011) argued that in recent times, professionalism is rooted in occupational values that embodies the changes to and continuities in professionalism in organizational contexts. Indeed, “professionalism is changing and being changed as professionals now increasingly work in large-scale organizational workplaces and sometimes in international firms” (Evetts, 2011, p. 406). Notwithstanding, professions have an emphasis on social obligation, moral integrity and duty to the general society that the profession serves – this is a term of a profession’s obligations under its social contract (Friedson, 2001). As Colby and Sullivan (2008) pointed out, the relationship between the professions and the public is essentially ethical at its core. From this perspective, the notion of social trusteeship is embedded culturally at the core of professionalism, whereby a service-oriented ethos guides the work of a profession, collectively and individually, manifested in educational practices, systems and places of professional work (cf. Wilkerson, 2010). Certainly, professionalism viewed as occupational value can account for the increasing managerial tool in work organisations, aspects of which include:

- Control of the work systems, processes, procedures, priorities to be determined primarily by the practitioner/s;
- Professional institutions/associations as the main providers of codes of ethics, constructors of the discourse of professionalism, providers of licensing and admission procedures, controllers of competences and their acquisition and maintenance, overseeing discipline, due investigation of complaints and appropriate sanctions in cases of professional incompetence;
- Collegial authority, legitimacy, mutual support and cooperation;
- Common and lengthy (perhaps expensive) periods of shared education, training, apprenticeship;
- Development of strong occupational identities and work cultures;

- Strong sense of purpose and of the importance, function, contribution and significance of the work;
- Discretionary judgement, assessment evaluation and decision-making, often in highly complex cases, and of confidential advice-giving, treatment and alternative ways of proceeding;
- Trust and confidence characterizing the relations between practitioner/client, practitioner/employer and fellow practitioners. (Evetts, 2011, p. 413).

These features of professionalism are relevant, not only to understanding the organisation and functions of the professions, but also in promoting pedagogies in professional education that honour and preserve the terms of the profession's social contract. Indeed, the theories and shared understandings of professions and professionalism underpin professional education curricula and guide subsequent curriculum enactment and pedagogies that prepare graduates for professional practice. It has been observed that, "in almost every field of professional education, teaching for professional purpose and commitment, moral integrity, and ethical conduct [are] subordinate to teaching for professional knowledge and skill" (Colby & Sullivan, 2008, p. 408). The next section elaborates this and related curricular and pedagogical challenges.

2.2.3 Characteristics of practice-oriented disciplines

Professions such as medicine, law, nursing, teaching, accounting and engineering are described as practice-oriented disciplines. A practice-oriented discipline has a primary mission related to practice, within which individuals seek knowledge of, and expertise in, what professionals in a given discipline do, why they do it and when they do it (Meleis, 2012). The demands of practice-oriented disciplines are such that professionals are expected to be highly knowledgeable, skilled and reflective; they must learn constantly and continuously; and they need to integrate and draw upon the three dimensions of professional practice. Benner et al. (2009) described the three dimensions of professional practice as “knowledge, skilled know-how, and ethical comportment” (p. 10). Shulman (2005a) referred to these dimensions as foundational aspects of professional work within which professionals should be able “to *think*, to *perform* and to *act with integrity*” (p. 54; *emphasis in the original*). Barnett and Coate (2005) on the other hand used the terms “*knowing, acting and being*” (p. 2; *emphasis in the original*) to describe the three dimensions that form curricula. The critical unifying message from these authors’ assertions is that students, as developing professionals, must be instructed in the significance of all three dimensions. Unfortunately, according to Shulman (2005a), “these three dimensions do not receive equal attention across the professions” (p. 52). To put this assertion in perspective, the contexts of the nursing profession are considered, within which the importance placed on the holistic development and well-rounded preparation of future nurses is clearly evident.

Nursing, as an example of a practice-oriented discipline, embodies the attributes that characterise a profession: responsible service with moral vision, theoretical understanding, practical skills, the centrality of judgement, learning from experience and professional community belonging (cf. Benner et al., 2009; Diefenbeck, 2006; Heath, 2002; Levett-Jones & Lathlean, 2009; Meleis, 2012). Nurses work in unpredictable environments where stakes are high, and they deal with people who are at their most vulnerable, dependent, anxious and stressed. Nurses deal with human conditions and with humans’ responses to health and illness. Nurses interact with clients, families and communities confronting frightening, peculiar, upsetting, life changing and/or life threatening situations. Thus, the nursing profession demands

high standards of responsible professional practice, and it requires extensive education to explain and accomplish the roles and functions of contemporary nurses (Australian Nursing and Midwifery Council, 2013). Moreover, nurses are required to develop and demonstrate capacities for mastering information and applying knowledge in diverse scenarios and fast-paced working environments such as handovers between shifts (Matney et al., 2014), thereby acquiring and mobilising empirical, clinical and personal ways of knowing (Antrobus, 1997). These theoretical considerations are clearly highly complex and situated attributes of sophisticated knowledge workers that have significant implications for professional practice policies and practices in relation to contemporary nursing education, which are elaborated in the subsequent data analysis chapters.

The literature suggests that the dominant approaches to nurse education focus largely on cognitive development and knowledge acquisition (e.g., Griffiths et al., 2012; Long et al., 2009; Tanner, 2004). This is despite widespread acknowledgement that the development of the three dimensions of professional practice is foundational to shaping future performance in the profession. As Meleis (2012) contended, the knowledge development in nursing is “shaped by its practice orientation, which in turn shapes the nursing perspective” (p. 90). Thus, it is imperative that the professional preparation of nursing students matches the purpose of the nursing profession and orients them towards safe, accurate and compassionate professional practice in a variety of contexts, where innovation and knowledge increase at an overwhelming rate (Keating, 2014). As Shulman (2008) eloquently put it, “Intelligence and skill without values and responsibility [are] profession corrupted” (p. 7).

2.2.4 The role and purpose of professional education

A minimum requirement for entry to professional practice is the completion of tertiary education for a particular domain of practice at bachelor degree level. This mode of professional practice preparation falls into the realm of professional education — defined as a scholarly and disciplined undertaking that prepares individuals for responsible service (cf. Brint, 1996; Eraut, 1994, 2007). Professional education programs form part of the creation, codification and modification of the

complex bodies of professional knowledge that, in turn, facilitate currency, uniformity, consistency and continual revision of knowledge and practice throughout a professional field (cf. Freidson, 2001). The specialised preparation for professional practice leads to the granting of credentials that admit individuals to professional practice and that precludes those without credentials to join the profession as qualified professionals. Doing so enables professions to maintain control over memberships in a particular field of professional practice, and over how many enter such practice. In this way, professions control and maintain influence over the quality of applicants into a professional field and other aspects such as the supply of new practitioners to fill the demand for professionals in such a field (Brint, 1996; Sullivan, 2005).

Professional education, according to Colby and Sullivan (2008), is directed towards developing professional knowledge and skills *vis-à-vis*: (1) theoretical and empirical knowledge; (2) practical knowledge; and (3) ethical and moral knowledge. This complementary knowledge base serves a particular purpose in the professional practice preparation of future professionals and indeed in their occupational practice as professionals. Similarly, Billett (2010) proposed that the forms of knowledge to be learned for effective occupational practice have three interdependent dimensions: (i) *propositional knowledge* are forms of knowledge usually codified in the practice standards; (ii) *procedural knowledge*, which constitutes the requirement for performance in a particular practice setting; and (iii) *dispositional knowledge*, which comprises interests and beliefs are seemingly developed through individuals' social experiences.

Thus, in line with the stated purpose of professional education, three distinct modes of professional preparation or “apprenticeships of professional education” (Sullivan, 2005, p. 199) encapsulate professional education programs within the university setting, namely: (1) intellectual and theoretical knowledge building—embodies habits of mind; (2) practical skill building—embodies habits of hand; and (3) ethical and attitudinal building—embodies habits of heart (Sullivan, 2005). These three apprenticeships complement one another and transpire in varying combinations in professional education. The processes emerging from the enactment of professional education apprenticeships create uniformity of knowledge, practice and ethical conduct, and symbolise professionalism throughout a domain of practice

(Colby & Sullivan, 2008; Sullivan, 2005). The next section builds upon this understanding and further unpacks the current state of play in professional practice preparation.

2.3 Preparing students for the new world of work

The concepts considered in the previous section have highlighted the central research problem for this thesis: *What does it mean to prepare for professional practice?* Such a problem involves a number of key stakeholders, namely: higher education institutions, students, teachers, administrative support and industry partners whose respective roles support a common goal – that is, preparing aspirants for professional practice. Chapter 1 noted the notion that, as a provider of professional education, higher education is faced with the challenge of preparing students for an *unknown future* (Barnett, 2004; Kek & Huijser, 2017), in a world that is *supercomplex* (Barnett, 2004, 2011, 2012; Barnett & Coate, 2005; Jackson, 2011), and at *vulnerable times* (Yates & Grumet, 2011). Such complexity and uncertainty present new curricular and pedagogical challenges. The premise put forward in this thesis is that education is a social practice where individuals *learn to be* as well as *learn how to perform*, and these are realised through curriculum and pedagogies in university learning environments, and constructed through the interactions and interpersonal processes amongst lecturers, students and support mechanisms (cf. Seddon, 1997).

Stakeholders – institutes of higher learning, regulatory agencies, professional bodies and consumers – have a significant role to play in contributing to a meaningful and what is likely to be a profound transformation in professional education by *engaging in the curriculum* (Barnett & Coate, 2005) and by scrutinising how curricular constructs such as programs of study are used and developed. Doing so allows stakeholders to reflect jointly upon the lived experience of learning and teaching in this context, given the perpetual changes in work and education, knowing that the future of aspiring professionals and of the society as a whole depend on the education of such professionals.

2.3.1 The changing nature of work and education

In an age of continual changes and unpredictability, the journey towards becoming a member of a professional community is complex. Such complexity embodies the challenge, competing values and unpredictability in the world in which we live, work and learn. Individuals have to reinvent themselves throughout their lives and continually build their cognitive, social and emotional capacities and capabilities (Barnett, 2015; Billet, 2010; Jackson, 2011). Billet (2010) for example noted that the “nature and character of paid work is constantly transforming because of changes in human needs, technologies, workplaces and the organisation of work” (p. 98). These changes are reflected in the types of personal qualities, abilities and capacities that employers seek when they recruit graduates to work in contemporary professional fields, and they can be concomitant to appropriate curricula and pedagogies. Similarly, Sheppard, Macatangay and Colby (2008) stated that the external environments for professional fields are continually changing; so too is the substance of the work, along with the complex issues and problems that professionals address and the knowledge that they call upon to do so. Consequently, the professionals’ relations to work and the workplace, as well as their relationships with their colleagues, are also changing noticeably. As Green (2010) observed:

Education *is* changing, as is knowledge more generally, to a significant degree energised by what has been described as the digital revolution. This has been widely discussed with references to notions such as globalisation, the New Media Age, open access, and the Network Society. Something definitely to be considered here is what this could mean for the future of Education itself... (p. 56)

Concerns in relation to these issues are echoed in most professional education programs in higher education, which include, but are not limited to, medicine (Cooke, Irby, & O'Brien, 2010), nursing (Benner, Sutphen, Leonard, & Day, 2009; Heath, 2002; Ironside, 2008; Tanner 2004), law (Sullivan, Colby, Wegner, Bond, & Shulman, 2007), engineering (Sheppard et al., 2008), business (Sykes, Freeman, Simpson, & Hancock, 2010; Wilkerson, 2010) and the education of clergy (Foster, Dahill, Golemon, & Tolentino, 2006). These authors concurred that the emergence of

new ideas and practices, as well as changes occurring in professional work, have had a profound impact on curricular and pedagogical practices in professional education and capacities for effective professional practice. In the nurse education domain, for example, a longitudinal study in the United States found that significant “changes in science, technology, patient activism, the market-driven health care environment, and the nature and settings of nursing practice have all radically transformed nursing practice” (Benner et al., 2009, p. 1). Similarly, investigations in Australia, such as by Heath (2002) and in the United Kingdom, such as by the Nursing and Midwifery Council (2010), found that technological advancement and scientific and social understandings continue to develop rapidly and are transforming nursing practice profoundly. Such transformation has reshaped the field. However, the education of nurses has fallen behind in adapting to these changes (Benner, et al., 2009; Heath, 2002). Indeed, when nurse education in Australia last had a major review, concerns were raised that the new graduates were not able “to hit the ground running” (Heath, 2002, p. 7). Such concerns are also compounded with nurse educators facing the challenge of keeping up and conveying ever-increasing nursing knowledge and the changes occurring in the field, not to mention the shaping and reshaping of nursing practice (Meleis, 2012).

2.3.2 Societal changes and professional practice preparation

Stenhouse (1979) expressed the intrinsic value of education as encapsulated in its four different purposes, namely: the acquisition of skills (training); the successful acquisition of information (instruction); familiarisation with social values and norms (initiation); and induction into the thought systems of domains of knowledge. However, it is alarming that, since the emergence of the information and technological revolution, and concomitant societal changes, education has tended towards a skills-driven product and the time available for learning activities to develop professional understandings, practical skills, ethical comportment and capacity for professional judgment is greatly diminished (Benner et al., 2009). Dall’Alba and Barnacle (2009) asserted that the emphasis on knowledge and skills acquisition is “particularly evident in the design and implementation of many undergraduate programs in which bodies of knowledge and skills are decontextualised from the practices to which they belong” (p. 719). In the main, the design of

curriculum and pedagogies that engage students and that promote reflective, thoughtful, engaged students is largely overlooked (Brockbank & McGill, 2007; Keating, 2014; Laurillard, 2013). These authors suggested that, in this dominant conception of curricula, the students are considered minimally. In the main, students come into play as “potential bearers of skills producing economic value rather than as human beings in their own right” (Barnett & Coate, 2005, p. 24). It therefore begs the question: what might the preparation for professional practice look like from educational, professional and societal points of view?

On this note, the societal image of a professional field and the professionals within it is a critical factor in shaping professional identity and future practice. The nursing discipline for example has been discussing the public image of nursing as being diverse and incongruous (ten Hoove, Jensen & Roodbol, 2013). As Takase et al.'s (2006) study for instance showed that nurses were perceived by the public as feminine and caring professionals, but they were not viewed as leaders or independent healthcare professionals. Indeed, studies, such as those reported by Gordon (2005) contended that the portrayal of nurses in the media might indicate as to how their public image is perceived. Such public image in turn is likely to influence the perceptions of nursing aspirants as they prepare for professional practice. ten Hoove, Jensen and Roodbol (2013) asserted that such “image is partly self-created by nurses due to their invisibility and their lack of public discourse. Nurses derive their self-concept and professional identity from their public image, work environment, work values, education and traditional social and cultural values” (p. 295). The implication of this for professional nursing practice preparation relates to the shaping of the curriculum that embodies the knowledge, practice, values and beliefs expected of the nursing profession. As Meleis (2012) suggested, nurse education in the 21st century embodies a scholarly activity whereby nurses are educated to develop nursing theories and conceptual models, conduct nursing research and test nursing theories. To promote the professional image and identity of nurses, public awareness is critical; that nursing research exists for example and that it is important to patient health (ten Hoove, Jensen & Roodbol (2013). This awareness, in turn, will raise a positive view on the public image of nursing and nurses, and will empower them and those aspiring to be one as their professional identities are shaped.

2.3.3 The embodiment of learning to become a professional

Barnett (2004) asserted that learning has to be understood not in terms of knowledge or skills but of human qualities and dispositions. Given the increasing state of complexity and uncertainty in today's society, learning for an unknown future therefore demands an ontological turn (Barnett, 2004; Green, 2010). Dall'Alba (2009) also argued along such lines, pointing out that there is a tendency to direct the focus more strongly to knowledge and skills that must be acquired during professional education. The process must embody curriculum and pedagogical transformation, which involves:

[an] integration of knowing, acting, and being in the form of professional ways of being that unfold over time. When a professional education program focuses on the acquisition and application of knowledge and skills, it falls short of facilitating their integration into professional ways of being. In addition, through such a focus on epistemology (or theory of knowing), ontology (or theory of being) is overlooked....While knowledge and skills are necessary, they are insufficient for skilful practice and for transformation of the self that is integral to achieving such practice. When we concentrate our attention on epistemology—or what students know and can do—we fail to facilitate and support such transformation. (Dall'Alba, 2009, p. 34)

In other words, the embodiment of preparing for professional practice is addressed not only in terms of knowledge or skills, but also in terms of what kind of person – or at least what kind of practitioner – an aspirant to a profession should become: what such aspirants will need to be able to do and who they will need to be to manage their future lives (cf. Yates, 2009). What this means then is an emphasis not just on epistemology but also, and equally importantly, on praxis and ontological considerations (cf. Kemmis & Trede, 2010), with the latter to be understood as a key and recurring issue for professional education interrogation and amplification.

On the basis of the foregoing suppositions, it is indeed apparent that learning to become a professional involves not only what an aspirant knows and what an aspirant

can do, but also who the aspirant to a profession is becoming. It is also apparent that the entry of aspiring professionals to a profession entails a transition period such that they are prepared for the challenges of practice in their chosen profession in particular, and they are prepared for the challenges of navigating the *complex world* in general. Against this backdrop, it is pertinent to consider the role of professional education curriculum and pedagogies in student learning and development towards preparation for professional practice. At issue here is what learning to become a professional begins to look like when higher education and its role in preparing students for professional practice are considered. Thus, in this thesis, juxtaposed with the discussion of the ideas of curriculum and pedagogies in higher education is the underlying purpose of professional education learning and teaching – that of preparing aspiring professionals for the challenges of practice within a particular profession. The next two sections, Section 2.4 and Section 2.5, further consider the challenges and opportunities in professional practice preparation and their influences on graduate qualities.

2.4 The professional education curriculum

The works of renowned curriculum theorists Pinar (2014) and Ted Aoki (2004) in Canada and the United States, Barnett and Coate (2005) in the United Kingdom, and Green (2003), Kemmis (1990) and Yates (2009) in Australia, among others, addressed the idea of curriculum and suggested that the social and cultural purposes and outcomes of curriculum warrant a rigorous debate and focused engagement. Yates and Grumet (2011) for example noted that such focused engagement might be conceptually tied to what is done in educational institutions, including outside formal institutions and intentions. These authors argued that curriculum is an ambiguous term and explained that:

It encompasses different kinds of focus, including policy statements at the overarching level; curriculum guidelines and frameworks; textbooks; the enacted curriculum of what teachers do and what happens in classrooms; unintended and hidden curriculum relating to school practices and environments; and the issue of what young people received and perceive as curriculum. (p. 7)

2.4.1 The curriculum and its purpose

The purpose of curriculum goes beyond simply tackling the content to be taught. It provides the major domain for academic decision-making, conveys institutional purposes and values, and provides a primary touchstone in the professional life of students, teaching staff members and administrators (Conrad & Haworth, 1990). Values, beliefs and principles pertaining to learning, understanding, knowledge, disciplines, individuality and society are realised through the curriculum (Barnett, 2015; Shulman, 2005a). Thus, curriculum as a social mediator in professional education plays an important role in developing future professional practice and in shaping personal and professional identity. The curricula for most professional entry programs, for example, include mandatory clinical placements integrated into the program, which significantly contribute to the students' professional practice formation and professional identity development. Indeed, it has been argued that the curriculum develops and shapes individuals. Popkewitz (2001), for example, suggested that the curriculum is a form of social regulation: “a disciplining technology that directs how the individual is to act, feel, talk and ‘see’ the world and ‘self’” (p. 153). On this note, Aoki’s (1999) notion of curriculum-as-lived promoted a learning experience that focused simultaneously on the current and future developmental needs of students. Such foundational understandings of curriculum reflect current observations in the literature and they are as relevant today as they were in previous generations. Moreover, it is also equally complex and challenging today to address the intersecting aims of the curriculum and of student development. Hence, it is pertinent to reflect upon the relevance of curriculum and its purpose – in particular: “What kind of world is being represented in curriculum? What are the ways of knowing this world that curriculum extends to students? and What is being produced from those ways of doing curriculum?” (Yates & Grumet, 2011, p. 8). Such questions reiterate the complexity and ambiguity of curriculum theory and practice for various stakeholders.

Furthermore, the curriculum, according to Pinar (2012), is a “complicated conversation” (p. 1); far from a mere conversation isolated in classrooms, the curriculum constitutes the cultural and traditional nature of professional practice, characterised by informed communication. Smith (2003) posited that such

communication in pedagogical practice could provide opportunities for learning in ways that are more relational and personally meaningful. Here the relationships are characterised by a “paradigm shift away from *covering* the curriculum towards an *uncovering* of the curriculum by creating conversations that open the door wider for learners to be involved more deeply in their own learning” (Smith, 2003, p. 492; *emphasis in the original*). Grundy (1987) used the term “curriculum as practice” (p. 59) to describe that meaning making and interaction during the learning experience are the focus of curriculum, rather than control of the learning environment and the production of a predetermined product. Practical interest influenced such a curriculum in that, it is about the construction of subjective knowledge, as meaning making and understanding are achieved (Grundy, 1987).

2.4.2 The complexity of curriculum

The complexity of the idea of curriculum relates to the context and scope of the educational practice and the concomitant processes to which it refers. Curriculum theorists such as Aoki (1999), Barnett & Coate, (2005), Brunner (1977, 1996) Green (2003), Grundy (1987), Pinar, Reynolds, Slattery & Taubman (2008), and Yates (2009) likewise suggested a number of fundamental questions that relate correspondingly with: 1) the intended or specified curriculum; 2) the implemented or enacted curriculum; 3) the experienced curriculum; and 4) the hidden curriculum. The planned curriculum attends to the question of what knowledge is of worth. The enacted curriculum deals with the question of what happens in the learning and teaching process, based on what is actually put in place for students. On the other hand, the experienced curriculum focuses on the question of what the formal learning is actually experienced by the student and how, while the hidden curriculum deals with the question of what the student experienced beyond the structure of the curriculum – in particular, what messages the educational system conveyed relating to values, beliefs, behaviours and attitudes. Hence, “it is not just what is intended that forms the curriculum, but what eventuates — through the teaching, student engagement, meaningful connections to students’ lives and relationship building that are inherent parts of the learning process” (Churchill et al., 2011, p. 175).

Barnett and Coate (2005) demonstrated the need to look at the curriculum as a

process. Stenhouse (1975) likewise stressed that the curriculum is inherently a process, dynamic and a subjective interpretation. Such a process encompasses not just the curriculum, designed in advance, but also how the plans are enacted in the learning and teaching approach through the pedagogy and the learner (Barnett & Coate, 2005). Here Barnett and Coate (2005) explained the different levels of curriculum design, as they distinguished between *curriculum-as-designed* (designed in advance) and *curriculum-in-action* (dynamic and experiential). The distinction between curriculum-as-designed and curriculum-in-action is useful, as it highlights “that a curriculum is as much an achievement as it is a task” (Barnett & Coate, 2005, p. 3).

The ideas of curriculum highlighted here require deeper understanding, particularly pertaining to *curriculum alignment* (Biggs & Tang, 2011) and to the alignment of curriculum, pedagogies and assessment (Lingard et al., 2003) to achieve improved outcomes for all students. Such alignment is deemed to occur through a shared understanding of the intended educational outcomes that, in turn, shapes what a curriculum could and should look like (cf. Churchill et al., 2008). This constitutes, according to Kemmis and Grootenboer (2008), an educationally right practice that embodies *curriculum as praxis* — “those forms of practice that are enacted by those that are conscious and self-aware that their actions are morally committed, and oriented and informed by tradition” (Kemmis & Smith, 2008, p. 4). However, the literature suggests that the conception of curriculum is not well understood, and that minimal focus has been given to the higher education curriculum (Barnett 2015; Candy, Crebert & O’Leary, 1994).

2.4.3 Curricular matters — curriculum does matter

Contemporary issues in higher education – in particular, the professional education curricula – bring to the fore questions around the quality of educational outcomes and the factors that influence them. It is clear that there are significant challenges facing higher education curricula, whereby educators, practitioners and researchers alike concurred that more than ever they need to be addressed in a systematic manner. Many scholars support this assertion, contending that the lack of understanding and research in the fundamental ways in which future practitioners are

educated needs immediate attention (for example, Brenner et al., 2009; Foster et al., 2006; Shepherd et al., 2009; Shulman, 2005a; Sullivan et al., 2007).

However, according to Tight (2012), while there is an outpouring of research in the field of higher education, this is a recent phenomenon; hence it appears “relatively disorganised and little understood” (p. 3). This includes the curriculum in higher education being an under-researched phenomenon. Barnett and Coate contended, for example, that “the idea of curriculum is not yet seriously addressed in higher education” (2005, p. 2). These authors have highlighted that the minimal focus afforded to the higher education curriculum is alarming:

What students should be experiencing is barely a topic of debate. What the building blocks of their courses might be and how they should be put together are even more absent from the general discussion.... [T]he tacit conception of curriculum that is emerging reflects the interests of the dominant players.... [T]he voices of students are less evident. (Barnett & Coate, 2005, pp. 1 and 24)

Over a decade before these observations were raised, Candy, Crebert and O’Leary (1994) reported similar concerns, asserting that “the concept of ‘curriculum’ in the university setting was unfamiliar to many academics, who developed and taught units or courses to reflect their own interests with little attention to ensuring coherence or identifying the aims and objectives of teaching” (p. 60). Malcolm and Zukas (2001) echoed these concerns, pointing out that the narrow conceptions of curriculum resonate within the higher education pedagogy in that it is often presented as lacking in cultural and social context. On a related note, a couple of decades earlier, Foucault (1980) asked, “How do our students benefit from the way we teach them? How are they harmed? What else could we do here?” (p. 136). Such questions are of curricular and pedagogical relevance in professional practice preparation.

2.5 Pedagogies for professional practice preparation

From what can be gleaned from this literature review, one of the challenging tasks for educators in professional education concerns professional formation – i.e.,

moving aspiring professionals along a continuum from their role as students to that of emerging practitioners. The literature review has also highlighted the increased emphasis on the importance of pedagogies for the professions that foster the combining of theory and practice in local, situated judgments.

2.5.1 Prior research in professional practice preparation

The challenges highlighted in Section 2.4 as regards professional education curriculum were also at the core of the Carnegie Foundation's large program of research on preparation for the professions — the "Preparation for the Professions Program" or PPP. Under the auspices of PPP, the Carnegie Foundation commissioned a series of comparative studies that examined how future professionals are educated for their chosen professions (e.g., clergy, 2005; lawyers, 2007; engineers, 2008; nurses, 2009; and physicians, 2010). The PPP focused on exploring how to educate for integrity as well as for competence, how to impart the fundamentals of good professional judgment, and how to teach complex skills so that students not only master the technical craft of the profession, but also develop analytical skills and learn generalisable principles that make possible creative adaptations to new situations (Benner, 2005, p. 84).

Drawing on their own work in the Carnegie Foundation's longitudinal PPP research, as well as on the research findings of the Good Work Project at Harvard University (Gardner, 2005), Colby and Sullivan (2008) have distilled the characteristics of five key qualities that make for sustainable, lifelong growth in professional competence and commitment. Such qualities contribute to an individual practitioner's sustained commitment to high-quality professional work. These five qualities identified in these authors' findings are:

- (1) Deep engagement with the profession's public purposes...
- (2) Strong professional identity...
- (3) Habits of interpretation...
- (4) Habitual patterns of behavioral response...
- (5) The capacity and inclination to contribute to the ethical quality of the profession and its institutions... (Colby & Sullivan, 2008 pp. 415–416)

Reflecting upon these findings, I am of the view that such findings raise a number of pertinent questions, such as: Is it possible to promote and develop these qualities? How can the development of aspirants best include these qualities? How can professional education prepare graduates for high quality professional work, even in difficult professional situations? Shulman (2005a) proposed the idea of *signature pedagogies*, which relates directly to these questions, thus worthy of consideration.

2.5.1.1 Signature pedagogies

Presided over by the Foundation's 8th President, L. S. Shulman (2005a), and directed by senior scholars Anne Colby and William Sullivan (2008), researchers at the Carnegie Foundation studied the educational practices used to prepare lawyers, engineers, clergy, nurses and physicians through the lens of what has become known as *signature pedagogies in the profession* (Shulman, 2005a, 2005b, 2005c, 2008). Shulman has identified both the attributes of the professions and the similar features of the processes used to prepare professionals in their fields. In doing so, Shulman coined and introduced the concept of signature pedagogies, which describe the distinctive approaches and modes of teaching and student learning associated with the professions and with the disciplines within which students are instructed in the fundamental aspects of professional work.

The idea of signature pedagogies serves several functions in the professions, at the core of which is socialising aspirants to the professions into the theoretical, practical, and normative standards of those professions (Shulman, 2005a). Thus, according to Shulman (2005a), signature pedagogies also promote and maintain the pedagogical consistency of the preparation programs of a profession within and across institutions. Moreover, signature pedagogies reveal critical information about the character of a profession, as they convey what constitutes knowledge and responsible ethical practice in a particular professional field. The epistemological foundation of any fields of professional preparation therefore embodies its signature pedagogies.

[They] implicitly define what counts as knowledge in a field and how things become known. They define how knowledge is analysed, criticized, accepted, or discarded. They define the functions of expertise in a field,

the locus of authority, and the privileges of rank and standing. (Shulman, 2005a, p. 54)

By definition, then, signature pedagogies are archetypally unique to each professional field and pervasive in the professional schools associated with particular professions — i.e., the signature pedagogy of a particular profession is found throughout curriculum development and ways of teaching students, and is shared by most, if not all, preparation programs within and across institutions. Such signature pedagogies function in response to the sociocultural context and the professional field in which they are situated. Shulman (2005a) pointed out that: (1) signature pedagogies tend to exhibit shared qualities (e.g., pervasive in a professional domain, are routine-oriented and habitual, hold students accountable and encourage pedagogical inertia); (2) signature pedagogies render some permutation of three pedagogical forms (pedagogies of uncertainty, pedagogies of engagement and pedagogies of formation); and (3) signature pedagogies show one of three temporal patterns (the pervasive initial pedagogy that frames and prefigures professional preparation, the pervasive capstone apprenticeships and the sequenced and balanced portfolios). These characteristics occur within and across some combination of structures such as surface structures, deep structures and implicit structures (Shulman, 2005a).

Shulman (2005a) noted that “professional schools face a singular challenge: their pedagogies must measure up to the standards not just of the academy, but also of the particular profession” (p. 53). It is noted that interactions between the sociocultural context, the profession and corresponding professional bodies, and the academy influence whether and how signature pedagogies function across a field’s professional education programs and within any single institute of higher learning. These interactions particularly result in forces, such as societal expectations and the influence of a profession on the academy, that, in turn, promote uniformity and established pedagogical practices across and within programs of professional education (Shulman, 2005a).

2.5.1.2 Learning and teaching in professional fields

When particular pedagogies were identified as *signatures* they shared certain characteristics, in that they had become pervasive, repeated, routine, even predictable, and habitual for teaching and student learning in a particular disciplinary field (Shulman, 2005a). Herein lies the pedagogical inertia, whereby the pedagogy is robust and resilient in relation to different conditions and change, and thus stable over time. In this pedagogical context, students are held accountable for their own learning and that of others. According to Shulman (2008), such pedagogies had become inextricably linked with preparing aspirants for a specific profession. To put in context the notion of signature pedagogies in learning and teaching in professional fields, some examples include: bedside teaching in clinical rounds, which had been identified as the signature pedagogy in medical education to which all medical students are exposed, with the intention of developing in students the ability to act like physicians; or the pervasive legal case dialogue method in legal education, with the deliberate intention of developing in students the ability to think and reason like lawyers. The longitudinal research in nurse education conducted by Benner and her colleagues (2009) observed that signature pedagogies are ubiquitous in topics and courses, and cut across programs and institutions. Citing Cannon-Diehl (2009), Long and his colleagues (2012) likewise pointed out the prevalence of some pedagogies in nurse education, such as simulations: “Simulation pedagogies in nursing are now standard practice, employing a continuum of complexity from low-fidelity to high-fidelity, with an increased use of high-fidelity simulations in nursing that focus on patient outcomes” (p. 177). Stayt (2012) along with Jarzemsky and McGrath (2008) presented a similar assertion, illustrating that the use of clinical simulations embodies one of the dominant pedagogical patterns of knowing within nurse education (please see Section 3.3.1).

Indeed, Shulman (2008) contended that all professional fields follow the same dominant pedagogical pattern, which is distinctive to the character of a profession. Further, Shulman noted that signature pedagogies breed and nurture performance accountability, facilitate interaction and remove students’ tendencies to be passive, anonymous and invisible. Students are exposed to uncertainty, unpredictability and ambiguity, whereby they are obliged to perform their understandings openly rather than passively (Shulman, 2005a). Here the signature pedagogies embody

performances where law students argued during case-dialogue and nursing students presented patient cases during clinical placements and worked actively with patients. In such public performances, students cannot be invisible and anonymous — they are accountable. For medical students, during clinical rounds they must be prepared to interact and converse with patients and the healthcare team, as well as their peers, about observations, diagnoses, and patient treatment plans, in such a way that they show levels of clinical understanding. They are expected to build upon the team members and with their peers' clinical observations and conversations, and to contribute in meaningful ways to such conversations. These activities foster accountability and facilitate confrontation with uncertainty that helps students to develop professional judgment. In most professional preparation programs, accountability structures, noted Shulman (2005a), are enacted in class usually through public student performance and often lead to high levels of anxiety in students:

This accountability leads to a much higher affective level in class—students feel more anxiety when participating in signature pedagogies. That anxiety derives from the risk involved in putting forward ideas and defending them, from knowing that one must be prepared for class, from the fear of making a fool of oneself. (Shulman, 2005a, p. 22)

Students in professional schools are supported to learn and develop the professionally valued understandings, skills and attitudes, and values and dispositions, in turn cultivating their professional identities (Chick, Haynie & Gurung, 2009; Colby & Sullivan, 2008; Shulman, 2005a, 2008). This intent encapsulates the formative apprenticeships for professional practice preparation, deemed to promote the holistic development of students for professional practice.

2.5.3 Formative apprenticeships for professional practice preparation

Researchers at the Carnegie Foundation metaphorically labelled understandings, skills and dispositions as the *three formative apprenticeships* in professional education. These formative apprenticeships described as 1) *cognitive apprenticeship*, 2) *practical apprenticeship* and 3) *moral apprenticeship* characterise signature pedagogies, the amplification of which is explored in some depth by Colby and Sullivan (2008, pps. 409-411) and Shulman (2005c, pp. 12-14; 2008, pp. 8-10).

Please also see Section 2.2, which describes Sullivan's (2005) notion of professional education apprenticeships.

2.5.3.1 Cognitive apprenticeship

Cognitive apprenticeship is where an aspirant to a profession learns a theoretical knowledge base and builds capacity to think like a professional and in ways that are important to that profession (Shulman, 2005c). This first apprenticeship focuses on cognition and knowledge acquisition — to master the foundational technical knowledge of the profession. It aims to develop students' thinking skills in domain-specific contexts and content. *Thinking and knowing* or habits of mind (Shulman, 2008) are foundational to competent professional practice, where students must learn what counts as knowledge and how knowledge is constructed within their professional field. For example, cognitive apprenticeship embodies the signature pedagogy of the law discipline — the case-dialogue method — wholeheartedly embraced in the academy, as Wegner (2009) explained:

The dialectical approach allows instructors to force students to confront the inherent uncertainty at the heart of many legal problems. This approach also fosters the development of critical thinking, moving students through the full range of educational objectives....It allows instructors to make student thinking visible, then coach students to the next level, before fading away when students can stand on their own. (pp. 21-22).

2.5.3.2 Practical apprenticeship

Practical apprenticeship is where an aspirant learns the craft to perform like a professional that symbolises expert performance in the discipline (Shulman, 2005c). This second apprenticeship focuses on the development of skills and the cultivation of practice. Thus, the common thread within the practical apprenticeship is that it demands that professional education students do and act through a deeper level of participation and engagement with their chosen professional field of practice. The goal here is to develop the students' abilities to understand and intervene in particular contexts, mimicking the performance of expert professionals responsible for the well being of others — the locus for professionals and of professionalism.

Benner (2015) explained that, in nurse education, the notion of *practice apprenticeship* is focused on:

... clinical reasoning and clinical practice skilled know-how that teaches students how to think and solve problems in actual clinical situations. Learning how to reason across time through changes in the patient and/or changes in the clinician's understanding of the patient's condition and concerns (p. 1)

Here Colby and Sullivan (2008) noted that the “status of the apprenticeships in relation to one another affects how important the third apprenticeship [moral apprenticeship] is considered to be, how it is understood, and the ways that it is fostered or explicitly taught in professional education” (p. 420). The concern was that the moral apprenticeship is deemed somewhat marginalized, as the professional education programs tend to be planned around the values and priorities of the academy.

2.5.3.3 Moral apprenticeship

Moral apprenticeship is where an aspirant learns to *think* and *act* in a responsible and ethical manner, which integrates across all three domains and is centred on the profession's fundamental purposes (Shulman, 2005c). The normative purpose in this third apprenticeship embodies the *being* and *becoming* that shape professional identity, following its primary purpose to induct students to a profession's ethical standards and practices. As Colby and Sullivan (2008) explained, this apprenticeship is intended to:

...capture students' induction into the field's ethical standards and practices, professional sensibilities, appreciation for and commitment to the field's essential social purposes, and sense of professional identity in which those purposes and standards are experienced as core features of what it means to practice that profession”. (p. 408)

Both the cognitive and the normative aspects of student development are

juxtaposed in moral apprenticeship, as it establishes an expectation that students begin to develop a commitment to a profession's broad social purposes. With this commitment at its core, students in turn develop a commitment to an emerging professional identity. Similarly, Sullivan (2008) contended that "it is in this dimension of professional education that the acceptance of responsibility presents the chief formative challenge" (p. xv). Such educational foci assist the students actually to experience and to reflect upon the meaning, purposes, demands of and commitment to professional life.

According to Shulman (2008), these apprenticeships "cannot work in parallel isolation, they must be intertwined and integrated, with the intellectual permeating the technical, the moral tempering the imagined, and the practical always tuned to the consequences of their actions and their impact on others" (p. 8). Furthermore, this "modern apprenticeship", observed Shulman (2008, p. 8), transpires within "intellectual, practical, and moral communities, with instruction, demonstration, modelling, and practice moving in many directions". However, the major challenge in professional education in recent times is that the lack of integration between cognitive apprenticeship and the practical apprenticeship is compounded by weak abilities to think responsibly (moral apprenticeship) about the larger social and political significance of their practice, which really constitutes the major challenge (Sullivan & Benner, 2005).

Colby and Sullivan (2008) argued that, "patterns of emphasis among the three apprenticeships influence the character of each" (p. 420). Such an assertion has a parallel connotation of the schemas for curricula proposed by Barnett and Coate (2005). Figure 2.1 shows the general schema, as well as schemas for different disciplines, which includes those of professional subject areas. Each schema presents a different curriculum pattern that incorporates what Barnett and Coate (2005) referred to as the three domains of student engagement — knowing, doing, being. These authors noted that the variation in each field of study "recognises that curricula have distinctive but integrated components, as well as allowing for different weightings of each domain within any one curriculum" (p. 70).

The correlation of this work with the work of the scholars at the Carnegie Foundation is that both studies recognise the patterns of influence and the varying

dominant curricular patterns in different professional fields. Barnett and Coate (2005) explained that “the key factor about curricular patterns in the professional subjects is the integration of the self and actions domains...yet the domains can also be integrated with each other in the development of new modes of being for the student” (p. 78). Similarly, Colby and Sullivan (2008) noted the varying apprenticeship patterns in different professional fields in that the moral apprenticeship looks quite differently in fields for which the first apprenticeship is dominant from how I look in those where the practical apprenticeship is a central organising force. In medical and nurse education, the apprenticeship of skillful practice is “ultimately in the driver’s seat” (p. 420). Figure 2.1 shows an integrated illustration of Barnett and Coates (2005, pp. 70-77) schema for curricula, as cited in Hicks (2007).

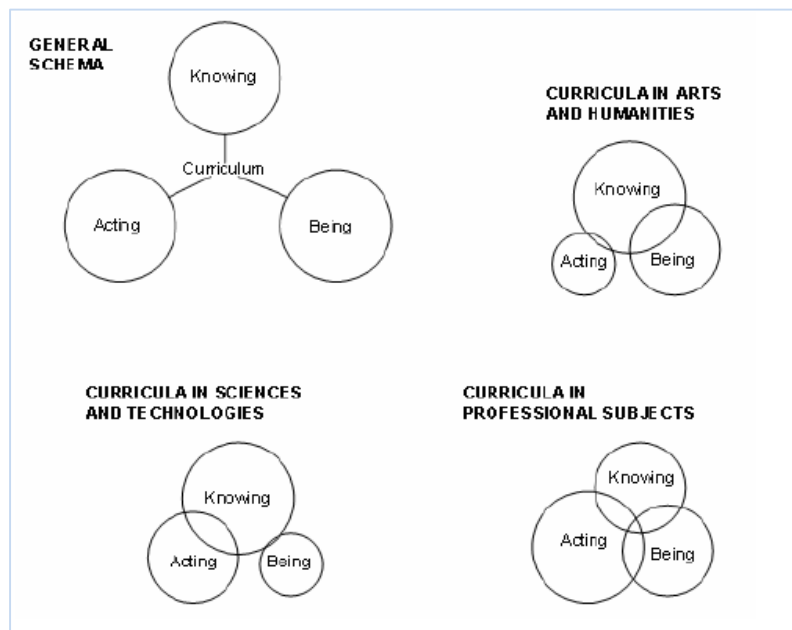


Figure 2.1 Schema for curricula

Hence, calls to educate future professionals more effectively based on an integrative curriculum and pedagogies that incorporate the development of theoretical, practical and ethical knowledge dominate the current discourse in higher education (e.g., Gurung, Chick & Haynie, 2009; Higgs et al., 2010; Jackson, 2011; Laurillard, 2013; Sullivan & Benner, 2005). The premise is that, through integrative curricula and pedagogies, ideas about higher education, and in particular about professional education, are put into action, which include fostering reflectiveness and powers of self-critical thought (Biggs & Tang, 2011; Laurillard, 2013). Certainly, as

was noted in Section 2.4, specific aspects that should be learned are well documented in the literature, in terms of the holistic development and preparation of aspiring professionals. At this juncture, it is pertinent to return to Sullivan's (2004) assertion about the challenge for professional education:

The challenge for professional education is how to teach the complex ensemble of analytic thinking, skillful practice, and wise judgment upon which each profession rests. The university setting, and even more the prevalence of the academic model of thought and teaching, facilitates training analytic habits of mind. It does far less, however, to further students' progress in developing practical skills and capacity for professional judgment. (p. 195)

Against this backdrop, the fundamental aims of this research project were to formulate theoretical understandings and generate new ideas as regards professional practice preparation. The premise was that curricula and pedagogies make a difference in shaping future performance and nurturing the values and aspirations of members of professional fields.

2.6 Chapter summary

This chapter has explored constructs that have guided professional education in general, and curricula and pedagogies in particular, concerning professional practice preparation. Key ideas embedded within the current research were examined to demonstrate and emphasise how the literature has acknowledged and researched these in various contexts, thus establishing the boundaries of this thesis. In illustrating such contextual boundaries, I have reviewed theoretical grounding, practices and research in relation to professional education from the literature pertinent to the preparation of students for professional practice. In the second section, I have investigated a number of key concepts and their structural contexts of influence on professional education, with consequent influences on the understandings of institutes of higher learning of what it means to prepare students for professional practice. In the third section, I highlighted the current state of play in preparing students for the new world of work, and I underscored the changing nature of work and education, and the society as a

whole. This provided a backdrop for the discussion on the embodiment of learning to become a professional, where the development of aspiring professionals was positioned within the trajectory of what such aspirants will need to *be able to do* and *who they should become*. Moreover, in the fourth and fifth sections, the role and nature of curricula and pedagogies have been identified as not only instrumental but also central to situating the current research. As such, I have interrogated knowledge from previous research studies focusing on professional practice preparation for their relevance to my research problem and my concomitant research questions in this study.

In sum, I presented the notion of professional practice preparation in this chapter as a social enterprise, informed by the practices and values of a professional field. In the following chapter, I will therefore conceptualise a framework through which these ideas can be theorised.

Chapter 3 | Framing the theoretical bases of the study

Problems gave birth to theories... facts are always examined in the light of
some theory and therefore cannot be disentangled from philosophy.
~ Lev Vygotsky (1962, p. 11)

3.1 Chapter introduction

The genealogy of the problem discussed in Chapter 2 has highlighted the need to understand the preparation of students for professional practice and the necessity to ground such understanding within a responsive and robust theoretical framework. In the main, the mechanism for explaining how aspiring professionals develop knowledge, practice and dispositions, and how professional identities are shaped, has not been accounted for with the support of an integrated or unified theory. In the present study, a unified theory was critical for examining the problem, for explaining the *what* and the *how* of preparing for professional practice, and for exploring the essence of lived experiences in this context. As the literature suggests, a theory provides a means for observing phenomena, for making sense of lived experiences and for classifying, explaining and making meaning of empirical data and subsequent findings (e.g., see Creswell, 2009; Maxwell, 2005). In the context of this research, theory was used as a tentative explanation, and not as an end in itself, in so far as elucidating or predicting real-world events usefully (cf. Gorard & Taylor, 2004).

The current chapter provides an overview of the theory of human development and learning, developed by the Russian psychologist Lev Semenovich Vygotsky (1896-1934), to specify a theoretical basis on which to ground professional education. Utilising this theory allows exploration and interpretation to be made within the thesis, as regards the practices and experiences of preparing for professional practice. The theory also enables understanding of the dynamic interdependence of social and individual processes towards the development of students for professional practice. This in turn lead to gathering theoretical insights into the manner in which students develop disciplinary ways of knowing (epistemological element), doing and acting (praxis element) and being and becoming (ontological element) and how their professional identities are formed. This premise is based on the understanding that:

In Vygotsky's theory, consistent with his emphasis on development as a process of learning to use the intellectual tools provided through social history, social interaction is expected to promote development through the guidance provided by interaction with people who have achieved some skill in the use of those intellectual tools. The model of most effective social interaction is thus joint problem solving with guidance by a person who is more skilled. (Rogoff, 1990, p. 140)

Practitioners in the professions and in professional education alike call for learning and teaching practices that align with these sociocultural views. The locus of learning and development of future professionals, as examined in Chapter 2, is in the social situatedness of disciplinary concept and practice formation. Hence, one of the advantages of the sociocultural approach in the current research is that, in studying the participants dynamically we gain a better understanding of them within their complex social circumstances. Certainly, the sociocultural perspective has significantly influenced my professional practice and research in higher and professional education, explicitly and at times tacitly. Upon encountering Vygotsky's theory of learning and development, I was immediately attracted to its experiential value, as my lived experiences both as a learner and as an educator aligned with a sociocultural perspective. In my view, learning and development cannot be separated from their social and cultural realities. They are inextricably linked and Vygotsky's theoretical frame has confirmed this understanding. It was his integrative approach to explaining social and psychological phenomena and its impact on education that is of particular interest to my PhD research, owing to the importance placed upon his work and his sociocultural approach.

It is important to emphasise that Vygotsky's theoretical work is not only extensive but also complex and an in depth coverage of his theory is beyond the scope of this study. I have purposely confined my discussion to unpacking three central tenets of his work deemed significant to this study, namely: (i) social sources of development; (ii) semiotic mediation in human development; and (iii) genetic analysis. In addition, I refer to various constructs originated by his followers and their contemporary contributions to the sociocultural movement, such as: participatory appropriation, guided participation and apprenticeship (Rogoff, 1990,

1993, 2008); situated cognition (Brown, Collins & Duguid, 1989; Gee, 2010); situated learning (Lave, 1988, 1997); cognitive apprenticeship (Collins, Brown & Newman, 1987); communities of practice and legitimate peripheral participation (Lave & Wenger, 1991, Wenger, 1998); and cognitive authenticity and authentic activities (Herrington, Oliver & Reeves, 2003; Resnick, 1987). I briefly examine some of these sociocultural ideas of human learning and development as they intersect with the perspectives espoused in professional education. In interrogating the inherent multidimensional connections between sociocultural theory and professional education perspectives, a working theoretical framework is presented, through which this phenomenological case study project pursued the investigation.

3.2 Learning and development from a sociocultural perspective

The study of human learning and development within the field of psychology has been influenced significantly by the ideas postulated by Vygotsky (1978). While developed over 80 years ago, Vygotsky's theory remained current and has continued to evolve and play an important role in educational research. Vygotsky's theory became known as the sociocultural or cultural-historical approach to the study of the mind (Cole, 1996; Rogoff, 1990; Wertsch, 2010). Thus, Vygotsky's perspectives continue to play an important role in education research and practice, particularly in understanding the students' development and learning. So much so that in the Introduction section of one of Vygotsky's highly influential work, *Thought and Language*, renowned psychologist Jerome Bruner asserted that "Vygotsky's conception of development is at the same time a theory of education" (Vygotsky, 1962, p. v).

Vygotsky was born into a middle class Jewish family in 1896 in the western region of Russia. At the time that he launched his career as a psychologist in the 1920s, Vygotsky, like many other scholars of his day, strived to integrate Marxist ideas into his work to reformulate and integrate all areas of intellectual inquiry (Wertsch, 2010). Of particular interest to Vygotsky as regards Karl Marx's work was the idea relating to the capacity and capability of humans to produce and use tools and that, in doing so, they have the ability to master their environments, meet their needs and realise their creative potential (Wertsch, 2010). Vygotsky sought to understand

the relationships between the sociocultural and the sociohistorical development of human activities and societies on the one hand and on the other, what these transformations mean for the learning and development of individuals during their lifespans or ontogeny (John-Steiner & Mahn, 1996).

3.2.1 An all-encompassing theory of human development

Vygotsky is one of a few theorists who have postulated an all-encompassing theory of human development (Eun, 2011). According to Wertsch (2010), Vygotsky's comprehensive theoretical framework can be explicated in terms of three fundamental themes: 1) his reliance on genetic or developmental method; 2) his assertion that higher or uniquely human mental functioning in an individual has social origins; and 3) his contention that higher mental functioning is mediated by socioculturally evolved tools and signs and that, in this regard, human language plays a central role. Vygotsky's theories are focused essentially on an integrated system of human functions, whereby aspects of development such as cognitive, emotional, physical and motivational elements are unified into the one system (Eun, 2011). They are mutually constituted and cannot be considered as isolated parts that develop without the influence of the other parts. As Wertsch (2010) explained, they are thoroughly intertwined in Vygotsky's thinking and any attempt to distinguish them is somewhat artificial.

Vygotsky was able to associate diverse strands of inquiry together in an exceptional approach that offered a practical psychology that did not isolate individuals from the sociocultural contexts in which they lived. He borrowed ideas from multiple disciplines, such as philosophy, social theory, linguistics, ethnology, literary analysis and psychology, as he sought a comprehensive approach that would make possible, not only description, but also explanation of higher psychological functions in terms acceptable to natural science (Wertsch, 1998).

Vygotsky devised what he called the general law of cultural development, which stated that the development of higher psychological functions denotes mastery of processes that originate in social contexts. Mastery of processes is firstly external and social before such mastery becomes internal. Any function in the individual's

cultural development appears on two planes: it appears first on social interaction - the interpsychological level - and subsequently on psychological planes, as individual achievements through phases of prolonged processes form into individual cognitive processes - the intrapsychological level (Eun, 2011). Wertsch (1998) maintained that, internalisation changes the process itself and transforms its structure and functions and that social relations among people genetically underlie all higher functions and their relationships. This well-known genetic law of development underscored the primacy of social interaction in human development. It was the basis of Vygotsky's formulation of the social sources of development and that learning emerges as a consequence of the "zone of proximal development" (see section 3.1.3).

3.2.2 Genetic analysis

The sociocultural perspective posits that any aspect of mental functioning can be understood only by understanding its origins and history. That is, cognition must be understood developmentally (i.e., genetically) in terms of its origins and the subsequent development of individual and cultural levels of analysis. Vygotsky dealt not only with the lifespan development of individuals (ontogenesis), but he also dealt with the development of species (phylogenesis), particular events or situations (microgenesis), and socio-cultural history (Penuel & Wertsch, 1995; Wells, 1999). These four interrelated roles of the individual and the social world may be employed to investigate any form of human development that includes the individual and the environment together in successively broader timeframes (Rogoff, 2008, 2014; Wells, 1999). Rogoff's (2008) account of Vygotsky's interest in the individual-social dyad provides a clear direction for the current research, particularly as regards the unit of analysis:

Vygotsky's (1978) interest in the mutuality of the individual and the social environment is apparent in his concern with finding a unit of analysis that preserves the essence of the events of interest rather than separating an event into elements that no longer function as does the whole (e.g., studying water molecules rather than hydrogen and oxygen to understand the behaviour of water. The use of "activity" or "event" as the

unit of analysis allows a reformulation in which each is inherently involved in the others' definition. None exists separately. (p. 58)

Vygotsky's focus on all forms of human behaviour led him to consider that it was necessary to study the genesis of behaviour. He used genetic method to develop his theoretical framework and guide his research, based on his contention that any event or phenomenon must be investigated from the point of view of its place in development. Genetic analysis examines the origins and the history of phenomena focusing on their relationships and interconnections. For Vygotsky (1978), focusing on the process of development rather than the product of development is a priority, through which higher forms of mental functions (e.g., thinking, memory and voluntary memory) are established. He elaborated that:

To study something historically means to study it in the process of change; that is the dialectical method's basic demand. To encompass in research the process of a given thing's development in all its phases and changes – from birth to death – fundamentally means to discover its nature, its essence, for “it is only in movement that a body shows what it is”. Thus, the historical (that is in the broadest sense of history) study of behaviour is not an auxiliary aspect of theoretical study, but rather forms its very base. (pp. 64-65)

This important approach to investigating human learning and development promotes a focus on understanding the relationship between the sociocultural and the sociohistorical development of human activities and societies. Of particular interest to this approach is inquiring into the resulting changes or transformations and what they imply for the learning and development of individuals during their lifespan. Here, the role of speech and language plays a part in accounting for qualitative transformations in the development of mental functioning through participatory activities. At this juncture, it is important to note that a critical focus of sociocultural research is to study “the way that the co-construction of knowledge is internalized, appropriated, transmitted, or transformed in formal and informal learning settings” (John-Steiner & Mahn, 1996, p. 196). In contrast to the research focused on examining development as a process occurring within individuals, Vygotsky

examined development as a process of the transformation of individual functioning in the course of appropriating and internalising various forms of social practice (Cole, 1996). Vygotsky proposed that, in order to understand phenomena such as learning and development, human modes of thinking and acting must be examined. He drew attention to the role played by cultural tools or signs in mediating thinking and intelligent action and the notion that social world is influential in the development and use of these mediational means and therefore forms part of human intellectual functioning.

According to Bakhurst (1991), this epistemology suggests a kind of relationship between organism and environment that represent knowing as “a way of *being* in the world” (p. 85; *emphasis in the original*). Cognition (thought) is understood in terms of the relationship between learners and the properties of specific environments, explained as essentially “something located...on the borderline between the organism and the outside world. For thought... has a life only in an environment of socially constituted meanings” (Bakhurst, 1988, p. 38). Thus, knowing does not only pertain to what an individual possesses in his or her head, but also focuses on his or her interactions with the objects of the social and physical world.

Herein lies the significance of Vygotsky’s sociocultural theory to this study. The sociocultural perspective foreshadows a way of integrating the valuable elements of the professional education perspectives discussed in Chapter 2. Reflecting the views espoused in the sociocultural approach to understanding learning and development, professional education also focuses on the connections between individual functioning and the sociocultural practices in which individuals take part. In this educational context, the individual and the environment require each other mutually in order to constitute themselves. Hence, in the context of the current study, the sociocultural approach to genetic analysis may offer insights about the development of individual learners (ontogenesis), the program and courses, and the learning and teaching activities (microgenesis), and the learning communities (cultural development) within the case.

3.2.3 Social sources of development

Central to Vygotsky's thesis is the notion that learning and development are a social process, highlighting that the developing individual relies on the accumulated experiences of others in the course of her or his development. Vygotsky proposed that higher (i.e., uniquely human) mental processes such as problem solving, voluntary memory and voluntary attention have their origins in social activity (Wertsch, 2010). Higher mental functions are therefore developed through social interactions where the more knowledgeable/skilful others guide such development. This is done gradually and through the support that less experienced individuals receive in social interactions from those with expertise. This builds the capacity of less experienced individuals to operate within a particular zone, which Vygotsky referred to as the zone of proximal development. This highly influential concept was defined by Vygotsky as "*the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem, solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers*" (1978, p. 86; *emphasis in the original*). Vygotsky maintained that, in order to appreciate the connection between learning and development, it was essential to distinguish between two different levels of accomplishments: the actual and the potential. The former refers to accomplishments that an individual can demonstrate independently, whereas the latter are likely accomplishments that can be achieved only with assistance.

Thus, for Vygotsky, human development and learning take place as a collaborative effort between the individual learner and experienced members of the culture. The co-construction of knowledge arising from individuals' collaborative interactions becomes the tools of mind for each individual involved in the processes of interaction. Collaboration is social in origin and nature, the products of which are used to serve the purposes of individual human minds when the process of internalisation has occurred (Eun, Knotek & Heining-Boynton, 2008). The less experienced individual's capacity to use forms of knowledge is possible when assisted by others. Thus, the essence of the idea of the zone of proximal development is that, when people are allowed to cooperate with more capable persons, their performance is usually much better than when they are on their own. Moreover, the capacity of the

less experienced individual is enhanced when *scaffolding* (Bruner, 1996) is built into the activity and certain interpretations of the task are shared with a more capable person who enables access to, and more productive use of, the less experienced person's knowledge and skills.

Rogoff (1990) described the zone of proximal development as a “dynamic region of sensitivity” in which the individual learns “the skills of culture” through problem solving with the help of “more experienced members of culture” (p. 14). For Rogoff (1990), the developing individuals draw on others' experiences of the world, within which development and learning are embedded in social events, as they interact with people and cultural tools in that environment. Development is engendered by the processes that materialise over the course of human social experience in cultural context.

In this context, activity, as a cultural system, is infused with norms, goals, meanings and esoteric knowledge that provide the medium for learning and development (Cole, 1996). Therefore higher mental functions have their roots in social activity (Wertsch, 1998). What individuals do and learn in the context of collaborative activity is the foundation of cognitive development. Hence, correspondingly, human action serves as a more inclusive unit of analysis (Cole & Engeström). The relationship between the individual and the setting, as signified by the learner's level of participation in the given contextual activity, forms the basis of the unit of analysis, rather than the individual or the setting (Barab & Plucker, 2002).

The idea of the zone of proximal development has generated countless inspirations for education research and practice. For example, a number of studies have investigated the role of the adult (teacher) in guiding the child (student) through a problem solving process (Brown, Collins & Duguid, 1989), reciprocal teaching and guided cooperative learning (Brown & Campione, 1990), and learning as a process of increasing participation in social practices (Rogoff, 1990), among much other developmental work. Findings from numerous studies, such as those cited above, have highlighted that the adult-child relationship constitutes mutual understanding and shared perspectives on the world when interacting and engaging in conversations.

Such findings extend the current understandings of Vygotsky's intentions for the idea of zone of proximal development and how this idea may operate in practice.

The zone of proximal development is certainly touted as one of the important mechanisms that accounts for the development of individual mental functioning, and deemed as a particularly useful device in designing and understanding effective educational interventions (please see Penuel and Wertsch, 1995). As Vygotsky maintained:

The zone of proximal development furnishes psychologists and educators with a tool through which the internal course of development can be understood. By using this method we can take account of not only the cycles and maturation processes that have already been completed but also processes that are currently in the state of formation, that are just beginning to mature and develop. Thus, the zone of proximal development permits us to delineate the child's [or the adult novice's for that matter] immediate future and his dynamic developmental state, allowing not only for what already been achieved developmentally but also for what is in the course of maturing (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 87).

Such a perspective promotes a holistic view when considering how individuals, groups and communities transform as they constitute sociocultural activity and are constituted by such activity. In the context of professional education, Vygotsky's viewpoint provides a means to understand the development of individuals as they are inducted into, and take part in, the social processes of their chosen discipline. Hence, this construct is of critical interest to the current research, particularly when used as a conceptual lens in the analyses of data, as it can explain how social and participatory learning takes place in professional education settings. Armed with this understanding, I have a theoretical appreciation as a researcher of socioculturally relevant activities within the students' zone of proximal development. Specifically, I understand how nursing students can gain positively from the guidance provided by university teachers, or knowledgeable others, in order to promote autonomy as they develop a more independent understanding of disciplinary practices, which shape their professional identity.

Thus far, it is clear that the various conceptual themes developed by Vygotsky, which make up his grand sociocultural thesis, highlight the inherent connection of the individual with the social, and that the individuals and their environments are inseparable. As noted, this fundamental assumption has significant implications for the current research about professional education, as it underscores the fundamental nature of learning and development and their social and cultural bases. However, at this juncture, it is worthy to note that Vygotsky's research have focused particularly on interactions among children and between adults and children, but not between adults. Nevertheless, I take the position that Vygotsky's theory of learning and development arises from social processes, which applies across the lifespan of human development, and that human beings learn and develop through the unification of mind and social interaction, using semiotic tools, such as language (please see John-Steiner & Mahn, 1996; Rogoff, 1990; Wertsch, 2010).

3.2.4 Semiotic mediation in human development

If human development occurs as a result of the internalisation of social interactions, how might this process actually take place? Put another way, what processes are involved in this developmental process? In response to this question, Vygotsky (1981) coined the notion of *semiotic mediation* as the mechanism that explains why and how human development occurs. Vygotsky (1981) maintained that semiotic mediational means are central to the development of individuals and their appropriations of knowledge through representation activity. Examples of this idea include "language, different forms of numeration and counting, mnemonic techniques, algebraic symbolism, works of art, writing schemes, diagrams, maps, and mechanical drawings, all sorts of conventional signs" (p. 137). Such mediational means are products of the development of practices, through an evolutionary process in communities over time. These are resources that shape, empower and constrain individuals, and have the capacity to transform action that, in turn, may facilitate the formation of relationships with oneself and with others (Penuel & Wertsch, 1995).

John-Steiner and Mahn (1996) explained that semiotic mediation is the key to all aspects of knowledge co-construction, for semiotic mechanisms, such as

psychological tools, are deemed to mediate social and individual functioning and connect the external with the internal, the social with the individual. Semiotic means are critical in supporting and transforming mental functioning, which becomes internalised and available for independent activity (Penuel & Wertsch, 1995). Semiotic means posit two categories of semiotic tools, namely, physical tools or psychological tools - the physical tools are those directed at the external world, whereas the psychological tools are those directed internally and that are internalised during activity (John-Steiner & Mahn, 1996). This perspective lends support to the notion that both mediation and action are central to the sociocultural approach. As John-Steiner and Mahn (1996) clarified:

Representational activities, whether in the form of speech, imagery, or kinetic concepts, are linked to culturally shared systems, such as language, and so developmental activities, including scaffolding (John-Steiner, 1995)... Thus, psychological tools are not invented by the individual in isolation. They are products of sociocultural evolution to which individuals have access by being actively engaged in the practices of their communities. (p. 193)

Cultural tools mediate human action, where such tools are deemed not merely to serve the purposes of individuals, but also to transform those purposes in important ways, and also to mediate mental functioning (Penuel & Wertsch, 1995). As developing individuals interact with experienced, more able members of their community, their capacity to use cultural tools is enhanced until they gain independence and are able to use them on their own. These higher forms of mental processes are mediated activities that may draw upon one or more of the three categories of mediation, namely: a) mediation through other human beings – i.e., the human mediator is the experienced, more capable member of the community; b) mediation through symbolic systems – i.e., symbolic or psychological mediation whereby the system of knowledge and skills is imparted and modelled by learned members of the community through social interactions with the developing individual; and c); and mediation through material tools – i.e., external mediation that involves cultural tools utilised in the process of social interaction and engagement in cultural practices (Eun, 2011).

Vygotsky (1978) described engagement in cultural practices and social interaction as playing a fundamental part in cognitive development, whereby humans use tools developed from a culture to mediate and navigate through their social environments. For Vygotsky (1981), cultural tools mediate human practice and, these tools are “devices for mastering mental processes” (p. 136). Such tools serve as instruments of thinking and acting at the level of individual action. Thus, cognition is mediated by semiotic mechanisms, especially natural language (Wertsch, 2010). According to Vygotsky (1978), language is the primary device for mediating what transpires in the world. Hence, language is critical for learning and development as it simultaneously serves as the link between people in interactive settings, and as a tool for thinking and understanding. Vygotsky (1978) was particularly interested in inner speech and its origins in the social speech that accompanied various types of problem-solving activities in social interactions. So much so that members of sociocultural thought communities placed language in a central position (Wells, 1999). While language has earned its central place and prominence in the examination of developmental processes, some Vygotskian scholars take a *pluralist* stance, such as John-Steiner and Mahn (1996), who argued that the means of semiotic mediation were not limited to language or communicative exchanges, and promoted the diversity of these means and the psychological tools that they represent.

Individuals have access to cultural tools, through active engagement in the practices of their communities, whereby sociocultural tools are central to the appropriation of knowledge. The notion of appropriation describes the adoption by an individual of one of the socially available tools (Leontiev, 1981, as cited in John-Steiner and Mahn, 1996). By learning to use cultural tools, the developing individual appropriate aspects of the accumulated experiences and knowing of her or his community. This suggests a connection between the inner world, such as thinking, and the outside world, such as interactions with others. According to Penuel and Wertsch (1995) these psychological tools are borrowed from social practices, such as the problem-solving capacities of individuals. The tools, or the mediational tools, are derived from cultural contexts, even as these tools are “mastered and transformed by individuals in their own activities” (p. 86). Semiotic mediation played an important role in, and provided a central focus for, Vygotsky’s research into the development of higher psychological processes.

At this juncture, it is important to point out that semiotic mediation is central to understanding Vygotsky's contributions to psychology and education, which is of direct relevance to understanding the learning and development of students in their preparation for professional practice. In the current study, I investigated the social settings in which the participation of nursing students in specific forms of nursing practice or activity occurred. Vygotsky (1981) referred to such investigations as examining the *social situation of development*, following his analysis of the formation of scientific concepts that emphasised the role that school context plays in transforming the everyday thinking of students, based on experience, into scientific concepts. In order to understand the process of development of nursing students towards professional practice empirically in the current study, the context and semiotic mediation that influence transformation from social behaviour to higher psychological functions were scrutinised closely. Hence, in this study, the sociocultural theory of semiotic mediation has been fundamental to constructing a theoretical understanding of the development and preparation of nursing students for professional practice.

3.3 Sociocultural foundations of professional education

Present day theorists and proponents of sociocultural perspectives have elaborated on Vygotsky's earlier theoretical ideas, which resonate with professional education perspectives. These theorists' (e.g., Rogoff, 2008; Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Treyner, 2015; Wertsch, 2010) examination of sociocultural assumptions foregrounded the enduring influences of Vygotsky's sociocultural ideas in contemporary educational research and practice. In turn, their ongoing work highlighted aspects underlying the idea of interrelatedness of the roles of the developing individual and of experienced individuals in their sociocultural context (cf. Eun, B., Knotek, S. E., & Heining-Boynton, A. L. 2008). The central tenet of these theorists' respective contributions to the sociocultural movement is that knowledge and learning are interwoven with the activities and contexts in which they occur. Following Vygotsky's theoretical ideas, the progressive sociocultural views proposed by his followers likewise promote that learning and development are located in co-participation in sociocultural practices and that knowledge development

(knowing) is an activity that is co-determined by individual and the social environment.

These contemporary contributions come in many different varieties and constitute a group of related but not identical perspectives. Just as the work of Vygotsky had rejected the idea of focusing on the individual's mind, advances on sociocultural theory has also focused on the world of human experience, as a shared process in social and cultural groups in which learning, thinking and problem solving among others take place. Moreover, recent work on human cognition and learning harnesses new technologies and digital tools, as playing a significant role in mediating and facilitating simulations of authentic contexts and practices, social interaction, thought processes and problem solving that engender learning and development (e.g., Bransford, Brown & Cocking, 2002; Gee, 2004; Wertsch, 2010). The primary focus is on the kinds of social engagements that increasingly enable learners to participate in the activities of the expert, rather than on the cognitive processes and conceptual structures involved (Cobb, 1994).

The selected progressive sociocultural constructs, together with their central tenets and supporting scholars and theorists are outlined in Table 3.1. The list contained therein is not exhaustive but highlights the influences of Vygotsky's sociocultural ideas.

The narratives in professional education literature certainly lend support to sociocultural perspective on learning and development (e.g., Dall'Alba, 2009; Shulman 2005a). Learning from experiences is a critical aspect of professional education and "is the major contributor to creating and testing theories of practice which are the defining constructs of professional knowledge and learning" (Shulman, 1998, p. 523). The challenge, according to Gonzi (2002) is to focus on enabling students to experience communities of practice where:

... learning is developed through doing, through acting in the world. The challenge is to shift the focus of professional and vocational education from training the individual mind, to the social setting in which the individual becomes part of the community of practice; from facts and rules stored in

the brain until the need to use them, to enacting knowledge through activity; from a conception of humanity centred exclusively on the brain to a wider conception where humans are seen as embodied centres embedded in the world ... It is a process which involves the emotions and the formation of identity through adapting the world in which the person is situated—in the communities of practice that we live and act in. (pp. 15-16)

Table 3.1 Learning and development constructs from a Vygotskian perspective

Sociocultural constructs	Central tenets	Scholars and theorists
Anchored instruction	Emphasis on the importance of creating an anchor or focus that enable students to experience critical features of problem situations and the changes in their perceptions.	Cognition and Technology Group at Vanderbilt (1990); Pelligrino & Brophy (2008)
Apprenticeship	Novice works closely with an expert in joint problem solving in the zone of proximal development.	Lave (1988, 1993, 1997); Rogoff (1990; 2008)
Authentic learning	Learning takes place in meaningful situations, and involves real-world problems that mimic the work of professionals in the discipline.	Herrington, Reeves & Oliver (2010); Resnick (1987)
Cognitive apprenticeship	Enculturation into authentic practices through activity and social interaction.	Collins, Brown & Newman (1987); Rogoff (2008)
Cognitive realism	Learning environments have varying degrees of fidelity to reality, but have strong linkage to real-world professional practice.	Herrington, Oliver & Reeve (2003); Smith (1986)
Communities of practice	Individuals sharing mutually defined practices, beliefs, and understandings over an extended period in the pursuit of a common goal.	Lave (1993); Lave & Wenger (1991); Wenger-Trayner et al. (2015)
Guided participation,	Stresses the mutual involvement of individuals and their social partners, communicating and coordinating their involvement as they participate in socioculturally structured collective activity.	Rogoff (1990; 2008)
Legitimate peripheral participation	Participation in authentic activities, and creating an identity that move an individual towards the centre of a community of practice.	Lave & Wenger (1991); Wenger (1998)
Participatory appropriation	Through participation, individuals change and, in the process, become prepared to engage in subsequent similar activities.	Rogoff (1990; 2008) Wenger-Trayner et al. (2015)
Practice field	Learning contexts that provide opportunity for learners to actively engage in negotiating meaning through practice.	Barab & Duffy (2000); Senge (1994)
Reciprocal teaching	Tutor and learners take turns leading a dialogue centred on pertinent features of the text.	Brown & Campione (1990)
Situated cognition	Learning is always situated and progressively developed through activity.	Brown, Collins & Duguid (1989); Gee (2004)
Situated learning	Learning through goal directed activity situated in authentic circumstances.	Lave (1988; 1993); McLellan (1996)

Here what the students experience and how they pay attention to the elements of these experiences is, in effect, their participation in the practices of their cultural discipline groups (cf. Gee, 2004). Perspectives such as this portray the situated nature of learning and development in professional education context because the idea of learning from experiences is always located in, what Lave (1997) referred to as, “situated social practice” where “*learning, thinking, and knowing are relations among people engaged in activity in, with, and arising from socially and culturally structured world*” (p. 67; *emphasis in the original*). Table 3.2 1 illustrates how Vygotsky’s theoretical ideas, and related sociocultural constructs of his followers, embody the practices in professional education.

Table 3.2 Professional education within a sociocultural perspective

Vygotsky’s theoretical ideas	Related sociocultural constructs	Professional education practices
Social interaction	Cognitive apprenticeship Communities of practice Reciprocal teaching	Learning interactions, such as class/online discussions, peer-to-peer collaboration, study groups, work-integrated learning.
Zone of proximal development	Apprenticeship Guided participation Legitimate peripheral participation	Observation and hands-on involvement in learning activities, such as joint problem solving in tutorials, guided practice in the laboratory, simulations with embedded direction and guidance.
Semiotic mediation	Authentic learning Cognitive realism Practice field Situated cognition Situated learning	Industry placement; Laboratory practice; High and low fidelity simulations; Case studies; work-integrated learning. These learning contexts include the three types of mediators: teachers and mentors (human mediator); equipment and learning materials (tools); and bodies of knowledge and skills modelled by experts (symbolic).
Internalisation	Anchored instruction Participatory appropriation	Learning tasks, such as individual problem solving, assignment responses, journal writing, self-assessments; and work-integrated learning.

What follows is an extrapolation of some of these Vygotskian inspired sociocultural constructs most closely related to this research. As is explained in the following discussions, tenets of sociocultural theory undeniably echo the assertions, aspirations and expectations in professional education. In the process of establishing a connection between the views in sociocultural theory and the views expressed in professional education, a number of Vygotskian inspired constructs that have been

applied widely to address educational concerns in compulsory education settings are also applied to learning and development of professionals in the context of professional education.

3.3.1 Situated knowledge and learning

Situated cognition is a contemporary construct for a collective research efforts that explain cognition, including problem solving, sense making, understanding, transfer of learning, and creativity, in terms of the relationship between learners and the properties of specific environments (Barab, Hay & Duffy, 1998). Proponents of the theory of situated cognition and situated learning (for example, Brown, Collins, & Duguid, 1989; Gee, 2004; Lave 1988; Rogoff, 2008) described situated cognition as learning embedded within and inseparable from participating in a range of activities deeply determined by a particular cultural setting. From a sociocultural perspective, the learner, the material to be learned, and the context in which learning occurs are inextricably linked. Here, knowledge is thought of as a function of social practice, as opposed to something that resides in the minds of individuals (Loftus, 2010). Hence, practice and *knowing about* are interdependent, situated and mediated in cultural activity. From a situativist point of view, the use of such tools and participation in activities are integral to cognitive development, which illustrates that the development and use of conceptual tools and processes of activity are visible. As Greeno and Moore (1993) maintained "situativity is fundamental in all cognitive activity" (p. 50). Such situations frame and scaffold understanding and in which understanding is internalised and used.

These theoretical underpinnings draw in parallel with some of the assumptions in professional education in that participation in practice is viewed as the key to developing future professionals who can think, do and value what practitioners in the professions are thinking, doing and valuing (please see Benner et al, 2010; Dall'Alba, 2009; Sheppard et al, 2009; Shulman, 2008; Sullivan et al, 2007). Certainly, the importance of situated thinking in authentic contexts is promoted in professional education settings, requiring educators to engage students in such activity. For example, in a call for the radical transformation of learning and teaching practices in nurse education, Patricia Benner and her colleagues' (2009) highlighted the

limitations of teaching methods that separate knowing from doing, and pointed out the importance of educational approaches based on situated cognition:

Students do not fail to notice the sharp divide between the pedagogies of the classroom and the effective pedagogies of situated teaching in the clinical setting... because the classroom experience is at odds with the strong ethos that results in deep commitment to professional values (and, as many students noted, deep personal transformation)... Nursing, like all practice disciplines, relies on situated cognition and action ... [therefore] teachers must step out from behind the screen full of slides and engage students in clinic-like learning experiences that ask them to use knowledge and practice thinking in changing situations, always for the good of the patient.” (pp. 13-15).

Jarzemsky and McGrath (2008) along with Levett-Jones, Lapkin, Hoffman, Arthur and Roche (2011) for example noted the importance of learning and teaching approaches such as those embodied in clinical simulations as congruent to shaping professional understanding and competent clinical practice. Indeed, the application of the principles underpinning situated cognition promotes learning for professional roles as constituting the kind of activities or tasks that embody the core knowledge and practices of a professional occupation (please see 2.5.1.2). Importantly, it constitutes having the capacity to learn and practice that occupation in certain settings. The premise of situated cognition is that the often tacit thinking processes and skills involved in undertaking complex tasks are brought into the open and made more visible as developing individuals observe, enact and practice the skills with help from those who have expertise (cf. Brown, Collins & Duguid, 1989). Participation in practice is therefore the main activity through which meaningful learning and understanding occur. Hence, the nature of knowledge, knowing and practice, and of identity formation, is always located and mediated in social contexts or what Lave and Wenger (1991) referred to as *communities of practice*.

3.3.2 Identity formation in communities of practice

Scholars in professional education domain, such as Colby and Sullivan (2008), Dall’Alba (2009) and Eraut (2007), expressed the view that the development of professional knowledge cannot be divorced from complex processes and practical applications, which highlighted the situated nature of knowledge development and learning. Such view relates to the notion that the disciplinary ways of knowing, doing and acting, and being and becoming have their roots in histories and traditions of a profession. According to Kemmis and Trede (2010) practices are “always already shaped by the particular historical conditions that exist in particular localities or sites at particular moment” (p. 30). Dall’Alba (2009) concurred and referred to the journey of preparing for a profession as having a “relation to the world” that represent the cultural practices of a profession whereby the “practices they learn to embody have their own routines, histories and traditions” (p. 37). Learning to engage with the practices “to the extent they are manifest in the present and relevant for the future is a essential aspect of learning professional ways of knowing, doing and acting, and being and becoming, and “involves transformation of the self through embodying the routines and traditions of the profession in question” (Dall’Alba, 2009, p. 37).

Therefore, from a sociocultural point of view, the transformation of the self—becoming a professional—is mediated in communities where knowledge and skills can be appropriated with the help from those possessing disciplinary expertise. As Barnett (2010) pointed out, “practice takes place amid communities” (p. 20). Through enculturation into the history and language of the community, individuals cultivate a sense of self in relation to community of practice. The eloquence of Jean Lave (1988, p. 14), a leading theorist of situated learning and the notion of communities of practice, delivered a powerful message that explicitly supported the intentions of professional education, when she stated: “knowledge-in-practice, constituted in the settings of practice, is the locus of the most powerful knowledgeability of people in the lived-in world”. Lave (1993) further explained that “developing an identity as a member of a community and becoming knowledgeable skilful are part of the same process, with the former motivating, shaping, and giving meaning to the latter, which it subsumes” (p. 65). Thus developing an identity and having the ability to engage in the practices of the community to develop

understanding and skills are one and the same. There are no defining boundaries among knowledge production, skill development and identity formation. Understandings and meanings are developed and produced, along with identities, which are shaped by the experience (Barab & Duffy, 2000). Wenger (1998), a notable theorist of, and contributor to, the legitimate peripheral participation and communities of practice movement, asserted that knowing something entails not just a matter of absorbing information but also involve forming a certain identity with respect to the sociocultural communities where such knowledge exists.

Such theoretical perspective embodies the transformational nature of learning and development in professional education, which promotes an integrative viewpoint of learning and development, whereby gaining expertise and forming identity go hand and hand in social contexts (please see Billett, 2010; Foster, et al., 2009; Freeman, et al 2008; Loftus, 2010; and Sheppard et al 2009). That is, the nature of the professional context influences identity formation and affects what knowledge is developed, used and how, which certainly emphasises the interdependence of context in developing theoretical knowledge (i.e cognitive apprenticeship), practical know how (i.e. practical apprenticeship) and moral understandings (i.e. moral apprenticeship) (please see Chapter 2). That is, the sense of belonging and identity formation takes shape when the processes for solving problems in a professional field are internalised and appropriated by the developing individual. This is because as the developing individual achieves professional expertise, they can focus more on their conscious attention on the problem to be solved. In contrast, a less experienced individual would need to pay attention to both the problem and the techniques for solving it. As Shulman (2008) pointed out, in professional education setting, the idea of *knowing* relates to what a person can *do*, entrenched in the cultural practices of a profession. Knowing how and being able to do something therefore influence the formation of identity and are central requirements of professional work. Here, the process of transformation is manifested through active participation in social practice that brings about learning.

3.3.4 Apprenticeship as contextualised participation

The idea of *apprenticeship* in communities of practice is a central construct for situated cognition, which is understood as moving from newcomer to expert within a structure of practices in sociocultural settings (Brown, Collins, & Duguid, 1989; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Rogoff, 2008). This learning approach, termed “cognitive apprenticeship” by Brown, Collins and Duguid (1989), promotes learning in the context of activity, tool and culture, through social interaction and the co-construction of knowledge. In contrast, the idea of cognitive apprenticeship proposed by Shulman (2005a, 2008) relates to developing ways of knowing and thinking in a professional field.

Through cognitive apprenticeship espoused in situated cognition, students engage initially in authentic activity (Resnick, 1987), facilitated by the teacher modeling and scaffolding an authentic task. As students gain more confidence and competence, they progress to a more autonomous phase of collaborative learning, as they participate intentionally in communities of practice. In this acculturation or socialisation process, collaboration leads to articulation and sharing of strategies that can be discussed and reflected upon, from which meaning making and situated understanding transpire. In turn, language and belief system are developed through ongoing support within the community.

In most professional education programs, students are provided opportunities, through apprenticeship-like settings, to develop their conceptual understanding, particularly through social interaction and collaboration in domain specific activities that involve ill-defined problems. Such conceptual understanding is grounded on the thinking, values and practices of the discipline, which then facilitate and support the development of professional, technical and dispositional knowledge. Worthy to note is that, while the characteristics of apprenticeship as a learning model remain and inform many professional education programs, it is at times embraced with caution, for example:

... the term *apprenticeship learning* is particularly controversial in nursing ... We use the word *apprenticeship* with some caveats. They are

“high-end” apprenticeships... creative and critical thinking, questioning, and innovation are central to learning a professional practice... we still hold on to the notion of learning by doing, observing, and participation in a community of practice... (Benner et al., 2009, p. 25, emphasis in original).

It can be deduced from this assertion that the use of apprenticeship learning in professional education context parallels an expectation to enable students to take part and engage in authentic activities, i.e. tasks that embody the thinking, practice and values of a disciplinary field. The nature of most professional education programs is such that students are afforded opportunities to participate in such activities. In this setting, students learn from disciplinary experts how to think, act and reason like a professional, by engaging, interacting and collaborating with them in educational and work environments through *guided participation* (see Rogoff, 1990; 2008). In guided participation, thinking is comprised of a relation between cognitive agents and the situations in which they are acting (Rogoff, 2008). Thus, cognition is situated in context and is explained in terms of the relations among learners and the properties of specific environments. Learning not only involves acquiring a set of self-contained entities, but also involves constructing a contextualised appreciation of these entities as tools, as well as for the situations through which these tools have value (Brown, Collins & Duguid, 1989). Learning therefore is always situated, which progressively developed through situated activity, within which knowing is conceived as a perceptual activity that always occurs within a context (Prawat & Floden, 1994, as cited in Barab & Plucker, 2002).

Similarly, Lave & Wenger (1991) referred to such participation as “legitimate peripheral participation” to describe the “engagement in social practice that entails learning as an integral constituent”, where learning is viewed as “an integral part of the generative social practice in the lived-world” (p. 35). The essence of the legitimate peripheral participation construct rests in the idea that less experienced individuals participate and learn in the periphery, and as they gain more confidence and become more confident, their participation increases and becomes more involved towards central participation and agency. Their intentions to learn are engaged and the consequence of learning is organised through the process of gradually becoming a

full participant in sociocultural practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991). These ideas have roots in Vygotsky's zone of proximal development in that, like the notion of zone of proximal development, the idea of legitimate peripheral participation highlights the primacy of participation in the social world, the relationship between the less experienced and experienced individuals, and the co-construction of knowledge.

The independent and interdependent participation inherent in preparing students for professional practice promotes learning as embedded in the social contexts of practice, allowing the aspiring professional to move from observation to limited participation to full participation and responsibility, under thoughtful modelling and meaningful supervision (Shulman, 2008; Sheppard et al., 2008; and Sullivan et al., 2007). The situated nature of learning and development, and the mediational processes that transpire in this context, embody the intents and purposes of professional education, as it is through participation that learning and development, and identity formation occurs. It supports the notion that the characteristics of educational practices in professional education ought to be situated in professional practice, with the various activities inherent in the discipline, and shaped by the discipline.

Suggestions in professional education certainly relate to promoting educational practices from a participative perspective, with its emphasis on situated activities that reflect the practices of the profession. In engineering education for instance, a large research study involving undergraduate engineering students and educators found that "the tradition of putting theory before practice and the effort to cover technical knowledge comprehensively allow little opportunity for students to have the kind of deep learning experiences that mirror professional practice and problem solving (Sheppard et al., 2008, p. 6). They argued that, too often, a student may pass the exam but remain inept in using the discipline's conceptual tools in authentic engineering practice. The authors called for a participative orientation to learning and development, for:

... students should have experience with and reflect on the demands of professional practice, linking theory and practice. Engaging in increasingly practice-like experiences, the engineering equivalent of the

clinical dimension of medical preparation, would be a central feature of engineering education. This emphasis on professional practice would give coherence and efficacy to the primary task facing schools of engineering: enabling students to move from being passive viewers of engineering action to taking their place as active participants or creators within the field of engineering. In this process, the student would begin to develop an identity as an engineer (Sheppard et al., 2008, p. 9).

Such viewpoint clearly favours the construction of knowledge situated in disciplinary context through learning activities anchored in real practice applications. This alludes to the creation of a learning environment consistent with what Senge (1994) referred to as *practice field*. Practice fields are educational settings in which students can perform and practice the kinds of activities they will encounter in the real field. The cognitive apprenticeship model of learning is an approach for creating practice fields, which emphasises learning at close proximity with disciplinary experts as they model and coach the authentic activity. The creation of practice fields, according to Barab and Duffy (2000) constitutes a number of design principles, such as engagement in domain-related practices; ownership of the inquiry; coaching and modeling of thinking skills; opportunity for reflection; dilemmas are ill-structured; support the learner rather than simplify the dilemma; work is collaborative and social; and the learning context is motivating. It is important to note that the idea of practice fields is different to the idea of communities of practice, and the authors raised a cautionary note about the distinction between these two sociocultural constructs. While they have much in common, they have some important differences also:

Of prime importance in distinguishing practice fields from community learning contexts are whether there exists a sustainable community with a significant history to become enculturated into, including shared goals, beliefs, practices and a collection of experiences; whether individuals and the community into which they are becoming enculturated are a part of something larger; and whether there is a opportunity to move along a trajectory of presence of, and become a member alongside, near peers and exemplars of mature practice – moving from peripheral participant to core member (Barab & Duffy, 2000, p. 40).

In short, the notion of practice fields focuses on the activity of the student in a collaborative environment. In contrast, the idea of communities of practice focuses on the connections a student has with the community and the patterns of participation in the community. These divergent foci co-exist in professional education perspectives, as students navigate the professional education context through changing patterns of participation in various activities—from practice field to communities of practice—throughout the different stages of student development towards professional practice.

To recapitulate, along with the sociocultural ideas discussed thus far, the participation construct is of particular interest to the current research, as it provides a useful analytic tool for the study. The idea of legitimate peripheral participation, for instance, provides an analytical perspective on learning, as Lave and Wenger (1991) pointed out. It is an approach for understanding learning that can take place regardless of the educational method and the context for learning. It can “inform educational endeavours by shedding new light on learning processes, and by drawing attention to key aspects of learning experience that may be overlooked” (p. 41). Such intent supports the objectives of the current research, and it is certainly a valuable conceptual lens, particularly given Lave and Wenger’s theoretical contribution was grounded on social participation, with the various activities in communities, deemed fundamental to constructing a sense of belonging and identity.

3.4 Affordances and limitations of this theoretical framework

Tenets of sociocultural theory and related contemporary sociocultural constructs have been presented as appropriate frameworks for educating for a profession. The sociocultural approach is valuable for this study because it is particularly suited for analysing learning and development in professional education and concomitant curricular and pedagogical experiences. Importantly, it provides a clear direction as regards using the cultural activity as the unit of analysis. Moreover, sociocultural theory not only enables knowledge and cognition to be seen and conceptualised as an object of study but it also provides a means for examining the role of mutually constituting context and the situated construction and co-construction of knowledge, as students prepare for professional practice. Employing a theoretical base for investigating how

professionals prepare and develop for professional practice provides a means to advance professional education theory and practice. The theoretical framework presented here aims to contribute to the conversation, and to add current knowledge and understanding.

It is worth noting that the Vygotskian-inspired theoretical framework does not suggest specific methodological approaches and tools, which may be viewed as restrictive. However, the framework does allude to the connection of particular approaches to the theoretical purposes to which they are placed (cf. Rogoff, 2008). For example, dialogical qualitative approaches may form part of investigating and analysing the nature of learning and development in a particular educational setting. In the context of the current study, the methodological approaches and tools used are presented in Chapters 4 and 5, which are purely qualitative in their orientation and congruent with this theoretical framework.

3.5 Chapter summary

This chapter has presented a case that there is a natural affinity between sociocultural theory and professional education. The manner in which Vygotsky's and his followers' sociocultural theoretical frameworks characterise a means for understanding the critical elements of learning and development in professional education is examined in this Chapter, particularly the connections between individual development, identity formation and the sociocultural practices in which individuals take part. Vygotsky's all-encompassing theoretical framework and the three fundamental themes that ran throughout his work provided significant insight, namely:

- Genetic analysis Cognition must be understood developmentally (i.e., genetically) in terms of its origins and subsequent development of individual and cultural levels of analysis.
- Social origins of individual mental functioning Higher (i.e., uniquely human) mental processes such as problem solving, voluntary memory, and voluntary attention have their origins in social activity.
- Mediated nature of human mental functioning Cognition is mediated by semiotic mechanisms, especially natural language.

These three themes form the bases for the related contemporary sociocultural constructs of interest to the current research, and professional education as a whole, such as situated cognition, communities of practice, legitimate peripheral participation, apprenticeship, guided participation and practice fields, among others. As were manifested in these contemporary sociocultural constructs, Vygotsky's three theoretical themes fit together into an integrated system, at the core of which is eliciting and analysing how cognitive development occurs in complex sociocultural settings. The use of activity as the unit of analysis enables a reformulation of the relation between the individual and sociocultural environments in which each is inherently involved in the others' meaning making and definition (Rogoff, 2008). Such perspective is embodied in the theoretical framework guiding the current study, which places significant emphasis on the sociocultural origins of professional knowledge and knowing. Hence, the framework is underpinned by contextual influences, with respect to the reciprocal construction of negotiated meanings, identities, and the communities in which it is all situated.

The succeeding methodological discussions presented in Chapter 4 and Chapter 5 draw attention to the synergy and compatibility between the constructivist paradigm and sociocultural theory.

Chapter 4 | Research design and methodological considerations

Every discourse, even a poetic oracular sentence, carries with it a system of rules producing analogous things and thus an outline of methodology.
~ Jacques Derrida (1930–2004)

4.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to explain the philosophical and methodological perspectives, as well as the principles, that informed the research design. I articulate the congruent relationship that sociocultural theory holds with the qualitative orientation of the current research and with the study's focus. This is discussed against the backdrop of the paradigmatic assumptions of constructivism, which inform the design of this research. Doing so reveals my philosophical orientation and conveys my stance as a researcher, thereby outlining my beliefs, experiences and role in the study.

Next, I introduce the research methodology, including my rationale for the selection of a single case study design (Creswell, 2012; Yin, 2014) combined with tenets of hermeneutic phenomenology (van Manen, 2014). Such fusion of methodological lenses brought together varied and contrasting methodological principles that, when 'fused', complemented each other and facilitated the development of new understandings and insights.

The subsequent discussion contains detailed explanations of the principles drawn from case study and hermeneutic phenomenology that informed the enactment of the methodological fusion that is elaborated in Chapter 5. It illustrates that the fusion of these two research approaches has the potential for establishing a pragmatic, rigorous research procedure for the present study.

The final section of the chapter discusses ways of ensuring quality in this constructivist inquiry and outlines the strategies used for ensuring the rigour, trustworthiness, credibility and authenticity of the research, thereby demonstrating the integrity of the study. It also makes explicit the ethical considerations and political

implications that I addressed in the research process, based on personal agency and professional and ethical practice, following legislative requirements for research involving human participants.

4.2 Qualitative research

As is discussed briefly in Chapter 1, the subjective experiences of participants within the cultural settings of higher education and their various ways of experiencing these contexts, interpreting the same situation and constructing the meaning of the phenomenon (i.e., preparing for professional practice) were the focus of this research. The nursing discipline was selected for the investigation, located in a selected University in Australia. Investigating the problem in this social context required direct engagement with the research setting, as well as with the participants, by observing, asking, listening, analysing, interpreting and describing. Such humanistic approaches have come to be known as qualitative research — “a field of inquiry in its own right [which] crosscuts disciplines, field, and subject matter” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008, p. 3). Consequently the design, purpose and outcome of this study were based on qualitative research assumptions. A quantitative approach would not have been feasible, using survey or experimental research for example, since there were few known variables or hypotheses to control or test. In fact, during the investigation, rather than trying to control variables, I sought and clarified what might be the important questions (cf. Maxwell, 2013).

4.2.1 Defining qualitative research

Qualitative research, according to Van Maanen (1979) is “an umbrella term covering an array of interpretive techniques which seek to describe, decode, translate, and otherwise come to terms with the meaning, not the frequency, of certain more or less naturally occurring phenomena in the social world” (p. 520). Maxwell’s (2013) view, on the other hand, was quite pragmatic when he stated:

Qualitative research is research that is intended to help you better understand (1) the meanings and perspectives of the people you study – seeing the world from their point of view, rather than simply from your own; (2) how these perspectives are shaped by, and shape, their physical,

social, and cultural contexts; and (3) the specific processes that are involved in maintaining or altering these phenomena and relationships (p. viii)

On the basis of these complementary understandings about the nature and characteristics of qualitative research, qualitative researchers are interested in understanding how people make sense of their world and the experiences that they have in the world. And the interest is usually in participant perspectives. Moreover, qualitative research is used in situations where relatively little is known about the phenomenon, or to gain new perspectives on issues where much is already known (Gray 2014).

4.2.2 Paradigmatic orientation

Qualitative research has a number of paradigmatic orientations, including: positivist/postpositivist, critical, constructivist, postmodernist and poststructuralist. Of interest to this research is the constructivist paradigm. The worldview of this form of qualitative inquiry is that, as researchers, we seek understandings of the world in which we live as human beings, and we focus on the socially based constitution of subjective meanings in everyday life (Cresswell, 2013). Thus the approach aims to promote understanding of phenomena from the point of view of participants, and posits that human actors and social constructs (such as professional education) cannot be interpreted in the same way as natural objects.

To situate these assumptions within the present study, the research aimed to identify how nursing students were prepared for professional practice, how students and teachers experienced learning and teaching during professional preparation, and the meanings that they ascribed to their experiences. The interest in understanding how people construct their worlds and how they describe and interpret their experiences exemplifies the hallmark of qualitative inquiry. Specifically, the study assumed that reality is socially constructed, that there are multiple realities or interpretations of a single event and that I, in my role as researcher, would co-construct knowledge, rather than find it, in the course of interacting directly with the research setting and participants (Maxwell, 2013). It is clear then that this project was

firmly placed within the *constructivist* tradition as it sought the understandings and meanings of phenomena through people's constructions/reconstructions of the meanings of their lifeworlds. The concept of lifeworld — the way that a person lives — was introduced by Edmond Husserl (1927/1971) to describe the realm of original self-experience of day-to-day experiences (Moustakas, 1994). In this thesis, I was interested in participants' accounts of preparing for professional practice, as they reflect upon this lifeworld — their "world of immediate experience (see van Manen, 1997, p. 182).

4.2.3 Philosophical perspectives

Proponents of qualitative research such as Denzin and Lincoln (2008), Patton (2002) and Creswell (2013) explained that there are four philosophical perspectives that embody qualitative research, namely: ontological, epistemological, axiological and methodological assumptions. The ontological assumption is concerned with the nature of reality and, from a constructivist perspective, it suggests that reality is socially constructed through lived experiences and that there are multiple realities or interpretations of phenomena; the epistemological assumption relates to what counts as knowledge and, from a constructivist worldview, knowledge is known through subjective experiences, within which the researcher and those whom she studies interact with one another to construct meanings; the axiological assumption, on the other hand, pertains to the values, beliefs and the positioning of the researcher in the study whereby the value-laden nature of the investigation is acknowledged and reflected upon; and finally the methodological assumption explains the procedures of qualitative research and, based on constructivist understanding, information is gathered from methods such as interviews, observations and analysis of textual data, whereby an inductive rather than a deductive approach guides the investigation, in that emergent ideas are built from the ground up to develop detailed knowledge of the topic being studied (Patton, 2002).

The philosophical perspectives within the constructivist paradigm are congruent with Vygotsky's (1978) theory of development — the theoretical lens through which the study proceeded, as discussed in Chapter 3 — as it likewise posits the centrality of contextual experience in knowledge construction and the co-construction of meaning.

From a sociocultural perspective, knowing and learning are fundamentally connected with, and constitutive of, the contextual particulars through which they occur (Lave, 1993). This dynamic interdependence of social and individual processes in knowledge construction was at the core of the current investigation. Following the constructivist perspective, the specific intent of this research was aimed at establishing a detailed understanding of the meanings that participants ascribe to their lived experience of preparing for professional practice, and the complex relationships between the experiences and concerns of the individuals involved in the study on the one hand and the specific learning and teaching environments that the study investigated on the other hand. The necessary alignment between philosophical assumptions and the theoretical grounding of the present study can reveal how nursing students experience the preparation for professional practice, what they do, how and what they learn, what they value, what they reject and how they transform over time. Given this intent, it was necessary to hear the voices of individual participants and to convey the essence of their lived experiences, in order to obtain and build a comprehensive understanding (Yin, 2014; van Manen, 2014). Such an investigation can present ideas from the points of view of different participants, bringing to the fore individual perspectives, histories and dispositions, as well as influences that dictate what people do to learn, what they learn, what they are able to do and in what ways these relate to future practice.

4.2.3.1 Philosophical perspectives as applied in practice

Maxwell (2013) concurred with Denzin and Lincoln (2008) that paradigms define the worldview of the researcher and provide an interpretive framework that then structures and guides processes for research action. The process of research in qualitative inquiry flows from philosophical assumptions, to interpretive lenses, and onto the procedures involved in studying social or human problems (Merriam, 2009). It is thus worthwhile asking what all these philosophical assumptions mean in practice and how they are applied. In the context of the present study, I have adapted the approach provided by Creswell (2013, p. 20) to reflect upon the ontological, epistemological, axiological and methodological assumptions as applied to this research. Table 4.1 illustrates the embodiment of these philosophical assumptions in a qualitative research process and how I enacted and operationalised them in my study.

Framed by these philosophical assumptions, the study pursued a detailed understanding of the complex learning contexts and experiences of the individuals involved in the study. The research approach provided a means to give voice to the participants as I sought their understandings and representations of lived experience.

Table 4.1 Philosophical assumptions and their operational implications

Assumption	Questions	Characteristics	Operational implications
Ontological	What is the nature of reality?	Reality is multiple as seen through many views	The researcher documents and reports multiple perspectives as themes emerge from analysis through interpretation and re-interpretation of data
Epistemological	What counts as knowledge? How are knowledge claims justified? What is the relationship between the researcher and the participants?	Subjective evidence from participants; the researcher collects data in natural settings and directly interacts with participants	The researcher undertakes fieldwork in natural settings; collaborates with participants; and uses narratives as an evidentiary base
Axiological	What is the role of values?	The researcher acknowledges that research is value-laden and that subjectivities are present	The researcher fosters ethical practice and reflexivity throughout the research process; acknowledges and actively discloses the values, preconceptions and predispositions that shape research outcomes
Methodological	What is the process of research? What is the language of research?	The researcher uses inductive logic, studies the topic within its context and uses an emergent design	The researcher utilises inductive processes and naturalistic methods, including dialogue with participants, observations of natural contexts and examination of cultural artefacts; employs hermeneutic cycle: action - data collection - data interpretation - further action based on data

Not only did this approach align with the purpose of the research but also it was equally important that it aligned with my ontological and epistemological position as a researcher. As Denzin and Lincoln (2005) advised, the beliefs of the researcher shape how she “sees the world and acts in it” (p. 22). Put simply, the underlying

belief systems of the researcher, as well as her values and experiences, predominantly influence the ontological, epistemological, methodological and axiological underpinnings of a study.

4.3 The researcher's stance and reflexivity

The methods by which data are interpreted and made sense of are personal in nature (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008). Thus, transparency of the research process is critical and any predispositions towards tainting and/or colouring interpretation of the data must be recognised and managed appropriately. Following the protocols of qualitative inquiry, my values, beliefs and role as a researcher are reflected upon in this section of the chapter.

4.3.1 Philosophical beliefs

Researchers approach inquiry from a particular paradigmatic orientation and my stance has manifested itself as clearly aligning with constructivist views. When conducting social research, my philosophical belief follows a relativist ontology and a subjectivist epistemology, and I aspire for a dialectical, hermeneutical methodology. My view is that individuals construct meanings socially as they interact with their environment. As such, there are multiple interpretations of a single situation. This worldview shaped the manner in which I conducted the present study, which clearly aligned with the constructivist paradigm espoused by Denzin and Lincoln (2008). Worldview is a “general orientation about the world and the nature of the research that a researcher holds” (Cresswell, 2009, p. 6). Such a worldview reveals itself in every aspect of my work, in that it is enacted not only in my role as a researcher but also in my professional role. For example, the constructivist view is evident in my educational philosophy (please see Epilogue) that also embodies the essence of sociocultural perspectives.

4.3.2 On being reflexive and reflective

As a practitioner in higher education involved in the education of future professionals, I need to acknowledge that there may have been the potential for a perceived conflict of interest. The interest that I hold in professional education is considered in Section 1.3, which outlines how my motivation to undertake this

particular project developed over time. My experience in designing curricula and promoting sound pedagogical practices in professional education may in some way have affected the manner in which I behaved in the research setting, particularly pertaining to assumptions and preconceptions (cf. Patton, 2002). On the other hand, such experience bore the potential to assist significantly in the data collection, analyses and processes of interpretation.

At the commencement of my doctoral candidature, my professional work context had been in nurse education at another university. Thus, at the time, my role at the research site was solely as a researcher who temporarily joined the organisation for the purposes and duration of the research (Brannick & Coghlan, 2007). During this time, the relationship that developed between the teacher-participants and myself was such that a common interest in tertiary teaching was quickly established, paving the way for gathering empirical and anecdotal data through frequent dialogue and sharing of teaching strategies and pedagogical experiences. Such dialogue was reflective in nature and allowed feedback processes to occur. Likewise, the nature of the relationship built with student-participants enabled open and casual discourses within and outside formal interview settings, particularly about learning strategies and metacognitive processes. My role evolved from a mere observer to that of a participant-observer (Yin, 2014) and participants treated me as part of their cultural context, where events and everyday happenings within the setting became focal points of both formal and informal dialogue (van Manen, 2014). In this situation, formal dialogue pertained to appointed, recorded interviews, while informal dialogue concerned impromptu conversations. This status enabled me to assume a pseudo insider's position (Coghlan & Casey, 2001) throughout the many aspects of the investigation. This enhanced my capacity to understand meanings and to construct rich descriptions of participants' lived experiences. In this context, my professional experience in higher education curriculum and pedagogy and my theoretical knowledge of the nature of university learning and teaching had been the critical lens through which observation and feedback processes were facilitated. Hence, the potential concern of researcher bias was countered by my insight in this area of inquiry and led to more discerning and insightful findings.

I was cautious, however, that, because unique perspectives and the lived

experience of each participant framed the phenomenon of interest in this research, these were open to my interpretation as a researcher (Merriam, 2009; van Manen, 1997). To mitigate any potential bias and/or misrepresentation, I employed member checks with participants (Stake, 2005) and peer review with critical friends (Creswell, 2013). The latter acted as “devil’s advocates” who asked a lot of hard questions and who kept me honest. Debriefing with participants (member checks) played a major role in the study, as they were able to examine rough drafts and to provide clarification and, at times, additional information that enabled rich descriptions (Merriam, 2009).

In the third year of my doctoral candidature as a part-time student, I gained employment in my area of professional practice at the University where the research site was located. This change had significant implications for my research project, in that the study had shifted to what has become known as “insider research” (Brannick & Coghlan, 2007, p. 59). Brannick and Coghlan (2007) described insider research as “research by complete members of organizational systems and communities in and on their own organizations...” (p. 59). This situation yielded advantages as well as posed some challenges. Some of the benefits of being an insider researcher were that I had knowledge of the University’s practices, history and policies and greater insight into the research participants’ ways of being as well as their meaning systems. Moreover, access, entry and acceptance in the research setting were also less problematic. A significant challenge, however, was occupying multiple roles within the organisation – that of practitioner, researcher and student. In these multiple roles, managing organisational complexities and politics was crucial, as potential concerns and friction could have arisen from a perceived conflict between the normal work role and the role as a researcher. Brannick and Coghlan (2007) cautioned thus, “Insider researchers are likely to find that their associations with various individuals and groups in the setting will influence their relationships with others whom they encounter, affecting the data that can be generated in working with them.” (p. 70).

I am cognisant of the advantages and also the potential risks presented by being an insider researcher, particularly the researcher’s position as a fellow academic staff member, and from the student-participants’ perspective, as a non-teaching staff member. For the student-participants’ point of view, they were more likely to share

their experiences with someone whom they considered to have no power over them (unlike, for example, their teacher as a researcher). On the other hand, the teacher-participants were more likely to hold back on disclosing critical information for fear of punishment or retribution within the organisation, and may have reported only positive experiences. To address these concerns, during all interactions with research participants, they were assured of confidentiality and anonymity, and that no data would be attributed to their name. Importantly, I subscribed to the notion of “empathic neutrality” in that I was of the view that “there is a middle ground between becoming too involved, which can cloud judgment, and remaining too distant, which can reduce understanding” (Patton, 2002, p. 50). I viewed my role as an empathic neutral listener where the interviews provided opportunities not only for value-neutral dialogue on the part of the researcher but also for participants to learn about themselves. Indeed, assuming a nonjudgmental emphatic stance (cf. Patton, 2002) allowed me to immerse myself in the participants’ world by listening intently in order that I could relate to their experiences and perceptions.

Another potential risk concerning insider research is that I may assume too much and not probe as much, given my insider knowledge and my likely tacit awareness of the happenings within the institution. As my research included an approved protocol in accordance with human research, I observed rigorous and trustworthy processes, and I ensured that accurate information and rich data were obtained. As Brannick and Coghlan (2007) advised, through a process of reflexive awareness it is possible to articulate tacit knowledge by monitoring behavioural impact in the research setting. Also worthy to note is that I have tried to minimise ambiguity by being attentive to, and reflective about, the nature of my multiple roles in my current University employment. In this situation, I have tried to observe conscientiously the protocols of a rigorous qualitative inquiry (Merriam, 2009).

Being familiar with the cultural mores of the participants’ community, as it were, enhanced my ability to build closer relationships and rapport. My status as an ‘insider’ further enhanced the building of trust, which proved to be especially valuable for encouraging research participants to share their views – for example, as had often occurred during interviews, participants would state: “You know what I’m talking about”. However, I was aware of the dangers presented by this insider stance,

such as the risk of making assumptions about the participants' meanings. It follows that the hermeneutic phenomenological approach, as discussed later in this chapter, encourages acknowledgement of prior knowledge and implicit assumptions and to make them explicit (van Manen, 1997, 2014). In doing so, my attention was focused specifically on revealing details and seemingly trivial aspects within subjective experiences that may have been taken for granted. This approach minimised the possibility of the participants assuming that I understood their meaning and consequently limiting their ability to explain their views in detail. As Patton (2002) advised, a reflexive researcher is conscious of, and attentive to, "the perspective and voices of those one interviews and those to whom one reports" (p. 65).

4.4 Research strategies

As outlined, this study was informed by constructivist perspectives and framed within sociocultural theory to capture the phenomenon of preparing for professional practice. This section explores the methodological approaches and techniques that gave me direction about how to proceed and act in this research, how to gather, manage, analyse and interpret data, and how to report findings that satisfied social science research standards. Figure 4.1 illustrates the alignment across all aspects of the research process – that is, alignment between the interpretive framework and the theoretical perspective that framed the study, and the methodological features and methodical techniques employed in the research.

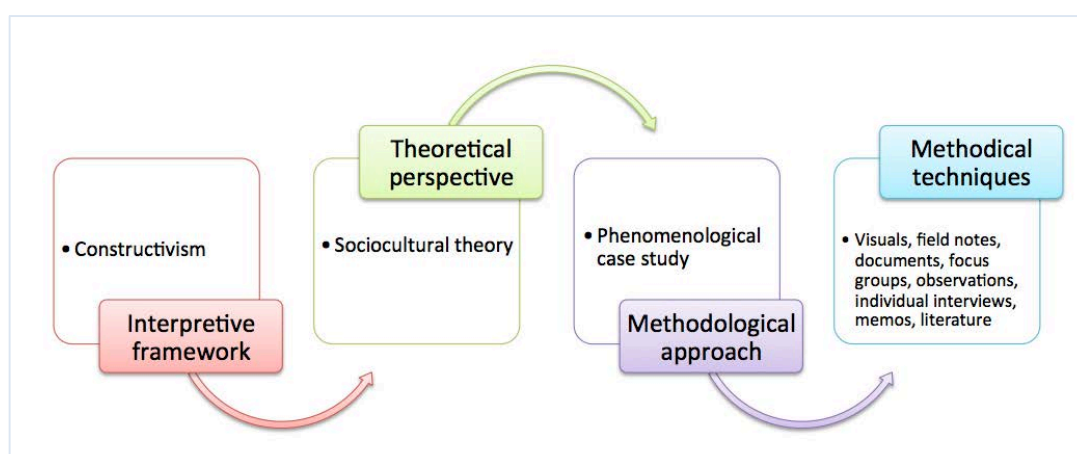


Figure 4.1 An approach to a constructivist inquiry utilised in the current study

As I reflected upon the question: "Should paradigms be **linked** with methods?"

(Creswell, 1994, p. 175; emphasis in original), the characteristics of the research design and inquiry methods for the present study remained faithful to the constructivist paradigmatic stance and thus established the necessary linkage. As Figure 4.1 illustrates, it was necessary to ensure that the methodological fusion of phenomenology and case study research (as elaborated in Sections 4.5.1 and 4.6) was consistent with the philosophical perspectives underpinning the study and likewise with each other. Doing so enabled a harmonious alignment of the ontological basis for epistemological and methodological decisions with that of the qualitative methodical techniques employed in this research, such as visual and textual data, observations, examination of artefacts, focus groups and interviews. As Annells (2006) pointed out, when combining two or more qualitative approaches in one study, researchers need to ensure congruency of approaches with the researcher's philosophical perspective about research. A cautious note is conveyed here that failing to establish congruence across the research is likely to render the study as lacking integrity (Annells, 2006). The following subsections illustrate how such congruence was achieved across and throughout this study.

4.4.1 A fusion of two qualitative methodological approaches

In the current study, the phenomenon of interest required understanding of the lived experience of participants' realities. As the phenomenon concerns examining the lived experience of preparing for professional practice, "phenomenological sensitivity" and "logical consistency" (van Manen, 2014, p. 24) were warranted such that these processes involved well-grounded interpretations and reflections. In this context, how people perceive their world and the meaning they attribute to their experiences are the principal concerns of the interpretivist methodology known as phenomenology. It is worth noting that most, if not all, qualitative research reflects some type of phenomenology (Patton, 2002), which focuses on people's perceptions and meanings (van Manen, 1997, 2004). Phenomenology, according to van Manen (2014), is "primarily a philosophic method of questioning, not a method for answering or discovering or drawing determinate conclusions" (p. 29; emphasis in original). Given its methodological orientation and focus, phenomenology can be extremely valuable for investigating the research participants' ability to describe, interpret and make sense of their lived experience, in order to construct meaning of

their lifeworld, and to co-construct the essence of what it was like to prepare for professional practice. Hence, phenomenology was one of the two points of methodological departure in the present study – the other was “qualitative case study research” (Cresswell, 2012, p. 97; Stake, 2005, p. 119; Yin, 2014, p. 15).

Given the nature of the research problem and the phenomenon of interest, case study was likewise considered appropriate for this investigation. A case is defined as a bounded system, a phenomenon of some sort occurring in a bounded context or, as Merriam (1998) suggested, a case is a “single entity, a unit around which there are boundaries” (p. 27). As a form of qualitative inquiry, the purpose of case study is to gather comprehensive, systematic and in-depth information about the case of interest (Patton, 2002). Stake (2005) noted that case study focuses on experiential knowledge of the case and close consideration of the influence of its social, political and other contexts. Thus, case study research can help investigators to focus on real-life situations, to explore and examine views directly in relation to phenomena as they unfold in practice (Flyvbjerg, 2001; Tight, 2010).

The nature of professional education is such that it has a number of aspects within a bounded system - i.e., bounded by time and place and the characteristics of the participants. As noted, the notion of a bounded system is a major defining feature of qualitative case study research. The Bachelor of Nursing program embodied an integrated system in a bounded case, where participants’ perceptions, their conduct and actions, and the happenings in the natural setting interacted with and affected one another mutually. Thus, in the current research, case study was clearly an equally useful methodological approach through which the investigation of the problem “What does it mean to prepare for professional practice?” was carried out. The case study sought to examine integrated systems within specific boundaries and the relationships and interconnections of aspects within the systems. Such relationships and interconnections signal the dynamic and complex contexts in which the phenomenon of interest was situated and enacted. Thus, the subjective nature of this phenomenon rendered a purely qualitative orientation to this inquiry, to which phenomenology and case study both subscribe.

The methodological fusion of phenomenology and case study research (please see Figure 4.2) was aimed at generating rich data in order to develop rich descriptions for understanding the bounded case (Stake, 2005) and to evoke the essence of lived experiences in this context through phenomenological means.

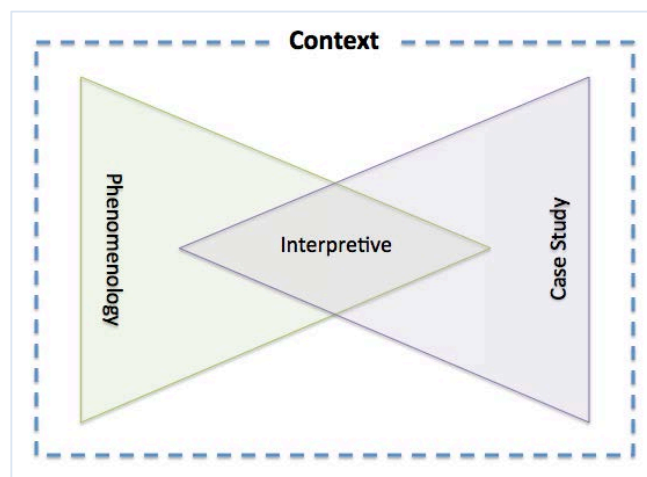


Figure 4.2 A methodological fusion approach for the current study

Reflecting further upon the necessity for this methodological fusion, I draw on van Manen's (1997) writing to explicate the synergy between different forms of qualitative inquiry, such as case study, ethnography and phenomenology:

There may be a phenomenological quality to such studies in that they ask people to talk about experiences, but the end of case studies and ethnographies is to describe accurately an existing state of affairs or a certain present or past culture.... Phenomenological research always takes its point of departure from lived experience or empirical data. (p. 22)

The situation in this research was such that the sociocultural context of nurse education was of critical concern for the investigation. Case study approaches were utilised to reveal and describe the particularities in this bounded context, including occurrences arising from the everyday practices in the preparation of future nurses. Specific methods for data collection congruent with case study inquiry were utilised at this stage of the investigation, including visual data and document analysis, among others as explained in Chapter 5. These sources served a specific purpose for the case

study but would have been unwieldy to replicate in methods such as phenomenological interviews. While case study may also embody phenomenological quality, as van Manen (1997) pointed out, delving deeply and systematically into the nature and characteristics of human experience is the domain of phenomenology. In this study, I was interested in understanding the meanings that the participants ascribed to their subjective experiences, which was best served by phenomenological approaches given this research tradition's interpretive and descriptive qualities. Thus, in this research, phenomenology was built into the case study. However, as was illustrated in Figure 4.2, phenomenology and case study were intertwined; they operated in conjunction with each other to serve their respective purposes in the inquiry, such that each approach's corresponding features and research outcomes were mutually drawn upon (please see Chapter 5, Figure 5.1) to facilitate a trustworthy and rigorous research process. Indeed, Maxwell (2005) pointed out that the combination of methodological practices in a single study is an approach that adds rigour, breadth, complexity, richness and depth to any inquiry.

I now turn to the descriptions and characteristics of each research methodology employed in the present study that, when combined, not only provided a way to investigate the phenomenon in-depth but also afforded a means to illuminate the essence of subjective experiences of those who were involved in preparing for professional practice. The succeeding subsections delineate firstly the descriptions and characteristics of phenomenology/hermeneutic phenomenology, and subsequently those of case study, specifically as they relate to the design of this phenomenological case study research.

4.4.2 Phenomenological research

I noted earlier in this chapter that phenomenology is recognised as informing interpretive or qualitative research, which critically and rigorously inquires into the perspectives concerning human experiences. Phenomenology is a term that evolved over time, encompassing a philosophical movement and methodological perspectives. It is important to note that this subsection does not explore different schools of phenomenology, rather, it unpacks the common theoretical assumptions of phenomenology in general and hermeneutic phenomenology in particular, and it

demonstrates the alignment of hermeneutic phenomenology in the investigation of the lived experiences of preparing for professional practice within the bounded context of the Bachelor of Nursing program as a case study.

4.4.2.1 Phenomenology

Finlay (2009) defined phenomenology as a way of “*seeing* how things appear to us through experience. More than a method, phenomenology demands an open way of being—one that examines taken-for-granted human situations as they are experienced in everyday life but which go typically unquestioned” (p. 173; *emphasis in original*). In explaining that phenomenology is the “study (logos) of phenomena”, van Manen (2014, p. 60) elaborated that such phenomena are “appearances or what gives or shows itself in experience or consciousness”.

By all accounts, the descriptions presented by the authors cited in the foregoing allude to phenomenological research as concerned with understanding the meanings of our everyday life; thus the emphasis is always on the meanings of human experiences, as lived. In focusing on the lived experience, the goal is to explore how human beings make sense of experience and transform it into consciousness, both as an individual meaning and as the shared meaning of a group of people (cf. Patton, 2002). The assumption is that consciousness is always directed towards an object, whereby the reality of that object is inextricably linked to one’s consciousness of it. Here, the processes and outcomes of inquiry hinge on the ability of the researcher to connect and engage with individual participants’ realities (Moustakas, 1994). Doing so enables the researcher to grasp subjective perceptions to facilitate the emergence of the *essence* of the phenomenon.

Merleau-Ponty (1962) described phenomenology as “the study of essences” (p. vii) and explained that the essence is the genesis of the phenomenon. Put simply, it is a way of investigating the essential meanings of phenomena, or unveiling their inner core in that essence “asks for what something is without which it would no longer be what it is” (van Manen, 1997, p. xv). Hence, methodologically, phenomenology focuses on describing what all participants’ experiences have in common as regards the phenomenon of interest and reducing individual experiences with a phenomenon to develop a composite description of the essence of the experience.

van Manen (1990, 1997) stated that the lived experience is the preliminary point and the end point of phenomenological research or, to express the same idea differently, this type of inquiry begins in lived experience and eventually turns back to it. As the present study was concerned with understanding the lived experiences of people involved in preparing for professional practice, phenomenology's emphasis on investigating the first-person experience of the world was fundamental to understanding *what* the phenomenon of interest was like and *how* it was experienced by those directly involved with the case – the Bachelor of Nursing program. Thus, reflecting upon developing a phenomenological understanding of the participants' experiences in professional practice preparation, the four lifeworld existentials suggested by van Manen (1997) provide an important analytical lens to examine experiential dimensions throughout the students' learning journey, namely: *spatial dimension or lived space* – experiences of landscape or place that affects the way one feels; *temporal dimension or lived time* – experiences of subjective time, as opposed to clock time or objective time; and *relational dimension or lived relation* – experiences of relations maintained with others in interactive space and *corporeal dimension or lived body* – experiences of sensing, action and bodily awareness. Such phenomenological inquiry is hermeneutic in character, as it is oriented towards interpretation and description.

4.4.2.2 Hermeneutic phenomenology

Developed by Martin Heidegger (1889-1976), hermeneutic phenomenology, like other forms of phenomenology, is concerned with the lifeworld or human experience as it is lived. Heidegger's interpretive or hermeneutic phenomenology focused on language and time as the media for experiencing the world or being. For Heidegger, being is revealed through phenomenology and is understood further by hermeneutics (Henriksson & Friesen, 2012). The perspective of Max van Manen (1997, 2014) exemplifies a contemporary and practical way of using hermeneutic phenomenology as a research methodology. His work was utilised fundamentally in the present study.

As a research methodology, hermeneutic phenomenology aims to produce rich textual descriptions of experiencing certain phenomena in the individuals' lifeworld

that are able to connect with the experience of us collectively (van Manen, 2014). It relates to interpretive understandings of the subjective experiences of individuals and groups as a way to uncover the world as experienced by research participants through stories of their lifeworlds. Thus, in hermeneutic phenomenology participants and researchers are exposed to, and engage with, meaning making through which in-depth meanings of lived experiences are constructed. As van Manen (1997) put it, phenomenology “describes how one orients in the lived world and hermeneutics describes how one interprets the ‘text’ of life” (p. 4). Thus, it is not possible to study experience without inquiring into the meaning simultaneously and, likewise, it is not possible to inquire into meaning without any experiential basis (Henriksson & Friesen, 2012).

As such the notion of lived experience, “announces the intent to explore directly the pre-reflective dimensions of human existence” (van Manen, 2014, p. 57). As phenomenology attempts to reveal meanings as they are lived in everyday existence, the researcher asks critically, *What is this experience like?* The methodological significance is that the researcher needs to acknowledge that phenomenological reflection is “not introspective but retrospective. Reflection on lived experience is always recollective; it is reflection on experience that is already passed or lived through” (van Manen, 1997, p. 10; emphasis in original). These processes are descriptive in the sense that they need to be attentive to how things appear, in such a way as to let things speak for themselves, and they are interpretive given that all phenomena can be interpreted through lived experience and captured in language, and this is inevitably an interpretive process (van Manen, 1997).

Employing hermeneutic phenomenology in the current research meant that I could explore participants’ interpretations of their lived experiences, as well as my interpretation of the meanings that they ascribed to those experiences. Hermeneutics adds the interpretive element to elucidate assumptions and meanings in the text that participants may have difficulty in expressing (cf. Crotty, 1998), particularly given the complex, and at times implicit, nature of preparing for professional practice. On this note, hermeneutic phenomenology maintains the view that the researcher’s prejudices and traditions are important for understanding and need to be made explicit. In contrast to the requirements for bracketing processes inherent in transcendental

phenomenological research (see Moustakas 1996), researchers involved in hermeneutic phenomenological study are encouraged to acknowledge their current understandings, beliefs, biases, assumptions, presuppositions and theories, rather than suspending or bracketing them (cf. van Manen, 1997). The present study maintained this perspective, in that my preconceptions, assumptions and beliefs about the phenomenon of interest and my processes for examining and revealing the answers to the research questions were noted reflexively, and reflected upon on an ongoing basis throughout the investigation and the writing of this thesis.

Hermeneutic circle

In eliciting the essence of preparing for professional practice, ongoing dialogue with participants was essential and, equally importantly, was reflecting on essential themes to uncover what constituted the nature of their lived experiences. Thus, the interplay of the dialogue of question and answer was critical to the conduct of this research, coupled with the holistic understanding of the data as the themes unfolded. In this regard, the notion of the hermeneutic circle (Bontekoe, 1996) was an important mechanism to guide the analytical and interpretation processes. This circle symbolises the contexts in which researchers analyse and interpret data and explains that understanding is achieved through interpretation in a circular process, by moving from the whole to the individual parts (data) and from individual parts to the whole (evolving understandings of the phenomenon) within the hermeneutic circle (Bontekoe, 1996). Thus, meaning making is understood as a circular and iterative process (see Figure 4.3).

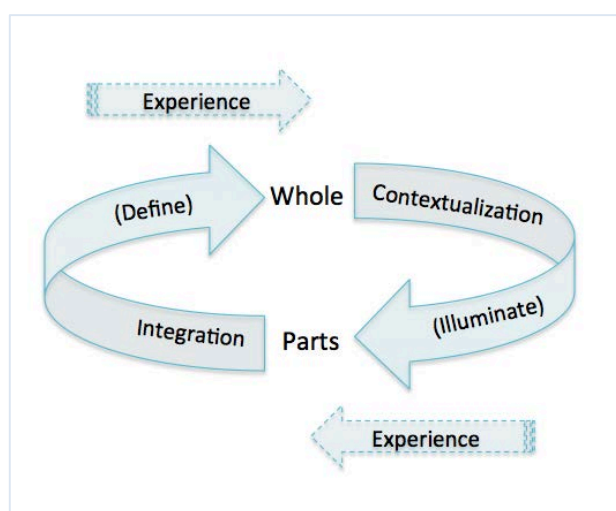


Figure 4.3 The hermeneutic circle (adapted from Bontekoe, 1996, p. 2)

The hermeneutic circle conveys that, “we understand what is general starting from the particular and the particular when referred to what is general” (Schokel & Bravo, 1998, p. 74). In other words, engaging in the hermeneutic circle involves remaining open to questions that emerge from studying the phenomenon and allowing the text to “speak”, giving rise to situating the answer to the research problem within the text (Dabesay, Naden, & Slettebo, 2008). From the raw data collected and the subsequent interpreted data developed, the researcher creates the text of the research, which facilitates the building of detailed understandings and rich descriptions. Hence, research and writing in this mode of inquiry are closely related whereby reflection is fundamental in the research process.

The writing and reflective processes within the present study had drawn not only on the lived experiences and meanings as narrated and interpreted by participants, but also on the knowledge gained from the case study that helped to construct deep, contextualised understandings of the activities in the learning and teaching environments of the Bachelor of Nursing program, as the bounded case for this investigation.

4.4.3 Case study research

This section outlines the definitions, characteristics and features of case study research, and explains its application within the design of this phenomenological case study research. Worthy to note is that a number of definitions of case study have been presented in the literature in the domain of social research. For example, some commentators asked: “Is it a method, a methodology, a strategy, a design, an approach or what?” (Tight, 2010, p. 329) and: “is the case study a method? Or is it an approach?” (Hamel, Dufour and Fortin, 1993, p. 1).

4.4.3.1 Defining case study

Stake (2005) famously asserted that rather than treating case study as a methodological choice, case study ought to be understood as a choice of what is to be studied. Creswell (2013), on the other hand, maintained that he chose to see case study as a:

methodology: a type of design in qualitative research that may be an object of study, as well as a product of the inquiry...in which the investigator explores a real-life, contemporary bounded system (a *case*) or multiples systems (cases) over time, through detailed, in-depth data collection involving *multiple sources of information*... (p. 97, emphasis in original).

This explanation was echoed in Merriam's (2009) observation, when she offered her pragmatic stance on the characterisation of the case study phenomenon:

Case studies can be defined in terms of the process of conducting the inquiry (that is, a case study research), the bounded system or unit of analysis (that is, the case), or the product, the end report of a case investigation. Case studies are case studies because the unit of analysis is a single bounded system" (p. 54).

Patton (2002) advised that, whichever "term or phrase is used, case studies depend on clearly defining the object of the study, that is, the case" (p. 298). Thus, following Creswell (2013), I considered *case study as a methodology* and utilised many of its defining characteristics to guide the current investigation. In doing so, I also acknowledged that case study research differs from other forms of qualitative inquiry, owing to the wholeness of the entity being investigated, which enables a focus on the elements relevant to only that entity, together with keen insight into how such elements interconnect (cf. Stake, 2005).

4.4.3.2 Intrinsic case study

The purpose of the case study was to explore and scrutinise the phenomenon of interest as it unfolded in practice, and examine views in a phenomenological way so that the stories of those involved in preparing for professional practice could be explored. This type of case study is known as an *intrinsic case study* because the case itself was of primary interest, in order to learn more about this particular case (Stake, 2008). Within a single bounded case, the case study methods guided the current investigation, whereby I was principally interested with the activities within the Bachelor of Nursing program. The intrinsic nature of the case involved close

examination of the Bachelor of Nursing program, its curricular and pedagogical contexts and the characteristics of learning and teaching environments and practices in this educational setting. Here, the intrinsic case study approach provided a way to investigate the preparation of nursing students for professional practice in an in depth manner that in turn enabled a deeper description of the case, set within its natural context and surroundings. As Creswell (2013) stated, a “hallmark of a good qualitative case study is that it presents an *in-depth understanding* of the case” (p. 98; *emphasis in the original*).

4.4.3 Study design and units of analysis

The design of the present study can be characterised as a single case study design with embedded cases. Yin (2014) described *embedded case studies* as embedded units of analysis, consisting of a number of projects in the program or departments in the organisation. The rationale for the choice of this design was related to the assertion made by Yin (2014) that such design can “capture the circumstances and conditions of an everyday situation because of the lessons it might provide related to some theoretical interest” (p. 52). The embedded case study design provided a means to investigate the Bachelor of Nursing program, not only from the point of view of eliciting a detailed understanding of the case, set within its context or surrounding, and eliciting a comprehensive picture of locally grounded causation (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2008), but also from the phenomenological point of view of eliciting the essence of the lived experience of the participants around the phenomenon of interest - that is, preparing for professional practice. The phenomenological orientation of this embedded case study project was a critical feature of the research design, as it sought to give voice to participants by studying the particulars or instances as encountered in their lived experiences. Hence, as noted previously, phenomenology was built into the case study and doing so enabled the internal meaning structures of the participants’ lived experiences to be revealed and interpreted (cf. van Manen, 1997).

In this study, the Bachelor of Nursing program was the case in which the sociocultural activities for preparing for professional practice were situated. The relationships between the individuals (student-student; teacher-student; student-teacher) and this context, as shown by the individuals’ level of participation in sociocultural

activities, form the basis of the primary unit of analysis (please see Chapter 3). The learning and teaching activities and the learning and teaching experiences constituted the embedded cases within the case, and represented as the embedded units of analysis. Nested in each of these inextricably linked sub cases were yet another set of interconnected embedded cases - namely, on campus and off campus activities; and student and teacher experiences. As is illustrated in Figure 4.4, the embedding of subcases helped to set the foci and boundaries for investigating the phenomenon of preparing for professional practice.

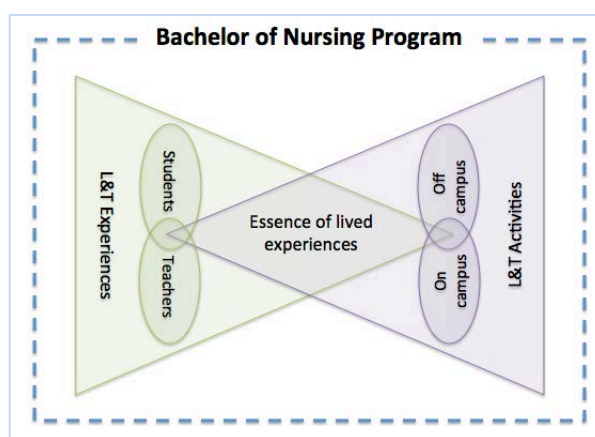


Figure 4.4 The phenomenological case study design with embedded cases

Embedding a number of inextricably linked subcases enabled examination of variations among the cases studied, and facilitated considerations of the characteristics of real-life events in the professional education of nursing students in a holistic manner. Approaching the research design in this manner served three interrelated purposes: to capture rich descriptions of the sociocultural contexts of nurse education (RQ1); to elicit meanings of the learning and teaching experiences of teachers and students in this context (RQ2); and to examine the essence of their lived experiences, in order to build a deeper understanding of the manner in which such experiences influenced and enhanced professional practice preparation (RQ3). As Flyvbjerg (2001) suggested, the selection of methodological techniques should clearly depend on the problem under study and its circumstances, so as to lead to the higher precision, trustworthiness and stability of the findings. In the context of the present study, the methodological fusion of phenomenology and case study research was enacted (please see Chapter 5), by combining their respective methodological

strengths and techniques, in order to address the research problem and the attendant research questions, and to ensure quality in the research process.

4.5 Quality in qualitative research

As a researcher who takes a reflective and reflexive stance, I am aware that the judgement of a qualitative study should not be made in the traditional quantitative manner - that is to say, as being separate from human existence, which is based on the positivist notion that reality is an absolute condition. For example, validity is a common criterion for judging the quality of quantitative research; even though judgment of validity is often deemed inappropriate for qualitative research (cf. Kvale, 1995). Similarly, the scientific notion of reliability is not as relevant within the social sciences. When judging the quality and outcomes of any qualitative research project, faithfulness rather than reliability is the ideal focus (Gray, 2014). Within phenomenological inquiry, whose aim is to elicit aspects of an individual's reality through lived experience, the more faithful that the researcher can be to the identification of individual perception of reality, the more equipped and better able that we are to understand human action within a specific social setting. In this research, such faithfulness was upheld when formulating the research questions, selecting the participants, obtaining the data, analysing and interpreting the data, and documenting and reporting the results.

Throughout this qualitative research process, to uphold faithfulness, I maintained an *interpretative awareness* (cf. van Manen, 2014) that allowed me to recognise and to deal explicitly with my subjectivity during the research. Earlier in this chapter, the issue of subjectivity was acknowledged, and I recognised that one's history or past experiences, worldviews and other orientations play a part in every stage of any research project (Creswell, 2013). Hence, at each stage of the research project, I was aware of the manner in which my interpretations influenced the research process and the specific strategies that could ensure quality outcomes. The strategies selected in the current study, through which the quality of the research can be enhanced, include rigour and trustworthiness, credibility and authenticity, and ethical and political considerations.

4.5.1 Rigour and trustworthiness

The rigour and trustworthiness in ensuring the quality of this research relate to the appropriateness of the methodology chosen and the rigorous methods of data collection and systematic analytical procedures used, transparency in documenting these methods and consistency in working within the philosophical assumptions and practices of the research paradigm (Patton, 2002). Strategies for enhancing rigour in qualitative research have been identified in the literature, including congruence between the adopted paradigm and the chosen methods (Annells, 2006), sustained engagement with the phenomenon of interest and research participants (van Manen, 2014), multiple methods of data collection (Huberman, Miles, & Saldana, 2008), and audit trails (Merriam, 2009). These strategies were considered, reflected upon and employed in the current research.

Consistency among the purpose of the research, the methodology and the methods used to collect and analyse data, and the philosophical assumptions of the research paradigm relate to the idea of congruence (Annells, 2006; Denzin & Lincoln, 2008). Such congruence ensures the alignment between the nature of the topic and the methods of inquiry, which is fundamental to enacting credible research design. I have endeavoured to demonstrate congruence by illustrating and detailing the philosophical assumptions of the chosen paradigm and approach and their relevance to my study, and by ensuring their alignment with the methodology and data collection and analytic methods selected and implemented in this research, as is explained earlier in this chapter, as well as in Chapter 5, Section 5.2 and Figure 5.1.

To promote rigour, the current research approach ensured a systematic data collection process that involved sustained engagement with the research site and participants (Patton, 2002, van Manen, 2014). Data were collected using multiple sources over four semesters and, during this time, my close interaction with both student- and teacher-participants enabled the building of rapport and gaining participant trust. Here, rather than seeking to achieve generalisability (cf. Denzin & Lincoln, 2008), I pursued intently the exploration of the case in a specific time and context where participants' voices through stories that provided substance and

insights. This allowed participants to share their learning and teaching experiences freely and to discuss their ideas and perspectives openly.

Participants were recruited and purposefully sampled, ensuring diverse experiences and perspectives on the phenomenon of preparing for professional practice. Different participants (students and teachers) presented corroborating evidence, thereby enabling triangulation of the findings, e.g., cross-reference checks were applied using multiple data sources and analysis (cf. Creswell, 2013; Maxwell, 2013). Such approach enhanced the depth and richness of the database, as well as cultivated the rigour and trustworthiness of the research findings (Creswell, 2013).

Ensuring quality was central to the research design, undertaken during each stage of the study, whereby clarification of meanings was continually sought using different data sources. It included comparing data from field notes, teacher perspectives, student perspectives and researcher-observer perspectives. Collaboration with participants to undertake cross-reference checks through discussion of analyses and conclusions with participants formed part of assuring quality, thereby providing additional means for verification that fostered rigour. The purpose of these approaches was to test for consistency and irregularity/ inconsistency, as they provided a way to compare and to cross check the quality of information derived at different times and through different methods (Huberman, Miles, & Saldana, 2008). Patterns for the phenomenological case were identified and thematically analysed to review differences and similarities to identify and synthesise themes. The purpose was “not to represent the world” (Stake, 2005, p. 460); rather the purpose was to represent the case, so that readers can experience the complex meanings encapsulated in the project.

Trustworthiness is linked explicitly to a rigorous inquiry, and an audit trail provided a means to capture and document research proceedings and decision-making processes, including whilst developing the research questions and the design of this investigation. Such an approach promoted transparency that in turn engendered the quality and trustworthiness of the research. As a researcher, I found this approach a useful methodological device throughout the research process, as it provided reflective and reflexive measures that helped to heighten my interpretive awareness (cf. van Manen, 1997) and to clarify my perspective and subjectivity. The audit trail utilised in

this research concerned audio files, transcript files, personal documents and memos capturing ethical, conceptual, methodological and analytical thoughts and decisions.

4.5.2 Credibility and authenticity

Experiencing the current research confirmed that credibility is a goal and not a product. It has to be “assessed in relationship to the purposes and circumstances of the research, rather than [being] a context-independent property of methods or conclusions” (Maxwell, 2005, p. 105). Indeed, this thesis draws its legitimacy from a purposely-established alignment of methodology with the epistemological and ontological foundations on which the research is based and from which dependable, authentic interpretations emerged. To foster the credibility of the research, the present study ensured that the theoretical framework conceptualised was based necessarily on the intent of the study. Moreover, the thesis draws its credibility from the integrity of the approaches and methods employed within the investigation and the quality of the sources of data collected as evidence.

Throughout these processes, reflective and reflexive approaches were employed. Reflectivity impacts on the systematic observation, documentation, analysis and interpretation of the data to acquire a deeper understanding of the ways in which the nursing students were prepared for professional practice. Reflexivity, on the other hand, suggests the powerful and inescapable influence of the researcher, given that what the participant says is always influenced by the interview situation and by the interviewer (cf. Maxwell, 2005). Another potential concern reflected upon was participant bias - e.g., obstruction or withholding information, such as in cases where the researcher is perceived as a threat, or reactivity arising from the researcher's presence in the natural setting, which could interfere with the behaviour of participants (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008). In such cases, Maxwell (2005) stressed the importance of understanding how the researcher is influencing what the participant says and how this affects the quality of the inferences the researcher draws from the data. A reflective journal, peer support, cross-reference checks, closer analysis of both negative and positive cases and an audit trail (Patton, 2002) were utilised in this research, as was noted previously. Such approaches were employed as regards processes of iterative data collection and analysis.

Credibility goes hand in hand with authenticity. In addition to the approaches described thus far, I ensured that the voices of the participants and myself as the researcher were evident in the text (cf. Patton, 2002). In writing the text, I employed rich descriptions using participants' narratives to allow them to represent their voices. Doing so has allowed me to illuminate and describe the phenomenon deeply. I used first person narrative throughout the text, to distinguish my voice from that of the participants' voices (third person). This approach to data analysis and reporting is supported by Edwards and Titchen (2003), who explained that "faithfulness to the raw data was retained by the high value placed on the subjectivity of the research participants, by allowing their interpretations to lead the development of theory and by constant reference back to the first order constructs" (p. 457). By acting responsibly as regards representing the participants' views, duly established the credibility, authenticity and utility of the thesis. I endeavoured to describe the research context and the methods of inquiry in-depth, such that readers can judge for themselves the value and applicability of the research findings to their local contexts. The usefulness of the study is reflected in its capacity to help to explain a phenomenon and its trustworthiness in the extent to which readers believe the research findings (Huberman, Miles & Saldana, 2014).

4.5.3 Ethical considerations and political implications

An ethical approach to research is paramount, particularly as research involving human participants poses risks where the research process can bring about ethical dilemmas (please see Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, pp. 34-40). In the context of this research, obtaining ethical clearance and adhering to the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research guaranteed that potential ethical issues were addressed and measures were taken to minimise and/or prevent risks associated with the research. In recognition of the conventional ethical and political protocols at the time of conducting this study, a number of considerations were addressed. Firstly, before the commencement of data collection, ethics approval was obtained from the nominated research site's Human Research Ethics Committee (please see Appendix 1 Human Research Ethics Committee approval number H12REA187). Secondly, prior to each preliminary interview and class observation, information sheets were

distributed and consent forms were signed by each of the participants (please see Appendix 2 Information Sheet and Participant Consent Form). The information sheet described the aims, objectives and procedures of the study and the intended benefits of the study to the participants, as well as the voluntary nature of participation and the participants' right to withdraw at any time without consequence. In describing the benefits of my research to stakeholders, I also explained how this would contribute to the existing body of knowledge across the field. Advice and avenues for the participants to file complaints were also provided. Thirdly, in accordance with the guidelines espoused in the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research, pseudonyms were used to protect each participant's identity as well as that of the institution. Details concerning considerations of broad ethical issues and appropriate assurances were also explained.

As a researcher, I have high regard for acting responsibly, respectfully and morally, and I always endeavour to build rapport with research participants. Such an "ethic presumes that investigators are committed to stressing personal accountability, caring, the value of individual expressiveness, the capacity for empathy, and the sharing of emotionality" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p. 40). Certainly, prior to each interview proceeding, I reiterated the intentions of the study and I encouraged the participants to ask any questions that they may have had, or to raise any concerns. I also once again addressed issues of confidentiality and anonymity, and the role that they would play, and I explained the use of pseudonyms in the reporting process. My intention here was concerned with gaining entry or consent, establishing purpose and initial rapport whilst responding to any resistance from a participant who might challenge that role.

With regard to practices of classroom/participant observations, heightened ethical awareness was observed, concerning the day-to-day interactions associated with conducting this study and for emergent data collection through interactions with colleagues more broadly in the university. Interactions were filtered by awareness that I was acting in three roles at the university – student, researcher, practitioner – and constantly moving among these roles, and that doing so may have affected the relationship between the researcher and others in the research setting. However, as was noted earlier in this chapter, focusing on caring and respectful relations ensured a

collaborative, productive partnership with participants. It was critical that the relationships between the researcher and those participants in the study were collaborative, trusting and non-oppressive (cf. Christians, 2005).

For me as the researcher, being part of the everyday lives of the research participants could have been problematic in terms of the ability to remain objective, as there was a possibility of becoming too involved. However, when observing first-hand some emotional manifestations demonstrated by individual participants, journaling was an essential exercise such that my perception of what appeared to be happening was captured and cross-referenced subsequently with the empirical data. In cases where the discussion required me to move from researcher to confidant, either the participant or I requested that the audio recording be paused, to manage sensitive information more effectively. I was cognisant of the sensitivity and confidentiality owed to each participant. In this research, interview procedures, for example, followed those proposed by Stake (2005) concerning “low-priority probing of sensitive issues” (p. 459) in a way that the privacy of each participant was protected. Moreover, self-disclosure or the sharing of experiences was reciprocal in nature as I felt that if I were asking participants to share something about their experiences and knowledge I could, in fairness, likewise disclose information about my own experiences and knowledge. Consistent with my axiological position, I recognised this view of reciprocity and level of relationship building as both parties being mutually committed and assuming the role of *giver* and *receiver* of information, at the core of which was shared confidentiality.

Maintaining the confidentiality of each participant was of critical concern in this research, and warranted the correct recording and appropriate storage of data. Christians (2005) warned that the participants should not experience any “harm or embarrassment as a result of research practices” (p. 145). This “professional etiquette” (Christian, 2005, p. 145) was certainly necessary in the conduct of the present study – e.g., taking responsibility for the confidential recording and storing of the corpus of data. Therefore all audio-recorded interviews and transcriptions were stored in password-protected devices, and field notes were locked in a filing cabinet in my office. Research data were backed up on an external drive that was stored in the same locked cabinet, alongside the collected research artefacts.

4.6 Chapter summary

This chapter has provided an informed, rich description of the rationale underpinning important decisions with respect to the design of the study and the contexts in which they were made. I have established the character of this study as regards the research design and made explicit the necessary alignment across the ontological, epistemological and methodological positions, as a means to investigate the preparation of nursing students for professional practice. Having identified and made visible the rationale for, and the relevant theory underpinning, a qualitative approach, I have also established my axiological positioning as a researcher and how this influenced the ways that I approached this study.

As was discussed in this chapter, recognition of the complementary ontological position of constructivism and sociocultural perspectives was an important point of reference for this study. Upon establishing the suitability of qualitative approaches to the investigation, and upon confirming the epistemological and ontological alignment with the nature of the phenomenon under study, which was underpinned by sociocultural theory, a *methodological fusion* was deemed necessary for the conduct of the research. *Phenomenological case study* – the fusion of hermeneutic phenomenology and embedded case study approaches – was positioned as the methodological choice suitable for investigating the complex and interrelated elements that influence the unique macro and micro contexts of the case under investigation (cf. Robson, 2002). Guided by the complementary philosophical and theoretical frameworks utilised in the study, the choice of these combined methodologies was critical for illuminating the *what* and *how* aspects of preparing for professional practice. These included examining the case (Bachelor of Nursing program) in depth, its learning and teaching environments for different modes of delivery, the experiences of teaching staff and students in such contexts, and the essence of their lived experiences.

The chapter then outlined various measures that were undertaken to promote and enhance the quality of the research, including strategies to maximise rigour and trustworthiness, credibility and authenticity, and ethical and political implications.

Looking forward to Chapter 5, the enactment of the research design is explored in depth next. In this chapter I discuss specific qualitative inquiry approaches utilised in the study, the participants' profile and details of data collection. Consistent with the notion of the methodological fusion approach, I also discuss the applicable analytical procedures in this chapter.

Chapter 5 | Enactment of methodological fusion

Fusion power is speculative and experimental. I think it is reckless to assume that the fusion problem will be cracked, but I'm happy to estimate how much power fusion could deliver if the problems are cracked.

~ David J.C. MacKay (1967–2016)

5.1 Chapter introduction

In Chapter 4 the rationale for, and strategy of, applying a methodological fusion between hermeneutic phenomenology and case study that embodies the current research was presented and examined. This was in direct response to the intent of the current research to investigate the contemporary phenomenon of preparing for professional practice as a bounded system to give voice to the participants' lived experiences in this context, i.e. interpreting and describing the essence of *what* they experienced and *how* they experienced the phenomenon of preparing for professional practice, individually and collectively.

The current chapter illustrates the enactment of the methodological fusion formulated in the present study. The chapter demonstrates how the combined methodical techniques of hermeneutic phenomenology and case study provided a means for collecting data and examining the case in depth, and for building a rich understanding of the situational experiential happenings (cf. Denzin & Lincoln, 2008) in the professional education of nurses. Further, the chapter discusses the manner in which the essences and meanings of lived experiences of preparing for professional practice in this context was analysed and reflected upon.

5.2 Inquiry approaches

Preparing for professional practice is a complex phenomenon. Such complexity is related to its multi-faceted and context-dependent nature, involving individuals engage in cognitive and interactive processes. As learning about professional practice is situated and often implicit (Colby & Sullivan, 2009; Shulman, 2005a), investigating the phenomenon of interest to this study required a higher level of awareness amongst the participants, to bring to the fore specific aspects of the experience of being involved in preparing for professional practice. Thus, the research problem was framed as: "What does it mean to prepare for professional practice?" and was

supported by three guiding research questions, re-stated here for the purpose of the current discussion:

1. How do the university and its nursing students engage in professional practice preparation?
2. What does the engagement mean for the students becoming professional?
3. What factors influenced and enhanced the preparation for professional practice as they have emerged?

The case study addressed Research Question 1 by investigating the sociocultural context of nurse education by examining the nature and characteristics of the learning and teaching environments where the Bachelor of Nursing program is enacted, as informed by its accredited curriculum. This approach provided a means to investigate complex social units and structural aspects that proved useful in formulating insights about the phenomenon being investigated and the case. An iterative data collection and analysis was therefore employed, within which stages of the research process included direct interactions with the research context and participants taking part in educational processes and facilitating educational outcomes. Such exploration and examination provided a backdrop for developing knowledge about one of the crucial foci in this research, that of understanding the lived experiences of preparing for professional practice and the students becoming professional (refer to Research Question 2). The phenomenological orientation of the case directed the investigation toward the *what* and *how* aspects of learning and teaching experiences in this setting, the approaches for which were central to unveiling the essences of lived experiences of preparing for professional practice. I examined more extensively the essences revealed in investigating participants' experiences, with further abstraction and interpretation based on my theoretical and practical knowledge, as well as knowledge drawn from relevant literature, in order to reveal the significance of the meanings ascribed to such experiences as influencing and enhancing the preparation for professional practice (refer to Research Question 3).

Figure 5.1 demonstrates the congruence of methodology and methods used to collect data with the philosophical assumptions of the research paradigm as enacted in

the methodological fusion of hermeneutic phenomenology and case study research, and how such fusion was employed in the present study. It illustrates the alignment between methodologies, methodical techniques and paradigmatic assumptions, and provides an overview of their relationship to the research questions, and the centrality of the research problem across the research design.

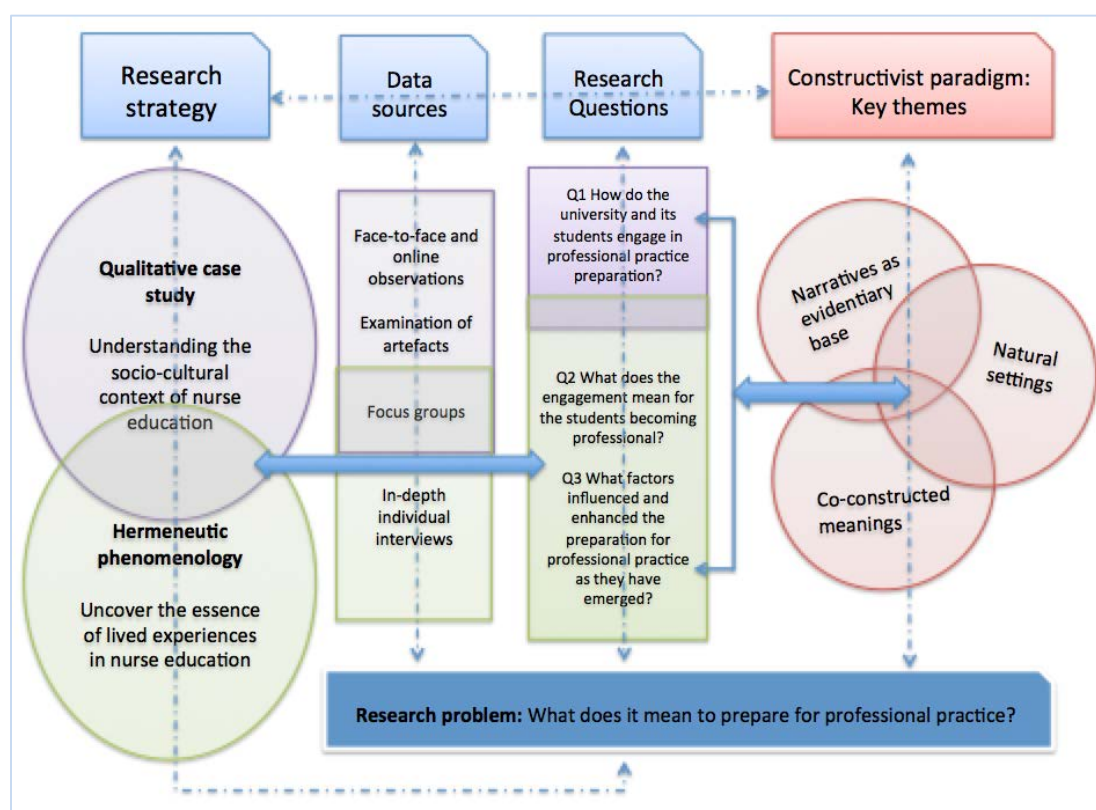


Figure 5.1 The methodological fusion of hermeneutic phenomenology and case study research

Moreover, as illustrated in Figure 5.1, it is imperative for the research problem, the research questions and the methodology and methods chosen to connect and align with each other. Doing so focused the goal of the research to make sense of the phenomenon under investigation, avoid and/or minimise any tendency to anticipate the outcomes and fulfil the objective of rigorous qualitative inquiry (Merriam, 2009).

5.3 Case sampling

An investigation of qualitative nature typically focuses in depth on relatively small samples, selected purposefully (Patton, 2002). The Bachelor of Nursing

program at an Australian university was the single case investigated for this phenomenological case study. As discussed in Chapter 6, the case was situated at a multi campus university, Eastern Star University (not the real name), whose enrolment number reached nearly 29,000 students, and employed 704 academic staff and 950 professional staff during the period of this investigation (citation withheld for anonymity). All participants in the study were affiliated to this university, as either undergraduate student or teaching staff.

5.3.1 Sampling methods

Sampling and recruitment were interdependent processes in this study, which involved a number of purposeful sampling strategies. To ensure the likelihood of the emergence of rich data, formal case study screening procedures were employed to select embedded cases. In doing so, purposeful sampling was undertaken, which enabled the selection of “information-rich cases” that produced “insight and in depth understanding rather than empirical generalisations” (Patton, 2002, p. 230). The purposeful sampling strategies utilised in the study included: criterion sampling; homogenous sampling; snowball or chain sampling; and emergent sampling. These methods of sampling are consistent with qualitative interpretive inquiry (see Creswell, 2013; Merriam, 2009, Patton, 2002).

Criterion sampling

Sampling of this type involved reviewing cases relevant to this investigation, to determine their alignment with the predetermined set of characteristics (Patton, 2002). The criteria for the selection were defined as follows: a) current learning and teaching environments pivotal to students’ education, which may involved purely theoretical oriented classes - on-campus and/or online, and/or with a simulation/laboratory component, and/or with a clinical experience component; b) current enrolled students at different stages of completion in the program (n=61); and c) current teaching staff from different year levels (n=13). Past students and previous teaching staff members were excluded. Learning and teaching contexts external to the university were included but only as reported experiences by participants. No direct data collection was carried out within external learning and teaching contexts, such as clinical placement environments. However, on account of emergent sampling (see below) an

innovative learning and teaching initiative in partnership with another university was included, which was facilitated at an external venue, requiring data to be collected on site. Recruitment of teacher-participants was facilitated during a School meeting, with a follow up broadcast email. Broadcast email was also sent to all students but with minimal uptake, which was addressed with the help of participating teachers.

Homogenous sampling

Given the research involved a whole program of study in the Bachelor of Nursing program, it was imperative to carry out homogenous sampling. The purpose of this sampling technique was to describe some particular subgroup in depth (Patton, 2002). The process involved bringing together the same year level participants purposely in focus groups to inquire into learning and teaching, as regards their overall experiences in the program. Student-participants' recruitment was undertaken mostly during class, with the help of teacher-participants from specific year level. This approach enabled the student- participants to speak about their learning and teaching experiences of the program on a level playing field during focus groups, rather than a mixed of students from different year levels, with varying experiences. Of the 61 student-participants who took part in the investigation, 55 participated in focus groups. The number of student-participants increased to 61 as a result of snowball sampling, but these later recruits only participated in individual interviews.

Snowball or chain sampling

This approach usually begins by asking the right people "Who should I talk to?" (Patton, 1990, p. 176). In conjunction with my direct inquiry to increase participation, a number of participants likewise volunteered their suggestion to "go see this or that class" or recommended, "you should talk to X". Suggestions and recommendations from different participants snowballed and converged, as classes and/or names were mentioned consistently over and over by different teacher- and student-participants. Four teachers were identified using snowball sampling but only two teachers participated in this process and consequently their classes were subsequently observed and intently studied. Six student-participants were recruited following their peers' or teachers' recommendations, two of whom actively participated in multiple phenomenological interviews.

Emergent case sampling

As opposed to an intentional case sampling, emergent case sampling is about considering new or novel opportunities closely as they emerged in the study, or as Patton (1990) puts it “taking advantage of whatever unfolds as it unfolds” (p. 179) during the investigation. In the course of this research, a number of opportunities presented themselves, which arose from interview and observation data. While listening to interview data and reading field notes, the Golden-O (pseudonym) initiative emerged as a critical aspect of the learning experience for students who took part in this educational intervention. Their experiences would have remained in the periphery and not carefully and systematically explored, had the investigation not taken advantage of emerging opportunities as they unfolded in the data.

In the later stages of the research a more focused sampling was facilitated, whereby the sample was purposely biased (Creswell, 2013) towards critical themes or essences that arose from data. For example, themes from teaching staff interviews were closely re-investigated through follow-up interviews and/or class observations and observation de-briefs. Likewise, themes from class observations and student interviews were utilised as foci for dialectical interactions at subsequent series of interviews. According to Patton (2002), this is an effective research strategy to gain better insights and “to learn from those who were exemplars of good practice. In many instances, more can be learned from intensively studying exemplary (information-rich) cases” (p. 234).

5.4 The participants

The total number of participants in the study was 74, which included 13 teachers and 61 students (please see Table 5.1 which outlines the participants’ demographic breakdown). Recruitment took place over a twelve-month period, accounting for snowball and emergent samplings, and I was working part-time as a doctoral candidate. The implication was that some participants had completed the data gathering process before others started.

Table 5.1 Study participants' demographic breakdown

	Student	Teachers	Total
Overall Participants	61	13	74
Gender	N women = 54 N men = 7	N women = 11 N men = 2	74
Non English Speaking Background	N women = 4 N men = 2	N women = 0 N men = 0	6
Age range	18-65	26-66	

5.4.1 Teacher-participants

Among the teacher participants, there were 11 women and two men, their ages were within the range of 26-35 through to over 66, all of whom were from English speaking background. The teacher-participants were selected on the basis of their direct involvement to the Bachelor of Nursing program. For the duration of the present study, 11 teacher-participants were employed as continuing academic staff, whose roles intermittently changed between course examiner, course moderator or teaching team member. Two sessional staff formed part of the teacher-participant group, one assumed mostly the role of a teaching team member, the other had stints as course examiner. Chapter 6 details additional relevant information.

5.4.2 Student-participants

The student participants consisted of 54 women and seven men; their ages were within the range of 18-55 through to 54-65 and included both native English speakers and those from non-English speaking backgrounds (n=6). The student-participants were selected on the basis of currency of enrolment, but regardless of their mode of study (internal or distance) or study pattern (full-time or part-time). It is worth noting that while the student-participants' enrolment was often classified by default as either internal or distance study mode, such study modes converge intermittently for internal students. For example, even though internal students were traditionally enrolled in internal mode of study, meaning they attend classes on campus, their semestral enrolment might also include distance study because a course or two might only be offered by distance delivery. However, the same was not true for student-participants enrolled in distance mode of study, they study exclusively by distance, unless they

negotiated an *ad hoc* on campus attendance. In the final year of study, all students study by distance, regardless of their original mode of enrolment, to accommodate the demands of intensive clinical placements. The enrolment patterns and other educational practices within the Bachelor of Nursing program are discussed in detail in Chapter 6.

5.5 Details of data collection

One of the strengths of the approach concerning methodological fusion is that it facilitates the integration of different techniques for data collection, so as to gain an in-depth insight into the case and phenomena under investigation. In the current research, data collection techniques included visual images, field notes, documents, class observations (both physical and online spaces), focus group and individual interviews, themes from empirical data, and knowledge from literature. The rationale for utilising these data sources was to inquire deeply into the phenomenon of interest, such that the processes reveal the essence of lived experiences in this bounded context and interpret its significance to future professional practice in the nursing discipline. In some aspects of the investigation, data collection and analysis transpired simultaneously, upon which insights from current analysis directed subsequent data collection requirements. Guided by the theoretical bases utilised in the study, (see Chapter 3), data for the investigation were collected in three stages.

5.5.1 Stage 1 Learning and teaching spaces

The goal of Stage 1 was to gain an understanding of the sociocultural contexts of nurse education at the selected university, by collecting data that embodied the nature and characteristics of the learning and teaching activities to which nursing students were exposed in their educational spaces (RQ1). Collecting information on the features and elements of the Bachelor of Nursing curriculum, referred to by Barnett and Coate (2005) as curriculum-as-designed, also formed part of this stage of the study, which included investigating curriculum documents and related artefacts, examining them with reference to the intents and purposes of higher education in general and nurse education in particular, as revealed in the literature review. Focus group interviews with students from different year levels and modes of enrolment

were also undertaken as part of Stage 1 investigation, to give voice to their experiences of the learning and teaching settings and practices.

Physical learning and teaching spaces – visual data

During site visits, learning and teaching spaces on campus were collected and recorded as visual images, using a digital camera. Visual images did not include appearances of people involved in preparing for professional practice, owing to the commitment to anonymity amongst the participant groups. The type of visual data generated was mainly focused on the built environment and associated artefacts, to illuminate ways in which the participants use or make sense of such spatial context in the course of their everyday practical learning and teaching routines in this educational setting. Emmison (2004) maintained the “material ecology of the built environment... has been argued to exert a determining influence on the movement and mutual coordination of people” (p. 250). Through the visual data collected, the “seen dimension of social life” (p. 250) was examined and rich textual descriptions written based on the observable spatial context of people involved in preparing for professional practice. Such data might not otherwise be forthcoming during the interview process.

Virtual learning and teaching spaces – written field notes

During or following the interview, access to the course site was sought from teacher-participants to “enter” and examine their respective learning management system (LMS), which supports and hosts the delivery of all courses on offer at Eastern Star University. Upon entry, data was collected in the form of written field notes, focused on examining the design and characteristics of the learning and teaching environment. Moreover, as the context of social construction, the activities and interaction within this Internet-based learning and teaching spaces were also investigated. Indeed, Markham (2004) conveyed to us that the Internet is a “unique discursive milieu that facilitates the researcher’s ability to witness and analyse the structure of talk, the negotiation of meaning and identity, the development of relationships and communities, and the construction of social structures as these occur discursively” (p 97). Thus, the design features and utilisation of the educational tools (e.g., discussion forum, wikis, noticeboards, etc.) employed within the LMS were also examined to establish the functions and the role they played in learning and teaching.

Interpretations generated from these written field notes were compared with visual data, document analysis and focus group and individual interview data, in order to facilitate cross-data quality checks (cf. Patton, 2002).

Documents

In this study, documents and records were a rich source of information about the context and events that form part of preparing for professional practice. To examine documents pertaining to the preparation of nursing students for professional practice, I conducted a document analysis, also known as “mining data from documents” (Merriam, 1998, p. 112). The focus of this investigation was to inquire into the curriculum-as-designed (Barnett & Coate, 2005), in order to examine the processes, focus and content of learning and teaching in this context. Doing so, facilitated access to critical information provided in documents such as annual reports, university handbooks, program accreditation and curriculum documents, and also course syllabi and assessment information. To collect data using interview methods on such complex curricular matters would have taken an unmanageable amount of time. Thus, documents are a useful source of data in this research, as they were not only grounded in the real world, but they were also a product of the context in which they were produced (Merriam, 2009). Field notes were written to record data during the examination of documents, such as curriculum and course documents (Appendix 3 Curriculum data gathering instrument). Interpretations of this data were referenced with all other data sources.

Phenomenological focus group interviews

The potential of focus group interview in phenomenological inquiry is well documented in the literature (e.g., see Bradbury-Jones, Sambrook & Irvine, 2009; Jasper, 1996; Tomkins & Eatough, 2010), given its capacity to facilitate group interactions and bring experiences to light. In the early stage of this research, the essence of lived experiences was captured using focus group interviews with the student-participants. The semi-structured format enabled a degree of balance between directed and undirected approaches in facilitating interactions amongst small group of participants (up to 7 participants per group) and between participants and researcher. Focus group interviews were organised homogeneously i.e., for the larger population of on campus students, groupings were organised per year level of enrolment while

distance students were grouped exclusively based on this mode of enrolment. Thus, most participants already knew each other and had a common interest in the topic, such that they were able to interact with each other “by responding to ideas and comments in the discussion” (Krueger, 1994, p. 6, cited in Patton, 2002, p. 386). The total number of student-participants who participated in focus group interviews was 55. All focus group interviews were held in the School’s meeting room, designated to me during my negotiated data collection period.

Focus group interviews in this research commonly commenced with an explanation about the purpose of the study and the voluntary nature of their participation, then followed by the guiding questions I prepared, which started with a broad, general question (Appendix 4 Focus Group Interview Protocols). In my search for the essential structure of the phenomenon under study and its constituent parts (Bentekoe, 1996), data were collected focused on experiential perspectives, that is to say personal, phenomenological accounts of lived experiences. I assumed an active listening role, whilst I interacted with participants to focus on the phenomenon of interest and their lived experiences. At this stage of the investigation, the phenomenological orientation of the case had put the phenomenon of interest at the centre of group dialogue, as guided by open-ended questions that allowed participants to hear each other’s stories and add their own perspectives and insights as the story unfolded.

Each focus group interview was audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim, the subsequent interpretations of which were critical in the successive stages of the investigation. For example, based on the preliminary analysis of focus group data, some participants were invited to progress their participation to multiple phenomenological individual interviews. This allowed me to seek meanings more deeply, as I negotiated through the part-whole relationships (Bentekoe, 1996), in a manner that I could make sense of the whole and the parts of preparing for professional practice. This approach was critical in this phenomenological case study research, as its foundational concern was the inter-relational nature of experience and my reflections on it.

In combination, the data collection methods employed in Stage 1 facilitated the exploration of the Bachelor of Nursing program in depth such that the goings on in the case was revealed, including illuminating the nature and characteristics of learning and teaching in this bounded context. Stage 1 provided a means to undertake a macro level analysis to explain what was happening in the social system, which in turn paved the way for gaining an understanding at the micro level analysis in subsequent stages (see Robson, 2002).

5.5.2 Stage 2 Learning and teaching experiences

Stage 2 concerned exploration of the learning and teaching experiences of those involved in preparing for professional practice within the nursing discipline. The goal was to examine more closely *what* students and teachers experienced and *how* they experienced learning and teaching in this context (RQ2). Data collection techniques for Stage 2 involved observations of classes, clinical laboratories and external simulated hospital ward, as well as individual interviews with both teaching staff and students. Insights from analysis of the case and its setting from Stage 1 investigation were scrutinised in greater depth, in context of the meanings constructed from research participants who took part in multiple phenomenological interviews (total n=10), consisting of teaching staff (n=4) and students (n=6).

Class and laboratory observations – on campus venues

Observation was used in this research to examine the phenomenon of interest in context of the pedagogical settings where the Bachelor of Nursing curriculum was enacted. This method was used to gain an understanding of the curriculum-in-action (Barnett & Coate, 2005), or what Aoki's (1995) notion of "lived curriculum" (p. 255), such that the natural learning and teaching settings, interactions and other dimensions of pedagogical experiences can be investigated. Observation is one of the most used data collection techniques in interpretive research, typically focusing on the actions and interactions of people in their natural environment. Following Argyris & Schon, (1974), this technique is useful for determining what people say they do (espoused theory) and what they actually do (theory-in-action). Upon investigation of the curriculum-as-planned in Stage 1, the lived curriculum became apparent through the process of observing the participants' natural learning and teaching settings through

observations. This was a critical aspect of the investigation whereby salient pedagogical practices and tacit knowledge that guide practice (Kemmis, 2005, Polanyi, 1967) may be seen or inferred during observation, and that the extent to which participants access and used cultural tools and how they were utilised in learning and teaching may be displayed in their natural situations.

I conducted overt observations in my role as a *nonparticipant observer* (Brannick & Coghlan, 2004) in classroom and clinical laboratory settings. Measures were put in place to minimise the potential feeling of participants being evaluated or assessed. For example, the teacher-participants were consulted about the appropriate timing of the investigation and reassured of the intent and purposes of each class observation and that the focus was not to evaluate their teaching practice but to investigate how the curriculum was enacted, and to document learning and teaching activities and interactions in this context. The teacher-participants likewise conveyed this information to their students at the start of class or laboratory. Upon introduction, I maintained a non-threatening, professional and collegial manner, in that I welcomed any questions and was always open and responsive about the nature and conduct of my research.

During observations in classroom settings I positioned myself surreptitiously so as not to distract the natural flow of the class. However, while this was appropriate in the classroom, it was challenging in clinical laboratories, as students, working in groups, conducted different clinical tasks and constantly moved around. Where relevant, I followed the movement of the teacher-participant within hearing and seeing distance, to get close to student action and interaction. As there were a lot of movements in the laboratory, my presence and movements became obscure after a while as students attended to their clinical tasks at hand. In the four learning and teaching environments I observed (i.e. online, classroom, laboratory, simulated hospital ward), I functioned as a reflective observer (van Manen, 2014), observing and recording the natural environment – furniture formation, seating of students, positioning of the teacher and use of cultural artefacts – and observing the interaction that transpired in this environment – teacher-student, student-student, student-teacher, while actively listening and recording pedagogic discourse. Thus, these field notes also included notations with naïve illustrations of observed activities (please see

Appendix 5 Example of field notes – Observations with naïve visual illustration) and behavioural strategies that the teacher employed in negotiating through curricular matters and likewise the behavioural techniques that students used, e.g., in explicating their ideas and opinions. In addition to field notes, dialogue and interactions were also audio-recorded, where possible. Each observation lasted for the duration of the class or laboratory or simulation, after which a follow up phenomenological interview was conducted with the teacher-participant and participating students who happened to be attending the learning and teaching environment I observed.

Simulated hospital ward setting – off campus venue

As noted in the case sampling section (Section 5.3), data was also collected at the only external venue used in this research, for the purpose of pursuing emergent sampling revealed in the data. The educational intervention — Golden-O, discussed in detail in Chapter 6 and Chapter 7, took place in simulated a hospital setting and was delivered off campus in four-hour block. Thus, each observation lasted for the duration of this block. Similar to observations carried out in classes and laboratories on campus, curriculum-in-action was the focus of the investigation, whereby both teacher-participants and student-participants were observed, with a particular focus on this unique learning and teaching environment, and the *in situ* clinical activities and interactions between student-nurse-patient, student-nurse-mentors and student-nurse-doctor-student.

As I was not a member of the nursing discipline, or any healthcare fields for that matter, it helped to facilitate the observation in this setting without the *insider* encumbrances, such as ascribing to certain meanings or perceptions (Brannick & Coghlan, 2007). This allowed me to maintain an objective stance during data collection. This has its disadvantages also, such as not having the clinical awareness or technical language to discuss activities or describe situations. However, I used this predicament to benefit the investigation in that during the follow up phenomenological interviews I asked the relevant participants to describe the clinical activity or situation from their perspective, suspending my own interpretation and judgment, thereby allowing the data to *speak* (cf. Patton, 2002). Such predicament concerns *hermeneutic alertness* (van Manen, 1997), where the researcher pauses to reflect on the meanings of situations so as to work with participants in reconciling any pre-conceptions and

interpretations. Observation at this external venue provided greater access to the phenomenon under investigation and potentially added value to the research findings as regards the significance of lived experiences to future professional practice. This part of data collection in Stage 2 investigation involved a total of 16 hours of observations, after which time data reached saturation.

Phenomenological interviews

Collecting verbal data is one of the major methodical approaches in qualitative inquiry (Maxwell, 2013). In this study, the phenomenological orientation of the case under investigation required gathering personal narratives from participants, whose personal life stories involving experiences, anecdotes and incidents, among others could elicit valuable insights into the phenomenon of interest. Through interviews, such data source is an important aspect of phenomenological inquiry and serves particular purposes (van Manen, 1997). In this study, the interview was used as a means for exploring lived experiences through narratives or stories for the purpose of developing a richer and deeper understanding of a phenomenon. Moreover, the interview was used as a vehicle by which to develop a conversational relationship with the participant about the meaning of an experience. This facilitated mutual reflection and co-construction of meanings as regards the phenomenon of interest, while participants share their stories in their own words.

The nature of social interaction between the researcher and participants shape the type and characteristics of knowledge generated through interviews. In the present study, semi structured interview approach was deployed to elicit greater breath of data and allow participants freedom to respond to open-ended questions and probes. This approach enabled participants to recount and convey their experiences without being tied down to specific answers, as is the practice in structured interview (Patton, 2002). Through individual interviews, both student-participants and teacher-participants shared their perspectives and experiences of the phenomenon under study, some of whom were interviewed multiple times.

Interviews with student-participants

For student-participants, individual interviews were organised based on demographic representation such as mode of enrolment and progression in the

program, and on the basis of their willingness and availability to attend multiple interviews. There were ten (10) student-participants who took part in the initial interviews conducted in Semester 2 of Year 2 of my part-time doctoral candidature. Subsequent individual interviews took place in Semesters 1 and 2 the following year, where six (6) student-participants from the original ten (10) interviewees continued their participation. The number was confirmed to six (6) based on participants' availability. The student-participants favoured my office as the venue for appointed interviews but, if unable to attend in person, telephone interview was conducted. Each interview was audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim.

All individual interviews proceeded in a conversational manner in 45 to 60 minutes duration. Gathering their reflective recollections was the main purpose of individual interviews whereby previous and recent learning and teaching encounters within the Bachelor of Nursing program were discussed and illuminated. I prepared an interview guide using open-ended questions and probes that encouraged the student-participants to respond freely and openly (Appendix 6 Individual Interview Guiding Questions). Given some questions were standard across all interviews, it allowed me to make comparisons in the process of eliciting the essence of lived experiences.

The successive individual interviews were also conducted between 45 to 60 minutes duration. I listened actively throughout the successive interviews with student-participants and explored in detail their responses to opening question, such as "What was it like for you in the classroom this past weeks?" or online, or lab, or clinical or their personal learning space whatever the case may be. I was privy by then to their learning journey and activities, as disclosed in prior interviews, and was able to contextualise the questions. I followed their responses with probes asking for explanation, clarification or examples for further detail and with reference to themes emerging from previous interviews or from field notes. And consistent with my reflective and reflexive practice in this research (Creswell, 2013), I analysed my performance as interviewer, such as. I scrutinised my interviewing techniques and participants' responses to particular questions during audio playback. This also informed the framing of subsequent interviews.

By Semester 2 of Year 3, the six student-participants were actively engaged in the investigation, often volunteering information and resources as they come to hand, or indeed initiating the meetings themselves to share their experiences. Figure 5.2 provides evidence that a sense of collaboration and partnership were firmly established and a tacit understanding of a shared notion of the process of research.

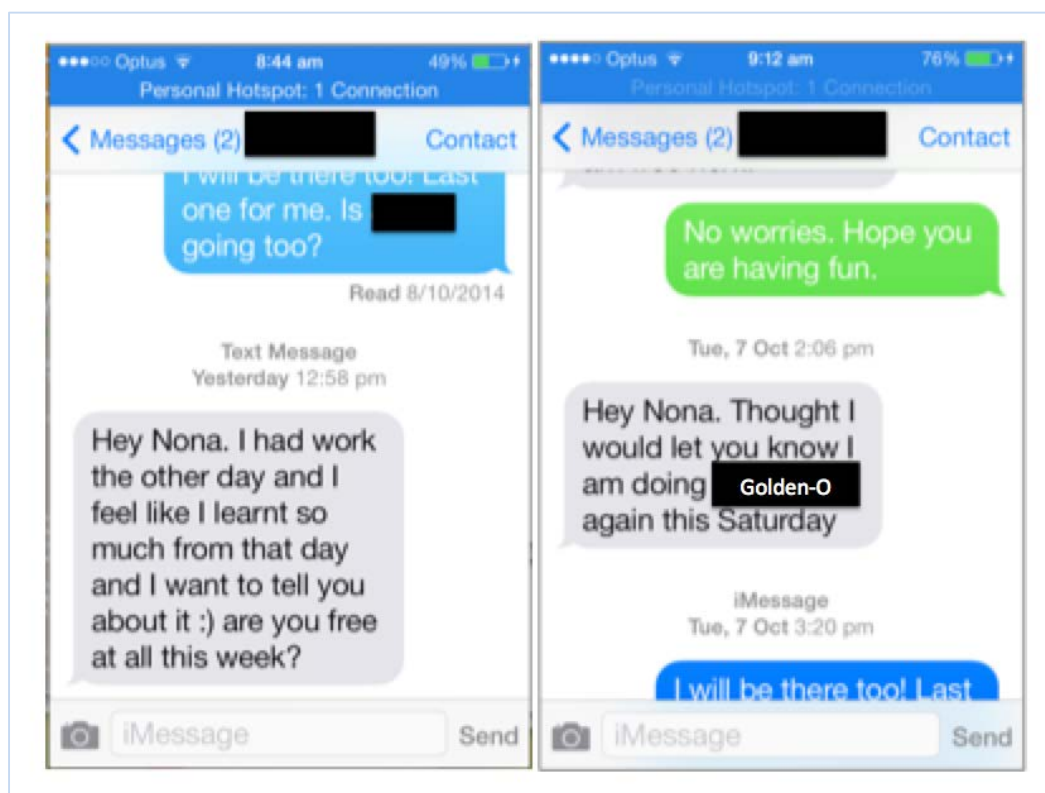


Figure 5.2 Student-participants' self-initiated continuing engagement in the research

Multiple individual interviews ranged from three sessions to 6 sessions, some of which were initiated by student-participants. See Figure 5.2, which illustrates a student-participant making contact, which presented an opportunity to ask the student-participants what the experience was like at a moment in time, where it was imperative to “stay close to an experience as it is immediately lived” (van Manen, 1997, p. 67). There were occasions during these impromptu interviews where the student-participants illuminated new insights. At times, their sense of wonderment triggered strong emotions and was surprised at the strength of their feelings, prompting them to reflect deeper about the experience.

Interviews with teacher-participants

A series of interviews were scheduled for teacher-participants, at mutually convenient date and time. They were asked to choose a setting for the interview with which they feel comfortable to interact with me. The fulltime continuing teaching staff member chose the convenience and comfort of their respective work offices, whereas the casual teaching staff members chose my office as the venue for their individual interview. Consistent with semi-structured interview technique, I prepared standard core questions with reference points for follow up or probing questions (see Appendix 6 Individual Interview Guiding Questions). For subsequent interviews, I prepared a specific interview guide before the interview with questions that probed certain aspects of experiences narrated in the initial interview and/or aspects noted during close observations of their classes. The interviews were audio-recorded, and to encourage reflection, I asked open-ended questions that allowed rich descriptions of lived experiences.

The initial interview (n=13) was conducted between 45 to 60 minutes duration during the blocks of data collection period in Semesters 1 and 2 of Year 2 of my part-time doctoral candidature. Subsequent interviews (n=6) occurred immediately following each class or laboratory observations during Semester 2 of Year 2 and Semesters 1 and 2 of Year 3. Dialogue and reflection were oriented and focused on gaining deeper insights into the teacher-participants experiences in preparing nursing students for professional practice, which were triangulated with other data sources. The final interview with selected teacher-participants (n = 4) was conducted in Semester 2 of Year 3 of the study. During the final interview, emerging themes from the analysis were used as a stimulus for further reflection and dialogue with teacher-participants, such that the nature and characteristics of lived experience in preparing nursing students for professional practice were elicited at yet another level. In many respects, the final interview also served as a member checking process (Patton, 2002) from the perspective of teacher-participants, which was then cross-referenced with student-participants' perspectives.

By the end of Year 3 of my part-time candidature, I determined with guidance from my supervisors that the data collected from a variety of sources had provided sufficiently rich data and no new concepts emerging at that point in time. The

multiple interviews conducted for the present study, for example, promoted growing depth of participant engagement with the research and enabled increasing rich understanding by the researcher. This was true for both teacher-participants and student-participants, which was critical in this investigation, due to the embedded and implicit nature of the phenomenon of preparing for professional practice. The multiple interviews, which included aspects of member checking, extended the interaction and engagement with participants and, in the process, fostered rigour and trustworthiness in data collection.

5.5.3 Stage 3 Essence of lived experience

The final stage, Stage 3, examined the themes from empirical data such that the essential aspects of the phenomenon under investigation were the main focus, drawing from insights gleaned in two previous stages of the investigation. At this final stage of the inquiry, textural and structural descriptions (van Manen, 1997) captured in memos for Stages 1 & 2 analyses were utilised as a data source, which paved the way for examining in greater depth the nature and characteristics of the phenomenon of preparing for professional practice. The essential aspects of this phenomenon was interpreted and referred back to the literature for yet another deeper examination. Final synthesis of emerging themes enabled the construction of composite meanings that embodied participants' diverse lived experiences – the essence. The subsequent, and final, examination was carried out to scrutinise what and how such meanings related to, and intersected with factors that influenced and enhanced professional practice preparation (RQ3). These in depth interpretations helped formulate theoretical understandings of the complex and arguably tacit nature of preparing for professional practice (cf. Colby & Sullivan, 2009).

In all phases of inquiry the theoretical bases identified in Chapter 3 were drawn upon closely during data collection and analyses. The premise in the research was that subsequent findings would lead to theorising and explaining the relevance of empirically derived meanings concerning the conduct and experiences of preparing future practitioners for professional practice. Interpretation of findings from each stage of the investigation was used to form a picture of the data as a whole such that answer to the central research problem and research questions began to evolve. The

approach followed the process informed by hermeneutic circle (Bontekoe, 1996) moving between the literature, the research texts and the analysis of interpreted text, moving from parts to whole. This process helped elicit the essential quality of the phenomenon being investigated.

5.5.4 Data management plan

The interview data was stored on a recording device and later uploaded to NVivo – a qualitative data analysis computer software package. Interview recordings were transcribed, uploaded and managed entirely on NVivo, which helped to organise the coordination of data and keep it in an orderly manner. Additionally, for protective measures, each interview was saved and a backup file was created and stored on an external drive. This was kept in a locked cabinet in my office when not in use. Each file was labeled the name of the participant for the individual interviews and for the focus group interviews each file was labeled the year level groupings, so that I could easily locate the origin of significant statement.

5.6 Approaches to data analysis and interpretation

The main focus of this study, as noted previously, was to examine and gain insight into the preparation of nursing students for professional practice. Such phenomenon is socially situated, inherently interdependent, action oriented and also quite complex, within which process and structure are inextricably linked. Hence, the approach utilised within this embedded phenomenological case study design involved holistic case study investigation (macro level analysis), coupled with in-depth phenomenological investigation (micro level analysis). As Robson (2002) argued, in order to illuminate what is going on in social systems, analysis at different levels is critical, particularly when trying to understand human actions pertaining to their locations within different social reality.

This section outlines the analytical methods utilised in the research that facilitated rigorous data interpretations. In keeping with the methodological fusion deployed in this investigation, data analyses were drawn from both case study and hermeneutic phenomenology analytical procedures, facilitating a systematic and informed way of interpreting qualitative data. While the analytical and interpretation

methods I used were specific to this research, much of them were based on the work of qualitative researchers cited throughout this thesis. Although they offered direction and guidance to transform data into findings, the process was deeply personal and authentic to the nature of the current investigation. As Patton (2002) explained, “Qualitative analysis transforms data into findings... Direction can and will be offered, but the final destination remains unique for each inquirer, known only when—and if—arrived at” (p. 432).

The analytic process in this research was designed to organise ideas into thematic units, in order to establish substantive patterns of thought in two areas of interest to this research: 1) understanding the sociocultural context of preparing nursing students for professional practice (R1); and 2) understanding the essence of lived experiences in preparing for professional practice (R2), and to elicit the meanings of such understandings in relation to determining factors that influencing and enhancing professional practice preparation (R3).

The analytical and interpretation processes in this research followed iterative non-linear approaches. Such approaches ensured that as I immersed with the analysis armed with the data collected, I engaged with several aspects of analytical procedures and go through that process over and over and, when completed, exit with a reliable account that illuminates the phenomenon being investigated. As Miles, Huberman and Saldana (2014) asserted “It makes analysis an ongoing, lively enterprise that contributes to the energizing process of fieldwork....So we advise interweaving data collection and analysis from the very start” (p. 70). Thus, Phases One and Two of the analytical spiral formed the preliminary analysis of the research data, which occurred iteratively as data was still being collected. During this time, the purpose of the concurrent analysis with data collection was to scrutinise existing data and generate strategies for collecting new, more insightful data. Phase Three of the analytical spiral concerned in-depth interpretation of themes that emerged from the data, which was then compared and further analysed across the entire data set. This interpretation involved constructing narratives of teachers’ and students’ lived experiences in preparing for professional practice, and that of my own interpretation, “abstracting out beyond the codes and themes to a larger meaning of the data” (Creswell, 2013, p. 187). As I endeavoured to remain authentic and ground my interpretation with the

empirical data, I crosschecked my interpretation with the original transcripts constantly and analytically. In the final phase of the analytical spiral, Phase Four, maps were formulated that shows different levels of abstraction, which aimed to present an authentic portrait of the phenomenon of preparing for professional practice. These, and the outcomes generated in Phase Three were then referred to the larger research literature of interest to the current study, and participants later reviewed the eventual documented outcomes. Also worthy to note is that selected participants carried out reviews and feedback formatively throughout the research process to confirm information, challenge interpretation or provide additional insight on the case. This data feedback is a chance to learn more about the *case*, and not just about the feedback (Miles, Huberman and Saldana, 2014).

Figure 5.3 illustrates the data analysis spiral that embodied the procedures used in the investigation of the complex social system of preparing for professional practice.

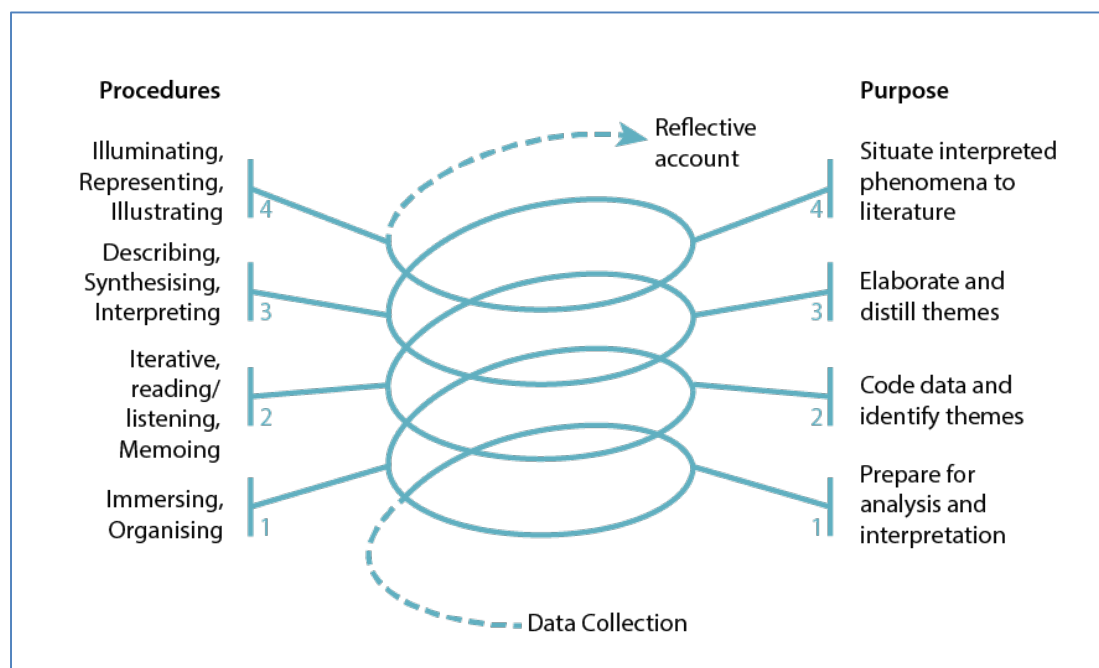


Figure 5.3 The phenomenological case study data analysis spiral
(adapted from Creswell, 2013, p. 183)

5.6.1 Immersing | Organising

It was critical at this point that I organised the data systematically to better manage the massive volumes of information, which included interview data and program and course documents, plus my field notes. The research data were progressively transcribed verbatim and prepared for iterative in-depth analysis on NVivo10. At an early stage of the analysis process, I immersed in the research data as I organised them methodically into subgroups, based on the context in which data were collected, e.g., student year level, teacher context, learning spaces, etc. This level of immersion enabled engagement with the data, which involved preliminary reading of the text to facilitate coding. In this initial stage, I considered each interview data as a whole and its text consisted of individual parts that provide positive opportunity for gaining new knowledge. As was discussed in Chapter 4, the notion of hermeneutic circle suggests that, “understanding is achieved by interpreting within a circular process, in which we move from a whole to the individual parts and from individual parts to the whole” (Debasey, Naden & Slettebo, 2008, p. 58). To avoid deterministic assumptions, the hermeneutic circle in the current study was associated with a spiral, touching on the loops in the spiral around and around as the analytical processes take place (cf. Debasey, Naden and Slettebo, 2008). As part of my ongoing preliminary immersion with the research data, I listed key concepts to assist my in-depth reading of the text and subsequent coding. This “lean coding” Creswell (2013, p. 184) expanded my categories and reduced and combined them into my final themes, as I reviewed and re-reviewed my database.

5.6.2 Iterative reading/listening | Analytic memoing

Having established a sense of the whole and its constituent parts in the first phase, I progressed to detailed iterative reading/listening and analytic memoing as I carried out the coding processes. At this phase of the analysis, using NVivo10 allowed me to create nodes or codes utilising the key concepts I had already identified. I employed the use of the nodes function in NVivo10 to highlight elements of the text that revealed aspects of the experience of preparing for professional practice. The goal was to capture essential information that could be conceptualised to support the construction of critical themes directly from the empirical data, or what I referred to in this research as the first order construct. First order construct

embodies the participants' narratives, stated in their own words and represented accurately what they were saying (cf. Ajjawi & Higgs, 2007). As NVivo10 also offered the facility to have the transcript displayed on screen while listening to the interview audio recording, I was able to grasp tacit meanings, which were not visible in the transcript, e.g., sense of excitement, passion or disappointments, among other non-verbal cues. Reading and re-reading the text, and/or listening to audio recording a number of times enabled me to gain an impression of the salient elements of each spoken data and which facilitated the identification of representative statements related to my three research questions.

Also worthy to note is that NVivo10 allowed me to add annotations on specific aspect of the text, most of which formed the basis for my analytic memoing. An analytic memo is a concise or comprehensive narrative that records my reflections and thinking processes about the data. I employed the analytic memoing approach to examine deeply and reflectively what a particular narrative revealed about the participants' experiences of preparing for professional practice. As Miles, Huberman & Saldana (2014) suggested, an analytic memo attempts to synthesize descriptive summaries of data into "higher level analytic meanings" (p. 95). I collated my initial interpretations of participants' accounts of their lived experiences and invited feedback during successive interviews. Participants freely volunteered additional information if they felt certain aspects needed clarification. Such close collaboration between participants and researcher enabled the co-construction of meanings and bode well for the quality of research outcomes in the present study (Merriam, 2009).

5.6.3 Describing | Synthesising | Interpreting

This phase of the analysis concerned constructing detailed descriptions, capturing themes and providing interpretation in light of what I "see" in the data and with reference to my own views, or views formulated in the literature. The goal is to transform the "first order constructs" into abstractions or "second order constructs" (Ajjawi and Higgs, 2007, p. 624), based on the accumulation of insights across different sources on the database, and utilising my theoretical and personal knowledge throughout the analysis. Thus, it is a spiraling process (see Creswell, 2013, pp. 182-188) of progressive or incremental thematic understanding to describe aspects of the

structure of lived experience. Maintaining a phenomenological attitude was certainly critical in order to focus on and grasp what was meaningful for the participants, while remaining attentive and thoughtfully engaged. Such attitude was at the core of the three approaches I utilised in uncovering or isolating thematic aspects of a phenomenon, as per the suggestion made by van Manen (1997 p. 93-94) and also referred to by Creswell (2013, p. 195), namely: i) holistic reading approach - attending to the entire text; ii) selective or highlighting approach – looking for statements or phrases; and iii) detailed approach – examining every sentence. Hence, as I scanned the entire database to identify major organising ideas, and as I considered every sentence or sentence cluster, I asked: “What does this sentence or sentence cluster reveal about the phenomenon or experience being described?” “Are there any phrases that stand out?”. In describing the whole phenomenon, I also attended to the detail so as to come to a new understanding of the whole phenomenon whilst reflecting upon subsequent interpretations. Seeking meaning, therefore, required maintaining a constant orientation towards the research question: “What does it mean to prepare for professional practice?” and utilising this question as an analytical lens or a consistent point of reference while uncovering the essential meanings of preparing students for professional practice.

Uncovering the essential meanings of experiencing this phenomenon was the beginning and end point of this research, taking into account different contexts and varying individual interpretations and understandings. I found that such situations lend themselves into yielding multi-dimensional and multi-layered meanings. Thus, I approached the analysis with an open attitude to the data, engaging in ongoing reflection as I continually immersed in the participant narratives and iteratively composed descriptions and thematic interpretations. Such processes of abstraction, alongside synthesis and theme development, facilitated deeper, informed understanding of preparing for professional practice. In this analytical spiral, critical concepts and ideas were labelled as themes and synthesised to portray tentative composite findings. These reflective processes involved writing and re-writing, as insights and understandings evolved. The outcome was a synthesis of the emergent understandings, in the form of thematic statements in phenomenologically sensitive paragraphs. From this, the interpretation of the principal research phenomenon of preparing for professional practice evolved.

While considering and reflecting upon the complexity and the tacit nature of the phenomenon of interest in this study, I was able to identify salient points or meanings that the participants could not convey. I was cognisant of Polanyi's (1967) wisdom when he suggested the idea of tacit form of knowing - we know more than we can tell but our knowledge is sometimes not available to our linguistic competency. Hence, I re-read and reflected upon the data that illuminated answers to my original research questions and, considered other questions the data may be answering or, for that matter, the data may not be indicating directly. I also examined "silences" (Creswell, 2013, p. 186), i.e., experiences that "appeared unspeakable or ineffable one moment may be captured, however incomplete, in language the next moment" (van Manen, 1997, p. 114). In this way, the illumination of the qualities of the phenomenon of preparing for professional practice depended upon intuiting the essence of being a direct participant and writing hermeneutic phenomenological descriptions that explain the essential quality of a theme (van Manen, 1997).

5.6.4 Illuminating | Representing | Illustrating

This final phase of the data analysis spiral concerned illuminating the essences of the diverse lived experiences of preparing for professional practice. Critically, in concert with my open attitude towards the participants' experiences of preparing for professional practice, the hermeneutic phenomenological process required me to engage with pre-existing knowledge in the literature and my own knowledge to illustrate the essence of meanings of participants' lived experiences. During this time, I explored reflectively my personal presuppositions, as well as through ongoing interaction with my doctoral supervisors and professional discussion with critical friends. Consistent with the process informed by the hermeneutic circle, moving from parts to whole, I systematically and continuously moved backwards and forwards between the research text, the earlier analysis and interpretations, and the literature. As themes were developed, I examined the relationship of emerging themes with existing theoretical interpretations, so as to situate the findings within a wider context. Themes and sub-themes were scrutinised closely and further elaborated, and their relationship clarified by reading and re-reading the entire data set and visualising analytic processes about the meaning of a particular set of data.

I examined possible links between the main themes to facilitate further theoretical understandings. Essences of the lived experience that appeared to characterise broader meanings were examined more closely as potentially holding a collective or universal significance. The outcomes culminated in the creation of composite phenomenological descriptions of the phenomenon, incorporating both the textual (what the participants experience) and structural (how the experience happened) descriptions. In these descriptions, I reassembled the participants' learning and teaching journeys using their narratives (first order constructs) such that it revealed their lived experiences and underscored key findings from empirical data.

The results of the analysis of this phenomenological case study project are presented in Chapters 6, 7 and 8, the critical aspects of which were discussed with, and confirmed by, selected participants. Comments received were included into the interpretation and, where necessary, minor amendments were made.

5.7 Chapter summary

In this chapter, I have conveyed the way that I have formulated, interrogated and enacted the idea of *methodological fusion* – the fusion of *hermeneutic phenomenology* and *embedded case study* approaches, as the research methodologies informing the design for this study. In doing so, I demonstrated the alignment between methodologies, methodological techniques and paradigmatic assumptions, and discussed their relationship to the research questions, and the centrality of the research problem across the research design. I have also demonstrated that the choice of these combined methodologies was critical for illuminating the *what* and *how* aspects of preparing for professional practice.

As evidenced in this chapter, I have provided a rich description of the rationale supporting all major research decisions, actions undertaken and the contexts in which they were made. I have explicitly illustrated and justified the research procedures employed in the study, including paying critical attention to my data analysis strategy, involving the use of *the data analysis spiral* purposely developed for this investigation, to ensure quality, credibility and dependability of research outcomes.

The basis upon my perceptions of findings were interpreted was scrutinised closely, whereby I reflectively and reflexively examined them as I considered my personal knowledge and referred to the existing body of knowledge in the literature, as well as whilst I engaged with my research community.

The first data analysis chapter, Chapter 6, follows and features the case study institution and its Bachelor of Nursing program. In this chapter, my analysis and interpretations provide a rich description of the settings, circumstances, meanings, intentions, strategies and motivations that characterise the program. Describing the characteristics of the program in analytical detail and the situational happenings in this setting provided a context for understanding the lived experiences and their textural and structural descriptions.

Chapter 6 | Engaging in education for future practice

The great aim of education is not knowledge but action.
~ Herbert Spencer (1820-1903)

6.1 Chapter introduction

In Chapter 3, I used the perspectives of Lev Vygotsky and his followers to outline a theoretical representation of how people learn and develop from sociocultural viewpoints. I then clarified my choice of two methodological approaches in Chapter 4, and I explained the idea of methodological fusion and its congruence with the intents and purposes of the study (please see Sub-section 4.5.1). I described in Chapter 5 how the methodological fusion was enacted and, of particular relevance to the current and subsequent chapters, how the analytical and interpretation processes took place. In that preceding chapter, I also illustrated the phenomenological case study data analysis spiral, purposely developed for this study, to guide the analysis and interpretation (please see Figure 5.3 and Sub-section 5.6.1, which explain the strategy for data analysis and interpretation). The current chapter is the first of the three results chapters, and addresses the first research question. Findings related to the second research question are discussed in Chapter 7, while the findings for the third research question form part of the final chapter, Chapter 8, along with the response to the research problem.

Research Question 1 How do the university and its nursing students engage in professional practice preparation? necessitated an interrogation and analyses of written, visual, spoken and observed data, in order to present my interpretations derived from the research findings. In presenting the results, I outline details of the case from the research data, which provided insights into the context and relationships within the professional education enterprise that embodied the students' learning journey in a three-year undergraduate program.

In presenting the results, short participant quotes are woven in-text, with quotation marks, to illustrate critical points in context of the analysis and interpretation, and to provide evidentiary narratives. Moreover, long participant quotes are presented in smaller font size to illustrate the grounding of the findings in

the research data and to highlight participants' voices. Interview identification with the participants' pseudonym precedes each long quotation. The identification sequence and description are provided in the following examples:

Interview (interview number)–enrolment mode–participant type–pseudonym

- I4-OC-S-Riley Fourth interview with a student studying on campus
- I2-DE-S-Taylor Second interview with a student studying by distance
- I2-FT-T-Nita Second interview with a full-time teacher
- I1-CE-T-Morgan First interview with a casually employed teacher

Focus Group (group number)–enrolment mode–participant type–pseudonym

- FG2-OC-S-Wen Focus group interview with group two on campus student cohort
- FG2-DE-S-Rory Focus group interview with group two distance student cohort
- FG6-OC-S-Year3 Focus group interview with group six, consisting of large group of participants from 3rd year on campus cohort

Consistent with my data analysis spiral approach, discussed in Chapter 5, I have incorporated literature in the discussion of the themes and sub-themes, to explicate and/or emphasise a point highlighted in the analysis, where relevant. Each theme contributes to constructing a theoretical understanding of preparing for professional practice. The aim was to transform the data into knowledge that can offer valuable insights into meaning structures of preparing for professional practice.

The aim of the current chapter is to present a theoretical understanding of *how the university and its students engaged in professional practice preparation*, dealt with accordingly in Section 6.2 and 6.3. In doing so, I illustrate an amalgam of participants' interpretations, particularly factors that they experienced as influencing and impacting on their preparation for professional practice. As reflected upon later in the chapter, the findings provide a rich, sound description of Research Question One as experienced and interpreted by the participants collectively, and which I analysed thematically. The findings also offer an illuminated backdrop for unpacking Research Question Two in the following chapter.

The current chapter is organised in three sections: Section 6.1 presents a brief profile of the case study and provides background information for the Bachelor of

Nursing program. Section 6.2 and 6.3 are interrelated sections, which present and discuss the findings that encapsulate the significant theme revealed in the research data. Finally the chapter summary section summarises critical learning as regards Research Question One.

6.2 Case profile — The Bachelor of Nursing program

Research Question One: *How do the university and its nursing students engage in professional practice preparation?* is usually a question not thought about purposely, or reflected upon explicitly, in the normal course of educational practice. Rather, the processes are embedded in institutional cultural practices and embodied in the practices of agents of socialisation – these are people or groups responsible for the socialisation of students whilst at university. Such practices intersected with the student’s lifeworlds and, in many respects, influenced their educational experiences.

To uncover the practices and experiences of preparing for professional practice, I examined the educational setting and the culture and relationships therein, to illuminate the sociocultural context of professional education as exemplified in the case. This section discusses the case profile, which provides a backdrop for understanding the institutional culture in which selected nursing students experienced their preparation for professional practice.

6.2.1 The educational setting

With respect to confidentiality and anonymity, Eastern Star University (ESU) is a pseudonym for the University, as was noted in Chapter 5. ESU is a multi-campus university, the main campus of which is located at a regional city, in one of the geographically largest States in Australia. The site for this investigation was at this main campus, but I was also given access to other campuses, as well as to virtual sites. After a recent organisational restructure, the university consisted of six organisational divisions and two faculties with 12 schools. At the start of the investigation, the Bachelor of Nursing program was hosted in the Department of Nursing and Midwifery, which later became a School. During this time, the University website indicated that ESU was one of the leading providers of on-campus and online (distance) education in Australia, and offered a range of accredited

academic programs – a program is a collection of courses of study, leading to an award or a qualification – which included the Bachelor of Nursing program – accredited by the Australian Nursing and Midwifery Accreditation Council (ANMAC, renamed the Nursing and Midwifery Board. The University is recognised as a major provider of accredited undergraduate nursing program within the State.

ESU consisted of three campuses and a number of satellite study centres across a number of Australian States. The campuses offered high quality learning and teaching spaces, one of which comprised a newly opened state of the art laboratory for the Bachelor of Nursing program. As observed during site visits, and also reported in the University's 2015 Annual Report [citation withheld for anonymity]. Like most Australian universities, ESU had likewise invested significantly in its technological infrastructure, replete with various technological devices for learning and teaching, and a comprehensive online learning and teaching environment.

By the final year of the data collection, the Bachelor of Nursing program had been in existence for 25 years at ESU. The program offering started with on-campus delivery and operated in this way for a number of years. The re-accreditation of the program encompassed multimodal delivery, following the introduction of “an external mode of delivery, designed to be suitable for students who live beyond commuting distance from the University” (citation withheld for anonymity). The multimodal offering “combines intensive face to face learning via residential schools, online learning and an extensive range of professional placements” (citation withheld for anonymity).

6.2.2 Teaching staff members and academic program support

The Department of Nursing and Midwifery boasted a complement of well-qualified tenured academic staff members (n = 26) who were also Registered Nurses teaching in the Bachelor of Nursing program. Their continuing registration with the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA) was a requirement to teach into the program and indeed of their continuing employment. “Termination of employment would be an end result if re-registration is not a possibility” (Citation withheld for anonymity).

Joint appointments with [State Government Health Agency], involving expert nurse clinicians (n= 2) complemented the teaching staff. Moreover, casual academic staff (n = 59) casual clinical facilitators (n = 25) and casual clinical coaches (n = 4) were also employed in the Department, all of whom were experienced Registered Nurses. Worthy to note is that the number of casual employment varied every semester. In addition, senior students who excelled in completed courses supported the Bachelor of Nursing students in their role as Study Buddy Leaders – a peer-assisted learning initiative. Study Buddy is a pseudonym for the peer-assisted learning program at ESU. After undertaking training and development activities for the Study Buddy Leader's role, selected successful students were employed by the University on a semester basis to support courses participating in the peer learning initiative.

The Bachelor of Nursing program was also supported by professional staff members in a number of functional areas within the Department or shared across the Faculty. The academic program support included clinical placement coordination, laboratory management and academic program administration, among other support mechanisms of importance to the effective program operation of the Bachelor of Nursing. Support services from other divisions were also available, a core function of which was to help facilitate the students' socialisation into university and academic life.

6.2.3 Student cohorts

A diverse student population was enrolled in the Bachelor of Nursing program, which included a large number of mature aged students as well as school leavers, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, and students from a range of international locations. These students enrolled either as on-campus students (n = 1425) or as distance education students (n = 1447). At the conclusion of data collection, the total number of students enrolled in the program was 2872.

6.2.4 University vision for learning and teaching

It is worth noting ESU's espoused vision for learning and teaching stated: "We promise to partner with learners in the pursuit of their study objectives regardless of

their background, location or stage in life” (University Strategic Plan 2013-2015). The University’s focus on promoting and facilitating personalised learning was explained under three themes, as illustrated in Figure 6.1, which provided a useful point of reference for understanding the rationale for educational practices exemplified in the case study.

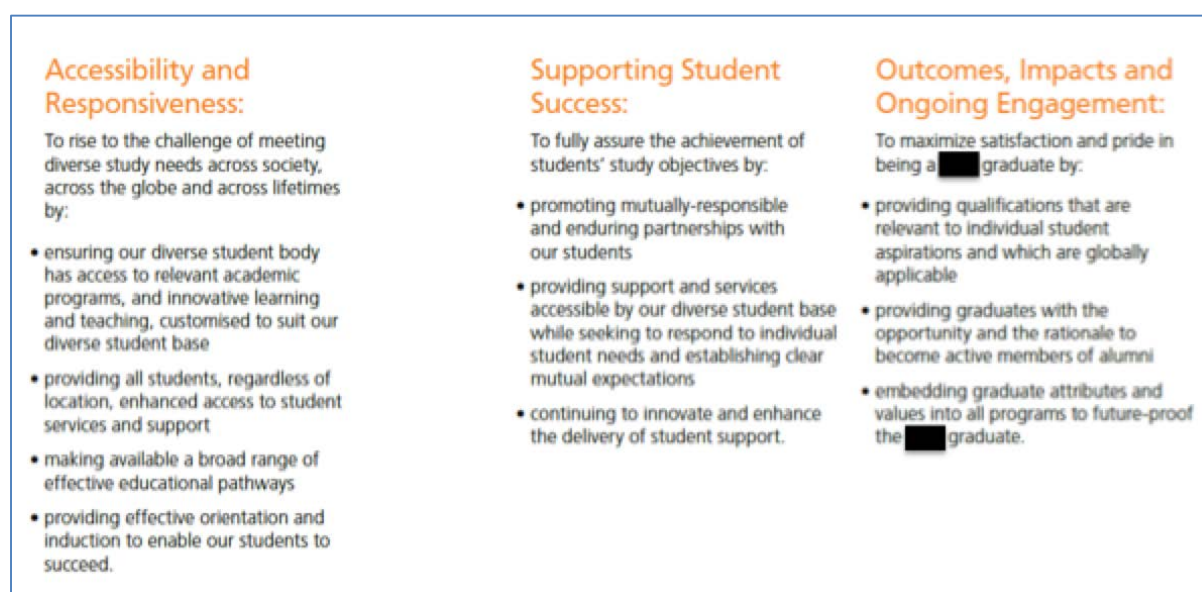


Figure 6.1 ESU’s vision for learning and teaching 2013-2015

6.2.5 Regulatory compliance and accountability

The quality and standards that govern higher education providers like ESU rest in the domain of the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA). TEQSA registers and evaluates the performance of universities in Australia against the Higher Education Standards Framework (TEQSA, n.d.). TEQSA has a dual focus: 1) ensuring that higher education providers meet minimum standards; and 2) promoting best practice and improving the quality of the higher education sector as a whole (TEQSA, n.d.)

At ESU, like other universities in Australia, the preparation of students for professional practice was subject to regulatory compliance and accountability. The nurse education program was accountable for complying with the national qualifications pathways policy (i.e., Australian Qualification Framework, e.g., AQF Level 7 Criteria), professional standards (e.g., The Australian Nursing and Midwifery Accreditation Council

— ANMAC) and University policy and procedures (e.g., Graduate Qualities, Program Accreditation, and related policies and procedures, such as the Graduate Attributes).

6.2.5.1 National qualifications pathways policy

The AQF website (www.aqf.edu.au) outlines the standards for Australian qualifications. These standards embody an integrated policy that encompasses the learning outcomes for each AQF level and qualification type and the specifications for the application of the AQF in the accreditation and development of qualifications, such as the Bachelor of Nursing program. AQF facilitates pathways to, and through, formal qualifications, such as learning pathways between schools, VET and higher education. The aim is to provide flexible, transparent and systematic learning pathways that break down boundaries between educational sectors and enable consistency in the way in which qualifications are described. It also provides clarity about the differences and relationships between qualification types. For example, a number of nursing students were given recognition of prior learning based on the qualification gained from the VET sector (e.g., Enrolled Nurse), allowing them to join the program as second year students.

6.2.5.2 Professional accreditation standards

The preparation of nurses for professional practice ensured that, as future professionals they have an understanding about the sources of professional standards and the manner of professional regulation as well as domain-specific knowledge underpinning practice. Hence, nurse education programs like the Bachelor of Nursing program at ESU undertook the rigorous process of professional accreditation through ANMAC, who subsequently makes recommendations to the Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia (NMBA). In successfully accrediting the program, ANMAC ensured “that standards of nursing and midwifery education promote and protect the health of the Australian community.” (ANMAC, 2012). It was evident that the program was designed in such a way that future nursing professionals who complete the program successfully have achieved agreed professional outcomes and are able to practise in a safe and competent manner. Following the professional regulator’s guideline, the aim of the program was evident, that of equipping nursing students with the necessary foundational knowledge, professional attitudes and essential skills.

6.2.5.3 University policies and procedures

As self-accrediting higher education provider, a university like ESU accredited its programs and courses. These regulatory requirements and expectations typically influenced the make up and design of the Bachelor of Nursing program. In this research, evidence showed that the program outcomes and course learning objectives were mapped to the relevant policies and standards. For instance, at the time of the investigation, each course had to identify the range of Graduate Attributes being taught and assessed, conveyed in the course syllabus. At program level, the mapping ensured, for example, transparency in certification and articulation processes, such as recognition of prior learning. As evidenced later in this chapter, different levels of regulatory compliance informed the educational practices at ESU and, in turn, influenced the direction and quality of the student learning experience.

The essential components of the case presented in the current section revealed the sociocultural setting of nurse education at ESU, and provided a context for the construction of meaning and understanding of the preparation of students for professional practice. The section that follows, Section 6.3, examines the institutional culture in preparing students for professional practice. Following exhaustive exploration of the research data, reading and re-reading participants' narratives and interpretations, the research findings revealed critical features of the institutional culture that influenced and enriched the preparation of students for professional practice. These findings highlighted the essence of the participants' lived experiences as regards Research Question One and, to some extent, Research Question Two discussed in Chapter 7. The findings were uncovered by analysing and interpreting the research data within a process of hermeneutic circle (please see Chapter 4 and 5), in which I moved from a whole to the individual parts and from individual parts to the whole emerging understanding of the phenomenon under study.

In unveiling the results, I will present an explanation of the themes, supported by verbatim extracts from the transcripts as evidentiary base. To enhance readability of the extracts, I have made some minor changes where necessary, while observing the usual conventions of academic writing. For example, I have indicated missing piece of text by placing ellipses. Moreover, as indicated in Chapter 5, I have removed or

changed all identifying information, and I have used pseudonyms to protect the anonymity of the participants.

6.3 The landscape of education for professional practice

I think we try to create in them the perception that they are responsible for a lot of their learning. We are just here taking them along their journey, but they have to put a level of responsibility into it. It's not just all our responsibility, and I think that's good, a good way to do it.
~ Deputy Head of School, ESU

This observation concurred with wider evidence in this study that showed that the shaping of the students' educational experiences and outcomes in diverse social settings was a shared commitment between the university and the student. It was evident that, against the backdrop of a positive university culture, students equally engineered their learning journeys and educational outcomes. The data analyses revealed that preparing for professional practice was a deliberate, highly demanding and an inherently personal enterprise. For most student-participants in the current study, this meant pursuing a personalised learning journey in the landscape of education for professional practice, in order to build capacity to realise their potential and to achieve the desired educational outcomes.

Preparing for professional practice was enacted in certain places and particular times. Hence, the notion of landscape was a useful metaphor through which to consider the phenomenon under study. My intent for its use in this thesis resonated with Clandinin and Connelly's (1995) perspective, *viz*: "A landscape metaphor allows us to talk about space, place, time. Furthermore, it has a sense of expansiveness and the possibility of being filled with diverse people, things and events in different relationships" (1995, pp. 4-5). In the sense used here, the landscape metaphor provided a way to position the different dimensions of professional practice preparation in the context within which they occurred and were experienced, as found in the data. Thus, rather than being in the foreground from the start, the use of metaphor emerged in this research from reflective processes. It is worth mentioning that the landscape of education for professional practice is clustered within broader landscapes that define, shape and constrain higher education. For the purpose of this thesis, the notion of the landscape of education for professional practice and its

constituent parts provided a broad social perspective on educating and preparing for future practice, and illuminated the characteristics of not a “new landscape” *per se*, but instead of an “emerging landscape”.

Data analysis revealed an essence or critical theme of participants’ lived experiences of preparing for professional practice that specifically addressed Research Question One: *How do the university and its students engage in professional practice preparation?* From the “university culture” data category, the current sub-section examined the participants’ lived experiences through spoken, written, visual and observed data. Here I explicitly explored the ways in which the university engaged in preparing students for professional practice that encapsulated the spatial, temporal, relational and corporeal dimensions of the lived experience. A synopsis of the themes that emerged from the data as regards RQ1 is outlined below:

RQ1 – Essence of the lived experience

The university culture facilitated the students’ curricular endeavours. Such a culture reflected the engagement in educational activities, in which individual context interacted with peer context within practice fields and communities of practice settings, the processes of which encapsulated the spatial, temporal, relational and corporeal dimensions of the lived experience.

Correspondingly, in the next sub-section (6.3.2), based on the data category of “educational activities”, I shift my focus to the characteristics of activities in which the students engaged at university and beyond.

6.3.1 The university landscape and its culture

In many respects, universities are people-oriented institutions and, thus, diverse groups of individuals and communities need to be recognised for universities to fulfil their function (cf. Sporn, 1996). This forms the basis of university culture. Edgar H. Schein, one of the leading scholars in organisational culture, defined “culture” as follows:

a pattern of basic assumptions—invented, discovered, or developed by a given group as it learns to cope with its problems of external adaptation

and internal integration—that has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems. (1985, p. 9; emphasis in the original)

Similarly, from a sociocultural theory perspective, culture is understood as being formed from the efforts of people working together, using and adapting material and symbolic tools provided by predecessors and in the process creating new ones (Rogoff, 1990). Students, for example, enter a university with specific expectations and needs regarding their education and preparation for future professions that a university must address, based on assumptions and beliefs that are shared historically by university members. Thus, in this research, the notion of *university culture* stresses the shared assumptions, values and beliefs of individuals and groups forming the university communities, which are established in a historical process, inherited and transformed by successive generations.

The research data revealed features of university culture that influenced and enhanced the students' preparation for professional practice, namely: the lived curriculum; agents of socialisation; learning spaces; and pedagogical encounters, at the core of which was engagement in educational activities of curricular significance, as illustrated in Figure 6.2.

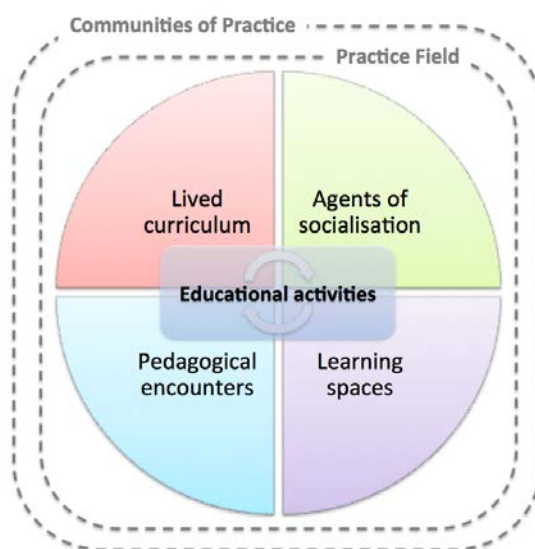


Figure 6.2 Features of university culture in preparing students for professional practice

The features of university culture identified in Figure 6.2 were a synthesis from all the participants' data, and represented a collection of all student-participants and teacher-participants' interpretations and experiences reported as influencing and enriching the preparation for professional practice. It is noteworthy that not all the features were present in every participant's experiences of preparing for professional practice. They represented an aggregate of all the participants' interpretations and elements that they experienced in preparing for professional practice, as regards the specific features of university culture.

The findings revealed that the university culture influenced the nature of student-participants' engagement in educational activities that embodied their curricular endeavours, as well as co-curricular and extra-curricular pursuits, in which individual context interacted with peer context. It was observed that students actively participated in practice fields i.e., learning contexts that provided opportunities for students to engage actively in negotiating meaning through practice (cf. Barab & Duffy, 2000), and communities of practice, i.e., individuals sharing mutually defined practices, beliefs, and understandings over an extended period in the pursuit of a common goal (cf. Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner, 2015).

The curricular aspect of the students' lived experience pertained to engagement in learning activities and support processes that related directly to a student's academic program of study. The features of university culture – lived curriculum, agents of socialisation, pedagogical encounters and learning spaces – were central to the students' curricular experiences, as illustrated in the following sub-sections.

6.3.1.1 The lived curriculum – as experienced in the learning journey

The three elements of the regulatory compliance – namely: Graduate Qualities – institutional compliance; Professional Standards – professional compliance; and AQF Levels Criteria – sectoral compliance – informed and shaped the student-participants' experiences in curricular settings. These regulatory aspects of preparing students for professional practice have been shown to influence *what should be learned*, as was found in the Bachelor of Nursing curriculum examined in this study.

The curriculum acted as the university's systematic plan for what and how students will learn, as explained in Chapter 2. Thus, the lived curriculum symbolised

the students' university experience and how the courses and other learning experiences fitted together, and described the educational outcomes at a particular point in time. The manner in which the lived curriculum was experienced in preparing for professional practice concerned broader processes of actions, to enact what outcomes had been intended, through the teaching, student engagement, meaningful connections and relationship-building that formed part of the learning process. Such intended paths were guided and influenced by the way that the curriculum was designed, and subsequently enacted, as evidenced in the following sub-sections.

6.3.1.1.1 The curriculum-as-designed

The curriculum model that underpinned the design of the Bachelor of Nursing program was an *outcomes-focused curriculum* (Aldridge & Fraser, 2008) in which objectives with clear learning outcomes were articulated at program and course levels, intended for students to demonstrate at the end of significant learning experiences. Extracts from program documentations outlining program outcomes and examples of course specifications are provided in Appendix 7, to illustrate the nature of espoused learning outcomes for the Bachelor of Nursing program. The statement of intent suggested that the program's "primary focus [is] nursing practice, [and] includes national health priorities and contemporary issues in health care and the areas of content [which] are directly related to or complementary to the discipline of nursing" (Citation withheld for anonymity). The rationale and philosophy for the program informed the selection of learning experiences, and mirrored the intent and educational goals. The intent reflected the program curriculum, and necessarily informed the selection and sequencing of courses, the content therein, and the learning and teaching strategies – something I reflected upon closely in my research journal, for example:

Journal entry — 03.07.14

I've been reflecting upon the mapping of the curriculum, i.e. what gets done across 1st year, 2nd year and 3rd year? I had an interview with a Course Examiner and we touched on the state of the curriculum, in particular what threads of learning were mapped out well enough? Interestingly, some students can "feel and see" the threads going through between courses and across the program. But during this particular teacher interview, medication and medication safety was raised as an example. It's a 1st year subject, but there is apparently no bridge on it very much after that at all. Yet in the literature there should be a consistent reinforced message with medications, because it's the highest risk out there. But also in the literature, the issue of an "over crowded", "jam-packed" (Ironsides, 2008) and "additive" curriculum (Tanner, 2004) is constantly raised. So is it a case of adding more content to courses that follow and "feed more fish" to students or is it a case of teaching students "how to fish" from the start. Would this be the happy medium? Something to ponder upon some more...

The evidence suggested that, as an outcomes-focused curriculum, the learning experiences were organised akin to the laying of building blocks, to allow students to progressively develop interconnected knowledge, skills, attitudes and values. The idea of building blocks is a useful analogy here, to describe the educational experiences that are built from the bottom up, with scaffolding around it, much the same way building blocks are used.

It is evident that the curriculum was designed in such a way that the critical foundational knowledge and *knowing as a professional nurse* (epistemology) was to be constructed and laid primarily in year 1. At this level, established academic and pastoral support mechanisms were regarded a necessity, which were duly put in place in partnership with relevant functional service areas of the university. In year two, this level was surrounded by the next layer of scaffolding, in such a way as to guide the students to build upon their theoretical knowledge and to develop practical knowledge further.

At this point, the next layer of the building blocks was taking shape for students to progress into acquisition and application of a range of nursing skills in different clinical settings, whilst *doing and acting as a professional nurse* (praxis) under supervision. During this time, engagement in reflection-in-action and reflection-on action processes, terms coined by Donald Schon (1986) to foster the ongoing development of reflective practitioners, was promoted further, deemed a critical element of the student learning experience in the program, as evident in selected coursework and the design of clinical portfolio tasks. The varied and interconnected components of the building blocks took shape in more defined form in the final year, whereby the scaffolding was less visible as students transitioned into *being and becoming a professional nurse* (ontology), immersed in the landscape of nursing practice. The autonomous nature of this transition embodied personal agency and sense of professional identity, as students consolidated the foundational and expert nursing knowledge, clinical competencies, and graduate qualities developed over time. Producing competent beginning practitioners was at the heart of the curriculum intent. The vision was to develop professional registered nurses who are able and capable of pursuing a career-long professional learning and development (Citation withheld for anonymity. To provide a snapshot of the program, the composition and structure of the Bachelor of Nursing are summarised in Table 6.1.)

At this juncture, it is important to note that the three themes: *knowing, doing and acting*, and *being and becoming*, identified in the analysis of the design of the Bachelor of Nursing curriculum were not only evident in program documentations, as interpreted, but also in the lived experiences of both student-participants and teacher-participants.

Table 6.1: Program composition and structure

To ensure accuracy, the information contained herein was sourced from both the Accreditation Document and University Handbook.

Year 1 Knowing	Semester 1	Semester 2
<i>Educational activities</i> Simulated laboratory work F2F tutorial work Online study & tutorial work Residential School Facilitated clinical = 80 hours	Responsible Nursing Practice Social determinants of health Biological and Physical Science Concepts Building Professional Nursing Attributes	Professional Nursing for Older People* Medications Theory and Practice Human Anatomy and Physiology Concepts in Patient Care
Year 2 Doing and acting	Semester 3	Semester 4
<i>Educational activities</i> Simulated laboratory work F2F tutorial work Online tutorial work Seminars Residential Schools Facilitated clinical = 160 hours	Clinical AA: Situated Practice* Simulated Nursing Practice Episodes of Nursing Practice Pharmacology	Managing Complex Care Nursing Models of Care Mental Health Nursing Care Indigenous and Cross Cultural Health Care
Year 3 Being and becoming	Semester 5	Semester 6
<i>Educational activities</i> Simulated laboratory Residential School Online study Clinical placement = 120 hours plus 160 hours x 3 = 480 hours	Clinical B* Clinical C* Rehabilitation in Community Settings Nursing Research into Practice	Clinical D: Nursing Care in Communities* Clinical E: The Beginning Practitioner* Nurses as Leaders Transition to Professional Practice

*Denotes the course includes a clinical placement component. Total number of clinical hours = 840

The Program Accreditation Submission consistently referred to the “development of knowledge and skills”, or “competencies and professional attributes” as facilitated by the curriculum. However, my analysis revealed that the educational activities and pedagogical encounters enabled students to engage in epistemological (*knowing*), praxis (*doing and acting*) and ontological (*being and becoming*) elements of their development as a future professional nurse. These themes were evidently critical in shaping the student development and preparation for professional practice and, thus,

were used subsequently as lenses for interpreting lived experiences in different spaces of learning, and the pedagogical encounters therein.

6.3.1.1.2 Curriculum-as-lived

As illustrated in Table 6.3, the Bachelor of Nursing program consisted of 24 courses, which were offered in multi-modal format, i.e. all course offers included different modes of delivery at all campuses. In full-time study, students completed the degree in three years, or two years through an accelerated pathway, by undertaking a course of study over three semesters per year in the two-year period. Most distance students studied part-time and, on this mode of enrolment, it could take up to six years to complete the degree. During this time, students were exposed to varied educational delivery approaches and learning and teaching methods (see Sections 6.3.3 and 6.3.4.)

The evidence suggested that the curriculum as lived focused in organising the essential elements that students should know and be able to do successfully at the end of their learning experiences. The Bachelor of Nursing curriculum presented a logically ordered process of academic and professional socialisation over a three-year period of full time study, the components of which showed varying degrees of vertical and horizontal integration that enabled consolidated, wide-ranging experiences in the final year.

Year one: *Knowing*

The developmental focus in first year was learning the theoretical and practical knowledge, and developing the language of nursing. Evidence suggests that, in the first two semesters, students undertook coursework on the foundational knowledge of nursing, complemented by simulated laboratory work, as well as clinical practice in second semester. The coursework included domains such as nursing, biological and physical sciences and social science. In first year classrooms and laboratory classes observed, the teacher-participants employed a range of learner-centred activities, such as innovative educational games, problem-based learning, and group-based collaborative work during tutorials, as well as case studies and scenarios with practical application in laboratory work. Distance students had the opportunity to undertake laboratory work during intensive Residential Schools, complemented by online tutorial activities and “Online Labs”, consisted of clinical videos. These

activities were designed to prepare students in their first clinical placement in aged care facilities. From the University's perspective, both cohorts of students were afforded optimal experiential learning opportunities. However, as adult learners, students must take ownership of these opportunities. For many student-participants this posed a challenge initially, particularly for distance students who were often working on coursework independently. In contrast, the students studying on campus had their peers and teachers with whom to consult during face-to-face contact and beyond. While the Program Accreditation Submission advocated that, to achieve course objectives, "students utilise a broad range of technologies", and for students to "engage in a variety of approaches to learning", it took some time for a number of student-participants to transition to tertiary study. Some students needed more than technological intervention, they needed academic and learning support from the Learning Centre, which most of them pursued. As a whole, the curriculum intent and the support mechanisms in place during the first year of study, including a peer-assisted learning program (see Appendix 8), have shown to build the students' capacity for more independent learning as they progressed in the program, and towards autonomous lifelong learning of their professional career, as evidenced:

FG6-OC-S-Year3 Yeah, and the other thing is that they're encouraging lifelong learning. Because you need to know how to research yourself, you can't be given stuff all the time. You go back and reflect and look at the literature and get an idea of the kind of approach to a particular problem and you do need to be able to do that, it's vital!"

Year two: Doing and acting

The developmental focus in year two was honing practical knowledge and skills that incrementally consolidated the development of professional knowledge, skills and attributes. The student-participants verified that, for semesters three and four, they were increasingly exposed to nursing knowledge and practical experience, and different levels of complexity involving community and clinical settings. The Program Accreditation Submission explained that the 'Burdens of Disease' perspective for case study work was utilised in course such as Pharmacology and Mental Health, which a student-participant explained, it was about "educating us on the impacts of illness and

diseases in society”. Moreover, the Models of Care and Indigenous Health courses addressed a range of health care settings and communities. The student-participants confirmed that, the first eight courses included a four-week practicum in acute care settings where they experienced the “real stuff”, *doing and acting* like a professional nurse. Some student-participants had aspired for clinical placements at metropolitan hospitals. Other students elected to complete their practicum in rural and remote hospital settings where they experienced “nursing in acute care involving long term and emergency patients”. Some student-participants indicated that the opportunities to consolidate the development of interpersonal, professional and psychomotor skills were manifested during clinical placements, where they could see and feel the complex nature of nursing practice – “when things are real” and “working with real nurses and doctors” as opposed to the “dummies in the labs that could not interact”. The second year learning journey also included two intensive laboratory courses designed to build the students’ skill base for clinical practice. While the student-participants preferred authentic learning contexts rather than simulated, they recognised that the simulated learning experiences in laboratory classes augmented the development of their “confidence and competence”, as they prepared for the increasingly complex and autonomous clinical work settings in their final year of study. They alluded to the laboratory as a “safe environment”, that “it’s OK to make mistakes” – “if you make a mistake or an error on a plastic patient, then that's not going to hurt anyone” – but it could be “fatal in real life”. The student-participants also appreciated processes of engagement in reflective practice and what these mean in their professional career, for example:

FG6-OC-S-Year2 I like the reflective learning process as well, so that if you don't do something right, you're not caught up on it, you're not hung up on the fact that you didn't get it right. You think about it and you make sure that next time you do it you'll do it the right way. So you're not hung up on the fact that you're going to make a mistake. You are taught what to do to fix it, and that's something I have learnt.

Year three: *Being and becoming*

The developmental focus of the final year was on transitioning into professional practice, where students progressively experienced *being* a clinician through different levels of immersion in various clinical settings, gradually *becoming* a professional nurse as confidence and competence further developed. As outlined in the Program Accreditation Submission and, certainly, as reported by student-participants, for the final two semesters, semesters five and six, the emphasis was on intensive coursework and clinical immersion. Such rigorous engagement involved a range of theoretical and practical courses, the aim of which was to consolidate the preparation of student to be a professional nurse. As was reflected in the Program Accreditation Submission, the student-participants likewise indicated that the acquisition of knowledge and skills in leadership, research, critical application of legal and ethical constructs as well as hands-on experience in a variety of clinical settings was central to their academic and professional learning in the final year. Given the intensive clinical placement, all final year students were enrolled as distance students, i.e. no longer attending classes on campus. The student-participants reported that, in addition to online study, they had to attend Residential Schools, which enabled them to engage in simulated learning activities in the laboratory to complement a range of intensive clinical experiences during placement. By this time, the students were fully immersed in both their study and work duties at clinical placements. Some student-participants noted that it seemed unachievable when they had complex coursework to complete and having to “go to work” at the same time. Some students associated their successful coursework completion with the fact that they can see the “connection” between the “theory they were learning” and “what was happening in clinical settings”, for example legal and ethical implications directly experienced at work, or drawing on evidence-based practice discussed with a Registered Nurse, or sense of independence and duty of care, as well as scope of practice – a student-participant neatly summarised: “The theory will mesh with the reality”.

During this time, the pedagogical encounter (please see Section 6.3.3) included consolidating the development of graduate attributes and professional competencies (please also see Section 6.3), which was evident in the types of activities in which students engaged, encompassed in both content and processes of learning, including assessment tasks. As the students approached the end of their learning journey, they

sensed the transformation from being a student to *being a professional nurse* – the sense of self-efficacy and agency embodying independence and interdependence, and the sense of *belonging* in a community of professional nurses. As evidenced in the following example:

1-OC-S-Cody Well, I was educated. I was given all of the foundation that I believed that I needed to leave the university area. But then I had to go and learn on site, I had to get out and I had to get exposed to the real world, and become a part of that network and learn on the spot. [And] if I didn't have the answer I would go and look for it in the books, if I don't find it in the books or online or in my policies and protocols, at the facility that I'm working at, then I ask peers.

6.3.1.1.3 Alignment | Vertical and horizontal integration

To continue the building block analogy that illuminated the critical features of the curriculum, it was evident that the curriculum design established the soundness of the laying of the foundation and the alignment of essential components. At times the curriculum *as designed* may not be in parity with the curriculum *as lived*, given the enactment of the curriculum is often influenced by varied interpretations, personal preferences and agenda, and contextual situations. Variations occur as activities unfold but an aligned curriculum mitigates any destabilising disconnections between critical curriculum elements (Biggs & Tang, 2011). This was a case in point in the Bachelor of Nursing program whereby the integrity of the curriculum alignment across the program was maintained, despite varying teaching approaches used by Course Examiners and the Teaching Teams, as they were guided by the agreed course learning objectives, which were linked to program outcomes. To work properly, all curriculum components were necessarily aligned to each other (cf. Biggs & Tang, 2011). Such alignment did not go unnoticed with the student-participants as they reflected on their learning experiences in a course and aspects of horizontal alignment:

FG3-OC-S-Iman ... he will go through our case studies in our labs, he'll talk about some interventions, nursing care, make us think about what we would do for this patient, and then in the labs we're putting the

actual clinical skills into practice. So, in [tutorial] class he was talking about a patient that has a compromised ability to swallow. So in our labs, we learnt the processes involved in dealing with that.

Nona So, you learn about it in class then you get to practice?

FG3-OC-S-Iman Yep. And you get to do whatever we're taught in tute class. Then we're taught it in lab class as a clinical skill on our patients.

Nona Have you experienced that in the clinical prac yet?

FG3-OC-S-Iman I haven't had to, but some of the other things we did in our labs I did experience, like your wound dressings and things like that. He showed us all different dressing in class. We practiced some of them in class, like wound packing and things, and then once we went out on clinical, I got to actually practice the skills on real people. So, it's really good.

The degree to which the activities are aligned will determine to a considerable extent the influence of the curriculum to achieve desired outcome. The student-participants certainly saw the connection between what they were learning and the relevance of this learning to professional practice. This was achieved through a clearly articulated set of learning objectives that guided optimal vertical integration in facilitating learning experiences throughout the continuum of the students' stages of professional preparation. Such vertical integration, which was coordinated, purposeful, planned system of linkages and activities across the program, symbolised the essence of the quality of the student learning experience in many classes observed, and as evidenced in focus group and interview data, for example:

FG4-OC-S-Ali And on paper they wouldn't seem like they fit together at all...
Yeah, the subjects we do on paper, when you look at them, they seem completely different subjects, like they wouldn't go together at all. Then when you go into class, like, 1120 connects up to 1140, 1140 connects up to 1099. And then what you've learnt in NSC you

can kind of understand in what you've learnt in those other three subjects, and how the care and the treatment of those diseases is given to the patient, it all links up...

I1-OC-S-Alex ...when I think back I can already see a reasonable amount of linking between each subject, and they're making some lectures links to material that we're going to be learning next semester, so we learn our bases, and then next semester we'll be going on to do things. And they give us a little bit of a look at that now so we can understand how we get into that process. So, the linking is there, there are definite threads running through.

In sum, the lived curriculum demonstrated processes of professional socialisation into the workforce and was augmented by the self-actualising nature of the curriculum intent. It was evident that the focus was primarily on the student as a developing nurse and building capacity in their role as a healthcare leader and patient advocate, and ways of enabling future nurses to engage with their patients collaboratively and holistically. This espoused curriculum intent was invaluable in shaping the student learning experience. This finding lends support to Billet's (2010) assertion regarding the importance of making explicit what is to be learned. "Without understanding what is to be learned, it is difficult to know what kind of experience should be provided for students to help them learn the kinds of knowledge that they need to engage in for effective occupational practice" (Billet, 2010, p. 98). Such understanding of curriculum intent is critical and, as this chapter evolves and the evidence unfolds, it will show that, the lived curriculum, together with the other three elements that embodied an institutional culture identified in this research — agents of socialisation, pedagogical encounters and learning spaces — interacted and influenced one another in professional education. All four elements were at the forefront of the University's approach in preparing students for professional practice, and showed to have significantly influenced the lived experiences of students in their educational pursuit.

6.3.1.2 Agents of socialisation – engaging the future practitioners

The lived relation or the relationality dimension (van Manen, 1997) of the participants lived experiences in professional practice preparation transpired in many

social settings associated with the Bachelor of Nursing program and the academic and professional communities as a whole. The focus on relationality meant seeking in the data a sense of lived relation between the actors within the context of preparing for professional practice. Relationality already pervades the considerations of temporality, spatiality and corporeality, where all the educational scenarios involved, in some way, lived relations with others. Indeed the agents of socialisation interacted and built relationships with students following university culture.

Overseen by the Head of Department, the management and coordination of the Bachelor of Nursing program were facilitated within the Department of Nursing and Midwifery. The program was led by the Program Coordinator, and assisted by key roles of critical importance to supporting the students in their learning journey, as illustrated in Figure 6.3.

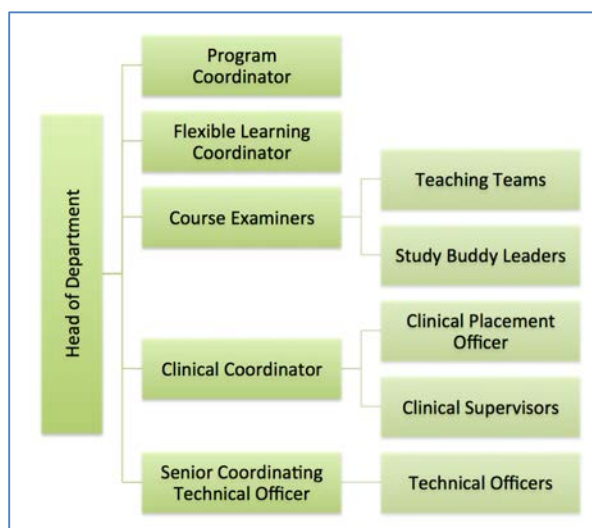


Figure 6.3 Bachelor of Nursing program management and support structure

To meet the students' learning and development needs, support from other key organisational units across the University was also in place, which most student-participants accessed for orientation and advising for developmental purposes. A number of student-participants also availed themselves to support services in areas such as health, counseling, welfare and pastoral care, as well as career development.

Some student-participants sought academic support to develop learning skills, communication skills, computer skills, mathematics skills, assignment skills, exam

skills and information literacy. A number of student-participants participated in the student peer-assisted learning programs either as a leader/mentor (these were senior students) or as participants. The student-participants' engagement in these co-curricular activities is discussed in detail in Chapter 7.

6.3.1.2.1 Student socialisation to university study

The evidence showed that in these social contexts, the experience of others exemplified conversational or interpersonal relations, and embodied the socialisation processes in academic and professional communities. Within the organisational structures illustrated in Figure 6.3, the evidence suggested that the staff members and student leaders were primary agents of socialisation, with whom student-participants interacted as they traversed through the Bachelor of Nursing program. The lived curriculum “brokered” much of the interaction between the student-participants and agents of socialisation. It was evident that members of academic, clinical and professional staff, and selected senior students were active participants in the students' learning journey, in their role of enabling and facilitating students' academic and social involvement. For example, although socialised in other educational contexts, students required socialisation into university norms, i.e., in terms of material culture, such as how to use the computer and the virtual learning environment, how to use the library borrowing system, etc., as well as relational culture, such as how to communicate and address the lecturers, how to interact in clinical settings, etc. Thus, guidance formed part of the socialisation process. The dynamic interdependence of social and individual processes were apparent both in educational spaces and administrative areas of the University, and embodied the types of activities involved in socialisation, first on being a university student, and then on becoming a professional, as student-participants reported. For example:

FG6-OC-S-Year3 It was like going back to school, doing homework, doing assignments on the computer... I don't feel like that now, but at the start I did.

I1-DE-S-Jojo Oh, my brain ached for 6 months. I didn't even know how to turn on a computer.

FG6-OC-S-Year3 ...the hardest thing at the very beginning is getting used to the University way of life. And then all of this other stuff falls into place once you get over that hurdle.

The evidence suggested that the course *Building Professional Nursing Attributes*, in conjunction with the Learning Centre, provided much of the students' socialisation to university study in general and the Bachelor of Nursing program in particular. For example, as this course was focused on developing academic skills, as well as communication and math skills, the learning experience equipped students with the fundamental skills needed to successfully complete the theoretical component of their program. Similarly, a number of senior students described their early semesters in the program as relying on support from the Learning Centre staff, for example:

FG6-OC-S-Year3 I left school when I was 15/16, so that was a long time ago... I couldn't give them enough praise! I think every time I've asked them a question, every time I wanted help, someone was there.

6.3.1.2.2 The social nature of student development

As students adapted and grew into their role as nursing students, their sense of accomplishment also grew, which allowed them to engage deeply in processes of learning and development for professional practice. Staff and senior students, as agents of socialisation, created environments and opportunities that engaged students in both intellectual and interpersonal pursuits. In turn, students took part in a variety of joint activities that enabled them to participate in the processes of academic and professional cultural practices, as the narrative below showed:

I2-DE-S-Taylor I'm happy to get involved with things I haven't done... so as long as I've got the support system there. I've got a person there who can guide me through it. I'm happy to get involved, I want to learn new things while I'm in there, get actively involved in things, as long as there's someone there, if I haven't done it before, just to make sure no harm comes to the patient, or I'm doing it with the right technique.

Taylor's narrative echoed the lived experiences of other student-participants whose reliance on support and guidance from socialisation agents, e.g., experienced clinicians, teachers and learning advisors, was evident in their reflections during interviews. Similarly, for the teacher-participants, they reported that it was absolutely vital to stimulate students' interest and provide a supportive motivating context for learning, as the following representative comment indicated:

I1-FT-T-Sophie I'll prompt them, and make them really start that critical decision-making. Um, I may guide them and say 'well, I can give you a scenario in my practice', and I can lead them that way, but I don't always do that, I sometimes will also leave them with a critical thought question, at the end of the class, or if it's online on the forum, and I'll make it very clear that I won't respond into that, and I'll give them a week to think about that before I ask them what's going on, or what do they think, and share experiences again with them. So I like to make them think, but I like to be supportive as well. So if I can see that a class is not getting the concept that is today's topic, I may pull it back a bit until I get them all engaged again.

The students' varied engagements in processes of learning and development are explored further below, which showed that the interactions between the students and various agents of socialisation were influenced by certain pedagogical situations in different learning spaces that students encountered. The pedagogical encounters formed a critical part of their lived experiences in preparing for professional practice.

6.3.1.3 Pedagogical encounters – engaging in pedagogies for the profession

Pedagogy, as illuminated in Chapter 2, is concerned with constructing and nurturing appropriate relationships between the teacher and students, which take into account many relational aspects that play a crucial role in interactions during the learning and teaching process. In short, pedagogy is about engagement in learning between student-teacher, student-student and teacher-student. To engage students with learning and teaching (pedagogical encounter), the evidence suggested that the teacher-

participants had to create supportive and respectful learning environments that promoted active learning while recognising the diversity of student cohorts, for example:

I-FT-T-Perry ... small group activities do it best, rather than the old didactic style of learning, and getting them [students] to mix around, and sort of saying to them right up front that you might be going to do small group work for the next 3 weeks with this group of people, and getting them to do some communicating, and looking at facilitating in the group. You realise very quickly that if they've got someone who speaks with an accent, they may not want that student to do an oral presentation as part of the group presentation, because they think that we won't get a good mark if it's worth assessment. So I say to them 'everybody has to participate, everybody has to speak... What I'm looking for is that you've included everybody, and everybody has contributed, and everybody has been allowed to contribute'.

Such lived experience of teaching into the Bachelor of Nursing program was akin to a blueprint for pedagogical encounters in formal learning spaces, with the exception of lecture classes, in that the classroom culture (both physical and virtual) embodied an interactive and inclusive environment for learning – this is discussed in detail in Sub-section 6.3.1.4.

Pedagogical focus

It was evident that the focus for most teacher-participants during pedagogical encounters was to promote and build a community of learners by establishing ways of communicating and interacting, such as employing “case-based small group activities”, “group presentation”, “problem-based learning activities”, and “games-based activities”, among others. This dialogic approach to learning and teaching meant a shared inquiry that allowed students to discover and define their own thinking, and stimulated and extended thinking processes which, in turn, advanced students' learning and understanding (cf. Churchill, et al., 2011). Indeed, both spoken and observed data lend support to the findings that the focus of pedagogical encounters exemplified in the Bachelor of Nursing program was participative in nature and situated in authentic

professional contexts, as demonstrated in different learning spaces investigated (See Sub-section 6.3.1.4).

Pedagogical relations

I explored the relations between the educational space and student-teacher, student-student and teacher-student interactions, and investigated the pedagogical encounters within various learning spaces at ESU. From the research data, the inherent dynamic connections between pedagogy and learning spaces were evident, whereby the teacher-participants created social environments that supported students intellectually and emotionally. In examining various learning spaces and concomitant pedagogical encounters, the results highlighted that the cultural practices and norms in educational space were an ongoing process of co-construction of meaning, manifested in various pedagogical situations, and shaped by the characteristics of the learning spaces.

Pedagogical affordance of space

The study found that the affordance of space shaped learning and teaching behaviours and influenced the educational activities therein. Affordance is understood in this research as that explained in Merriam-Webster dictionary, *viz*, “the qualities or properties of an object that define its possible uses or make clear how it can or should be used”. Moments of pedagogical encounters in different learning spaces showed evidence of the development of ways of *knowing, doing and acting* and of processes of *being and becoming*, and indeed of identity awareness, and of transformation, as students engaged in learning activities and interacted with agents of socialisation across communities. Subsequently, an understanding developed that learning and development for professional practice was a collective and individual transformation, which evolved throughout the students’ learning journey. From a phenomenological point of view, lived space is understood in this research as the experience of being-in-the-world, in which the fundamental way spatial realities are experienced, communicates the basic dynamic of culture (cf. van Manen, 1997).

It was clear that the learning spaces and pedagogical encounters were inherently connected, as the evidence demonstrated consistently. As such, it is essential that the interconnected findings for these two elements be discussed in parallel with one another, rather than in tandem. Thus, although Sub-section 6.3.1.4 contains the

heading “Learning spaces”, the analysis necessarily incorporates pedagogical encounters as the research participants experienced them in specific learning spaces.

6.3.1.4 Learning spaces – contextualising the spatial dimension of professional practice preparation

In this research, the spatial dimension (van Manen, 2014) refers to the context of education as the totality of what meets an educator, or an educational system when a student enters. Thus, the spatial dimension relates to a setting and this term signifies surroundings, the location, the vicinity or the milieu within which the students and agents of socialisation interact. The educational settings were identified in this research as learning spaces, which involved formal learning spaces (planned curricular activities); and informal learning spaces (co-curricular and extra-curricular activities). These classifications captured and described the types of learning activities and experiences therein, and provided a thematic picture of the dimensions of place and space and their role in influencing pedagogical encounters and consequent relevance to the shaping of students’ development for professional practice.

Pedagogical encounters in learning spaces on-campus

The learning spaces on-campus constituted both the formal and informal learning spaces. These are discussed in succession to showcase their respective characteristics. The formal learning spaces are first discussed, such as lecture theatres [1], tutorial rooms [2] and laboratories [3], which can be described as the traditional built environment in higher education context, as shown in Figure 6.4.

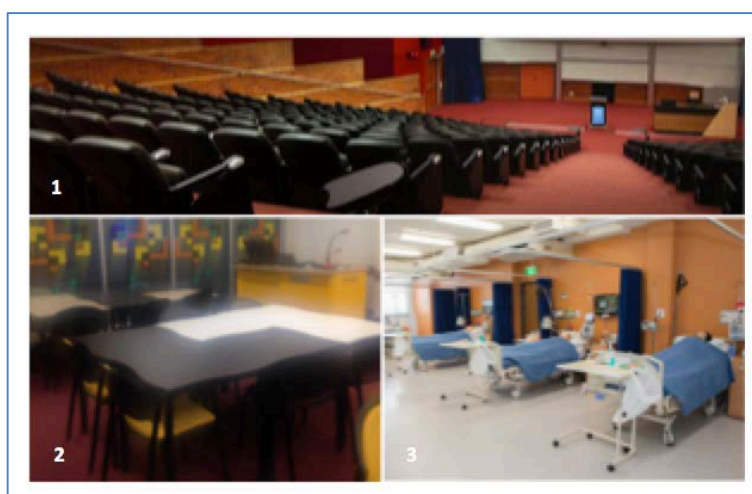


Figure 6.4 Examples of formal learning spaces on-campus

Formal learning spaces on campus | The formal learning spaces on campus conveyed the kinds of activities they supported as well as constrained. The characteristics of these learning spaces provided some indications about the types of behaviours that were expected, and the types of learning and teaching activities that were encouraged, as the evidence showed. For example, the lecture theatre (see Figure 6.4[1]) with its fixed seats in rows projected a didactic approach to instruction; it conjured up a vision of the teacher up front engaged in a monologue, while the presentation materials were displayed progressively in the background. In contrast, the configuration of tutorial rooms (see Figure 6.4[2]) suggested a number of possibilities for three-way interactions, i.e. teacher-student, student-student and student-teacher. The tutorial rooms were equipped with detachable tables and movable chairs, as well as huddle boards (portable mini whiteboards) and technological equipment, the affordances of which suggested closer interactions and engagements in collaborative learning activities. Likewise, the clinical laboratories (see Figure 6.4[3]) suggested an activity-focused learning environment that emulated the authentic professional work context of the nursing profession. As such, the laboratories were also replete with the equipment, tools and signs usually found in clinical settings.

An important fact about affordances of the environment, according to Gibson (1979), is that “they are in a sense objective, real and physical, unlike values and meanings, which are supposed to be subjective, phenomenal and mental... An affordance points both ways, to the environment and to the observer” (p. 29). These affordances and constraints have had implications to the pedagogical encounters between the teacher-student, student-student and student-teacher’s, as revealed in the research data. Affordances are action possibilities and, an important factor to note here is that the possibilities in a learning space are often latent and therefore independent of the socialisation agents and/or students’ ability to recognise them (cf. Gibson, 1979). The study found that the nature of pedagogical encounters in whatever affordances a learning space presented was dependent upon the capabilities and purposes of the socialisation agents and students, and how they interacted in the space, as evidenced.

Modelling ways of knowing in lecture classes | Following the introduction of hosting lecture presentations online in a pre- or live-recorded format, only a few classes were still held in lecture theatres, as teacher-participants noted, “a lot of our on campus lectures have also become online lectures”. Also worthy to note is that not all courses had a lecture component, even for on-campus students. Distance students viewed the recorded lectures at the time convenient to them, and were also accessible to on-campus students, which the latter equally appreciated, for example:

I1-OC-S-Sam The thing about lectures is that I value the fact that they're online, because I do live a reasonable distance from the Uni.

It was evident that the use of technology not only provided convenience for students in the learning process but also provided a means for students to develop technological fluency and competency. Computer literacy is one of the important trends impacting nursing education as highlighted in Chapter 2, as regards preparing students for technology-rich environments that await nursing students in healthcare workplaces. Throughout this thesis, technology has shown to be connected in almost all the themes that embodied the student learning experience.

Technologies were certainly present in pedagogical encounters during the lecture itself, often in the form of PowerPoint presentations. The evidence suggested that the lecture mode of educational delivery was designed for teachers to model ways of *knowing*, and to set the course of study by unpacking key concepts for tutorial, laboratory and self-directed learning activities that lie ahead. Evidence showed that lecture approaches varied, depending on curricular and pedagogical requirements:

I1-FT-T-Lee However, this week I hadn't used the lecture to guide the tutorial. I used the lecture to cover one topic, and then we're using that to build onto a new topic in the tutorial, so even though there's a relationship between the first lecture and the tutorial, they're not one in the same, and they're building on a new state with the tutorial, so we're using it as a new strategy to understand some more information.

For online lecture delivery, the approach also varied, again based on the teacher's curricular and pedagogical intent, as evidenced:

I1-FT-T-Sophie I don't have a didactic lecture. I will give some theory, and I will be didactic to a point. And now that our lectures are all online, I will do short, very short snippets of maybe 5 to maybe 10 slides at a maximum, but then I'll do a case study, and I'll put some questions up, and that will be the next thing. And the next round of slides will not come up for a few days after that goes up, so students have a chance to go in, follow a case study through and work out what they're going to do... and then we'd do another 20 minutes of a lecture followed by another scenario at the other end. Those scenarios would be my two leaders into how I ran the tutorial.

With the large number of students attending live lecture classes, the level of interaction was dependent entirely upon the teaching approach of the lecturer and, in this learning space, the delivery of information was the main focus of the educational activity. A particular distinction that most student-participants highlighted, and certainly appreciated in their experiences of lectures, was the style of teaching and the teacher's ability to make complex concepts accessible, which almost always guaranteed that they would grasp the content the "good teachers" were teaching, and that they would struggle understanding concepts in lectures from "monotonous" teachers, who were mostly "reading the PowerPoint slides" and/or "the textbook".

FG1-OC-S-Nat ... in this particular two-hour lecture at 8 o'clock on a Monday morning, we were very engaged with some of the lecturers who were passionate about what they were talking about. You could picture the system in front of you as they were talking. Yes, it was on the big screen but you could see how it works. Then the other lecturers would give us the notes and our piece of paper and what we have to do is read this, go home and join the dots - very monotone way of delivering it as well.

There is certainly much to learn from the students' views of learning and from their experiences of teaching in particular learning spaces. What is evident at this point is that most student-participants appeared to put a significant value on the pedagogies employed in different learning spaces. The evidence suggested that the student-participants had certain expectations of the style of teaching in particular learning spaces, in accordance with their tacit understanding of what these spaces afford and the teacher's role in this context, for example:

FG5-OC-S-Leila ...I feel the other teachers aren't like that... She had the experience, but uh, she didn't know how to teach. As a teacher it's her duty to explain everything during lectures, every small thing, because there might be students from different backgrounds, different cultures, different societies and all [who might need this kind of learning support].

Practice field experiences in tutorial classes | Tutorial classes formed part of the educational experience in every course in the Bachelor of Nursing program. It was evident that the purpose of teaching in tutorials at ESU was to facilitate closer interaction between the tutor and students and amongst students, which usually consisted of between 26 to 35 students per class. Such closer interaction was facilitated in practice field settings (please see Chapter 3), aimed to promote dialogic processes that enabled students to gain deep understanding of the subject matter in their discipline. As such, the types of educational activities inherent in practice field settings were situated in authentic professional practice, which provided opportunities for student-participants to engage actively in simulated domain-specific activities that often involved group-based tasks.

From my vantage point, seated as inconspicuous as possible amongst the students during all my fieldwork in on-campus formal learning spaces, it was evident that the types of learning and teaching activities that the teacher-participants facilitated were shaped by the manner the learning environment was configured. Indeed, tutorials were organised differently across different courses in the program, according to the stage of the course and the tutor's teaching style. Two types of tutorial approaches were observed: activity-based tutorials; and mini lecture tutorials.

Tutorials as activity-based group work

If the intent of the teacher-participant, as tutor, were to facilitate group work during tutorials, the tables and chairs would then be re-organised to enable small group interaction. The student-participants studying on-campus certainly identified that activity-based group work was a common aspect of the learning journey, which occurred mostly during tutorials (as well as in laboratory classes), for example:

FG2-OC-S-Hunter It's group-based work. We're given a working problem, a case scenario, usually a patient with some kind of problem that they [tutor] don't really tell you. Then they give you test results, and sometimes further physical examination, and we then split up in our groups and go off and research different little bits, and then we bring it all back the following week and discuss what we've found out about the patient.

As can be deduced from Hunter's narrative, and as distilled from observed data, activity-based group work during tutorials created a setting that mimicked real life contexts of nurses working as a team, the learning tasks for which simulated the way nurses think and perform, as students attended to and/or solved clinical problems from the assigned case scenarios. These tutorial activities encapsulated practice field pedagogical encounters, whereby groups of students independently undertaking authentic nursing tasks, and coming together to collaborate and solve assigned clinical problems, along with related problems that arise, such as difficulties in interpersonal relations. For example, "we all have different backgrounds and age groups, so I think in that sense that's what affected the group work". Some students' difficulties in group activities were felt with much trepidation, particularly when the activity was assessed and given a group mark, "we still got an OK mark but it didn't end very well". Some students on the other hand relished on being part of this type of pedagogical encounter, focused on peer-to-peer dialogue, collaboration and problem-solving, as they recognised the nature of activities in their future work environment, "we're going to be working with people, we need to learn those interpersonal skills".

In some tutorials, a number of teacher-participants allowed self-nomination to group memberships, whereas other teacher-participants specifically assigned group membership, both with pleasing results in terms of the quality of the student experience.

FG2-OC-S-Casey The dynamics of that group work extremely well which is wonderful because we're randomly put into these groups - we were told where to go.

FG2-OC-S-Hunter Yeah, it was self-selected... I'm so surprised, we have 10 people in our group, and everyone participates equally.

One of the rationales expressed by teacher-participants for specifically assigning group membership was to minimise "cultural clumping". Cultural clumping was the term used in the Department to describe the tendency of most international students from various cultural backgrounds to sit together in tutorials. Thus, in some tutorials, the groupings were intentionally made inclusive of "a mix of young, mature aged and international students", whereby students from different cultural backgrounds were combined with domestic students for collaborative work and group-based learning activities. As a teacher-participant explained:

I-FT-T-Penny It's good for the domestic students too, because it gives them a little bit of a broadening of their knowledge base. I guess making them work together, because otherwise they'll clump.

Penny's pedagogical intent was shared by a number of her colleagues in terms of promoting cross-cultural collaboration in tutorials; some student-participants also saw the educational benefits of inclusive groupings, stating with empathy, for example, "it would be intimidating for them as well because they're from a different country". The group work, as a pedagogical encounter, presented some tensions, and appeared to be influenced by personal preferences and ways of learning, individual expectations, and cultural orientation:

FG2-OC-S-Casey They just don't participate in the group level, a lot of the international students.

FG5-OC-S-Mica And you think ‘what am I doing? What is this?’ and then you just sit there without interacting with the group because you don’t have no idea... In my country as well, teachers, they teach you, even in University, they teach you until you graduate, that’s how you learn.

FG5-OC-S-Leila I could find myself the odd one in the group, not because they have excluded me, because they are too confident enough in the field, and I’m not. And in our culture, I think culture also affects that, in our culture we are not exposed to things since we are females, it differs according to culture...

Overall, the student-participants found much value in pedagogical encounters that involved collaborative interactions in group-based authentic tasks. As the evidence suggested, most student-participants related that meaning-making and construction of knowledge were significantly enhanced in conjunction with others, for example: to “have a different idea on something”, “get all their point of views [sic]” and “see different people’s perspectives on things”. This finding lends support to the notion that from a sociocultural perspective, knowledge construction can be seen as an almost entirely social or cultural vantage point (Lave, 1993). Indeed, the social aspect of group work and sense of professionalism, collaboration, independence and interdependence were promoted in tutorials where activity-based approaches were employed. From both spoken and observed data sets, it was evident that the activity-based pedagogical encounters were generated in case-based learning, problem-based learning, scenario-based learning and games-based learning activities that embodied the kind of practice field experiences for student-participants. Practice fields exemplified the three types of mediators: teachers and mentors (human mediator); equipment and learning materials (tools); and bodies of knowledge and skills modelled by experts (symbolic) (cf. Vygotsky, 1978). Indeed the activities in practice fields facilitated in activity-based tutorials enabled students to engage with others and in the authentic practices of the discipline in a sustained manner, utilising the tools of professional practice, as experts guided and modelled the kinds of professional knowledge, practices and dispositions valued in the nursing profession. The

pedagogical encounters in activity-based tutorials were certainly in accord with Dall'Alba's (2009) assertion that an individual does not become a professional in isolation and that the process of becoming a professional involved ongoing engagement with others. Put another way, the tutorials illuminated above, went beyond simply imparting knowledge and skills to aspiring nurses, whereby the relevant knowledge and skills were embodied and enacted in accordance with the social practice of nursing by those with expertise. However, not all tutorials were facilitated in this manner.

Tutorials as mini lectures

If the teacher-participants' style of teaching followed a more didactic approach during tutorials, such an approach likewise shaped the students' learning experience for a particular course. Certainly, there were tutorial classes observed whereby the tutorial time was utilised to deliver mini or semi lectures and to go through textbook questions, mostly with teacher-student interactions, and also some student-teacher interactions as well as student-student interactions albeit minimal. The student-participants concurred with this observation:

I3-OC-S-Riley It was a semi-lecture sort of thing, and so she would present and then we would discuss after having a PowerPoint, and then she'd have a question on the board and we'd discuss it as a whole.

I2-OC-S-Alex Um, they'd go through a PowerPoint presentation sort of thing. My teacher, she did use that, but not a heck of a lot. Often she'd say, 'the PowerPoint is on the [LMS] if you want to use it, but today we're going to do something a little bit different'. So, it was a lot of looking through information. There was a lot of discussion, certain video clips; thinking about how that changes your thinking, looking how you can apply it to a scenario.

In contrast with the presentation delivered during lectures, the mini or semi lectures during tutorials involved a lot more in depth discussions, accompanied by authentic examples from lived experiences of the tutor in clinical settings and, as Alex pointed out, video clips and other media were also used to promote the development

of deeper disciplinary understanding. The evidence suggested that the dialogic approach (Churchill, et al., 2011), noted in the lived experiences reported in lecture classes, was also applied in some tutorials. The difference however was that the observed data presented evidence of a significantly enhanced level of student participation by way of interactions and responsiveness in substantive conversations. For example, one of the mini lecture type tutorial episodes observed included a guest speaker from the local hospital. In this type of tutorial, the pedagogical encounters involved exploration of ideas in ways that stimulated and extended the way that student thinks. It was evident that the students were attentive for the entire two hours, engaged in a classroom discourse where they were enabled to discover and define their own thinking in a thought-provoking learning environment, facilitated by experts whose authentic mental healthcare stories captivated their attention. The dynamics of information within this tutorial environment were of critical interest to students, which provided an avenue to engage in particular ways of *knowing* in mental health nursing.

Learning professional ways of thinking and performing in laboratory classes | The laboratories, particularly the nursing laboratories, were a critical part of the student learning experience in the Bachelor of Nursing program, regardless of the students' mode of study. In the early part of the program, students used two different laboratories – the science laboratories and the nursing laboratories. Nursing laboratories were commonly utilised to help students to develop clinical competence and confidence, through simulated clinical activities. By all accounts, the design of the learning environment in the nursing laboratories replicated the hospital clinical settings, furnished with similar or the same furniture and equipment, where students took part in activities that simulated real-life clinical events. Thus, the pedagogical encounters in this learning space provided opportunities for situated learning, through a variety of hands-on clinical experiences that enabled students to think and perform like a professional nurse under supervision, and to affirm and/or re-affirm the relationship between nursing theory and practice. Almost all students interviewed in this study viewed the laboratory experiences as an important aspect of constructing clinical knowledge and skills. It was evident that the pedagogical encounters in this learning space provided building blocks for developing clinical knowledge and skills that prepared students for clinical placements and future professional practice. Indeed, the

student-participants recognised the relevance of the activities in laboratory classes and what these mean in their professional preparation:

I1-OC-S-Alex We were doing real nursing stuff. We were using tools, and doing procedures, and it felt like, 'yeah, this is what we're going to be doing', but yeah, you do need the background knowledge like we do in biology and all that sort of stuff, but it was fun. It was fun and it felt, it made the degree more real because we could see that this is where we're heading and this is what we're going to be doing, and so it linked that up really well.


Spoken, written and observed data lend support to the findings that the pedagogical encounters in nursing laboratories was focused on building a community of learning practitioners, whereby the students worked in teams as they engaged in authentic nursing practices through case-based learning activities, learning and practising professional ways of thinking and performing as a nurse. An extract of case-based learning activity from the course Learning Management System showed the nature of learning activities in nursing laboratories with which the students engaged:

Focus for your learning

As you can appreciate from the explanation above, understanding the connection of infection control and patient handling is critical. Hence, we will focus your learning and development as a nurse on the following:

- Evidence base for hand hygiene in healthcare settings
- Applying standard precautions for nurse and patient safety
- Physiology of human movement
- Safety and patient handling

As you engage with these concepts and assigned learning tasks this week, think about possible scenarios for the application of these ideas to address a particular clinical situation, as shown below.

 **Case L1**

You are a nursing student commencing practice on a hospital ward. Using the five moments of hand hygiene, you attend to basic nursing care in your team. You are required to help with patient hygiene by making the occupied beds. You then proceed to help position the patients within Patient Handling guidelines.

The following sections unpack these key concepts and their relevance to understanding what it means to practice nursing responsibly.

Figure 6.5 Extract of case-based learning activity in nursing laboratories

These critical learning and development experiences, albeit some aspects of activities were perceived as somewhat “artificial”, for example talking to “unresponsive dummy” patients, formed part of the student learning journey from Semester 1 through

to 6, which provided opportunities to practise applying procedures and follow protocols, as students navigated through what Schon (1987) referred to as ill-defined situations. In these pedagogical encounters, students were working as a team, both autonomously and interdependently. As a community of future professionals, the students engaged in clinical performances that relied on collaboration, critique, and explanations of others, for example in case study interpretations or clinical skills application. As was the approach in activity-based tutorials, the approach in laboratory classes likewise optimised peer learning in group settings, whereby the students were accountable for learning and for teaching, not only to the lecturer but even more important to one another. Moreover, it was evident that teamwork was accorded central importance. This had other developmental opportunities or manifestations, such as learning the processes of communication and interpersonal relations, clinical reasoning and judgment, collaboration, accountability, professionalism and self-reflection, as students worked through their shared learning experiences. Certainly, the student-participants alluded to these aspects of their professional development when describing teamwork experiences, for example:

I2-OC-S-Cam You form a group and you normally have those 4 people for the whole semester, which is good... You work together as a team, and you're basically setting up things like the IV's and the fluids to go in, the insulin infusions and things like that... and that's all good, that's all really good skills.

Individual and group feedback

It was evident that, as students worked in groups, the discourses that embodied the students' engagement in clinical performances during laboratory classes frequently involved clinical interpretations, reasoning and decision-making, and often times touched on ethical considerations, the processes for which required timely feedback. The evidence suggested that feedback from the teacher was perceived by student-participants as an important aspect of learning and development, particularly when feedback was personalised – for example to confirm/challenge clinical thinking and/or performance, or correct misunderstandings/misconceptions or share personal experiences:

FG1-DE-S-Dane She gave us individual feedback, and that was good rather than her just answering the whole group. She came back to each person.

FG6-OC-S-Year2 She'll tell you clinician hints. So little things that you don't even think of that she does in her everyday practice, and you think, 'oh, I'll remember to do that', because it makes sense yeah.

The importance of feedback in the learning process is well documented in the literature. For example, Wiggins (1998) noted that “feedback is at the heart of learning” (p. 302), as timely feedback enhances understanding about learning and approaches to tasks in the future. For Boud (2010), “the process of giving feedback is particularly important for building capacity for further learning” (p. 260). Certainly, the teacher-participants likewise placed significant value in guiding students in the learning process, and giving timely constructive feedback, as evidenced:

I1-CE-T-Morgan I'll stand back and look at them and what they're doing, and then I'll give them feedback and allow them to do the procedure again. Or sometimes I'll give them [feedback] they're doing something wrong then I give them the consequences then and there of, 'if you do this, that's what's going to happen', and then that sticks in their memory of what they shouldn't be doing. I think learning what not to do is good learning as well.

On this note, it is important to mention the issue of feedback technique and its impact to student learning. The evidence from the research data certainly alluded to the importance of timing and approach in giving feedback, for example:

I2-OC-S-Cam The lecturer would come over and put more spanners in the work, you know? So, you hadn't actually confirmed what you'd already learnt, and they were already saying, 'what if this happens?' which is good in some ways but you can't do that when you're very junior

and trying to learn. And that blows your confidence out of the water... it just destroys you in some ways. I know it's a pretty heavy word, but it is. That's what a lot of my peers say because we talk about these things all the time.

In such pedagogical encounters, students experienced uncertainty and anxiety whilst undertaking collaborative activities and individual tasks. The findings revealed that feedback was linked to confidence and self-worth. Churchill and his colleagues (2011) shared this observation, and suggested that “it is more important to ensure that students are provided with accurate and realistic feedback... and help them understand what they can and cannot do and assist them in acquiring the expertise needed to learn” (p. 124). Similarly, Biggs & Tang (2011) advised to devote significant energy to helping students on recognising not only where they have gone wrong, but also an even greater focus on understanding what they need to do to improve.

Clinical skills assessment

Uncertainties and feelings of anxiety were particularly evident during Clinical Skills Assessment (CSA). This assessment approach was adapted from OSCE, short for Objective Structured Clinical Examination, which is defined as “an approach to the assessment of clinical competence in which the components of competence are assessed in a well planned or structured way with attention being paid to objectivity” (Harden 1988, p. 19), or as an assessment of well-defined clinical skills (Ward & Willis 2006).

The CSA formed part of the students' curricular activities every semester, for courses with laboratory component. Many students, more so first year students, described the CSA experience as provoking intense anxiety, for example:

I1-OC-S-Alex I must say the only time I felt uncomfortable was when I was doing my Clinical Skills Assessment, because that's performance anxiety...

While most student-participants reported that the CSA was “quite confronting” and “a bit nerve racking”, they also recognised that the CSA also improved their clinical proficiency and coping mechanism, as practice and feedback evolved overtime. Indeed, Fidment (2012) suggested that anxiety could be a positive influence to learning as the experience equips students with useful coping mechanisms to manage stressful situations in clinical settings.

While not directly referred to by teacher-participants, it was observed that the approaches in CSA exemplified *assessment for learning* in that it focused on “the process of seeking and interpreting evidence for use by learners and their teachers to decide where the learners are at in their learning, where they need to go and how best to get there” (Assessment Reform Group, 2002, p. 2). In the laboratory classes observed, the CSA process demonstrated assessment for learning principles, such that assessment was part of effective planning, focuses on how students learn, was central to classroom practice, was a key professional skills, had an emotional impact, affected learner motivation, promoted commitment to learning goals and assessment criteria, helped learners know how to improve, encouraged self-assessment, and recognised all achievements (Assessment Reform Group, 2002).

Moreover, another significant aspect of the CSA process observed was the interaction between the student and assessor at the end of the formal assessment process, whereby the student was asked what the student did well and not so well. Hence, reflection and self-assessment formed part of the CSA experience, upon which the assessor provided feedback on all aspects of the student’s clinical performance. It was evident that this approach to assessment was highly developmental, not only pertaining to the development of professional competence but also concerning intellectual dimensions, such as clinical judgment and reasoning. Moreover, it concerned the demonstration of professional behaviours in a simulated environment, with opportunities to receive feedback at the end. It was evident that feedback was at the heart of the CSA process, which helped students understand what is good about their clinical performance and how they can build on it and develop further. Indeed, the CSA approach exemplified the assumptions underpinning Boud’s (2010) notion of *assessment futures*, viz:

- contribute positively to student learning

- take a view of what is to be learned and how it is to be learned beyond the time scale of the current course unit
- develop students' ability to make judgments about what constitutes good work
- position students as active learners
- engage students in the process of seeing themselves as people who will contribute to practice, whatever that practice might be. (p. 255)

Challenges in laboratory classes

A number of student-participants reported some challenges in their laboratory classes, such as the 16:1 student-teacher ratio was perceived as problematic because “not enough time to interact with the lecturer”, “limited feedback”, and “minimal practice time”. Some student-participants, particularly the distance cohort, noted that “lab is very rushed... if there's four of us at one patient, and we're all wanting to experience that same thing”. Indeed, the student-participants and teacher-participants alike noted that for a practice-oriented discipline, like nursing, time to hone the skills in authentic contexts was critical, for example:

I1-FT-T-Lee So learning theoretically in a controlled laboratory doesn't connect with a lot of the students, because it's not until you've experienced that patient with real wheezes, real crackles, respiratory depression where you can hear it and see it for yourself that you make the connection, and then your clinical reasoning starts to develop, because the next time you see that patient, you go 'oh yeah, seen that before, I know what that is'. Instant connection, you know what I'm saying? Whereas in our controlled laboratory environment it's harder to make that connection for them...

It is worth noting that the situation of needing to provide wide ranging real-world learning opportunities (see reflective journal entry 14.5.14) and for extended periods is a perennial concern across the sector, e.g., limited places in hospitals and other healthcare facilities (Heath, 2002).

Journal entry — 14.5.14

Post lab observation, I have been thinking about the student-teacher ratio of 16:1 or groups of 4 students to 1 teacher. The possibility for them to be missed doing a skill before leaving University is there. If they miss it in the lab, and then some students actually only get one hospital placement, then there's the opportunity for them to never do something before they're a new graduate. This brings me to think about John Biggs and his push to "flush out" the surface learners. The teacher I just observed said that if they're only trying to get through, then they could get through without doing something or doing something about their missed opportunity. On the other hand, some students did say they have to be assertive and say, 'I haven't done this, I need someone to watch me'. It appears that it is not just a case to "flush out" but also "flesh out" to give the learning experience more substance, more sense of completeness. There are of course implications for this which as most academics would say, it has "workload implications". Nonetheless, it is worth considering as it warrants further discussion.

Pedagogical encounters in virtual learning spaces

Online learning was an important aspect of the learning experience within the Bachelor of Nursing program at ESU, not only for the distance cohort but also for on-campus cohort. The evidence showed that all courses in this program had an online component, presented in the University Learning Management System (LMS). Each online course delivered on LMS was designed to host the course learning resources, communication tools, online learning tasks and assessment activities, such as quizzes. For distance students, the LMS was their main learning space, where coursework was facilitated online in conjunction with compulsory Residential Schools. On campus students were also expected to access the same learning resources and assessment activities online. Thus, for both cohorts of students, the courses were delivered in a blended learning format, which allowed for both in-person and online interaction.

Affordances of, and challenges, in the virtual learning space

The perspective of student-participants studying on-campus was that the virtual learning space provided additional incentives to engage in coursework, such as opportunities to "review recorded lectures", "work on case studies before labs" and

“get feedback on coursework progress”, for example through “online quizzes”. Likewise, most student-participants studying by distance mode appreciated the learning opportunities afforded to them and the guidance, support and feedback received from the teachers and peers. The use of technological tools that promoted social interaction and augmented meaningful learning activities online was at the forefront of students’ awareness of pedagogical encounters in online learning, as the evidence below illustrated:

- FG2-DE-Rory So they'll give you activities on that weeks reading. So basically you have to read something, it'll be a case study, and so basically they've got 5 questions about it, you post it online, your peers might make a comment [on the forum], and they check it on Friday... Yeah. So you have to have it in by Thursday on the forum, and then they check it and give you feedback, yep where you went right and what you suggested...
- FG1-DE-S-Leyal ...it's an interactive Blackboard [Collaborate] where you get on to talk to other students and you do team work type stuff. Yeah, it's live. That's a good concept.
- FG1-DE-S-Dane When we get on there, Blackboard, and you get to speak to other students. Because you realise that everybody else is in the same boat, it's good to know.

The findings also revealed that while the virtual learning space presented opportunities, it also posed some challenges. Evidence showed that a number of on-campus students experienced some difficulties on the virtual learning space (e.g., navigation, locating information, etc.) and, similarly, a good number of distance students also noted some challenges with what they perceived as “problems with online learning”, or being a “flex student”. “Flex” refers to the flexible learning delivery mode for distance students, which was the term the Department used earlier.

Focus group participants from the distance cohort commented, that the challenges concerned more than just difficulties with online learning or technological

issues in that, they struggled as a whole with the transition process to university study, particularly for those who had not studied in a while, for example:

FG3-DE-S-Shae Because this was my first time at Uni and I haven't studied in 8 years, so I found it really overwhelming. And I did not know where to start.

FG1-DE-S-Dane Yeah, because I think I find the academic side of it very hard because I've never had to do that before, because I'm a lot older.

Some student-participants studying by distance education reported that they needed support not only on technical matters of navigating the virtual learning space, but also support in academic writing skills, information literacy, numeracy and time management, among others. The student-participants' engagement in these co-curricular activities is discussed in Section 6.4.

While the virtual learning space, and technologies for that matter, presented some challenges specially for distance students, overtime the student-participants recognised its positive contributions to their preparation for professional practice particularly as regards building relationships, for example:

FG4-DE-S-Len I found those online classes extremely valuable... it's not only establishing your education, it's also establishing bonds with your lecturer and fellow students.

Relational and social interaction in online learning

As an online learning community, the LMS provided spaces and tools that allowed online inhabitants to build relationships, between teacher-student, student-student and student-teacher. The evidence showed that the typical pedagogical encounters within the virtual learning space for most student cohorts were mostly focused on relational aspects, which included threaded discussions through "Moodle Forums", small group interactions through "Moodle Group Spaces", and teacher-led synchronous videoconferencing through "Blackboard Collaborate" or "Wimba", among

others. Here, the teacher's pedagogical intent was critical. The evidence showed that for the majority of teacher-participants, their experiences when teaching online characterised the role of an enabler and guide, as they promoted active learning situated in authentic professional contexts, and supported students while building relationships, for example:

I1-FT-T-Jordan I drive learning through doing activities in that [online] environment, and having the ability to provide some sense of relationship with them via pre recorded videos, or communication in small forums... Yeah. So classically um, in the program that we ran last semester, it was based around rural patient. You know, 61 year old male presents with these, presents to the department, that's the problem, and from that you ask them to you know, read some real notes, read a patient chart, do a history, communicate to the patient, do a hand over to a colleague. So it's all based around a problem, the learning outcomes are pretty clear. What we want them to do. But we then provide a debrief at the end of what they should have done... So I try and maintain a relationship, whether it might be pre recorded me talking to them about something, but try and make the learning based around real case studies, real examples.

Indeed, from the point of view of student-participants, particularly those studying at a distance, the importance of teacher presence in online learning cannot be underestimated. Equally important, in their view, was promoting social interaction and situating learning in authentic contexts, through the use of case studies and real stories from the teachers' personal experiences, for example:

FG1-DE-S-Zane And also just stories that they share with us, because we're only external [distance students], we only see them at residential schools. So just the stories that the teachers will share with us online, trying to reiterate a point. They tie their story or their case study in with what you're learning about, and they sort of

reinforce the fact of what you need to focus on, because of this, this and this...

FG3-DE-S-Darryl They're sharing their life experiences with their patients... And that actually gives you a more of a relationship to the holistic care... Yeah, because they are real.

These pedagogical encounters within the online context promoted a sharing, dialogic approach to the construction, reconstruction and generation of knowledge. In such pedagogical encounters, the learning that occurred as the result of learning interactions was useful, having created a sense of community that amplified understanding of self and others, and increased awareness of personal and collective transformation (cf. Bandura, 2009). Certainly, from observed data, the multi-disciplinary interactions and exchanges suggested aspects of the learning experiences that were heavily impacted by scaffolded activities amongst the communities of learners, guiding and assisting one another to interrogate existing ideas, apply understanding to clinical practice and carry-out clinical decision-making processes. These activities (e.g., enacting clinical scenarios involving actor-patients and working with a multi-disciplinary health care team) enhanced capacity to develop new understandings that in turn developed future professional practice that reifies a sense of professional identity. It was evident that, for participating students, their perspective transformation (please see Section 7.4.3.1) embodied the lived experience promoted the process of *being* and *becoming* a professional nurse.

From autonomous to interdependent learning

From observed data, it was evident that autonomous learning associated with online tutorials formed part of pedagogical encounters in virtual learning space. Self-directed engagement in web-based learning resources was a typical learning activity online. Such resources comprised virtual clinical simulations, case-based activities on “Moodle Books” and scenario-based tasks, e.g., on “Moodle Lessons”, as well as online quizzes for formative and summative assessment. It was also evident that students frequently experienced group-based collaborative learning activities online, particularly distance students, some of the activities for which may be assessed and thus contributed towards the final grade.

Most distance student-participants viewed the convergence of autonomy and interdependence as a critical feature of online learning, whereby they worked on their own whilst at the same time they recognised the value of learning from and with others, as the narrative below exemplified:

FG1-DE-S-Bri ...all the information you need is online, and if you're not sure about anything, you just fly off an email. And you have all your peers that you can gain the knowledge from as well, to help you understand things because they might see things differently.

FG4-DE-S-Joey It was really good to see different points of view, because you might be focusing directly on one issue, when really there's ten different issues that develop, so it does really enhance your learning.

The finding showed that participation in collaborative learning activities and student-student interaction fostered the development of relationships amongst peers in different learning groups, i.e. small group and large group (whole class) interactions. As evidenced, such interactions offered multiple perspectives and diverse experiences, as well as access to a wide range of support and complementary resources. Certainly, within a formal online learning activity setting, some student-participants described learning experiences that reflected interdependence with one another, as evidenced:

I1-DE-S-Taylor There was a discussion, everyone gets a theme, and then you go and find out a part of it... Yeah. And then you all work together as a group with all the different parts of a disease. I thought that was good, rather than just read the chapters.

FG4-DE-S-Lola We were given a scenario in groups where one person was the leader, one person was the scribe, and everyone else was organised. So we got our group organised and we had to break down the scenario, and look at possible complications, and then allocate the possible problems to each member in there and then everyone chose theirs, went away and did the research, came back and presented it

[online]. One of our members got kicked out because the instructor came in, and then he had his speaker, which had the background noise, and then we couldn't upload our visual aspects, the PowerPoint weren't able to upload...

Meaningful engagement and active learning

By the final year of enrolment in the program, all final year students studied in multimodal format and, in their case, it was the mix of online learning + laboratory classes during Residential School (n = 40 hours) (see Sub-section 6.3.4 and Table 6.3). The type of pedagogical encounter in a multimodal setting for the third year student cohort clearly promoted student-centred pedagogies. The approach placed the ownership of learning firmly on students, and incorporated the development of not only disciplinary knowledge and skills, but also attributes such as critical thinking, time management and prioritising:

FG6-OC-S Year3 Scenario based every week. They put the scenarios up on [LMS], and what I do is go through and make sure I have all my definitions. I make sure I know what diseases are, and then I check the medications, and then I watch the videos. So then when I go into the lab I'm able to physically, hopefully, remember what I watched on the video, and put it all together. Because they're also emphasising prioritising, time management, critical thinking, and working as a team. But at the same time being patient focused. Yeah, I really like it. It's like, 'wow'.

For these students and their teachers, the technology played a critical part in promoting meaningful engagement and active learning. However, while technology did play a part, the key to meaningful learning was ownership of the learning goal (cf. Herrington, Reeves & Oliver, 2010), by presenting students with interesting, relevant and motivating clinical problems to solve in the weekly scenarios. Moreover, consideration of the zone of proximal development (Vygotsky, 1978; Rogoff, 2008) was at play here in that, promoting and enhancing motivation required the assignment of learning tasks within the range of competence for students while offering some

degree of challenge, which was clearly achieved in this pedagogical encounter.

Pedagogical encounters in clinical settings

The interview with Program Coordinators [I-T-Kerry; I-T-Anna] indicated that clinical experiences for undergraduate nursing students were crucial to the education and development of every student as a professional nurse. As noted in Table 6.3, each student was expected to undertake 840 hours of compulsory clinical placement.

The evidence showed that the placements were undertaken at a variety of clinical settings, including but not limited to aged care, mental health, acute care, medical practice, and communities such as domiciliary nursing, among others. Students experienced clinical placement in capital cities, as well as rural and remote areas. Please note that, as previously indicated in Chapter 5, no observation was carried out in clinical settings for this research due to access issues.

However, Lara, one of the teacher-participants, invited me to accompany her while visiting students on clinical placement at a local private hospital. During the visit, I was able to observe Lara and “listen in” on her conversations with ESU nursing students, their Clinical Facilitators, and a number of hospital clinical staff. Here, many “teachable moments” were evident and indeed optimised as experts and novices interacted with each other about clinical scenarios and student experiences. Examples included clarification on clinical procedures, sharing of skills and techniques, therapeutic communication and other dispositional aspects.

Clinical placements provided opportunities for professional practice experiences in authentic or real world settings that complemented classroom and laboratory learning experiences. As the Clinical Coordinator [I-T-Sophie] explained, each clinical learning facility encompassed all that surrounded the student in a clinical setting—the equipment, the health care staff, the patients, the clinical facilitator, and the clinical coach. The latter two were the students’ link to the University whilst on clinical placement, providing support and guidance throughout the clinical learning journey.

Uncertainty as a barrier and conduit to clinical learning

A number of student-participants described some of their clinical experiences as characterised by uncertainty or fear of not remembering what they learned in laboratory classes, and making mistakes or saying or doing the wrong thing. Some reported experiencing feelings of anxiety and apprehension, for example:

I1-OC-S-Jojo Oh scary! You've learnt that, so you go out and do it in the big world. It's just not that easy because you only hear of it or see it, but you don't actually do it.

Feelings of uncertainty was particularly magnified during the first year of study, as reported by student-participants whose level of confidence going into clinical placement was expressed as “bad” or “shocking”, and for some “paralysing”. A number of student-participants also reported being anxious about uncertainties on performance expectations, as the following narrative showed:

FG1-DE-S-Leila So you go onto a ward, and if you need to dress a wound, you can do it, but when you come in the morning, what on earth do I do first? And what happens after that? What is expected of me throughout that shift?

Shulman (2005b) famously stated: “In the presence of uncertainty, one is obligated to learn from experience (p. 19). Indeed, the senior students explained that as they gained more experience in different clinical placements, their knowledge and skill level increased and so was their confidence, for example:

FG6-OC-S-Year3 it's natural to be apprehensive, but you've just got to do it. So, that's [more placements] really given me courage because I feel overwhelmed.

As clinical placements became more concentrated and intense for final year students, and as nursing knowledge and skills that they developed in classrooms were repeatedly applied and tested in professional contexts, the evidence showed that the students' sense of belonging improved overtime. It was also evident that, in the final year (Year 3) whilst students were engaged in intensive clinical placements, the practice-based experiences enriched their capacity to move towards the centre of

professional practice, increasingly able to *think* and *perform* autonomously within their scope of practice, as well as interdependently as part of a multidisciplinary team. Benner et al. (2009) explained that in this professional socialisation process, the students gradually internalised the protocols and procedures of nursing practice and this became part of their identity.

On a related note, the evidence also suggested that well-coordinated clinical placements had prevailing influences in the quality of the students' educational experience in preparation for professional practice, and were crucial in their success. That is to say, the students were prepared well for the rigours and challenges of engaging in professional practice. For example, some student-participants who joined the program in Semester 2 reported encountering difficulties on their first clinical placement, citing perceived knowledge and skill gaps as main factors for the difficulties experienced. This cohort also reported "feeling unprepared" and "lacking confidence", leading up to the first clinical placement, but noted that there was "someone [e.g., experienced nurses] on the floor to give a hand". A student-participant also commented that "you kind of relax a bit once you see how things are done for real" and "you start to understand it".

Once the initial stages of adjustment was overcome, some student-participants noted that, as they undertook successive clinical placements, the apprehension gradually diminished and they gained more confidence in clinical practice, for example:

FG6-OC-S-Year3 Yeah, as [another focus group participant] said, we're all sort of a bit apprehensive, but the skill that you had when you started measured against when you're halfway through, or fully through, is just so much better and that's only because you've been exposed to what you have to do. You do things repetitively, and at the end of it you can do it with your eyes closed. It's just practice makes perfect, and gaining that experience...

Schon's (1987) observation offered insights on the students' predicament, when he explained that it was only when engaged in practice and immersed in the work

routines that much of what has been learned in the classroom began to make sense. The evidence showed that the critical factor here was the support and guidance provided by the Clinical Facilitator and/or other experienced nurses to help students make sense of what was happening, and to socialise them into the practices of the discipline.

In sum, the study found that engaging in authentic professional practice in a sustained manner, as was experienced in continuous clinical placements, evoked transformative experiences as regards *knowing, doing and acting* and *being and becoming* a professional nurse. Learning activities, situated in authentic nursing practice, with support and guidance from knowledgeable practitioners, facilitated the students' gradual transition into the role of a professional nurse.

6.3 Chapter summary

Throughout this chapter, and for that matter the entire thesis, preparation for professional practice has been presented as a contextual and situated phenomenon. In uncovering the findings as regards Research Question One, the study revealed a landscape of professional practice preparation rich in meaningful experiences and shared ownerships of professional education, reflecting the quality of the university's practices and norms, and the students' sense of commitment in pursuing educational goals. In this landscape, the formal educational experiences were primarily characterised by experiences in, and with established systems, aligned curriculum, contemporary academic and student services, educational facilities, academic practices, qualified staff and senior students as agents of socialisation, which formed part of a positive university culture for the students' and staff productive educational encounters.

The University's curricular endeavors were evidently instrumental in the student's development in their preparation for professional practice. Although not every participant articulated their experiences explicitly in all the elements identified within the university culture, i.e., lived curriculum, agents of socialisation, pedagogical encounters and learning spaces, each one conveyed their understanding of aspects that exemplified their preparation for professional practice. These understandings ranged from a naïve interpretation of their professional preparation, to

a more in depth or comprehensive interpretation that included reflections on how the student-participants, particularly final year students, see the totality of their university experience and their transformation for professional practice. From the research findings, the research concluded that the experiences of all the student-participants reflected a level of influence of each of the element, as they intersected continuously through different stages of the learning journey. The theme that encapsulated these findings directly answered Research Question One: *How do the university and its students engage in professional practice preparation?*

Such findings shed new insights into the emerging landscape of professional practice preparation, as interpreted in this research. The findings provided a backdrop for constructing a deeper understanding of the manner in which the characteristics of such emerging landscape influenced and enhanced professional practice preparation, as discussed in the succeeding chapter, Chapter 7.

Chapter 7 | The emerging landscape for shaping future practice

If lifelong learning ... occupies different spaces through the lifespan – ‘from cradle to grave’ – lifewide learning is learning in different spaces simultaneously.

~ Ronald Barnett (2011) ~

7.1 Chapter introduction

In the previous chapter, I examined the university culture, institutional structures, and academic and professional communities whose shared practice gave embodied existence in the social world. The current chapter investigated the ways in which the participants engaged in educational activities to determine what counts as forming part of professional practice preparation and, integral to this line of inquiry was the influence that engaging in educational activities had on shaping future practice and developing professional identity. From the data category of “educational activities” the second theme outlined below, corresponding to Research Question Two, *What does the engagement mean for the students becoming professionals?* distilled the essence of the student-participants' lived experiences in becoming professionals, as they engaged in activities in diverse social settings. A synopsis of the themes that emerged from the data as regards RQ2 is outlined below:

RQ2 – Essence of the lived experience

Educational activities were measures of student engagement in preparing for professional practice. The students' guided participation in curricular activities was complemented by their autonomous engagement in co-curricular and extra-curricular activities, through which personal and collective agency influenced and shaped their future practice and who they were becoming.

Drawing upon the findings presented in Chapter 6, the current chapter further extrapolates the social environments that the student-participants traversed, and communities that the student-participants formed, as they engaged in diverse educational and social activities. I argue that engaging in these activities manifested *lifewide learning* (cf. Barnett, 2011), whereby the students constructed a way of life in

which identities of participation were possible.

In the second section of the current chapter, Section 7.2, the students' simultaneous engagement in the landscape of educational activities is examined through transcripts of focus group and individual interviews, and my participant observation notes, as well as my reflective journal entries. Here I explicitly address the ways in which the students engaged in co-curricular and extra-curricular activities, alongside their curricular commitment, which the students did so in an autonomous and interdependent fashion. On this note, in the third section, Section 7.3, I shift my focus to understanding the individual's personal qualities and motivations, and their influences on academic and professional socialisation processes. Finally, in Sections 7.4 and 7.5, I turn my attention to the epistemological, practical and ontological dimensions of students' development in preparation for professional practice, emphasised here as an integrative process of becoming, and reflecting upon the domain-specific pedagogies that embodied their lived experience.

7.2 The landscape for engaging in educational activities

In higher education in the 21st century the notion of educational activities comes in different shapes and abstract ideas. This study uncovered a range of educational activities in which the student-participants took part. What was revealed was that engaging students in educational activities and shaping the students' educational experiences in diverse social settings were as much in the students' domain as it was in the University's. The evidence showed that the student-participants – as adult learners – navigated through various educational opportunities and challenges purposefully as they engaged autonomously and interdependently in educational activities and related interests. Student-participants reported the rich and dynamic nature of the educational opportunities and learning activities that they pursued and with which they engaged whilst preparing for professional practice.

The essence of the students' lived experiences is presented here, drawn from the themes that emerged in the research data regarding their engagement in different educational activities: curricular activities; co-curricular activities; and extra-

curricular activities. The description of each classification of educational activities is outlined briefly in Table 7.1.

Table 7.1 Classification of educational activities

Classification	Characteristics
Curricular activities	Educational activities and support processes that related directly to a student's academic program of study, the pathways for which included teacher-led learning pathways, self-directed learning pathways, assessment for and of learning, and learning and teaching support.
Co-curricular activities	Usually an extension of the learning experiences in a course or program of study outside the classroom or laboratory, the components of which consisted of both university-initiated and student-initiated educational activities, as well as activities related to continuing professional development.
Extra-curricular activities	Comprised of activities that were not necessarily directly connected to the academic program of study, although some aspects may be individually negotiated to contribute towards course assessment. Aspects of extra-curricular activities often involved work-based learning, community-based learning and lifelong, life-wide learning.

Data analysis (Figure 7.1) illustrated the components of educational activities forming each of these three classifications of activities in which the students engaged as they prepared for professional practice. This diagrammatic representation demonstrates that the student-participants constructed various educational pathways to meet their personal learning requirements and/or to complement or augment their educational experiences at ESU.

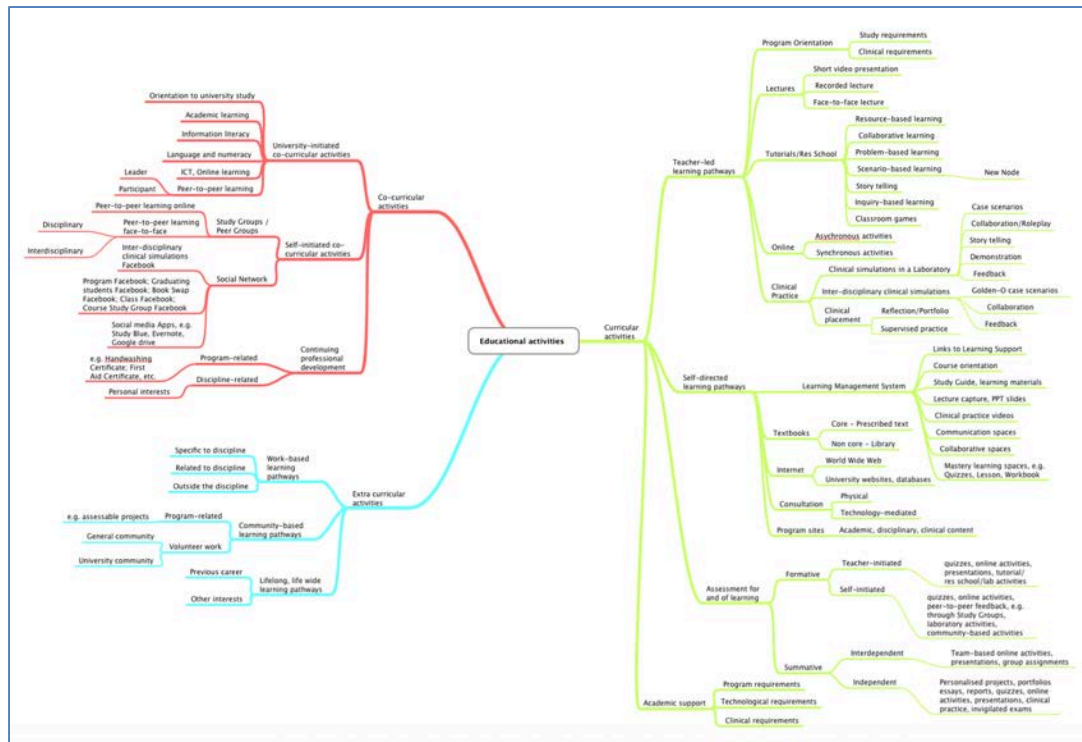


Figure 7.1 Components of educational activities and pathways

Each component of Figure 7.1 was extracted and placed in relevant sections of this chapter for wider discussion. Please also see a larger full copy in Appendix 9. Evidence showed a sense of ownership by the students in curating their learning activities and experiences. It also showed a shared ownership (autonomous and interdependent) of the learning processes between the students and the university, between the students and their peers, and between the students and the communities with which they were associated.

Figure 7.2 illustrates an example of interaction with student-participants to describe and explain their engagement in educational activities that encapsulated their learning journeys in a given semester. Such interaction conveyed the types of educational activities that exemplified the three sub-themes – curricular, co-curricular and extra-curricular activities. Moreover, it further demonstrated the importance of the co-construction of meaning in this study, through my ongoing collaboration with research participants throughout the development of the thesis.

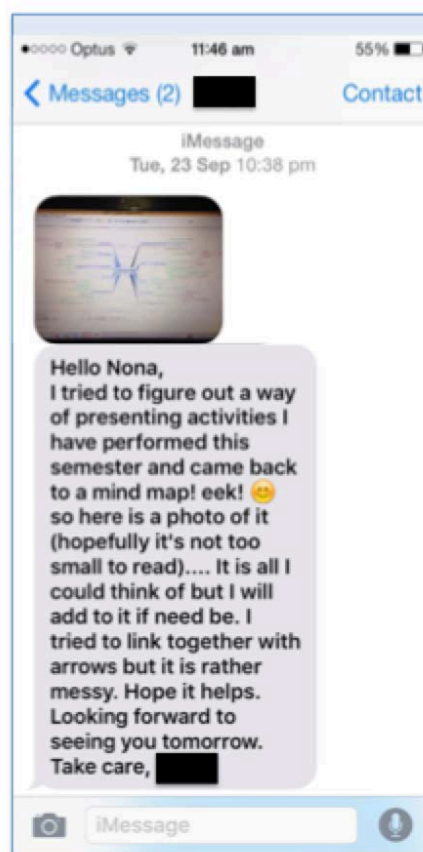


Figure 7.2 Interaction with I2-OC-S-Sam unpacking educational activities

The three themes that characterised the types of educational activities in which the students engaged – curricular, co-curricular, extra-curricular – are discussed below. In doing so, each theme will be explained supported by verbatim extracts from the transcripts.

7.2.1 Curricular activities

According to the study's findings, the curricular activities guided and influenced the students' learning journeys, constituting the prescribed learning activities and tasks for students to undertake within and outside the classroom to meet curricular requirements and to enhance and supplement their learning journeys (see Figure 7.3 – an enlarged extract from Figure 7.1). These activities were central to the students' educational experience, the processes for which involved facilitation and guidance by various agents of socialisation. These are discussed in the succeeding sub-sections.

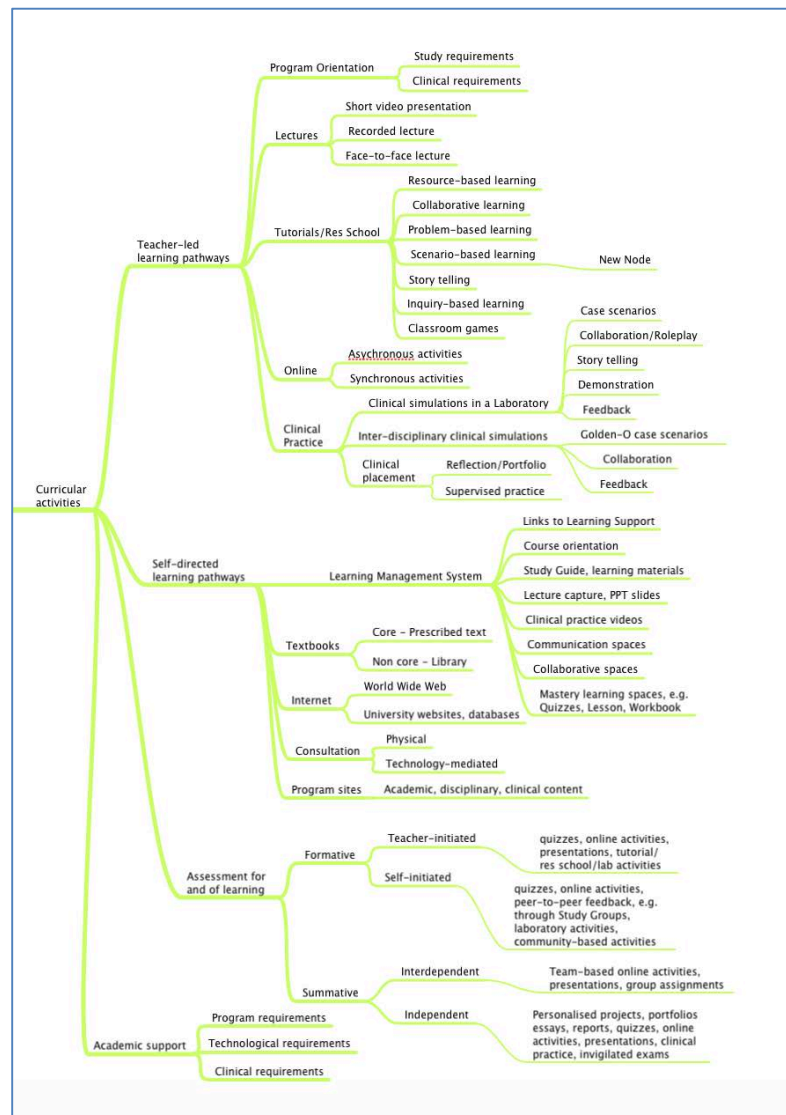


Figure 7.3 Curricular activities and learning pathways

What follows are themes identified in the “curricular activities” data category.

7.2.1.1 Developing and achieving competence

For the student-participants, the development and achievement of intellectual, practical and interpersonal competence were significantly influenced by their experiences of educational activities in their curricular contexts. The learning activities in nursing laboratories consolidated the application of not only theoretical knowledge but also nursing skills, attitudes and beliefs, modelled in different learning spaces, and encapsulated in learning activities. Students worked autonomously as well as interdependently in group-based settings, during which time the teacher

provided feedback about the application of theoretical ideas and about clinical performance. The students assumed designated roles in groups to perform their assigned clinical tasks, the activities for which involved simulating hospital settings and events, and employing the use of real health care equipment and tools and using the language of the profession.

The three interrelated forms of competence were involved in curricular activities whereby the students exercised ways of knowing and reasoning situated in professional practice, which involved using reason and evidence in interpreting and analysing problems, making decisions and acting on such decisions, as students physically performed clinical procedures that nurtured skilful practice. The observed data showed that the lived experiences of interpersonal relations in these curricular contexts entailed listening, asking questions, collaborating and cooperating, recognising diversity, communicating and responding, and, receiving and giving feedback, among others.

As nursing is a social activity (Benner, 2015), the development of interpersonal competence was nurtured overtime in nearly all clinical activities in which students took part, as well as in learning activities in different learning spaces. These learning activities were facilitated in such a way that students appreciated the relevance of interpersonal competence in their preparation for professional practice. For example:

FG2-OC-S-Hunter And my first group exercise I hated it, but the more you do them the more you realise that you're just dealing with people. And that's what nursing is about, you're dealing with people, and you've just gotta be able to deal with people as people... because when you're nursing you are going to be a part of a group.

It was found that the development and achievement of the three interrelated competences were incremental in terms of growing expertise and were not necessarily reducible to the passing grade achieved at the end of the semester. For example, during a focus group interview with one of the groups of second year students, the student-participants reflected on their developing expertise as future nurses and their

sense of competence by having immersed themselves in the work routines of professional nursing practice in a sustained manner. One of the students said:

FG7-OC-S-Year2 And if you think back, you can remember being that guy who couldn't remember to pump up a blood pressure cuff or find the pulse. You remember doing that, but after you've done it for a while, you just kind of forget about it...

This student had clearly mastered and internalised the skills, and performed the clinical tasks with confidence. The experience resonated with Vygotsky's (1978) notion that mastery of processes initially happens socially (at the interpsychological level) – for example, through the guidance and support of experienced practitioners who tutored and assisted the student to reach a level of proficient practice, by which time, through the phases of prolonged processes, they became internal and incorporated into the student's cognitive processes (at the intrapsychological level) (please see Chapter 3). What was seen was that the curricular pathways to educational activities facilitated the development of much of the students' interpsychological and intrapsychological levels of cognitive processes, building their capacity to develop confidence and competence in the processes of nursing practice:

FG7-OC-S-Year2 ...So knowing that the confidence that we had was coming from the University, it shocked a lot of the nurses that we worked with how competent we were. They weren't expecting anywhere near as much knowledge as we had.

According to van Manen (1997), within accounts of lived experience temporality is likely to involve reference to the life course, hopes and expectations as well as to a sense of whether time moves fast or slowly. The dimension of temporality in the lived experience was another point of reflection for me as I engaged in my journal (see journal entry 10.10.15), providing a useful analytical lens for understanding of temporality as a "succession of presents" with a past and a future (Gibbs, 2009, p. 115), which is "lived time".

Journal entry — 10.10.15

When the participants were contextualising their experiences, reflecting on the past learning journey, or narrating existing dilemmas, or responding to current events or situations, or organising with the future in mind, such as anticipating future career or other aspirations, the focus of my analysis was on the temporality dimension, or lived time. I sought in the data moments of experiences at a point in time (van Manen, 1997; 2014), to enable an objective, rich interpretation of the students' learning journey. This allowed me to consider during analysis the significance of utterances, as situated in past, present and future contexts.

7.2.1.2 Fostering autonomy and interdependence

Autonomy and interdependence featured prominently in the types of educational activities in curricular contexts in which the student-participants took part on a regular basis. For example, as evidenced, the nature of distance students learning and teaching contexts was such that by and large they worked autonomously, but they also relied on others in the learning process. When students did not fully understand a concept, for instance, or they could not anticipate the ways in which a topic might be linked with practice, they turned to one another for support in much the same way that interdependence transpires in the workplace, as exemplified by this comment:

FG1-OC-S- Nat Then I would just talk to other students on the forum or in my study group and say, "How did you feel about this?" and they would be in the same boat. We would have to work it out and between all of us we would figure it out ourselves.

Students learned to navigate through the complexities of interpersonal relations, and they learned to rely on their ability to get the information that they needed, to move towards achieving their goals, and to function autonomously and interdependently, with the built up confidence and competence to succeed. The narrative below provided another example of the interconnection between independence and interdependence processes to which students were exposed in curricular contexts:

FG6-OC-S-Year3 We lost people from our group because they never showed up, and so that made it more difficult because we had to do more work... If one of us doesn't do any work the others let them know. We're willing to say, "Hey, pull your weight a bit more"...

As alluded to, the implication of such learning experiences for future professional practice was that nursing involved not only autonomous work but also interdependence in a multidisciplinary team environment, which the students themselves were quick to recognise, for example:

I1-OC-S-Jojo ...because that's what happens in the Hospital anyway; you've got work together.

7.2.1.3 Building healthy interpersonal relationships

The process of engaging in curricular activities as students prepared for professional practice was mediated through interaction and communication with peers and teachers, and people in clinical settings, using the language of the profession that facilitated communication of ideas with respect to the learning activities. The study also found that, in this social setting, students viewed feedback about curricular activities as the most critical aspect of their learning experience. Students, either individually or as a group, needed time for direct interaction with the teacher for the articulation of ideas and processes, critique, affirmation and correction, among other things. Student-participants reported that giving and receiving feedback helped to make the expert thinking visible and for the students to communicate their understanding (as individuals or as a group). The capacity to use professional language was clearly the means of expressing or articulating thoughts, analysing thought processes and justifying clinical decisions or opinions. This finding aligns with the ideas: that (1) higher psychological functions (Vygotsky, 1978), such as preparing for professional practice, are developed through social interaction; and (2) language is the essential mediator in this educational context (Rogoff, 2008; Wertsch, 1981). As language is inherently woven within social activities and interactions, its function is to shape thoughts and ideas (cf. Gee, 2010), but at the "heart of such interactions is the ability to respond to people in their own right" (Chickering & Reisser, 1993, p. 48).

Teacher-participants, as one of the agents of socialisation, were cognisant of their diverse roles in curricular settings (e.g., as a facilitator and guide in tutorial and virtual learning spaces, and/or as a mentor and role model in lecture and laboratory learning spaces). Teachers played heterogeneous roles in the development of professional knowledge, skills and attitudes. These roles included being used as a resource, modelling behavior, providing advice and feedback, and raising awareness about the practices and beliefs valued in the nursing profession. For instance:

I1-CE-T-Morgan I try and watch one person in that group doing the whole thing. So, if I can observe one person and make sure I give the feedback to the whole group they can then be assessing each other on that feedback... It's getting them involved in how they envisage nursing to be. If they're wanting to be able to see where that learning fits into what they're going to do as a nurse and that's where my personal experience comes from. But also in tutes and things, I'll use what they're learning and place it in a context where they can then apply that to procedure, so that they can see that that's got a practical application.

It was evident that in curricular contexts, building healthy interpersonal relationships involved social interaction and communication, which were central to pedagogical encounters between teachers–students, students–students and students–teachers. The teachers certainly played an important role in creating educational pathways and in facilitating curricular learning activities, whereby the pedagogical encounters embodied the nurturing and caring nature of learning and teaching in the nurse education domain, enacted with a genuine sense of commitment to, and interest in, student holistic development as an autonomous and interdependent future practitioner. For example:

I-PT-T-Nita What I do though in the tut rooms, is that I'll walk around while they're doing that work, and I'll try and keep them on track, because we know a lot of people you know get off track and start chatting, but I'll walk around and make myself very visible... “Do you need

some help here, is there anything you don't understand, any terminology in that paperwork...”, so I'll actually support them while they're doing that group work. If they're working fine, I'll just back away. Don't need to be sitting on top of them. It is their self-directed work...

I-FT-T-Lara The whole thinking around teaching for me is for the student to lead it, but there are certain things that I've got to teach... So I'm very much about putting it together. I'm very much about letting the student lead their learning.

Teachers' roles were found to be invaluable in facilitating student learning, and engaging and guiding the students beyond what they were capable of learning on their own. This finding supported Vygotsky's (1978) notion of the ZPD, and related human development processes. The study found that the ZPD was created during the interaction between the students and the teacher or the teaching team whilst participating in an activity, and in a way that was responsive to students' needs. The teacher, as expert, guided and supported learning beyond what the learner was able to achieve independently (cf. Rogoff, 2008).

7.2.1.4 Knowing as doing and the centrality of cultural tools in socialisation

Cultural tools, or “instruments and aids” as Bruner put it (1996, p. 152), define the work of a professional field. Certainly, the student-participants were cognisant of the centrality of nursing instruments and aids in their curricular activities:

I2-OC-S-Riley So, this is our lab (drawing on a notebook), and we have four beds, and then we have the equipment centre, so needles, medications, and things like that. And my group is here. We're not called group 3, but we just go to that bed each week, and then there's all the IVs and bedside tables on each one...

I2-OC-S-Cam ...those tools of using those tables... As I said, you identify the patient interviews, identify the risks of those issues to the patient, identify the Nurses interventions and the collaborative

interventions, then the goals... and everyone that I've spoken to, this has been the one tool that has been really valuable in the BNUR. It really has.

Gaining more experience in the use of these tools was at the forefront of the students' learning agenda. In almost all individual and focus group interviews, the student-participants expressed discomfort about their sense of readiness going into clinical placement, because of "not knowing enough" or "not having enough practice in the labs", where the instruments and aids were housed. Bruner (1996) offered an insight in making sense of the students' apparent dilemma, which he termed "KNOWING AS DOING" (p. 150; *emphasis in the original*):

The mind is an extension of the hands and tools that you use and of the jobs to which you apply them....And much of what is involved in being a member of a culture [i.e. professional field] is doing what the "things" around you requires....Frequently, indeed, we know how to do those things long before we can explain conceptually what we are doing or normatively why we should be doing them....[Thus] work or activity or, more generally, *praxis* provides a prototype of culture (p. 151; *emphasis in the original*).

Learning, viewed through Bruner's (1996) lens is developed or acquired through experience, explaining the student-participants perceived dilemma of feeling that they needed more practice because it was through doing that knowing was manifested whilst engaged in cultural or professional activities. Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory was likewise useful in understanding that individual cognitive skills resulted from engagement in sociocultural activities. For the student-participants the idea of knowing (cognitive development) occurred as they learned to use cultural tools for *knowing and thinking* and for *doing and acting*, with the help of experienced members of the community. The idea of knowing as doing represented many of the students' learning agenda, albeit tacitly, not only in their curricular pursuits, but also in their co-curricular and extra-curricular interests.

7.2.2 Co-curricular activities

The term “co-curricular” is used here to highlight the value of university experiences “that are not only “extra” or outside the curriculum but also complementary to it and equally important (cf. Chickering & Reisser, 1993). An extract from Figure 7.1 is provided in Figure 7.4 below to illustrate the component parts of the co-curricular activities found in the data. The findings of this research suggested that, while the university provided structural and organisational settings for the students’ educational experience, each student navigated the social environments based on her or his academic and professional learning requirements.

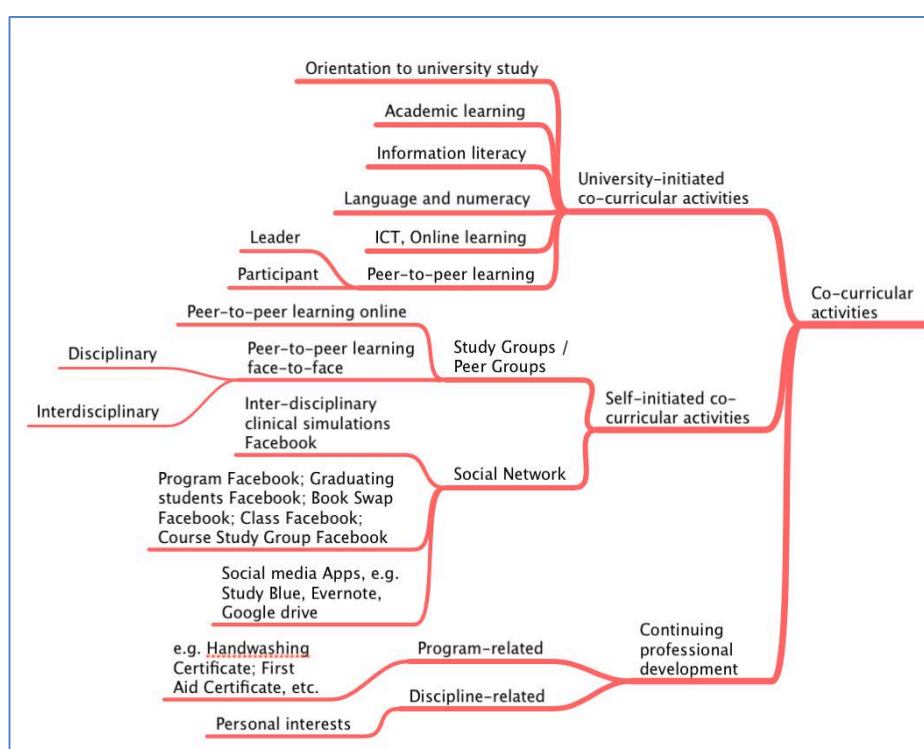


Figure 7.4 Co-curricular activities and learning pathways

These activities complemented, in some way or another, what students were undertaking in curricular activities, thus, forming part of the students’ overall educational experience, which occurred mostly in university-related educational facilities. For the student-participants who pursued co-curricular activities, the undertakings were typically an extension of the formal learning experiences in a course, such as:

- educative activities in technological or digital fluency;
- information literacy;

- academic learning skills;
- language and mathematical skills; and/or
- coursework-related activities facilitated in peer-assisted learning program or in a simulated clinical learning initiative.

In pursuing co-curricular endeavours, the students personalised their engagement in educational activities and curated their learning experiences by negotiating different learning pathways at will, and establishing their own learning support network. Some examples of student-participants' co-curricular efforts are discussed in succeeding sub-sections.

7.2.2.1 Learning communities in informal learning spaces on campus

At anyone given time, students frequently populated different learning spaces actively, either studying in solitude or working in groups. These learning spaces depicted in Figure 7.5, were informal learning spaces on campus, which represented a type of learning commons [1 & 2], study nooks [3] and learning hubs [4], all combined in open spaces close to the Library. The student-participants reported their regular use of this space as a meeting place, because they could rearrange the furniture to secure a quiet place or accommodate study sessions and/or assessment project collaborations.

These informal learning spaces also provided direct access to specialist support for assistance on library matters, information technology issues, academic learning advice and peer-assisted learning, all of which were housed in this area. Although personal computers were available in these spaces, some students often used their own technological devices.

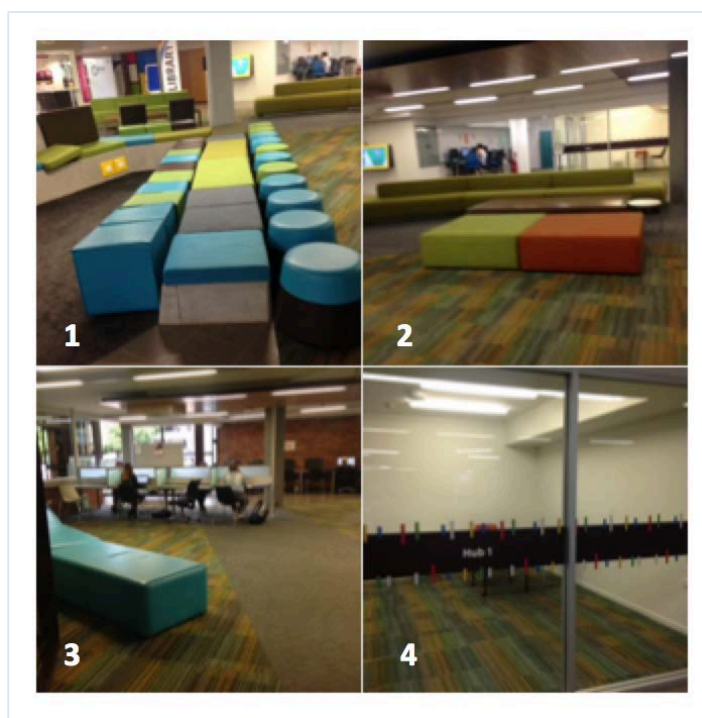


Figure 7.5 Examples of informal learning spaces on-campus

A noticeable and indeed remarkable aspect of these informal learning spaces on campus was the observed and reported sense of self- or group-initiated learning communities, permeating the collaborative and cooperative activities observed. These informal learning spaces were alive with student voices, mostly collaborating and working together, building the kinds of connections that promote engagement and active learning. As a result, a convincing theme noted across the focus groups and the individual interviews was the value of peer support and of having strong peer groups. Akin to a network, they used their learning community/ies productively to support one another not only in academic work but also in other facets of their lives (e.g., family, work and clinical placements). Some student-participants created transitional peer groups as they progressed in the program, but most student-participants maintained the same study group for the duration of their learning journeys. The learning engagement focused on course-based collaborative inquiry and was informed by individual and collective learning agendas:

I1-OC-S-Cam [I set up my study group] first semester I was here ... I've sent out the tables to people I know and said, 'do you want to be part of this? Yes or no?' and they then contribute and we work together ... Everyone

goes off and does their different part, then we come back together and reflect on it together... and you don't even have to have people who are here, because a couple of my peers have left and are now external students in Darwin and Sydney.

I1-OC-S-Sam Yeah, so, study groups, because I wanna do really well in the course, but also when I'm out in the field [clinical placement] I don't wanna be ignorant. So, I wanna try and retain what I'm learning as well. So, peer groups is good, if you're needing some motivation...

These students and their respective study group mates were highly motivated and their beliefs about personal efficacy guided their actions. Bandura (2000) suggested that these agentic capabilities enabled people to influence the events and to take a hand in shaping their lives. Bandura (2000) further noted that people do not live their lives in individual autonomy. Indeed, it was evident that, for these students, many of the outcomes that they sought were achievable only through interdependent efforts and that they found much value in the participative processes of a learning community. The student-participants in this pedagogical encounter explicated their shared beliefs in members' combined power to produce desired results. Such processes encapsulated the notion of collective agency, as the efforts of these collaborating students were exercised through socially cooperative and interdependent processes (cf. Bandura, 2000). For many study groups that the student-participants reported in this study, the sense of agency, whether personal or collective, was critical in the effective functioning of their small group learning communities.

7.2.2.2 Ways of knowing in peer-to-peer learning contexts

The co-curricular activities in the study groups engendered self- and group-initiated collaboration and distributed leadership to address coursework and assessment tasks. Self-regulation and cooperation made up the core group dynamics; hence, degrees of personalised learning were achieved within the group. The narratives below described a pedagogical encounter that embodied a sense of autonomy and collaboration as students engaged in peer learning, to augment the depth and breadth of their learning experience. The activities undertaken by student-

participants in study groups were linked directly with coursework related tasks, and it was evident that the group assumed ownership of their inquiry as they engaged in the course learning activity:

I5-OC-S-Riley We meet in the fish bowl. It's called the fish bowl [Learning Hub]... We've formed a study group, and it's the same people that after the lab we have on Wednesdays we always just have a bit of a debrief on how we felt the lab went... and we meet twice a week and study for our courses and it's really good. Yesterday we got together, and you understand it better, and if you don't understand something another person does, and so they try and explain it to you and then that way they learn as well.

Nona So, this peer study group, is it only for this course?

I5-OC-S-Riley For the three courses we're doing. Mmm.... So, instead of just doing one subject a week and focusing on that, we're all doing work for all of them so we keep up and we're not left behind. We're really trying to be productive and pro active about our study... So, one of the girls she says she works better if she's actually typing it up herself and that's how she learns. So, the fact that I'm doing that is a good structure for her to do her study. So, she can just work on the document and start typing, and she knows exactly what she has to do, and that helps with her learning. Another girl prefers to talk it out and that's me as well, I prefer to talk and write on the whiteboard.

The lived experience shared in this example, including the type of collaboration among study group members, was echoed similarly in study groups initiated by other student-participants, whereby ways of *knowing* embodied the central goal of their study group activities. Learning through shared work and distributed leadership (cf. Cashman et al., 2015) was evident in these study group members' experiences, exemplifying the processes of sociocultural orientation to learning and development, through individual and interdependent activity-based participation and knowledge co-

construction. Group members performed their roles with a high sense of efficiency to work together productively. To be successful in their roles, personal efficacy and metacognition were vital. Their intent was focused on enhancing the quality of their educational experience and academic performance, based on their belief that learning with others was a more efficient and productive process.

The study found that such actions pertained to mechanisms of human agency, the most central of which were beliefs of personal and collective efficacy. As noted in the previous sub-section, the majority of student-participants who reported study group participation exhibited self-efficacy. Students recognised that belonging to a learning community, which exemplified what Bandura (2000) referred to as collective agency, enabled the participating students to seek and achieve outcomes through interdependent efforts. As Bandura (2000) pointed out “[A] group’s attainments are the product not only of shared knowledge and skills of its different members, but also of the interactive, coordinative, and synergistic dynamics of their transactions” (pp. 75-76). Collaboration transformed individuals and their identities overtime (cf. Cashman et al., 2015). Such collaboration embodied beliefs that students can mobilise their efforts and resources to produce desired results independently and interdependently in an academic community of practice, which more or less mimicked the professional communities of practice. As a student-participant noted: “I know this is what it’s like in nursing, working as a team”.

7.2.2.3 Dilemmas as a conduit for co-curricular activities and learning

Similar to but different from issues of uncertainty as discussed earlier in Sub-section 7.2.1.4 is the notion of dilemma. Dilemmas represent the difference between those who make decisions and those who experience them. Uncertainty, however, comes from the pathway (context) that progress takes, especially as it represents the crossing of students from learners to practitioners (Mezirow, 1991). In this study, a number of student-participants felt disoriented about the challenges of managing and succeeding in their university study. Displays of emotion may be interpreted as “what ensues when an individual’s long held perspectives and assumptions of self as learner are unsettled, critiqued and transformed” (Willans, 2010, p. 58).

These students reported that their dilemma became increasingly apparent as they responded to assessment tasks:

FG2-DE-S-Zane It's sort of, yeah, when I put an assignment together, I find that part of it difficult. The clinical stuff is easy as far as I'm concerned, but it's all that other stuff [academic aspect] that is hard. And it's very difficult to go through your module. It's a mountain. It really is.

Griffiths et al. (2005) explained similar or related dilemmas as a learning shock and argued that such emotional reactions could facilitate the most profound learning. Indeed, the evidence suggested that this type of dilemmas provided developmental opportunities as students sought assistance to understand conceptual tools and their respective contextual uses (e.g., referencing skills, academic writing skills, mathematics for nursing, software skills for preparing assignments, etc.) from those who had expertise. For example, the narratives below captured an aspect of the lived experiences of distance students, and their engagement in co-curricular activities, “brokered” by the demands of curricular activities:

FG2-DE-S-Rory And I said to the guy you know, “Does everybody feel like this? Is what I'm doing right?” And, for the first assignment that I'd done in 12 years, I was nervous as about it. I emailed him the criteria, and he did all the comments in the margins...

Nona Where did you go to get help?

FG2-DE-S-Rory The Learning Center. You go online, you can pick if you want to learn about academic or math, so I picked academic, and then it comes up with the consult times, and then you pick one that is available, and enter what course it is, if you want it done by phone, email or face to face. I even do email or phone, and you send all your information off to them. They assess your work in that half an hour that they've got, and they email it back to you. So I've done that for every assignment that I've

done, just so that I feel at ease. So the support system is fantastic...

The experiences of educational dilemmas facilitated pedagogical encounters and helped to reduce uncertainty by shaping the students' engagement in a landscape of various academic domains of practice as they engaged in doing things, talking, debating and reflecting together, working on issues, and using and producing artefacts (cf. Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner 2015). In this socialisation process, it was clear that the students took ownership of their learning, recognising that bodies of knowledge rested in different domains of practice, highlighted in accordance with their support requirements in aspects such as study skills, technological skills, academic writing and mathematical skills, among others. It was evident that the support provided by the University was multi-disciplinary in that it involved nursing academics and also other practitioners, such as educators, technologists and mathematicians, and others from the University's student support areas, particularly from the Learning Centre.

7.2.2.4 Professional ways of being where the focus was on becoming

Patient safety is central to healthcare, therefore students preparing for professional practice in healthcare domains are never placed in real events situations where they may have to apply clinical decision making skills and management of care as actual care givers (Robinson, 2014). To support students' growing requirements to practise in realistic contexts a simulated clinical learning initiative, Golden-O, was developed as a co-curricular activity. Golden-O is a pseudonym for the simulated clinical learning initiative experienced by ESU nursing students. This initiative was a collaborative endeavour among participating universities, including ESU. Golden-O was designed to enable students to work together in a safe, supportive and realistic simulated learning environment, using case scenarios and role-plays. Its principal purpose was to enable students to practice newly learnt skills and knowledge, develop an understating of their own role and that of others in the healthcare team, and personally evaluate if they will be safe and confident work-ready practitioners (Robinson, 2014).

From observation of the “healthcare team” at Golden-O (see Figure 7.6), it was evident that the situated learning context within communities of practice that embodied a Golden-O experience provided opportunities for students to *think, act* and *become* professional nurses who were faced with authentic clinical situations and dilemmas that they must address, as per their scope of practice and in conjunction with a healthcare team.

Students in this model participated as part of a multidisciplinary team. As part of this team, students were closely monitored and assisted by professional mentors (three of whom were also teacher-participants in this study). Tasks performed by students in the Golden-O simulated learning events included attending to clinical tasks plus interacting with “patients” (actors) and “physicians” (medical students).

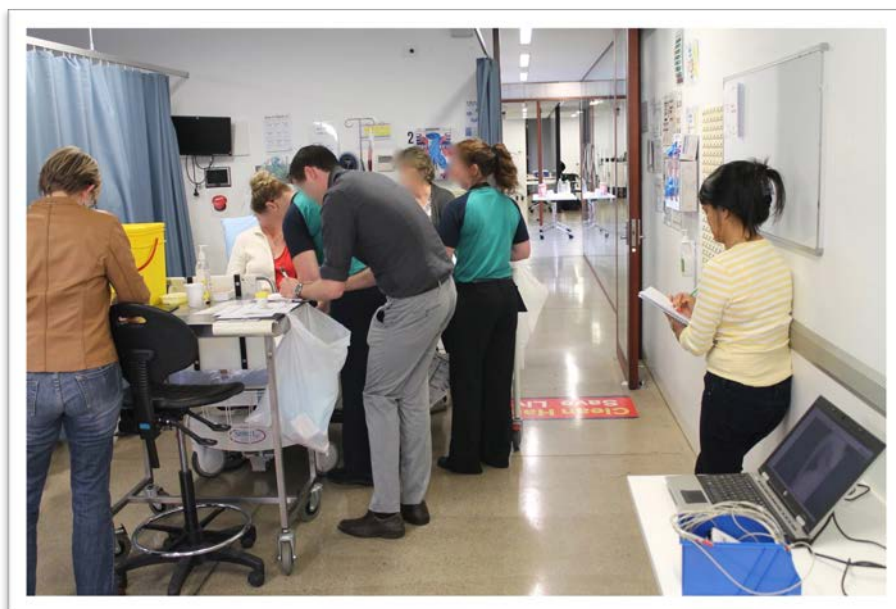


Figure 7.6 Golden-O Simulated Clinical Setting

Student-participants could not state strongly enough the value of realistic approaches to learning at Golden-O, and the reciprocal nature of learning and teaching in a multidisciplinary setting:

I2-OC-S-Cam ... you have the interaction with the doctor and the patient.
You work with a young doctor, you see them functioning, and

you work with them and communicate with them, as well as the patient... it tests those whole course skills that we've learnt.

FG2-OC-S-Sam But it's when you're actually in the situation that you can't think. It's performance anxiety that we get told about, because you're just trying to survive and do as much as you can. You're trying to figure out what you should be doing.

Throughout the enactment of each case as the healthcare teams rotated through every bed with a new patient suffering from a different medical complaint, the student participants' identity as a nurse and their sense of *belonging* within the healthcare team were on display and distinctly reflected upon during feedback. What the students *knew*, how they *acted* and how they *performed* their role as nurses were duly put to the test under the pressure of simulated authentic practices of their profession (nursing intervention, communication, problem-solving, clinical reasoning and decision-making). The situated learning approach affirmed that nursing was not just about having the necessary skills. It also highlighted dispositional aspects of the nursing profession, particularly caring and advocacy, as reflected upon below:

FG2-OC-S-Riley I think initially with the whole nerves and everything that you tend to become very skill orientated and focus on the skills that you have to do, and I think that when it came to the 3rd case scenario with the lady with the postpartum haemorrhage, it sort of occurred to me more that, 'hey, this is an actual woman and she's just delivered a baby, she would be very emotional'. And even though she was an actor I could feel that, I could empathise with that... So, it's not all skills based. It's actually being there and being in the present with her as well.

The corporeality (lived body) dimension of lived experiences consistently formed part of the students' experiences in preparing for professional practice, as working in bodies is typically an essential aspect of nursing practice. Nursing can involve the body in sensing action and bodily self-awareness. The "touching the

hand” that the experience below conveyed was an example of bodily experience for the student:

FG2-OC-S-Riley With that patient interaction, with a human person, not a dummy. Because I really had that patient interaction and I communicated, I touched the hand, I communicated a lot with the patient explaining the procedures that I was doing...

Students also alluded to caring for wounds, washing patients, taking manual blood pressure measurements, inserting cannulas, caring for the exposed body and the intimate areas of the body, helping them to dress and attending to their hygiene as a whole. In these interactions involving physical contact, the teachers guided and supported their students to learn the necessary procedures for working with bodies. Moreover, both teachers and students drew upon their own bodies as a teaching and learning device. Sensing the body’s discomfort was another aspect to which nurses also usually attend and, experiencing this scenario at Golden-O augmented the students’ learning and development in a profound way.

An increasing sense of professional identity was experienced while performing nursing tasks and forming relationships with others in this community of practice. This was evident in the students’ engagement in the clinical activities facilitated at Golden-O, whereby the experience of working in a multidisciplinary team established or reinforced for the students the meaning of *being* a nurse along with the complexities that the role entailed. As the student-participants reflected during a focus group interview, which took place immediately after this co-curricular activity, the interaction enabled them to appreciate that identity formation involved a growing awareness of competencies, emotions and values.

The feedback processes at the end of each case exemplified the learning and development in communities of practice, based upon which both nursing and medical students were able to identify strengths, weaknesses and areas for improvement in their clinical performance. Likewise, the multidisciplinary professional mentors provided feedback to both medical and nursing students, highlighting specific linkages among areas of professional practice. Student-participants who participated also

received feedback from the patients and were unanimous about the developmental aspect of taking part and receiving feedback at Golden-O. The processes in this simulated clinical setting certainly provided opportunities to perform, interact, collaborate, and provide feedback as a healthcare team, mirroring professional work contexts, as the following narrative demonstrates:

FG2-OC-S-Wen ... that to me was the most realistic afternoon that I have worked, because that sort of thing happens on a ward, and those people are real. And you had probably been put under pressure because you were watched at the end and given direct feedback, but those people were standing there, and at the end you got, 'you missed this, and when you did this', and that's what they told you that's what you need to work on... I found that really effective, because I didn't forget that.

For the duration of this study, a total of 243 students participated in the Golden-O initiative. Interested students were allowed to attend as many times as they could secure a place and claim the hours attended as the equivalent of 16 hours clinical placement. Attendance at Golden-O was not a compulsory component of the program. This co-curricular activity provided a 'bridge' between the students' perceived knowledge gap and their sense of readiness, as the representative comment below showed:

FG3-OC-S-Shane I'm still quite apprehensive about my prac next semester, because I will have finished my second year and I will have had 3 weeks in hospital, and that's it... That's why I did it [Golden-O] because I didn't have any clinical this semester. So, I had my clinical in November and December last year, and I knew I wasn't going to have any clinical and I didn't want to get stuck feeling like an idiot when I had the gap. So, when I saw this, I thought, 'I'm doing that', and it was awesome, really good...But it was quite scary, and it certainly challenged me and changed my ideas about nursing and nurses.

Those student-participants who availed themselves of this co-curricular opportunity spoke of the realistic nature of the learning activities, of the transformational impact of their learning experience, and of having experienced a highly effective way to reinforce and/or to increase their sense of identity as a nurse in safe environments.

7.2.2.5 Leadership development as an aspect of competence and socialisation

As students progressed in the program, opportunities to take part in co-curricular activities presented themselves in the form of the peer assisted learning program, “Study Buddy”. High performing students could obtain paid employment as a Study Buddy Leader whose role was to mentor and guide junior students in their discipline (see Study Buddy Leaders’ role in Appendix 10). Such leadership development was focused on social change and, in this context, it can be described as a “purposeful, collaborative, values-based process that results in positive social change” (Komives & Wagner, 2009, p. xii). It involved contributing to the good of the group and coordinating efforts to meet collective goals.

Those who sought assistance deemed the co-curricular activities facilitated by Study Buddy Leaders to be helpful:

I1- OC-S-Rain I found out about [the peer-assisted learning program] and I went along and it was an extra support for me. I could ask more specific questions or get advice about Uni life or Uni itself and how they approached studying and how they went about it.

The Bachelor of Nursing program involved a number of campus-based Study Buddy Leaders along with a dedicated Leader for the distance cohort. The narratives below outlined the nature of the activities in this peer assisted learning program:

I1-OC-S-Lindsay As a leader, each week you have your sessions. To begin with, you do preparation for your course. I go through some of the course content and then I pick out stuff that I thought was important to know that I found important from last year. So, I

It was evident that the student leaders learned to lead, serve and respond to the learning needs of their peers and, in the process, validated what they learned in their previous courses. It was also evident that they were autonomous and self-supporting in their service. They learned to monitor their own effectiveness as leaders, and they learned to traverse boundaries concerning ethical and professional comportment, as an example below showed regarding the ethical challenges of working on assessment with students:

I1-OC-S-Tim So, yes, in addition to that I also sort of ran through similar scenarios as to what they were covering in their current assessment. So, I can't really preview or read the drafts of their assignments, but I can take a similar scenario as to what they're studying and walk them through it that way, and they do like that.

In many respects, the knowledge, skills and values that embodied the practice of Study Buddy Leaders work characterised the knowledge, skills and values of the nursing profession. The leadership development in this co-curricular setting offered an invaluable learning experience towards professional socialisation and development of professional competence.

7.2.2.6 Developing technologically fluent future practitioners

Beyond the walls of the university, the students formed learning communities, using social media to augment their learning experiences. Some student-participants reported engaging in social media such as Facebook and explained that a number of course-based Facebook accounts were created and managed by “some students”. The Facebook site was accessible only to approved Bachelor of Nursing students and predominantly used for sharing ideas and assisting one another about coursework and assessment matters – this was clearly a co-curricular endeavor, given that the activities involved coursework matters. The student-participants formed a learning community on social media in a way that gave them more freedom and flexibility:

FG2-OC-S-Casey And last year before we did our bio, our biological exam, they were putting sample questions up all day, and I was at work, and because all of my Facebook stuff is emailed to me at work,

and they were putting all these sample questions up and it was so helpful for studying.

FG2-OC-S-Darby Especially when 3rd years get on there, and they say, 'this is what we did'. They don't give you the answers, but they say hey look.

FG2-OC-S-Casey There have been a few incidents, but on the whole it's helpful and supportive. I like it because I feel like I can ask dumb questions...

While social media offered countless opportunities for social interaction, it also presented quite a number of pitfalls, such as breach of confidentiality, bullying, professional misconduct, etc. The student-participants noted that the Nursing and Midwifery Board Code of Professional Conduct provides guidance to the nursing workforce as well as to nursing students regarding the use of social media.

It was evident that the development of what I referred to as *technological fluency* was situated in both curricular and co-curricular activities. The context of this fluency focused on academic and social processes. Sullivan (2004) observed that “the challenge for professional education is how to teach the complex ensemble of analytic thinking, skillful practice, and wise judgment upon which each profession rests” (p. 195). This study found that, along with these professional competencies, technological fluency was an equally important aspect of preparing for professional practice. Student-participants engaged in diverse experiences in university virtual learning spaces that contributed to their technological fluency for learning processes, locating, examining and using resources, using technological tools for varied tasks, and working in teams and building relationships to solve problems and/or to complete tasks.

On this note, it is pertinent to report that while reviewing and giving feedback about aspects of this thesis, one of the student-participants (now a graduate nurse employed at a large metropolitan hospital) discussed with me that the development of her technological fluency while at university had prepared her well for her contemporary, completely online work environment. She explained that, in her

workplace, everything, including nursing notes and patient data, was recorded and managed online. In this workplace, where technology had “invaded” every aspect of healthcare provision, the implication of being technologically fluent meant that it involved not only knowing how to use technological tools, but also understanding the ideas and processes related to technological activities.

7.2.3 Extra-curricular activities

The student-participants engaged in extra-curricular activities in a number of ways. For the purpose of the current discussion, an extract from Figure 7.1 is reproduced as Figure 7.7 below, to illustrate the three clusters and the component parts that made up the extra-curricular activities and the learning pathways identified in the data.

In addition to taking part in activities within curricular and co-curricular contexts, some student-participants likewise actively engaged in extra-curricular activities, in order to pursue professional and academic-related interests in a voluntary, autonomous fashion. These activities were undertakings that students pursued within and outside the university settings. For example, some student-participants joined student groups in university communities, took a leadership role in community groups, sought or maintained paid employment within or outside their discipline, or volunteered in community service, charity and not-for-profit organisations. These students showed increased self-efficacy in shaping their professional identities by exhibiting a greater level of commitment to developmental activities, and in shaping their professional identity.

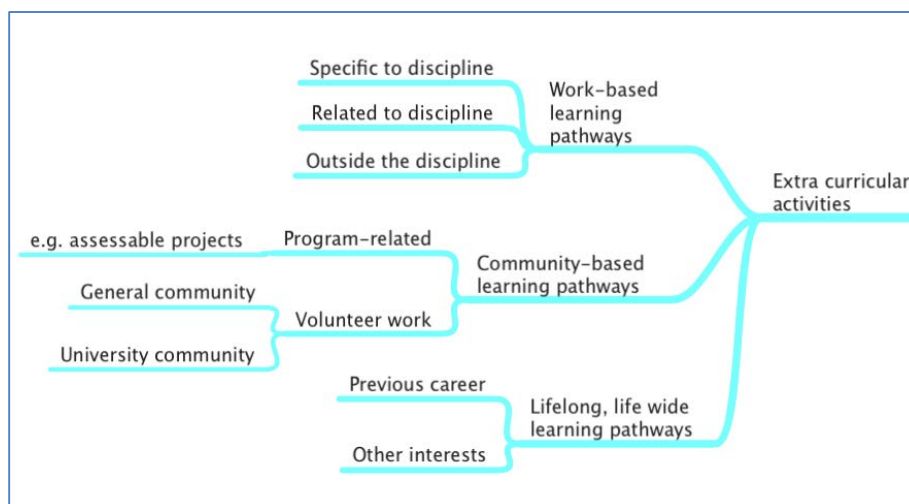


Figure 7.7 Extra-curricular activities and learning pathways

Through agentic efforts, some student-participants engaged in extra-curricular activities often outside the realm of the academic curriculum. While these activities may not be connected directly to the academic program of study, evidence from this study suggested that engagement in extra-curricular activities supported and enhanced the development of competencies.

7.2.3.1 Boundaries and identities in different landscapes of practice

My analysis revealed that nearly all the student-participants from both the on-campus and the distance cohorts were engaged in some form of employment – some within the field for nursing practice, others in different areas of healthcare, or in completely different fields of practice, as professionals or paraprofessionals. Under the work-based learning cluster (please see Figure 7.7), job employment was classified in this research as one of the extra-curricular activities in which the students took part, whether such employment were linked to the nursing discipline or otherwise. The premise was that learning and development were manifested in the individuals’ “relations to a multiplicity of practices across the landscape” (Wenger-Trayner & Wenger Trayner, 2015, p. 14). The examples below showed the work-based learning experiences of an Endorsed Enrolled Nurse (EEN) and an Enrolled Nurse (EN) and their ways of learning experienced therein:

FG3-DE-S-Darryl I've been a Nurse eight years now, an EN ... I work with GP's, so I get to see a broad spectrum of different things...

I2-DE-S-Taylor I work as an Endorsed Enrolled Nurse, so I've had similar situations where I've had exactly that [clinical scenario in a laboratory class] happen, and we did the right action plan, and the patient came out safe at the end of it. So I've seen it [a nursing intervention taught in a laboratory class] being utilised in the clinical setting.

Such work-based learning experiences intersected with curricular activities, strengthening students' sense of identity in their field of practice by traversing different boundaries to reformulate new identities. It was evident that the challenge for these students was in the process of adapting and transforming the habits of mind, heart and hands of an EEN or an EN or a TAFE student into that of a university student role, alongside a student Registered Nurse (RN) role:

FG1-DE-S-Oli I've done this [EN] job for a long time and I know this stuff, it's just that I don't know the academic things, which is what I'm learning now.... I don't have the academic sort of capacity, which [is why] I'm having a very sharp learning curve....It was easier through TAFE.

A number of student-participants also reported their continuing affiliation in their original fields of practice, such as teaching, speech therapy, mathematics and engineering “[studied] through the army”. Such a continuing affiliation was often related to paid employment and/or working as a volunteer whilst preparing for a career in nursing. It was evident that their journeys within and across practices shaped who they were:

I2-OC-S-Alex I'm always a little bit conscious of having to step back. I'm a little bit forceful. I think that comes from teaching as well and I particularly picked that up when I started Uni here, and I would attempt to answer questions and stuff because I know as a teacher nothing is more frustrating when you pose a question and all you get are dull glances.

Being members of multiple communities simultaneously had its benefits and challenges. For example members might be able to contribute to cross-fertilise one community (e.g., EN community) with another (e.g., student RN community) to bring about new insights for one or both communities, with interactions between the communities. This was broadly reflective of what sociologists Talkot Parsons and Niklas Luhmann referred to as double contingency, self-grounding exercise of social interactions leading to forms of normative acceptance through connections between these communities (Leyesdorff, 2008; Vanderstraeten, 2002). Here, the sense of identity was important when engaging with different communities of practice. The evidence showed, for example, that some student-participants had difficulty separating their EN or EEN role from their student RN role, as highlighted by teacher-participants. A number of teacher-participants noted that they frequently needed to raise and communicate the role of RN so as to provide greater sense of clarity about scope of practice and professional identity. The issue here, following Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner (2015), was crossing boundaries, which “always involves the question of how the perspective of one practice is relevant to that of another. It is connecting two forms of competence, whose claim to knowledge may or may not be compatible.” (p. 18). For example:

I1-FT-T-Penny I've had people who have been Enrolled Nurses, and I particularly remember one case where this Enrolled Nurse, and I was saying how the Nurses job was to review the pathology reports that came back, you know, that was part of their assessment. And she went 'that's Doctor's job'. Well, I sort of just looked at her, and I could feel the hair on the back of my neck rising, and so I said to the class 'would you agree with the fact that the Nurse shouldn't look at the pathology reports?' ... they said 'well no, how could you assess the patient without having that data', which of course is the right answer, because previous weeks to that, it was like data, assessment data helps to give you a whole picture of the patient as a whole. They're not just a blood pressure of pulse rate, there's a whole heap of other baggage that comes with them, and uh so the other student then just said 'well no, you need to know that', and then this Nurse

said 'well, the Doctor orders it', and I said 'well that's his job, he's got to have a job in life', but you know, he only comes once a day, and what happens if this pathology report comes at 5 o'clock in the afternoon, and it says that their potassium is at a dangerous level, are you going to wait until he comes back at 8 o'clock the next morning so that he can look at it? So, you know, it's probably, it's just a constant listening to what they say, and challenging that I guess.

7.2.3.2 The dynamic interplay between competence and experience

Some student-participants pursued extra-curricular activities beyond the University walls to complement their higher education experience, to build confidence as a nurse and develop graduate skills, such as communication and teamwork, as evidenced in the following extract:

I-2-S-Sam Umm, well, I also recognise gaps in my own experience and that's when I started part-time work at [a nursing home] to get more practical experience.

Nona And that's discipline specific?

I-2-S-Sam Yep. And building confidence and things like that. Communication skills [for example]. And then I also went and started doing some volunteering with St Johns as well.

Nona So, they're both extra-curricular. Right?

I-2-S-Sam Yep, yep it's related [to the nursing degree] but informal learning. I took the initiative because if you don't, you won't get that support.

As illustrated in the example above, engaging and learning with multiple communities of practice corroborated the dynamic interplay of competence and experience, whereby the student perceived the need to gain more experience to enhance competence. Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner (2015) described this as “a process of alignment and realignment between competence and personal

experience” and that “it is mostly the regime of competence that is pulling and transforming their experience – until their experience reflects the competence of the community” (p. 14).

It was notable in the example that the students’ individual perceptions of her educational requirements, and her judgment of the respective affordances of different contexts, guided her learning and development decisions and choices. As the evidence showed, such choices were complementary to the programmed academic pathways and curricular activities. Also worthy to note is the student’s perception that the extra-curricular context provided the appropriate space for building confidence and for developing graduate attributes such as communication skills. In many respects, Sam’s engagement in extra-curricular activities was related to her future professional career, in which her intent was to nurture the development of knowledge, skills, attitudes and values she deemed useful in future practice.

It was clearly evident that personal agency played a part in engaging in extra-curricular activities, upon recognition that pursuing such activities could further enhance opportunities for developing professional skills, which can consequently build capacity for effective future professional practice. Indeed, the recurring theme across my research database was that the students with agentic capabilities (e.g., a high level of motivation, increased self-efficacy and self-direction) presented a greater level of commitment to enhancing professional competencies, which then aided the shaping of professional identity.

7.2.4 Lifewide learning as an emerging landscape for shaping future practice

For the duration of the program, the student-participants experienced several forms of learning, all at once and in different learning spaces involving curricular, co-curricular and extra-curricular activities. Their engagement exemplified *lifewide learning* (cf. Barnett, 2011), which this study found embodied the emerging landscape for shaping future practice. Each of the activities in this landscape had its own rhythm and, from time to time, the students’ commitments competed and overlapped. As some student-participants noted, it involved “managing my time” and learning to

“prioritise” where agentic capabilities were of utmost importance:

FG4-OC-S-Ali For someone like me, I work 25 hours a week, and I do Uni full time. So that's a lot of work. So when I come home from work, if I'm doing an afternoon shift, I'll finish at 10 o'clock at night. If I don't have Uni. the next day, I'll get into my pajamas, get into bed on my laptop and listen to the lectures that I missed that day that I didn't go to because I was at work. So I go to all my classes, but I don't go to lectures, because I can do that online.

Jackson et al., (2011) suggested that lifewide learning “is an inclusive concept intended to recognize that universities are complex enterprises for learning and that many people (not just teachers) contribute to students’ learning and development” (p. 272). The study found that the students curated their own learning opportunities, often influenced by their personal learning goals, and academic and social expectations. Hence, this emerging landscape for shaping future practice was in accord with the idea of lifewide learning (Barnett, 2011; Jackson, 2011), where learning occurs simultaneously in different spaces. Barnett (2011) noted that:

Such an idea throws into high relief issues precisely of spaciousness – of authorship, power, and boundedness; for characteristically pursued in different places under contrasting learning conditions, the various learning experiences will be seen to exhibit differences in authorship, power, and boundedness, as well as in other ways. In turn, such a conception of lifewide learning suggests a concept of liquid learning, a multiplicity of forms of learning and thence of *being* experienced by the learner contemporaneously. (p. 22; *emphasis in the original*).

Barnett (2011) further explained that, in turn, this concept of lifewide learning poses profound questions as to the universities’ learning responsibilities. Findings in the current research indicated that the meeting of the students’ learning goals and educational needs was personal in nature and, while some university-initiated processes mediated some aspects, it was equally through self-initiated measures that shaped personal outcomes. Student-participants pursued augmentation of their formal

educational experiences through informal learning opportunities, for some tacitly and for others purposefully. It was evident in the current investigation that, while the university had some responsibility towards the students' learning experiences, the totality of such experiences was a shared enterprise between the student and the university, between the student and their peers, and between the student and their communities.

In a landscape full of challenges, complexities and competing priorities it was apparent that the idea of lifewide education was a transformative concept for the individual participants involved, and higher education as a whole. As Jackson (2011) advised, given the *supercomplex* world in which we live and work, engaging in lifewide and lifelong learning is a necessity. In this process, the characteristics of individuals play a significant part.

7.3 The centrality of the person and his or her characteristics

The university culture clearly played a critical role in offering students a wide variety of academic and social opportunities to engage with new ideas, people and experiences. However, as noted previously, the students played the central role in capitalising on such opportunities, to grow and develop and be what they wanted to be. In exploring the "characteristics" category across the database, it showed that there was a range of personal qualities, age, gender, cultural and social groups among others, which created diversity across the program. Some examples of student background characteristics elicited from the data are outlined in Table 7.2 with selected representative comments.

Table 7.2 Examples of background characteristics

Theme	Example of evidentiary base
Achievement	I actually worked as a speech pathologist for 4 years...
Age and maturity	I'm 53, and it's a bit hard to get your head around things, because we have a lot of blonde moments (laughs). But you know what I mean. Senior moments, whatever you want to call them.
Aptitude	I've always been really good at communicating with people, that's always been a really strong point of mine.
Aspiration	I could see that the things that they were doing wasn't right and I just felt that I wanna be that person that is going to be there for my patient.
Economic background	My family is from a very poor background. Nobody in my family has ever completed tertiary education. None of them ever finished grade 10, let alone 11/12 and then to go onto University, so I'm the first in my family to do that.
Educational background	... when I was doing my EEN, I had an experience where I did my aged care clinical placement and there was a particular female patient that was dying.
Ethnic background	Yeah, I'm a registered Nurse. I worked 3 years in the hospital in the Philippines.
Motivation	... my passion is in helping people, saving others lives, that's my motivation
Personality	I was too shy to ask the lecturer 'what is this, what is that?'. That would be my weakness...
Study approach	We listen, and then try to study it. Study it when we go home and memorise.

A student's development for professional practice was not merely the result of the opportunities provided by the university but rather the function of the quality of the student effort or involvement (cf. Astin, 1993). From the research data, it was evident that such effort was influenced and shaped by individual's background characteristics and interactions with agents of socialisation, with the impact mediated through social environments within and outside the institution. I did not deliberately ask for student-participants to describe their background characteristics; rather consistent with phenomenological inquiry such descriptions were illuminated in context of narratives when asked about specific experiences of preparing for professional practice.

Evident was the range of important background characteristics students brought to the university, which constituted predisposing and, to a certain extent, constraining forces on students' learning journey (cf. Weidman, 1989). One of the noticeable predispositions the students brought to the university was the way they approached learning. As illustrated elsewhere in this thesis, some students were predisposed to

forming and working in study groups, while other students joined online forums. Some students on the other hand were predisposed to working in solitude and employing strategies to which they were accustomed, such as memorisation, as the evidence below showed:

FG7-OC-S-Rina Yeah, we have to memorise those things.

Nona Give me an example of the things that you have to memorise.

FG7-OC-S-Rina Like, the vital signs, because we do vital signs at the moment. The pools, and things like that. The blood pressure, respiration rate.

Nona But wouldn't that be different for every patient? So which part do you memorise?

FG7-OC-S-Rina Yeah, but there's different range in every patient, we have to remember different range to different patient. If they're old or pregnant, the aged, athletes, adults.

FG7-OC-S-Vine It has different range, BP, they all have different range, you have to know the normal range in each individual.

Nona That's the bit that you memorise?

FG7-OC-S-Vine Yeah.

According to Weidman (1989) the socialisation process encourages students to evaluate and balance various normative influences in order to attain personal goals. He also noted that such process requires decisions about maintaining, redefining or changing attitudes, values, or aspirations held at the time of matriculation. Certainly, it was evident in the current investigation that the students were at the core of this process, adapting and adjusting to their multiple contexts, reinventing and transforming the self in autonomous and interdependent manner.

7.3.1 Influences on the decision to become a nurse

From the research data, the evidence showed that influences shaped the students decision to become a nurse. Students joined the program from all walks of life and with different motivations to pursue a career in nursing. In turn, the belief system related to these motivations and influences have had an impact in the students' learning journey. These motivations and influences have also shown to impact on the students' perceptions and expectations about the characteristics of nursing as a profession, and their experiences of learning nursing knowledge and practice. It is noteworthy that nearly all the student-participants acknowledged their belief of nursing as a caring profession and my analysis revealed that such belief influenced the students' heightened awareness of moral, ethical and responsible nursing practice. The thematic analysis revealed six qualitatively different motivations or influences for pursuing nurse education, as illustrated in Table 7.3.

Table 7.3 Examples of motivations and influences for undertaking nursing study

Theme	Example of evidentiary base
Belief about nursing as a caring profession	I really like helping people and looking after people and all that sort of stuff.
An experience of a medical episode	...my mum got diagnosed with breast cancer, and it was her nurse that made me want to be a nurse. Just the care that she gave mum was absolutely fantastic, and that's what made me want to do it, mum's breast cancer.
Flexibility to manage family and career	Flexibility of the shift work, and things like that to work around my children
Friends and family influence	I have a couple of close family members in the profession and so I was influenced by them.
Career change	I can see myself going further as a Nurse than what I could as a teacher
Career opportunities in nursing	Nursing has a lot of diversity; it's not just ward work. You can go into research, you can go into education, you can go into facilitation; you can go into oh gosh, it's endless what you can go into.

The data analysis demonstrated that caring was identified, enacted and experienced simultaneously in its professional and personal dimensions by nursing students. Professionally, students encountered curriculum content and accompanying pedagogical strategies that emphasised nursing as a profession predicated on the ethic of care. Students communicated their understanding of this ethic of care as professionally complex and multifaceted, and as underpinning professional decision-making at multiple levels, from individual interactions with patients to professional

accreditation documents highlighting nursing as a caring profession. Personally, students shared multiple examples of their respective feelings of compassion, concern and empathy in relation to individual patients and also with regard to their personal motivations for selecting and remaining in nursing as their chosen profession, as the narrative below exemplified:

FG7-DE-S-Year2 ...there was a patient who I saw on Friday and she was gone on Monday. And I was talking to my preceptor [Clinical Facilitator] about it, and I said, 'how do you deal with that?' Like, this is the first person I've ever experienced where she was there and now she's gone, and I was getting upset about it, and she said, 'if you stop getting upset then you should quit'. She said, 'you'll learn to deal with it better and better, but it's just the way it goes. It's there, you have to stare it in the face but go home and have a big cry about it, 'but if you stop caring then you should stop working'.

On a related note, this type of social interaction between the expert nurse and the nursing student demonstrated the consideration between technical action and praxis, whereby emotions and professional identity were duly acknowledged, seizing opportunities to create new and transformative future practices through reflection, dialogue, creativity and courage (cf. Kemmis & Trede, 2010).

7.3.2 Agentic capabilities in a hidden curriculum

As illustrated in Chapter 6, the critical features of the lived curriculum provided the building blocks to promote integrative learning experiences that encapsulated the epistemological (knowing), practical (doing and acting) and ontological (being and becoming) dimensions of student development, where various agents of socialisation from different domains of practice guided and supported the students initially. During this time, the evidence showed that, for many students, their agentic personal characteristic manifested as a self-regulated and self-motivated process, evident in the quality of their effort and involvement (cf. Astin, 1993). Indeed, from the research data, a common theme for the student-participants as regards personal qualities was

their agentic capabilities. As alluded to in the previous chapter, the latter relates to one's capability to use influence in one's own performance and the course of events by one's actions, or as Bandura (2012) put "In personal agency exercised individually, people bring their influence to bear on what they can control directly" (p. 12). Beliefs of self-efficacy to curate and pursue learning opportunities, for example, contributed significantly to how a number of student-participants engaged in simultaneous educational activities that shaped their educational experiences at university and beyond. As noted previously, nearly all student-participants pursued simultaneous learning opportunities and, while engaged in lifewide learning, most of them also held some form of employment. This mechanism of personal agency (cf. Bandura, 2012) is related to one's capabilities to exercise control over their own level of functioning. The findings suggested that such personal agency embodied an autonomous but collaborative learner, possessing high metacognitive control of learning, gained through engagement in educational activities with support processes from various agents of socialisation, like teachers and peers. The positive university culture and structures complemented individuals' agentic capabilities, which facilitated and sustained the continuous co-construction of meanings in the learning journey that occurred through enriched opportunities, meeting challenges, enacting shared ownership of the learning, and personal leadership.

The Program Accreditation Submission, referred to the term "independent learning", interpreted here as self-directed learning. However, there was no reference to notions of self-efficacy and self-regulation, which encapsulate the idea of personal agency. As a hidden curriculum, the development of agentic capabilities was encapsulated in different engagements in the activities within curricular, co-curricular and extra-curricular settings. And in these contexts, personal agency represented the students' ability for self-efficacy that built self-esteem as they progressed in the program and developed a sense of accomplishment. The finding suggested that, throughout the student learning journey, different levels of personal agency were at play, where personal control embodied the core belief that the student had power to affect changes by their action (cf. Bandura, 2000; 2012), for example, as regards responding to complex situations in clinical settings, or managing the challenging program of study and other competing priorities, such as family and work. This finding aligns with Bandura's (2012) assertion that through "self-awareness, they

reflect on their personal efficacy, the soundness of their thoughts and actions, the meaning of their pursuits, and...[as required] change existing life course patterns” (p. 8). Certainly, for a number of student-participants, self-efficacy prompted awareness of gaps in their learning or experience that enabled them to pursue educational activities in co-curricular as well as extra curricular contexts to augment their learning experiences of the lived curriculum.

In sum, the student and their characteristics are front and centre in the professional preparation enterprise illuminated in the research. The potency of the social environments within and outside the institution for influencing student growth and transformation appeared to rest in their ability to expose students to: diversity; agents of socialisation including peers to emulate or challenge currently held values, attitudes and beliefs; and opportunities to explore (cf. Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005).

7.4 Impacts of domain-specific pedagogies on professional formation

The findings presented thus far demonstrated that the student-participants engaged in a variety of educational activities that involved personal, interpersonal and cultural processes, and required boundary negotiation at many levels of students’ developing identities. By engaging in cultural-historical, domain-specific activities and practices, the processes of socialisation enabled students to traverse the landscape of professional formation. As revealed in the current investigation, the emerging landscape of professional formation embodied domain-specific pedagogies, namely: situated pedagogy; participative pedagogy; and transformative pedagogy. Such pedagogies built the students’ capacity to develop and cultivate disciplinary ways of knowing (epistemological element), doing and acting (praxis element) and being and becoming (ontological element). The students’ engagement in diverse social settings, in turn, facilitated the transition from a layperson to an increasingly confident and competent professional.

7.4.1 Developing disciplinary ways of knowing through situated pedagogy

As demonstrated in the previous chapter, developing ways of *knowing* occurred in different pedagogical encounters. That is to say, the knowledge developed in lectures was built upon during tutorials, as well as the virtual learning environment,

where students continued to engage in ways of *thinking* in the discipline, and connecting these to *doing and acting* during laboratory classes. It is also noteworthy that in today's technology-rich educational landscape, the evidence suggested that, through video recorded lectures, students had the ability to access experts' knowledge, repeatedly if they so wish, and at their own time, to augment ways of *knowing* and acquiring disciplinary understanding. The study found that the curricular learning experiences in lecture, tutorial, laboratory and virtual spaces formed a cohesive whole, which supported the students' preparation for clinical placement and beyond.

It was evident from the interview and participant-observation data that the pedagogical encounters experienced by student-participants concerned the teacher modelling expert thinking and professional practice that enabled students to develop theoretical knowledge and to acquire disciplinary understanding. Some student-participants described experiences that involved the lecturer illustrating and unpacking what they know as expert clinicians, discussing how they come to know and initiating imaginations of the landscape of nursing practice through the sharing of personal and professional stories, in context of theoretical concepts being presented. Such learning experiences were critical for students' professional formation, as they influenced ways of *knowing* in a meaningful fashion, whereby commitment and passion for the discipline were demonstrated to students as they shared personal and professional experiences. This type of pedagogical encounter aligned with Brown, Collins and Duguid's (1989) description of situated learning, when they explained that meaningful learning will only take place if it is embedded in the social and physical context within which it will be used. The narrative below below described an example of meaningful learning opportunities, experienced through situated pedagogy:

I2-DE-S-Taylor Well, [Lee] introduced himself and said, "we're going to talk about CF [cystic fibrosis]". He said he knew the two gentlemen, the clowns, personally. He talked about all of history with them, and he started telling us more in depth knowledge, and you could hear that he was passionate about it, the way he was talking, he was getting excited, he was getting

enthusiastic. And it made me more enthusiastic, seeing someone can get so happy and content with the lungs and CF studies, it gets you more motivated to get in there and give a bit more... It's real. It stuck with you, rather than someone just reading from a PowerPoint. The way he was saying it, it really stuck with you and got you thinking about it ... he talked about his personal history, his personal experiences, and he talked through all that, and that gave us a bit more in depth knowledge about his personal experiences, and how it can relate to us working in the field.

What can be deduced from this, and similar evidence, following the situated learning approach was that the teacher-directed discourse facilitated the development of disciplinary understanding, by modelling ways of thinking and performing through experiential accounts, which provided an avenue for students to access expert thinking embodied in situated practice. Put another way, the students were engaged in apprenticeship in thinking with the lecturer modelling ways of *knowing* and how the ideas were enacted in professional practice (cf. Rogoff, 2008). A number of student-participants certainly spoke of this epistemology, of similar situated modelling approach involving different lecturers, the critical aspect of which was the storytelling discourse used in presenting theoretical concepts situated in real world clinical practice, as another example below showed:

FG4-OC-S-Ali [Name withheld] still works full time at the [Name withheld] Hospital, so she'll come in and tell us what happened at work, and we'll be doing something in prac, and she'll be like 'oh, well this happened this time' ... she was telling us about this little kid that came in to the ER, and he came in, because kids drop really fast, and they can really recover so much faster as well, and his BGL was really low, and she said that they put him in bed and had all these cords attached to him, ready to go in theatre because something was wrong, and 10 minutes later he sat up, and he was like 'can I have some ice cream?', and he was all happy, like he was fine. And that was teaching us, you

know, if someone comes into the hospital and they're presenting with symptoms, it's what behind those symptoms is what's important. It's not just important to take the symptoms, like the blood pressure and everything, but it's the why has this happened. It's learning what's behind those doors that you don't see that you can also make better, to make sure that the patient in the long run is still going to be OK.

The evidence suggested that the student-participants benefited from this type of situated pedagogy using storytelling. Moon and Fowler (2007) explained that pedagogical encounters which encapsulate storytelling include critical incident analysis, scenarios or case studies drawn from real experiences, all of which offer diverse opportunities for learning, reflection and critical thinking. Such pedagogical encounters showcased professional education as embodied in the teacher, a master-learner and an expert, who was teaching and modelling what s/he had learned, and sharing their intellectual and professional expertise, as evident:

I1-FT-T-Lee Yeah. So, you impart knowledge by talking about previous experience with patient case studies. Actually talking through that real episode that you've had with the person. So today I went through a case study which was based on a real patient that I've nursed in the past, and my experiences with that patient, the things that I successfully assessed, and the things that I wasn't overly clear about and why in my assessment of them, my response time and whether it was appropriate, and whether there was more things we could have done for the patient ... You talk about the discharge planning that goes on with that patient, and whether we were actually able to take that patient from a critically ill state to a point where we could send them home reasonably well, and the answer to that was yes, but you're showing them how you got there. So you're sharing your experiences. It's very hard, theoretically, to share that with them; it would be much better if we could take it to the bedside with the real patient and talk them through it, and

really show them what we're talking about, but you do that with the best that you can using some visual imagery, and you're using some diagrams on white boards, and you'll go through and look at charts and results from the patient to show them what you were talking about, and why you took that action.

The pedagogical encounter provided scaffolding for understanding theoretical concepts, with teachers recognising the need to situate the learning of the concepts in the way that they are used in real life. Lee's class, which I also observed multiple times illustrated the value of storytelling when used as a situated pedagogical tool to elicit critical thinking and develop sound clinical judgment:

I1-FT-T-Lee

At some point with that case study, I will stop and I will get them to critically think themselves, do some group work, do some individual work, think through, for example, signs and symptoms. What would be some early cues vs late cues here with this component of the case study? What should we be considering as Nurses? Get them to brainstorm and think about it, put themselves into that picture, that situation that I was in. So that they come back, and are they giving the responses I was looking for, are they reinforcing what I want them to know and confirming that they understand.

My analysis revealed that the approach that embodied the situated pedagogy in the classroom not only guided the students to think critically but also showed them ways to develop clinical reasoning and clinical judgment abilities. As the evidence in this study illustrated, the curricular learning spaces such as lectures and tutorials were a useful starting point for *knowing* theoretical concepts, i.e. a space for concepts to be laid out, explained and expounded, and for weaving contexts to nursing ideas through situated coaching and modelling. The approach helped students take into account diverse situations in healthcare and nursing practice. Such situated pedagogy was focused on *contextualisation* and, as Benner and her colleagues (2009) pointed out, nurses “confront multiple levels of context, from physiology to the family and social world of the patient” (p. 46), therefore, “knowing *what* and *how* is not enough; the

must also know *when*” (p. 48; *emphasis in the original*). Learning what, when and how to act in the situation from a nursing perspective was strongly emphasised in courses observed and as revealed in interview data, whereby clinical reasoning was a key focus, along with dispositional aspects, such as holistic care, moral obligations and patient advocacy.

7.4.2 Cultivating disciplinary ways of doing and acting through participative pedagogy

Revealed in the study was the integrative nature of the student learning experience, whereby the pedagogical encounters in different learning spaces complemented each other and exemplified the engagement in active learning processes, influenced by individual academic effort. This included working independently and in collaboration with others, involving dialogue to interpret information, and to apply theoretical concepts and related ideas from lectures, as well as from assigned readings and/or research. The learning activities epitomised engagement in real problem-solving processes that involved critical thinking, negotiating and reasoning within the dynamics of a team, and drawing upon theoretical knowledge to construct practical knowledge. Such participative pedagogy facilitated engagement in domain-related practice in a practice field setting, whereby the students were actively engaged in analytical and problem solving processes, *doing and acting* like a nurse, to facilitate case-based discussions and interactions:

I1-OC-S- Alex I think it was the second one, FILA [a tool for clinical assessment and problem solving]... Yeah, the one that my group had was looking at was the Code of Ethics, and so we were looking at what are the Facts (F), what are the ideas (I), what learning activity is there (L), what we can do to help us learn about that action (A)... I think that actual process of pulling apart a problem is very valuable... what do we need to do, what are the things behind it... but I'm glad that [teacher] said at the end, 'you can see how this section is very difficult', and she was talking about specifically about that 'idea', filling

out that section of the PBL [problem-based learning] is difficult.

The teacher-participant observed encouraged students to be “critical and holistic” as they interpreted assigned clinical situations, and reinforced their “role as a patient advocate”. Such processes educated students about “practicing interpretively” (Fish, 2010, p. 195), which embodied the clinical reasoning and clinical decision making practices in professional settings. Here, the students were directly and actively participating in the practice of the discipline, albeit simulated. It was evident that the focus of participative pedagogy was on student learning in authentic contexts, rather than focusing on what the teacher did to impart knowledge (cf. Biggs & Tang, 2011). The students or their groups were enabled to pursue their learning agenda, based on needs, asking questions during class time as well as online, in the course of solving problems and decision-making.

My analysis revealed that participative pedagogy was also reflected in a number of assessment schemes utilised in the program, aimed at promoting assessment that equip students to learn and assess themselves beyond the immediate task (cf. Boud, 2010). Such assessment approach helps students to take more responsibility for their own learning and for monitoring future directions. Some teacher-participants acknowledged that, where students were concerned, assessment more or less defined the actual curriculum. A teacher-participant described her assessment approach designed to scaffold the engagement in authentic learning opportunities and to help students monitor their academic performance:

I2-FT-T-Penny The first assessment is an online quiz with 20 multiple choice questions that not only indicate progress over the first four weeks of the semester, but introduce the students to an online environment and interpreting multiple choice format as a formative exercise towards the final end of semester exam – this can then direct which areas can be further fleshed out. The second assessment is an assignment based on students watching a studio production of an interview between a nurse (me) and a ‘patient’ who has multiple health needs, and formulating their

clinical response. This authentic assessment incorporates the application of concepts learnt in the previous ten weeks to a 'real' clinical situation in order to integrate evidence-based practice and critical thinking. The final assessment is a restricted end of semester exam that combines multiple choice and short answer type questions, based on application of concepts learnt throughout the semester to specific case studies and scenarios that requires understanding and clinical judgement capabilities.

Some student-participants recognised the lasting and transformative impact of approaches that embodied participative pedagogy to their learning and development:

FG6-OC-S-Shae None of us are talking about remembering the assignments and remembering the exams. If you don't remember that you remember the experience and how it made you feel. It was never ask and answer, it was: "and did you think of this and let me tell you a story about x" Not just taking the textbook answer, not just wanting you to spit out what you've just read in the textbook but actually your own opinion.

As the teacher-participant Penny explained, in her classroom, participation and engagement in learning processes was "no longer about simply passing the exam, but about learning how to be a clinician".

7.4.3 Nurturing disciplinary ways of being and becoming through transformative pedagogy

As demonstrated in Chapter 6, the experiences in various learning spaces, particularly in laboratories and clinical settings, provided authentic contexts and opportunities for the student-participants to perform nursing knowledge and skills and to observe and demonstrate the attitudes and values of a professional nurse. Benner and her colleagues (2009) noted that in the formation of nurses, they encounter their own coping in the context of identifying difficult life experiences and, hence, "active learning and emphasis on formation are so central to professional nursing education"

(p. 39). Here, being and becoming started by locating ones identity and a place in the domain of practice:

FG6-OC-S-Year2 The lecturers told us straight away that we are nurses. And because of that, you feel good about yourself. You're not just a nobody. You're a somebody. And that was important to me because of what was going on in my life at that time. I now felt I had a place, and because I had a place I had a direction to go, and I know by doing this and this, I will have this at the end.

The student-participants in the current study also described rich opportunities that allowed them to continue to learn, develop their practice and articulate in both as individual nurse and members of a health care team. The narrative below provided an insight into the types of learning experiences during clinical placements, which involved an experienced nurse modelling professional ways of *thinking*, *doing* and *acting* that positively influenced the student learning and formation:

I2-OC-S-Reily You learn the 12 themes [of holistic care] and we do research assignments on it, but it's like you can't really relate to it until you've applied it to an actual patient. Maybe that's just me, but for me being able to actually apply my theory that I've learnt here to actual practice is what helped me further... So, for example the Registered Nurse that I followed was very professional. I admire her for how she approached this situation. She got the daughter of the patient that was passing away, and she had a really accurate and concise conversation where she said, 'your mother is deteriorating, this is what's gonna happen', and really did a thorough and holistic interview with her, and I just, that was really interesting to observe. Because we learnt about holistic care, where there's the 12 things of holistic care, and sometimes you'll be like, 'how are you supposed to include all 12 for every single patient?' And they tell us that Nurses mainly focus on the social and the physical because that's what's there, but it's also everything,

especially the spiritual, emotional, gender, all those sorts of things. It's very important, so it was good to see the holistic care from that perspective... I learnt her confidence. She knew what to say, she knew the right words to say, and I was like, 'wow'. It's from experience obviously...

Indeed, the student-participants' descriptions of pedagogical encounters as experienced in different clinical settings suggested that the experiences of working closely with experienced nurses enabled them to make sense of their identity as a nurse, that progressively built capacity to learn the necessary knowledge, skills, values and attitudes for professional socialisation, for engaging in relationships with health care staff, and with patients and families. This finding certainly lends support to the notion that the nature of the professional context influences identity formation and affects what knowledge is developed, used and how (Benner et al., 2009; Colby & Sullivan, 2009, Rogoff, 2008). Importantly, it emphasises the interdependence of context in developing theoretical knowledge, practical know how and moral understandings (Benner et al., 2009; Shulman, 2005a). And, in this professional context, the role of experts in supporting and guiding nursing students cannot be underestimated, particularly in the process of preparing for clinical learning experience:

I1-CE-T-Morgan I've used things for my Nursing practice of how I would include of those sort of things in my practice as I'm doing that procedure. So, yeah, for instance, I showed them how I would discuss it with the patient, and then encouraging them because they're working with dummies. I'd encourage one person [student] to act as the patient so they've actually got someone to talk to, and they can get that personal perspective. I find that sometimes when they're acting as the patient they can pick up things on how the other person is feeling and how that might feel... I'm trying to mould them into what I perceive—what was taught to me—they should be acting towards the patients, and I'm trying to get across to them the importance of the person.

Many student-participants certainly felt that familiarity and interaction with experienced nurses and their Clinical Facilitators facilitated the building of confidence and fostered their ability to take initiative in clinical situations while exposed to a variety of clinical tasks. This finding concurred with the view of sociocultural and professional education theorists (e.g., Dall’Alba, 2009; Lave, 1997) that the students’ transformation of the self— becoming a professional—is mediated in authentic contexts, involving communities of practice, where knowledge and skills can be appropriated.

7.4.3.1 Belongingness in the landscape of professional practice

Pedagogical encounters that situated the learning of disciplinary concepts in real-world contexts, e.g., through case studies and authentic stories during tutorials and laboratory classes, stimulated possibilities for students to imagine the landscape of nursing practice, and to picture their role in particular professional contexts as a future nurse. As evidenced, such imagination created relations of identification, indeed of professional identity identification, which were arguably as significant as those derived from engagement (cf. Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner, 2015):

FG5-OC1-S-Leila In class I was just, I was creating a story. I had no knowledge what it was actually about. When I went to the practical and see all those things in real, then I realised 'this is what it means', because when we just have a rough knowledge, or imagined it, and if hadn't ever seen those things, we wouldn't know how it looks like, you know ... It was very eye opening for me. I felt so empathic with the old people, you know. And what we were learning in class, we were just imagining those things, what people would be like, how delicate their skin would be. But when we saw it in real, it was really fascinating for me. Since being a student nurse, we need to do those things with the old people as well, and I experienced everything, that was wow, this was what we learned in class. ... The practical things help, yes. The placement helps and it feels like I really belong there.

Belongingness, according to Levett-Jones and Lathlean (2009), is a pre-requisite for students' clinical learning. However, decreased feelings of belongingness, especially in the early stages of socialisation in clinical settings, was reported by student-participants as presenting obstacles to learning opportunities and in fostering quality learning outcomes. Some student-participants reported feeling unwelcome and/or unsupported, resulting in them feeling disheartened and disconnected from the clinical setting, or feeling like an "outsider", which affected their self-confidence. Mezirow (1991) described this sense of alienation as forming part of a process of perspective transformation, which involved a number of phases. Table 7.4 outlines the phases of the perspective transformation cycle, adapted from Mezirow (1991, pp. 168-169).

Table 7.4 Phases of the perspective transformation cycle

Phase 1	A disorienting dilemma occurs
Phase 2	Self-examination with feelings of guilt or shame
Phase 3	Critical assessment of personal, professional, or cultural assumptions
Phase 4	Recognition that the process of discontentment and transformation can be shared, acknowledging that others have negotiated similar changes
Phase 5	Search for and commitment to new roles, relationships, and behaviours
Phase 6	Plan strategy to act on commitment
Phase 7	Acquire knowledge and skills for implementing strategies for action
Phase 8	Try and evaluate new roles and behaviours
Phase 9	Develop personal skill and confidence in new roles and relationships
Phase 10	Incorporate behavioural change into one's life based on the perspectives

Following Mezirow (1991), it was apparent that some student-participants experienced *disorienting dilemma*, such as uncertainty about their identity and belongingness in the clinical environment. A number of student-participants described their early clinical experiences very closely resembling some of the phases outlined above, as they spoke candidly about their predicament and the reflection,

planning and learning that ensued with the help from Clinical Facilitators and “some helpful nursing staff”. These processes facilitated empowered action.

The concept of taking action, as explained by Mezirow (1991), offered important insights in understanding these students’ experiences. Indeed, they reported that their confidence gradually grew while on clinical placement, whereby affirmation and feedback from preceptors, staff and patients were noted as of particular importance in their sense of belonging. In Mezirow’s (1991) view, experiencing disorienting dilemmas can become a trigger for deep learning for individuals or groups. The objective here is not about protecting students from these dilemmas and, as reported by students, it was about guiding and assisting them to reflect on their understanding and action, and build capacity to arrive at new understandings to better equip them for future practice – the transformation process. It was evident that, for these students, such transformation reified the process of *being* and *becoming* a professional nurse and sense of accomplishment:

FG6-OC-S-Year2 The first time I went [to clinical], I just felt like, 'what the hell am I doing here? I can't do this'. Then [recently] I had a chat to my preceptor and I don't know, I was doing something, putting a drip together one day, and she said, 'you know you're doing really well?', and I said, 'am I?'... and she was like, 'no, no you've improved a lot'.

Moreover, for many student-participants, the sense of belonging in communities of practice while on clinical placement was apparent, and nurtured a heightened appreciation of nursing as a caring profession. Indeed, the experience constantly tested their sense of professionalism, empathy and patient advocacy, for example:

FG6-OC-S-Year3 I was in the room when she first saw it [toe amputation], and she just burst into tears so I stayed with her, and she was talking all the stuff about suing the Doctor, and I said, 'I can't advise you on that', because she looked on me as her Nurse, but I'm glad that I was there, because she was just so upset and I was there for the next two weeks, and I saw her go through the cycle of grief for her toe... it's that personal connection with

the patient. The patient-nurse I really enjoy. I was glad I got to be there for her.

Many students in the current study also alluded to experiences where the pedagogical encounters during clinical placements afforded them the opportunity to not only link theory to practice but also to begin socialisation into the nursing culture. Through domain-specific pedagogies, the students experienced the process of socialisation into the history and language of the nursing profession, cultivating a sense of self in relation to community of practice (cf. Lave & Wenger, 1991). As students moved from one clinical placement to another, *being* and *becoming* a nurse was nurtured and supported in communities of practice, where the sense of identity came to include much that went into competent professional practice (cf. Loftus, 2010).

7.5 An integrative pedagogical model

The domain-specific pedagogies identified in the study – situated, participative and transformative – embodied the emerging landscape of professional formation. Based on empirical evidence, I have found that these pedagogies emphasised social engagements, with activities designed to enable students to participate progressively in the activities of the experienced professionals, rather than focusing only on cognitive processes and conceptual structures involved. In this integrative pedagogical model of educational processes, learning occurred through students actively *thinking*, *doing* and *acting* with the supporting help from those who have expertise. Figure 1 provides an illustrative interpretation of an integrative pedagogical model revealed in the current study.



Figure 7.8 An integrative pedagogical model from a sociocultural perspective

The student-participants, studying on campus and/or at a distance, navigated through various opportunities and challenges purposefully, as they engaged in educational activities and related disciplinary and personal interests as a means of achieving desired learning outcomes. Noticeable is an inseparable and mutually constituting structure of pedagogies, which facilitate and promote action that mediate the students' personal agency and transformation through ongoing participation in cultural (i.e., professional) activities. The evidence suggested that educating *for* professional practice constituted educating *about* professional practice and educating *in* professional practice. Here, prepositions did matter (cf. Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999 as cited in Reid, 2010), as educating *for* professional practice involved spatial, temporal, relational and corporeal aspects that characterised professional growth. Observed was that students actively participated in practice fields as they learned *about* professional practice. This involved learning activities in lectures and tutorials where professional ways of *thinking, doing* and *acting* were made visible through nursing stories, collaborative authentic tasks, questioning, and reflective dialogue, among others. In Year 1 and Year 2 of the program, students negotiated their learning paths between practice fields and communities of practice whilst participating and learning their craft *in* professional practice. This involved practice-based learning and co-participation starting

in simulated clinical settings in nursing laboratories, and then in authentic clinical settings.

Students navigated through these boundaries as they traversed the cultural context of professional education through their changing patterns of participation in practice. The findings demonstrated that the students participated in communities of practice, and worked alongside practitioners, moving incrementally toward full participation in the sociocultural practices of their discipline, transforming the self and acquiring a sense of confidence and identity in their professional field. Indeed, engaging in professional practice in a sustained manner has shown that the transformative experiences of *being and becoming* in this context facilitated the students' transition into professional practice, and progressively evident membership in the discipline. It was also evident that, in the final year (Year 3) whilst students were engaged in intensive clinical placements, the practice-based experiences enriched their capacity to move towards the centre of professional practice, increasingly able to *think* and *perform* autonomously, within their scope of practice.

7.6 Chapter summary

In this research, the analysis was based on the student's level of participation or involvement and their experiences in the given sociocultural activity. Such participation took many forms, such as engagement in curricular or academic work, involvement in co-curricular activities, participation in extra-curricular interests, interaction with academic and professional staff and so forth. The students' personal characteristics and their involvement in these activities were central to processes of transformation for professional practice. Noteworthy are the students' participation in simultaneous educational opportunities in different learning spaces, which reflected congruence with the notion of lifewide learning. The idea of lifewide learning highlighted the potential for drawing learning from the diverse experiences that a learner may encounter during their tertiary education experience (cf. Jackson et al., 2011).

The conclusion drawn was that discipline-based educational activities promoted and shaped individual and student group behaviour and definition of professional

culture. From the perspective of both teachers and students, meaning making was a shared process, grounded in the authentic practices of the nursing profession. In such a context, integrative domain-specific pedagogies played a critical role in mediating the types of activities in which the students took part, allowing them to develop the language of the discipline as they experienced the practices and values of their chosen profession. The learning experiences modelled for the students' future professional practice by providing authentic points of reference for developing disciplinary ways of *knowing, doing and acting*, and *being and becoming*.

The next and final chapter, Chapter 8, sums up the research findings. In synthesising the findings, the chapter presents a model of preparing for professional practice from a socio-cultural perspective. The chapter then outlines the significance of the study and future work in this area of inquiry.

Chapter 8 | Synthesising the findings and conclusions

Education is the most powerful weapon, which you can use to change the world.

~ Nelson Mandela (1918-2013)

8.1 Chapter introduction

The knowledge constructed in Chapter 6 and 7 emerged from the phenomenological analysis of the case involving the sociocultural context of nurse education, on the basis of which I endeavoured to explain the processes of student learning and development, and the relevance of their engagement in educational activities in this context. The idea of preparing for professional practice has been predominantly grounded in this study in narratives and concomitant analytical interpretations, primarily to reflect upon the lived experiences of the participants in the case, and to uncover the essences of their lived experiences as regards the phenomenon under study.

The aim of this final chapter is to extrapolate and discuss the significance of the research to and the implications of the study for, students' preparation for professional practice as a developmental construct. I will do this by synthesising the findings and by situating the study and the results within the substantive area of human learning and development from a sociocultural perspective, with respect to RQ3. In the second section of this final chapter, Section 8.2, I present key findings from the two data analysis chapters, Chapter 6 and Chapter 7. The significance of the findings concerning the preparation of students for professional practice is highlighted in a conceptual model that emerged in the study, whereby the relevance of Vygotsky's (1978, 1981) developmental theory as a conceptual framework is affirmed, as juxtaposed with this study's findings. In the third section, Section 8.3, I explore the significance that such findings may have for contributing to conceptual, methodological, policy and practical knowledge about the research problem, its theoretical framework and its research design. The fourth and final section, Section 8.4, is reflective and also future oriented by way of positioning the preparation for professional practice within the site of future research upon exploring the opportunities as well as potential challenges facing various stakeholders.

8.2 The sociocultural nature of preparing for professional practice

As was indicated in Chapter 5, findings were developed by analysing and interpreting the research data within the process of the hermeneutic circle, in which I moved from the whole to the individual parts and from the individual parts to the whole and emerging understanding of the phenomenon under review. In doing so, the research findings revealed elements and features that embodied the preparation of students for professional practice. These findings were based on an exhaustive exploration of the research data, including reading and re-reading participants' narratives and interpretations, upon which the first order construct encapsulating the key themes (*elements* – first order constructs) was illuminated. My understandings and interpretations were likewise illuminated as second order constructs were formulated and clustered into sub-themes (*features* – second order constructs), and elaborated to capture the description of each theme, and to reveal the *essence* of the lived experience. Such lived experience embodied a rich and diverse social culture exemplifying critical elements that influenced and enriched the preparation of students for professional practice. Please see Chapter 5, Sub-section 5.6.2, which explains the notions of first order and second order constructs, as suggested by Ajawwi and Higgs (2007).

The two results chapters, Chapter 6 and 7 have indeed laid the groundwork and elicited empirical evidence for demonstrating the sociocultural nature of preparing for professional practice. The complex and lengthy discussion within these two preceding chapters encapsulated the essence of the necessary understandings by which to frame a conceptual model of preparing for professional practice from a sociocultural perspective. This chapter addresses that latter task, in addressing Research Question Three: *What factors influenced and enriched the preparation for professional practice as they have emerged?* In response to this final research question, the investigation uncovered four themes, as shown in Table 8.1, which embodied the essence of lived experiences of preparing for professional practice, as was revealed in the analysis in Chapters 6 and 7, and, in turn, represented an aggregate of participants' interpretations. Indeed, the theoretical understanding unpacked in Chapters 6 and 7 characterised the essence of professional practice preparation, viewed from a sociocultural lens. It represented specific elements and features of preparing for professional practice that embodies the essence of profession practice preparation. Thus, this conceptual model is presented as a sociocultural model of preparing for professional practice as described in Table 8.1, reflected upon in

Table 8.2 and captured illustratively in Figure 8.1 with concomitant narratives that explain the model in considerable depth, which was empirical in its orientation. Indeed, Chapter 8 provides evidence-based narratives of components of the model that make up the features, characteristics and sociocultural nature of preparing for professional practice. The sociocultural view is the sense in which the conceptual model is offered.

Table 8.1 The essence of professional practice preparation from a sociocultural perspective

1. The student and his/her personal qualities influenced educational outcomes – My analysis revealed that the student's personal qualities influenced the nature of the student's engagement in educational and social activities and, in turn, influenced her or his learning and cognitive development through the exerted autonomous and interdependent efforts.
 2. Bounding aspects of regulatory importance influenced the make up and administration of an academic program – My analysis revealed that different levels of regulatory compliance influenced the manner in which a program for professional practice preparation was operationalised at the university, and impacted on the direction and quality of the educational experience.
 3. The social environment influenced and enriched the learning journeys of students – My analysis revealed that the university and the people within it have histories and that, in turn, the institutional culture that embodied the social environment influenced the activities and interactions that occurred at many levels, i.e., within the department and its programs and courses, and within the institution.
 4. Domain-specific pedagogies influenced and enriched the professional formation of students – My analysis revealed that preparing for professional practice drew upon domain-specific pedagogies, which concerned not only an epistemological and practical matter that involved issues of practitioner knowledge but also an ontological matter that pertained to learning professional ways of being where the focus was on becoming.
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All four themes or essences were interrelated and they represent key elements that influenced and enriched the preparation of students for professional practice from a sociocultural perspective. Each theme contributed to a deeper understanding of the significance of the experiences of professional practice preparation at university and beyond. Not all the elements within these themes were present in every participants' experiences of preparing for professional practice. Rather, they represented an aggregate of all the participants' interpretations and features they experienced, and reflected upon as embodying their experiences of preparing for professional practice. What follows is a further unpacking of the findings, encapsulated in the theoretical understanding of professional practice preparation through sociocultural means.

8.2.1 Towards a theoretical understanding of professional practice preparation

The key findings outlined in Table 8.1 showed four distinct and interconnected themes and, upon deeper analysis, they revealed specific elements and features that influenced and enriched the preparation of students for professional practice from a sociocultural perspective. At the core of these four findings was the understanding that learning and development were inextricably tied to their context and to the social relations and practices within those context, in which a transformative process occurred through participation in the activities of the various communities in which the students took part. The students' sense of personal agency, their sense of place, and their sense of belonging in educational spaces were found to promote simultaneous memberships of diverse communities of practice, where they employed their own engagement strategies in various activities. However, it is important to note that, from a sociocultural viewpoint, learners need to be supported by more experienced members of communities of practice who can guide them through processes of knowing, doing and acting, and being and becoming, and assist them make sense of what is happening (cf. Loftus, 2010).

Indeed, central to the assertion being advanced in this thesis is the belief that “cognition is distributed among individuals, that knowledge is socially constructed through collaborative efforts to achieve shared objectives in cultural surroundings, and that information is processed between individuals and the tools and artifacts provided by culture” (Salomon, 1993, p. 1). My analysis revealed that developing

professional competence in nursing was not about memorising facts and principles through specific coursework, but instead that it involved a social negotiation as students integrated curricular experiences with professional activities during diverse clinical placements, and as they collaborated with practitioners and peers. Students fostered understanding and embraced the process of being nurses by attending on-campus classes, undertaking online activities, doing reading and research, engaging in co-curricular and extra-curricular activities, and integrating these learning experiences into practice in clinical settings. The openness of relationships in these contexts facilitated germane autonomous and interdependent modes of learning, which necessitated interactions among peers and connections with agents of socialisation, including contacts and collaboration with professionals that, in turn, promoted a sense of community within the students' academic, professional and social life. Such relational interactions defined the students' ability to share, model and scaffold experiences, to collaborate on the joint construction of knowledge and understanding, and to open self and others to embrace opportunities for personal and collective transformations. The implication of these findings echoed Bandura's (2009) notion of personal and collective agency, and Billet's (2010) assertion pertaining to agentic personal epistemology, whereby the development of such agency will have to be engendered in students to build their capacity for monitoring their learning effectively. In this context, opportunities for community engagement will also have to be optimised, such that participation in communities would foster reciprocal learning, guidance and growth (Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner, 2015).

Table 8.2 provides a snapshot of key aspects that influenced and enhanced the preparation of students for professional practice.

	Element	Feature	Essence of lived experience
Core Aspects	The student and his/her personal qualities	Background - prior learning, ethnicity, aspiration, socioeconomic status Characteristics - preferences, aptitudes, values, beliefs, Personal agency - self-efficacy, self-motivation, self-direction self-management, self-reflection Collective agency - interactive, collaborative, interdependent	The student and his/her personal qualities at the core of educational experience, whereby their personal qualities and the contemporary institutional culture blended, which influenced the nature of the student's engagement in learning and teaching, and educational outcomes. Learning and cognitive development were significantly affected by the individual's qualities, efforts they exerted, and the culture within their social environments.
Bounding Aspects	Regulatory compliance	Graduate Qualities – institutional compliance Competency Standards – professional compliance AQF Levels Criteria – sectoral compliance TEQSA – quality and standards compliance	Regulatory processes at different levels –institutional, professional and sectoral compliance, which informed educational practices that, in turn, influenced the direction and quality of the student learning experience.
The Social Environmental Aspects	University culture	Lived curriculum Agents of socialisation Pedagogical encounters Learning spaces	The university culture reflected the engagement in educational activities, in which individual context interacted with peer context within practice fields and communities of practice settings, the processes for which encapsulated spatial and relational factors.
	Domain-specific pedagogies	Situated pedagogy Participative pedagogy Transformative pedagogy	The educational experiences were characterised by domain-specific pedagogies that were inherently relational and conversational, and which demonstrated the social and experiential nature of learning and development.
	Educational activities	Curricular activities Co-curricular activities Extra-curricular activities	Educational activities were measures of student engagement, whereby the student guided participation in formal curricular activities complemented their autonomous engagement in co-curricular and extra-curricular activities.
The Student Achievements	Professional formation	Knowing (epistemology) Doing and acting (praxis) Being and becoming (ontology)	Intentional student engagement and immersion in intellectual, practical and transformational modes of being exemplified the students' professional formation and transformation, developed and nurtured over time, as students undertook a range of increasingly complex educational activities and professional responsibilities.

From a sociocultural theoretical viewpoint, preparing for professional practice was clearly an inevitable process of socialisation, which involved an inexorable interplay between the personal and the social, and which symbolised personal and collective growth. As the four interrelated themes outlined in Table 8.2 show, people and culture intersected and came together in the pursuit of shared endeavours. The mediating aspects of these relational and communicative endeavours were centred on educational and discipline specific activities. Developing competence and professional transformation during professional practice preparation was therefore best conceived as the individual's ability to participate as part of the university culture in general and within the various systems in nurse education in particular.

What follows is an illustrative demonstration and discussion of the model of professional practice preparation that emerged based on sociocultural theoretical analyses.

8.2.2 A sociocultural model of professional practice preparation

Based on the research findings and upon teasing out the elements and features that influenced and enriched the students' preparation for professional, I now present a diagrammatic representation of a conceptual model of preparing for professional practice from a sociocultural perspective. Figure 8.1 illustrates the interconnections of the specific elements that influence and enrich the preparation of students for professional practice derived from my empirical evidence and my research findings.

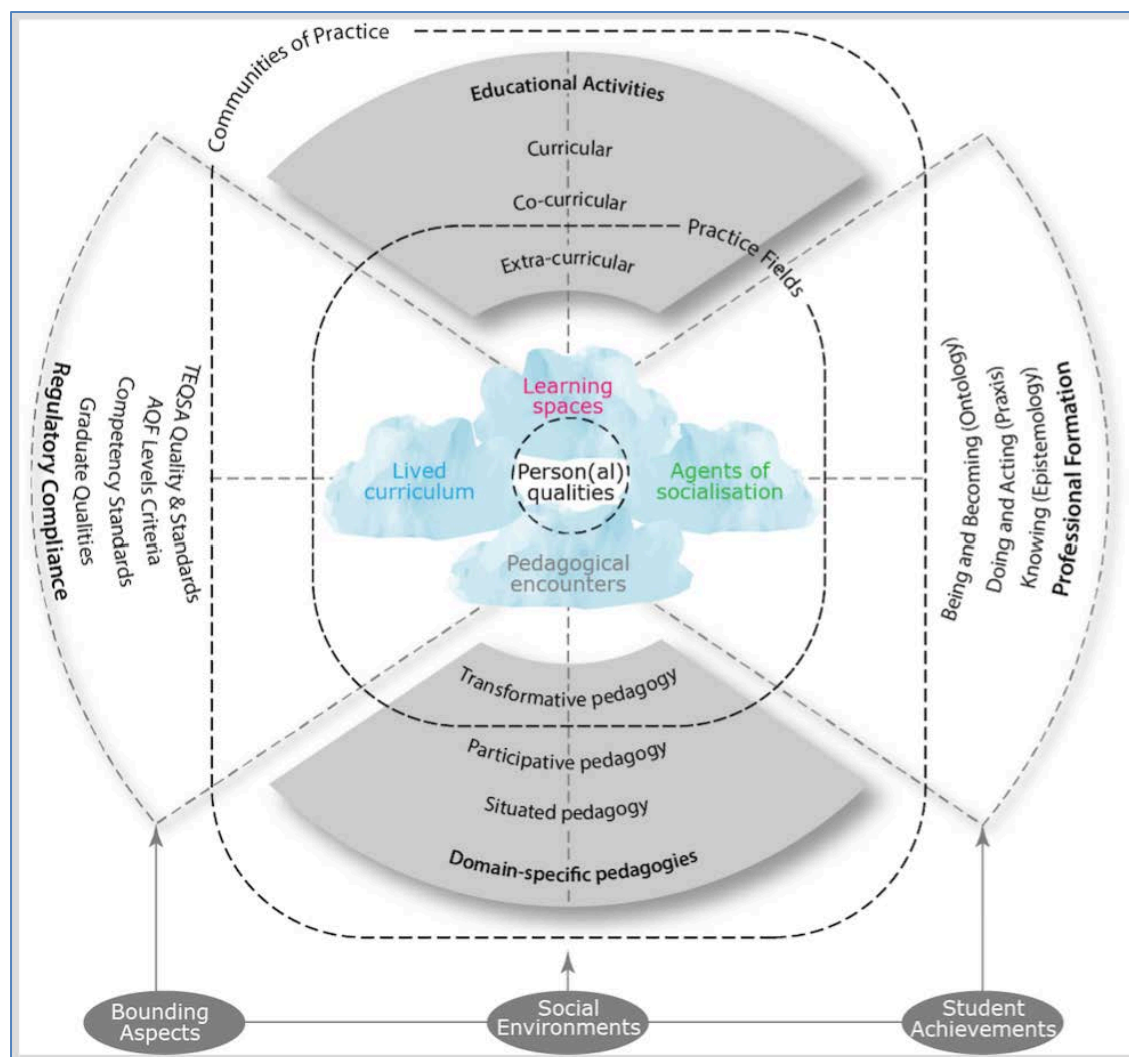


Figure 8.1 Diagrammatic representation of a sociocultural model of preparing for professional practice from my research findings

The analysis and interpretation of my research data found that the activities and practices were a complex endeavour concerning the preparation of students for their chosen profession. Hence, it was not surprising that the identified elements and the associated features were not mutually exclusive. Students did not encounter or experience each element in a linear or isolated fashion. On the other hand, their lived experiences suggested that these elements were inherently interconnected, interacting with one another continuously as they took part in various activities in different educational and professional settings.

Each component in the model, as described in Table 8.2 and demonstrated

illustratively in Figure 8.1, is elaborated in the following sections, to provide a distinctive logic from an empirical standpoint for understanding and responding to the research problem: *What does it mean to prepare for professional practice?*

8.2.2.1 Core aspects | The student and his/her qualities

Inherent in a sociocultural model of preparing for professional practice is student learning and development whereby the students were central to the educational experience – they enacted what was required for their learning and development. Indeed, the students' educational outcomes were influenced by their personal qualities and, consequently, their involvement and efforts that they exerted. Hence, as is illustrated in Figure 8.1, the student and his/her personal qualities were at the core of professional socialisation processes. Another significant finding of this research concerning the role of the self in preparing for professional practice was that the student-participants were consciously learning to become nurses through theoretical and practical pathways experienced at university and beyond. But they were also consciously, and at times subconsciously, acquiring knowledge about how to *become a caring nurse*, often driven by their personal characteristics and understanding of, and their commitment to, nursing as a caring profession. Meleis (2007) aptly pointed out that there is “knowledge for the sake of knowledge” and “knowledge to provide better nursing care for people and enhance their well-being” (p. 458).

In this context, most student-participants drew upon their agentic capabilities that engendered in many students the ability to engage in monitoring their learning effectively and to seek out learning opportunities autonomously (c.f. Billett, 2010). Here, reflection and reflexivity played an important part in nurturing their professional growth. Reflexivity went beyond reflection whereby students focused on their learning and professional development in the context of clinical events that were experienced, and they were given feedback and/or they sought feedback from experienced practitioners following reflection and critical self-assessment. This developed individuals' need to strive for self-awareness and the continuous monitoring of their professional practice in order to address emerging difficulties and/or limitations. However, self-assessment is not easily acquired or developed. Hence, the significance of gaining an understanding of this theme is that interdependence (e.g., guidance and feedback from experienced others), which helps to inform one's ability to judge one's actions and decisions, is

complementary to the autonomy needed by developing individuals as they prepare for professional practice.

8.2.2.2 Bounding aspects | Regulatory compliance

In a university context, the preparation of students for professional practice was oriented towards the educational activities of students, supported by various mechanisms that built students' capacity to achieve graduate outcomes. As was reported in Chapter 6, ESU like all other universities in Australia was a self-accrediting entity whose practices were governed internally by the Academic Board. Also worthy to note is that, as discussed in Chapter 6, TEQSA is committed to promoting processes for assuring quality in the higher education sector. Hence, in preparing students for professional practice, quality educational outcomes were at the forefront of the University's educational goals, which were informed by the national qualifications pathways policy (i.e., the Australian Qualification Framework, e.g., AQF Level 7 Criteria), professional standards (e.g., the ANMAC Competency Standards as key drivers of the Bachelor of Nursing curricula, and the Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia as the accrediting body) and university policy and procedures (e.g., graduate qualities, program accreditation, and related policies and procedures, such as the graduate attributes).

These bounding aspects and the concomitant regulatory requirements and expectations typically influence the make up and design of an accredited program and, in this phenomenological case study, the evidence showed that the program outcomes and the course learning objectives were mapped to the relevant policies and standards. Such mapping ensured, for example, transparency in certification and articulation processes, such as the recognition of the prior learning of EEN and EN professionals. The significance of this finding pertains to understanding that the different levels of regulatory compliance (i.e., sectoral, professional and institutional) informed the educational practices at ESU and, in turn, they influenced the direction and quality of the student learning experience.

8.2.2.3 The social environment aspects | University culture, educational activities, domain-specific pedagogies

The social environments comprised a number of elements that influenced and enhanced the preparation of students for professional practice, specifically: the university culture; educational activities; and domain-specific pedagogies. The university culture was characterized by the: lived curriculum; learning spaces; agents of

socialisation; and pedagogical encounters, which blended with or super-imposed on one another. As shown in Figure 8.1, the cloud-like blending represented the relationships within and across the university culture whereby each feature interacted with and influenced the others. Unlike a Venn diagram with defined borders, the dynamics of a cloud-like blending flowed into one another and reflected the modalities of interconnectedness of process and outcomes.

The relevance of this interpretation lies in the findings that the social nature of student learning and development, as exemplified in the case study, was shaped and influenced by each of these socially relevant features of the university culture; they supported and/or drew upon one another's function seamlessly, more fluidly, to facilitate the student development and professional formation, as they engaged in practice fields and in various communities of practice. In these social environments, domain-specific pedagogies informed and influenced professional formation, specifically: situated pedagogy; participative pedagogy; and transformative pedagogy, which mediated relational endeavours and promoted action. Such action influenced and nurtured the development of students' personal and collective agency, and their transformation through ongoing participation in cultural activities. As students engaged in educational activities, their actions shaped their educational experiences at university, i.e., as they engaged in their curricular and co-curricular activities, and as they pursued their extra-curricular interests.

The significance of these findings pertains to the manner in which the student-participants pursued their own learning agenda, in which they personalised their learning activities simultaneously and in different spaces through lifewide learning. Engagement in lifewide learning concerned not only in relation to curricular requirements but also their personal learning goals, and their academic and career expectations as mediated in social environments.

8.2.2.4 The student achievements | Professional formation

The students' preparation for professional practice in this phenomenological case study exemplified the social nature of student development and achievements. This was evident in the way that students and experts interacted in the learning process, in the manner that students learned expert thinking and occupational

techniques from experienced clinicians and in the way that students gained the confidence and competence that embodied their professional formation through engagement in situated practice, or what Lave and Wenger (1991) referred to as legitimate peripheral participation. Those who had expertise guided the students' academic and professional socialisation, whereby autonomous and interdependent actions were promoted and nurtured. In turn, this built students capacity to develop professional ways of *knowing* (epistemology), *doing and acting* (praxis) and *being and becoming* (ontology). These activities encompassed the transformation of the self, and they embodied personal agency and interdependence, among others that encapsulated the students' personal achievements.

The bounding aspects, which made up the regulatory compliance, informed the social environments that influenced and enriched the student achievements, as students traversed through their learning paths between the practice field and the communities of practice. Students, as future nursing professionals, were constructing their professional identities within the changing contemporary conditions of knowledge production and consumption in the different settings for learning, namely: the curricular, co-curricular and extra-curricular settings. And within these settings the students' academic and social effort and involvement undoubtedly influenced and enriched their individual achievements.

The significance of this finding is the recognition that, as the student-participants immersed themselves in the university culture and engaged closely with various agents of socialisation and with the practices of the nursing profession, the students were involved in professional identity work, in the practices of their professional community and, indeed, in its regime of competence in order to function effectively within and beyond the professional community (cf. Fenton-O'Creevy, Brigham, Jones & Smith, 2015).

8.3 The significance and implications of the findings

So what do these findings mean for the work of educators and the university in preparing students for professional practice in particular and, in general, for the significance of this study? To reflect upon this point, what follows is a reflective consideration of the conceptual, methodological, policy and practical significance and

implications of the study and its findings.

8.3.1 Conceptual significance and implications

Vygotsky's (1978) theory of human learning and development has afforded a fertile ground to explore the mechanism of professional practice preparation, as this theory pays particular attention to the role that culture and its tools play in human interactions and learning. Indeed, Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory was of substantial value in helping me to examine, conceptualise and create a theoretical premise concerning the experiences of preparing nursing students for professional practice in Australia. This led to a systematic exploration of the sociocultural contexts of nurse education, its underlying principles and its educational practices in naturalistic settings. A significant point is that sociocultural theory can be used to analyse a diverse range of objects of study in social settings, and I was able to examine and analyse the range and complex ideas that emerged in a variety of social contexts for professional practice preparation.

Indeed, sociocultural theory allowed the investigation to see the students' relations with interrelated elements that embody a model of preparing for professional practice from a sociocultural perspective (please see Figure 8.1 and Table 8.2). Based on empirical findings, the present research concluded with the evidenced inference that engaging students in educational activities and shaping the students' educational experiences in diverse social settings was as much as the students' domain as it was the University's. Through their agentic capabilities, the student-participants personalised their learning journey in that they constructed a range of educational pathways to meet their personal learning requirements and/or to complement or augment their formal educational experiences. Thus, it must be acknowledged that, theoretically, an important and inseparable goal of professional practice preparation is the development of personal and agentic epistemologies (cf. Billett, 2010). Such agentic epistemologies will underpin how students engage with curriculum and related processes, and how they interact with domain-specific pedagogies as core elements of the higher education provision. Perspectives such as this advocate promoting professional learning *for* practice and *in* practice that could lead to a deeper understanding and a reinterpretation of practice.

8.3.2 Methodological significance and implications

The use of the methodological fusion of hermeneutic phenomenology and case study research enabled me to examine in depth the nuances of the case – the Bachelor of Nursing Program – and the participants' lived experiences of preparing for professional practice. In combination, these two methodologies helped the study to generate rich data, about which rigorous analysis could be conducted and from which empirical conclusions could be drawn. Their co-existence was intertwined such that each methodological approach's corresponding features and research outcomes were mutually drawn upon to assist rigorous research processes.

The phenomenon of preparing for professional practice was not a problem to solve but, from a phenomenological point of view, it was a question of meaning to be inquired into (cf. van Manen, 2014). The phenomenological orientation of the case was a commitment to examining deeply and holistically the lived experiences of participants involved in preparing for professional practice, in order to elicit the meanings that they attributed to such experiences, in a manner that invited the readers to look into the essence of lived experiences. Hence, in combination, the phenomenology and case study methodologies constituted a valuable contribution to extending current understandings of the preparation of nursing students for professional practice, and together they assisted in examining the significance of the essence of lived experiences for future professional practice.

The fusion of phenomenology and case study research, or a fusion of other methodological traditions for that matter, could be potentially useful in inquiring into professional practice preparation in other academic disciplines. Such a fusion could facilitate an in-depth exploration of a phenomenon in professional education, and all its complexities, about which there is a potential dearth of knowledge. Nevertheless, at this juncture, a cautionary note is warranted. When planning to employ a methodological fusion, likely tensions between the underlying ontology of each methodology ought to be considered – congruence or complementary philosophical underpinnings must be evident. Likewise, congruency of approaches with the researcher's philosophical perspective about research must be considered (cf. Annells, 2006).

8.3.2 Policy significance and implications

The present study showed that professional practice is a sociocultural process that is negotiated among multiple stakeholders and in many respects it involved partnerships among stakeholders in the provision of professional education. These stakeholders included higher education, workplace organisations, professional and discipline bodies, accreditation agencies, governments and communities. It is essential that partner healthcare facilities strengthen their policy and commitment in educating and developing students for professional practice. Such commitment could be shown through enhanced partnerships with institutes of higher learning and through offering diverse clinical learning opportunities for students as well as nurse educators and mentors in academic and practice settings.

Universities and their partners and collaborators involved in practice-based education have a challenging and demanding task to prepare aspirants for professional practice. Part of the task is to promote and support students in establishing a place in the landscape of practice and moving and transforming self towards a fully-fledged professional identity (cf. Hutchinson & Shakespeare, 2010). This relates to the significance of the finding that accentuated the autonomous and interdependent nature of learning and development as students prepare for professional practice. In the light of this finding, consideration needs to be given in enhancing the program of support for students within academic and clinical practice settings that include not only academic and clinical experience support but also programs that foster the health and well-being of students. Doing so will assist students to cope well with the complexities and challenges of preparing for professional practice. Peer learning also forms part of student learning and development that must be recognised with appropriate administrative and policy support.

Another administrative and policy implication relates to the research finding in the current study that students engage not only in curricular activities but also in co-curricular and extra-curricular activities. It would be strategically imperative for any departments where a Bachelor of Nursing program is hosted to consider how best to harness the notion of lifewide learning coupled with agentic capabilities that, in many

respects, facilitate engagements in curricular, co-curricular and extra-curricular opportunities simultaneously and in different settings. While preparing for professional practice, students take part and engage in all these contexts to develop themselves and involve themselves in a whole-of-life experience (cf. Jackson, 2011). As was observed, the results of such engagements were central to the shaping of their professional identity and destiny, yet only the formal curricular learning experiences constituted their accredited outcomes. Hence, it is fair to conclude that the lifewide concept in higher education is worthy of further and extensive consideration. It warrants a conversation, for example, about what a lifewide curriculum might look like in specific domains of practice. In a similar and related pursuit under the auspices of what Kek and Huijser (2017) referred to as an “agile problem-based learning ecology for learning” (p. 1), they responded broadly on the changing nature of learning and learners “by making deliberate and meaningful connections between formal and informal learning environments and between the university and the world beyond” (p. 25). Also worthy to note is the work on lifewide learning within the nursing discipline at Surrey University, UK (Jackson, 2010), which provides a point of reference for considering the possibilities and opportunities lifewide learning affords to student learning and development in the nursing field.

A further and equally important implication, then, for any departments where a Bachelor of Nursing program is offered is that their administration and policy processes must strengthen the support for the professional work of those involved in the program, such that they can conceive and deploy domain-specific curricula and pedagogies that provide holistic educational experiences for students. The teachers and mentors’ essential role as primary agents of socialisation is to enact integrative curricula through pedagogies that shape professional performance and practice. Thus, support for teachers and mentors’ ongoing professional development within and across the program is imperative. Engaging teachers and mentors in professional development can, in turn, model to students the professional educator as an expert reflective learner, actively engaged in lifelong lifewide learning and continuous self-improvement (cf. Schon, 1987).

8.3.3 Practical significance and implications

The theoretically grounded message generated in this research is well-defined and provides an informed conclusion that should resonate with students, educators, higher education institutions and professional bodies alike at a practical level. It ought to be recognised, for example, that the preparation of students for professional practice should serve as a collaborative learning endeavour that brings students, teachers and professionals together to promote student autonomy and interdependence, and to share not only the students' cognitive challenges and solutions, but also their emotional difficulties and coping mechanisms. On this basis, the student learning and development need to be considered as being embedded in social contexts that facilitate the shaping of personal and professional identity.

Such perspective could be useful for stakeholders when focusing on the holistic development of students as future professionals on a lifelong learning journeys and through continuous development, so as to engender processes of *knowing* (epistemology), *doing and acting* (praxis) and *being and becoming* (ontology) that embody the development of responsible, caring future nursing professionals. To do so, higher education environments need to be designed strategically and responsively to support meaningful learning and teaching, and to promote effective holistic educational experience. This ought to include, for example, centrally positioning students in the curriculum and pedagogical considerations that foster and support the development of agentic capabilities. In this way, placing students at the core of the educational endeavour (please see Figure 8.1) gives them an active role and fosters student responsibility for directing and monitoring their learning, as well as their professional practice. On the part of students, it should promote their ownership of the learning process and provide opportunities for their personal and professional growth, as well as for engaging in reflective and transformative dialogue in diverse communities of practice.

As the current research demonstrated, most if not all professionals do not work in isolation. Their work functions are never individualised *per se*. Rather, they are part of teams that share a domain of interest and a common practice – the very notion of communities of practice. The concept of communities of practice continues to

stimulate scholarly research and debate and certainly within the current study, it formed part of the sociocultural lens that underpinned the research. Indeed, the community of practice construct has contributed to the discourse of professional practice and likewise to the discourse on professional education for that practice, at conceptual and practical levels (cf. Loftus, 2010). At the core of the community of practice construct is the shift away from individualistic, cognitive, psychological view of what is involved in knowledge and learning, to the emphasis on engaging in social practice. In other words, learning is understood as being primarily a sociocultural process and not simply as an individual process. And as the current research showed, even individual learning was also socially mediated.

Future program and curricular design decisions could consider the value of communities of practice and their educational principles in formulating educational experiences for students. There is now a considerable and growing body of scholarly work concerning various aspects of this construct, particularly pertaining to education for practice (please see for example Higgs et al., 2010; and Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Treyner, 2015). Indeed, we are reminded that:

The concept of CoPs has encouraged, and continues to contribute to the development of other ideas such as the nature of professional knowledge and knowing, the sense of identity that members of communit[ies] develop through their membership of many different communities, the importance of boundary crossing, and how we can navigate our way through the landscape of practices that make up our lives. (Loftus, 2010, p. 49)

In sum, against the backdrop of the implications presented here, the challenge for professional educators is to imagine the future of practice and interrogate how the concomitant education of future practitioners is to be organised for this future (cf. Higgs, Loftus & Trede, 2010).

8.4 Researching professional practice preparation

The critical findings presented throughout this chapter may serve as the basis of

future research into other students' preparation for professional practice. Potential research that parallels and/or extends the direction employed in the current study might focus on other academic disciplines. Following the Vygotskian conceptual framework (Vygotsky 1978, 1981), such research undertakings could formulate domain-specific models of professional practice preparation that equip students to work in complex contemporary work environments and to meet the challenges that they will face as they go into professional practice. A program of research in this area could further promote sociocultural perspectives to frame discussions concerning the preparation of students for professional practice, as one of their lifelong learning touch points and what might embody their lifewide learning pursuits.

In the current study, it was not possible to investigate directly the student-participants' engagement and learning in clinical settings. Efforts to incorporate the examination of lived experiences in clinical settings could provide an insight into different learning spaces and conceptualise the interactions and synergies that transpire within and externally to the higher institutes of learning. Moreover, research in this field of inquiry could investigate experiences not only within curricular contexts but also in the co-curricular and extra-curricular contexts that form a significant part of the students' lifewide learning journey during professional practice preparation. In doing so, the characteristics and forms of educational experiences that shape future practice and professional identity could be examined and interrogated.

Importantly, further reflection and analysis should necessarily focus on problematising how preparing for professional practice is currently being conceptualised, contextualised, experienced, shaped, reshaped and envisioned (cf. Higgs, Loftus & Trede, 2010). Future research concerning these foci of interest could illuminate forms of professional practice preparation that can be understood and subsequently produced, reproduced, incorporated and built upon in the ongoing professional practice of graduates (cf. Reid, 2010).

8.5 Contributions and concluding remarks

This chapter has discussed the study's key research findings and examined the new conceptual, methodological, policy and practical knowledge arising from the

study about the research problem, its theoretical framework and its research design. The significance and concomitant implications of these findings were necessarily situated within the substantive area of human learning and development from a sociocultural perspective. Such significance and implications were highlighted in a conceptual model for professional practice preparation that emerged in the study, whereby the relevance of Vygotsky's (1978, 1981) developmental theory as a conceptual framework was once again corroborated. In doing so, the study's contributions at different levels were evident.

The present study has contributed to the higher education literature in general, and to the professional education literature in particular, concerning the preparation of nursing students for professional practice, in an era when higher education is faced with the challenge of preparing students for an extremely complex world. The study has contributed in expanding the knowledge base of professional practice preparation in the nursing discipline, in ways that interrogated and interpreted different dimensions of professional practice preparation *vis-à-vis* the curriculum design, epistemology (knowing), praxis (acting) and ontology (becoming) elements of such preparation. This study extended current understanding of exploring professional practice preparation and experiences through the conceptual, methodological and analytical frameworks developed for the study. In emerging from these frameworks, the findings have crucial implications for educational practice because they provide important insights into the contexts, politics and activities of the educational system in which students and teachers interact and engage in curricula and pedagogies that offer an early socialisation into the practices and values of the nursing profession. A broader contribution of this research therefore pertains to the wider application of the findings to other nursing student populations, other cohorts of nursing teaching staff members and, for that matter, other practice-based disciplines.

The findings presented in this chapter were generated in this research study and readers are invited to consider the broader application of these findings in their respective contexts. I do not attempt to generalise these research findings to other groups or populations. Rather, they serve as points for conceptual, methodological, policy and practical considerations by individuals, educational institutions, professional agencies and other stakeholders.

To conclude, it is apt to end this thesis by once again conveying the complex nature of the environments in which we live, work and study. Hence, universities, their partners or collaborators and other stakeholders need to extend far beyond the traditional boundaries when preparing students for professional practice. The diverse characteristics of our student cohorts and the affordances of new technologies constitute other significant factors in the success of educational providers involved in professional practice preparation. Thus, such factors need to be understood, considered and harnessed so as to work more effectively and raise expectations, and to influence positively students, teachers and learning. Working more effectively and raising expectations will serve us well in the holistic development of students for professional practice. As Shulman (2005b) advocated:

We all must get smarter and become much less sanguine about what we can and cannot do pedagogically. Part of what we have to learn we must learn from one another within the universities and colleges, broadly construed....We can do so much better, and research in the cognitive sciences and other fields supports this. I know we lack the resources. I know we lack the administrative and policy support. I know some students we inherit are already deeply wounded. Nevertheless, we have to make the commitment. We need to respond to the pedagogical imperative. And if we do, then raising expectations and keeping promises will not be empty rhetoric but prophetic ministry. We can hardly afford to do less. (pp. 24-25)

Epilogue

I have come to the end of a fruitful journey, albeit the many trials and tribulations experienced due to ill health. But with family support, personal resilience and a quest for knowledge, my thesis has become a reality, and a lasting reminder of my transformation as a learner, as a researcher and as an academic. Along the way, I experienced *disorienting dilemmas* (Mezirow, 1991), brought on predominantly by uncertainty about my identity and belongingness as a researcher. Through Mezirow's ten phases of *perspective transformation cycle* (please see Table 7.4), I have a better understanding of the 'impostor syndrome' and sense of alienation but, as it turned out, many in academia commonly experience these phenomena. One thing proved certain though — my passion was stronger than my fear, such that it transformed me as a person.

I so cherish this learning journey and the enormous personal and professional growth it afforded me. Moreover, some phenomenological interview participants reported that they have embraced their growth emanating from this research – this in itself is a transformational gift for all concerned. For example:

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Yeah,

it's incredible how much I've learned from this. And I remember telling my Dad when you initially called me at the start of the year, and I said, 'oh, she's called me back, and she wants me to be a case study', and he's like, 'oh no, it's going to distract you from your study. Are you getting paid?' And I said, 'no, no, no, it'll be fine', and then gradually after we keep talking I keep saying, 'I've learnt so much from her - I've learnt how to reflect and evaluate everything I do', and they're like, 'wow cool'. So, it's really cool.

As I have a significant role to play in educating future professionals, my quest for knowledge in this area of inquiry has certainly been a worthwhile endeavour. The thesis has allowed me to pursue a research agenda in professional education in a systematic and sustained manner. In particular, it has enabled me to methodically document, analyse and theorise the fundamental ways of educating and preparing a group of students for professional practice.

Reflecting upon my biography as a researcher and the paths that led me to undertaking this project has likewise provided ongoing opportunities for *reflexivity* (Creswell, 2013), particularly in chronicling my stance, values and experiences as the project took shape. The research that underpinned this thesis represents a continuation of my pursuit to understand existing and emerging curricular and pedagogical concerns in shaping future professional practice towards a sustained research focus for myself. Indeed, my philosophy as an educator has been reconstituted and refined, renewing my perspective about matters of curricular and pedagogical importance.

Such renewed thinking embodies my educational philosophy, in which I subscribe to the transformational nature of education. I believe that learning in this context is an environment of discovery where students construct and co-construct knowledge and understanding, and develop within themselves the power of reflective and critical thinking. As a practitioner in the field of education, I see the role of the teacher as an empowering facilitator in the learning process. I take a sociocultural view in that I believe knowledge is fundamentally situated in practice, constructed by learners as they build new ideas upon prior knowledge. I also believe that the best way to foster this knowledge construction is to facilitate scaffolded and supportive learning in an open and collaborative learning environment, reflecting the values and practices of their discipline. In such an environment learners are empowered to take responsibility for their own learning, which lends itself to student-centric pedagogical approaches. My aim is to encourage free expression and mutual appreciation of ideas that, not only foster reciprocal learning, but also harness the affordances of feedback. Further, I believe that the learners have the flexibility to explore and learn from an environment that provides a rich array of choices and enables them to generate, test and regenerate ideas governed by their individual values, past experiences and whatever personal learning agenda they might bring to the environment. Because of this belief, I am highly committed to promoting authentic learning and assessment in such a way that I can create opportunities to help learners to view knowledge as a tool for solving problems rather than just a collection of facts. I also have a strong commitment to lifelong and lifewide learning in which I strive to promote reflective practice. I see myself as modeling the professional educator as an expert learner and a stalwart supporter of ongoing personal and professional development.

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Appendices

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Appendix 1

Human Research Ethics Committee Approval

Email Confirmation

From: Ethics
 Sent: Friday, 26 October 2012 4:53 PM
 To: Nona Muldoon (n.muldoon@cqu.edu.au)
 Cc: Patrick Danaher; Ethics
 Subject: Fast Track Assessment advice H12REA188 Nona Muldoon

Dear Nona,

The Human Research Ethics Fast Track Committee recently assessed your application and agreed that your proposal meets the requirements of the *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007)* <http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/publications/synopses/e72syn.htm>. Your project has been endorsed and full ethics approval granted.

Project Title: Educating for a profession: Inquiring into fit-for-purpose pedagogies in undergraduate nurse education at an Australian University

Approval no.	H12REA187
Expiry date	14.11.2015
Faculty Decision	Approved

The standard conditions of this approval are:

- (a) conduct the project strictly in accordance with the proposal submitted and granted ethics approval, including any amendments made to the proposal required by the HREC
- (b) advise (email: ethics@usq.edu.au <<mailto:ethics@usq.edu.au>>) immediately of any complaints or other issues in relation to the project which may warrant review of the ethical approval of the project
- (c) make submission for approval of amendments to the approved project before implementing such changes
- (d) a 'progress report' is due on 14.11.2013 and 14.11.2014
- (e) a 'final report' is due on 14.11.2015
- (f) advise in writing if the project has been discontinued.

For (c) to (e) forms are available on the USQ ethics website:
<http://www.usq.edu.au/research/ethics/human/forms>

Please note that failure to comply with the conditions of approval and the National Statement (2007) may result in withdrawal of approval for the project.

You may now commence your data collection for this project. I wish you all the best.

Regards

Leah Baldwin
 Ethics Committee Support Officer
 Office of Research & Higher Degrees
 University of Southern Queensland
 Phone: 07 4631-2690
 E-mail: ethics@usq.edu.au <<mailto:ethics@usq.edu.au>>
www.usq.edu.au/research/ethics <<http://www.usq.edu.au/research/ethics>>

Appendix 2

Information Sheet and Participant Consent Form

Information Sheet for Participants

The project *Educating for a profession: Inquiring into fit-for-purpose pedagogies in nurse education at an Australian University* is a Doctor of Philosophy research project. The purpose of this research is to advance understandings of professional preparation in nurse education, its philosophy, principles and practice. It aims to investigate the characteristics and forms of pedagogies in nurse education that align with the intent and purposes of the nursing profession.

Your university has been selected for this study and the researcher has obtained consent from your Head of Department to undertake the study. Initially, the researcher will request from your Head of Department any relevant curriculum documents and learning and teaching artefacts for content analysis.

If you are willing to participate in this research, a **Participant Consent Form** has been provided for you to complete and return to the researcher. It will involve participation in a **focus group discussion, class observations** and/or **follow-up individual interviews**. There will be an opportunity before the focus group discussion and follow-up interviews for you to ask any questions about the project. The focus group discussion and follow-up interviews will be organised outside of class time, at a time and day most convenient to participants. Questions about your experiences and perceptions of learning and teaching in the Bachelor of Nursing program will be the focus of the discussion and interviews. It will take about 45-60 minutes for the focus group and 30-45 minutes for each follow up interviews, which will both be audio recorded and notes taken. Notice will be given in advance when classes will be observed. The time period for class observations will be equivalent to the scheduled class time. There will be an opportunity at the start of the class to indicate non-participation in the research of those who have not given consent. Once indicated, no observation will be made of them, nor information recorded about them, nor any reporting of data of those who have not given consent. Class interaction will be audio recorded and notes taken. With prior permission, snapshots will be taken of the physical and online learning environments. Participants will NOT be photographed directly.

Participation is **voluntary** and you may **withdraw at any time** from this study. Participation or non-participation in this study will not affect nor influence your standing in the university. Individual identity and that of the university and location of this research will not be identifiable in any reports published. The actual names of participants will not be used in any way by the researcher in order to ensure privacy and anonymity. All hard copy data, including interview tapes and transcripts, will be kept in a locked filing cabinet, to which the researcher will have the only key. Electronic data will be stored on the researcher's personal computer, which will have password protection known only to the researcher.

While no negative sequelae are anticipated from your participation in this research, it is important to note that a counsellor on campus is available to address any concerns or discomfort you may feel in the process. Please also note that should you feel discomfort or fatigue at any time, you may choose to discontinue the session.

The information gathered for this project will be used to write a doctoral dissertation, conference papers, journal articles, and reports; information may also be used at conferences and in media interviews. You and the university will be provided with feedback in the form of a report that describes the results and findings of the investigation. If you would like a Plain English statement of results, please complete the relevant section on the Consent Form.

Nona Muldoon is conducting this research project. Should you have any questions regarding the project, please feel free to contact her at any time: **Phone:** 0435 723375 or 07 49282353 **Email:** u1034809@umail.usq.edu.au

Please also note that you can contact the Office of Research and Higher Degrees should there be any concerns about the nature and/or conduct of this research: **Phone** 07 46312955 or **Email** orhd@usq.edu.au

Thank you in anticipation of your support to this research project.

Nona Muldoon, PhD Candidate
Faculty of Education
University of Southern Queensland, Toowoomba Campus

Consent Form for Participants (Online Form)

Research Project - Educating for a profession

Please click on appropriate box for each item below.

- | | Yes | No |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. I agree to participate in this research, which involves participation in focus group discussion, class observation and follow-up individual interviews. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2. I am over 18 years of age. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3. I have read and understood the Information Sheet, which provided details about the study. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4. I understand that anonymity and confidentiality is guaranteed. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 5. I understand that I have the right to withdraw from the research at any time without penalty. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 6. I understand that the focus group discussion, class observations and follow-up individual interviews will be audio-recorded and notes taken. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 7. I understand that the learning and teaching environments may be photographed and that I will not be directly photographed. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 8. I understand that, when the researcher is quoting from, or analysing transcripts, interviews or other material gathered in this research, information that could reveal the research site and participants identities will be removed. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 9. I understand that the information gained during the research will be used within the doctoral dissertation, reports and articles that will be published. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 10. I understand that I will not be identified by name in any publications. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 11. I understand that I may not directly benefit from taking part in the research. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 12. I would like to receive a Plain English Statement, which describes results and findings of the investigation. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

If you answered yes to item 12, please enter your preferred mailing address _____
 Please provide your name and contact details, which will be kept in the strictest confidence.
 Your contact details will only be used to communicate the time and venue for focus group and follow up interview.

Name _____ Email _____ Phone _____

Next webpage → confirmation message

Thank you for completing the Consent Form. Nona Muldoon will be in touch with you shortly.

Appendix 3

Curriculum Data Collection Instrument

Course level data collection instrument

1. What is the code and name of the course?

#

2. What is the aim of this course?

The aim for a course is the overarching statement that describes in broad terms what the student will gain from instruction. In most courses at ESU, the course aim is tacitly communicated in the course specification.

#

3. What are the desired learning outcomes?

This contains a set of specific and measurable terms that describe what the student will know, or be able to do, as a result of the educational experience.

At the end of this course, students should be able to:

1. #
2. #
3. #
4. #

4. What evidence might determine an acceptable level of performance?

This outlines the strategies for assessment, to determine how students achieve the development of desired knowledge, skills and dispositions. These strategies will be drawn upon when collecting data for Section 6.

1. #
2. #
3. #

5. How do the students learn and what strategies facilitate and assist learning?

The 'Seven Principles for Good Practice in Undergraduate Education' (Chickering & Gamson, 1987) are helpful in identifying sound instructional strategies. The learning and teaching strategies identified here will be drawn upon in Section 6.

Principle	Instructional strategy
1. Encourages contact between students and staff	
2. Develops reciprocity and cooperation among students	
3. Encourage active learning	
4. Gives prompt feedback	
5. Emphasises time on task	
6. Communicates high expectations	
7. Respects diverse talents and ways of learning	

Appendix 4

Focus Group Interview Protocols and Guiding Questions

Focus Group Protocols

Welcome

Welcome everyone! Thank you for agreeing to be part of the focus group. We appreciate your willingness to participate. Before we start, it is necessary to outline some guidelines and protocols that will frame the way we operate in our discussions.

My name Nona, I'm the principal researcher.

Overview

As explained in the Information Sheet, **participation is voluntary** and that you are free to withdraw at any time without penalty or prejudice. As consented, we will be recording our discussion. Your **anonymity** and what is discussed here will remain confidential. This will ensure that all of you feel free to volunteer your opinions without recrimination or identification. I would like to again note that this discussion is NOT about evaluating and benchmarking the Bachelor of Nursing program. The research is specifically concerned with understanding pedagogies and learning and teaching practices utilised in the program.

Purpose

The reason we are having this focus group is to discuss your experiences in learning and teaching within the BN program. We need your input and want you to share your honest and open thoughts with us. The purpose is to gather data that may ultimately assist in understanding the characteristics of learning and teaching practices that work well and not so well.

Ground rules

I want **you** to do the talking. As I would like everyone to participate, I may call on you if I haven't heard from you in a while.

There are no right or wrong answers. I want to hear a wide range of opinions. Every person's experiences and opinions are important. I want you to feel comfortable sharing.

I want to capture everything you have to say, so our conversation will be audio-recorded. You will not be identified by name in the report or manuscript; you will remain anonymous.

Student Focus Group Guiding Questions

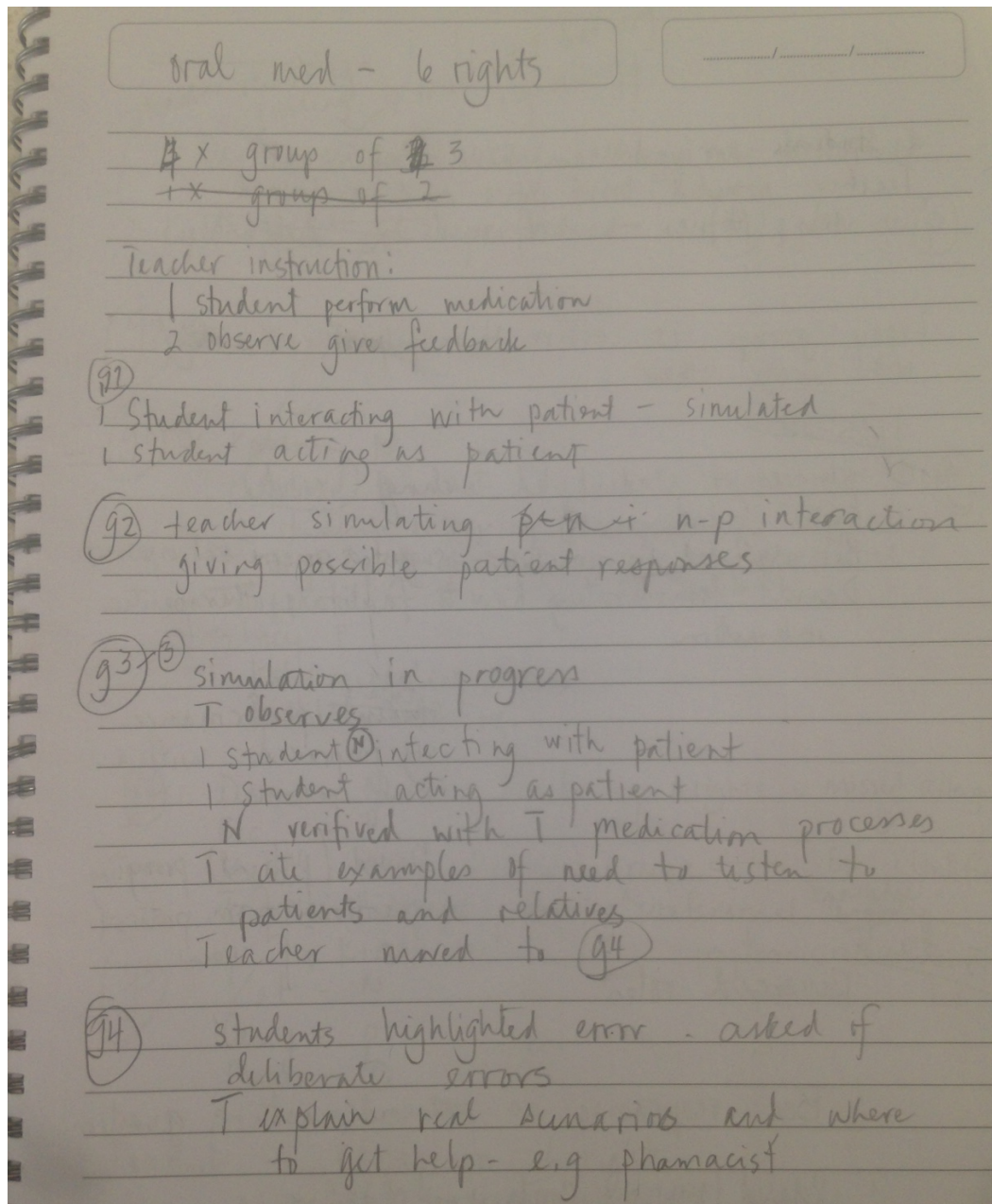
Students enrolled in the Bachelor of Nursing program

Main question	Follow up focus topics
Lead-in: Think back when you first thought about becoming a nurse. What is it about the profession that made you want to be a nurse?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decision • Motivation • Influence
With what you've just described in mind, how do you feel about the <u>BNur</u> program? Tell me about your experiences in the program so far?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning and teaching interactions • Delivery methods • Approaches to learning • Approaches to teaching
What do you think of your preparation for the nursing profession so far?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What works well? • What does not work so well?
Have you done clinical placement? How would you describe your experience/s?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Readiness • Confidence • Competence
Overall, how do you feel you're travelling?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Challenges facing students • Support mechanisms
Lead-out: Do you have any other thoughts or comments about the program?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Follow up interview/s

Appendix 5

Example of Field Notes and Naïve Visual Illustrations

Laboratory class



Golden-O Simulation

10

11

N | prep bench

N T clinical data

answering N consultation

questioning "Why would you jump to..."

guiding/coaching "Have a plaster..."

prompting "Don't forget to ask..."

confirming "Yeah you don't know how much..."

12

De-brief →

13

P - feedback to nurses
feedback to SD

T - feedback to Ns
reinforced what worked well
areas for improvement

D - feedback to Ns

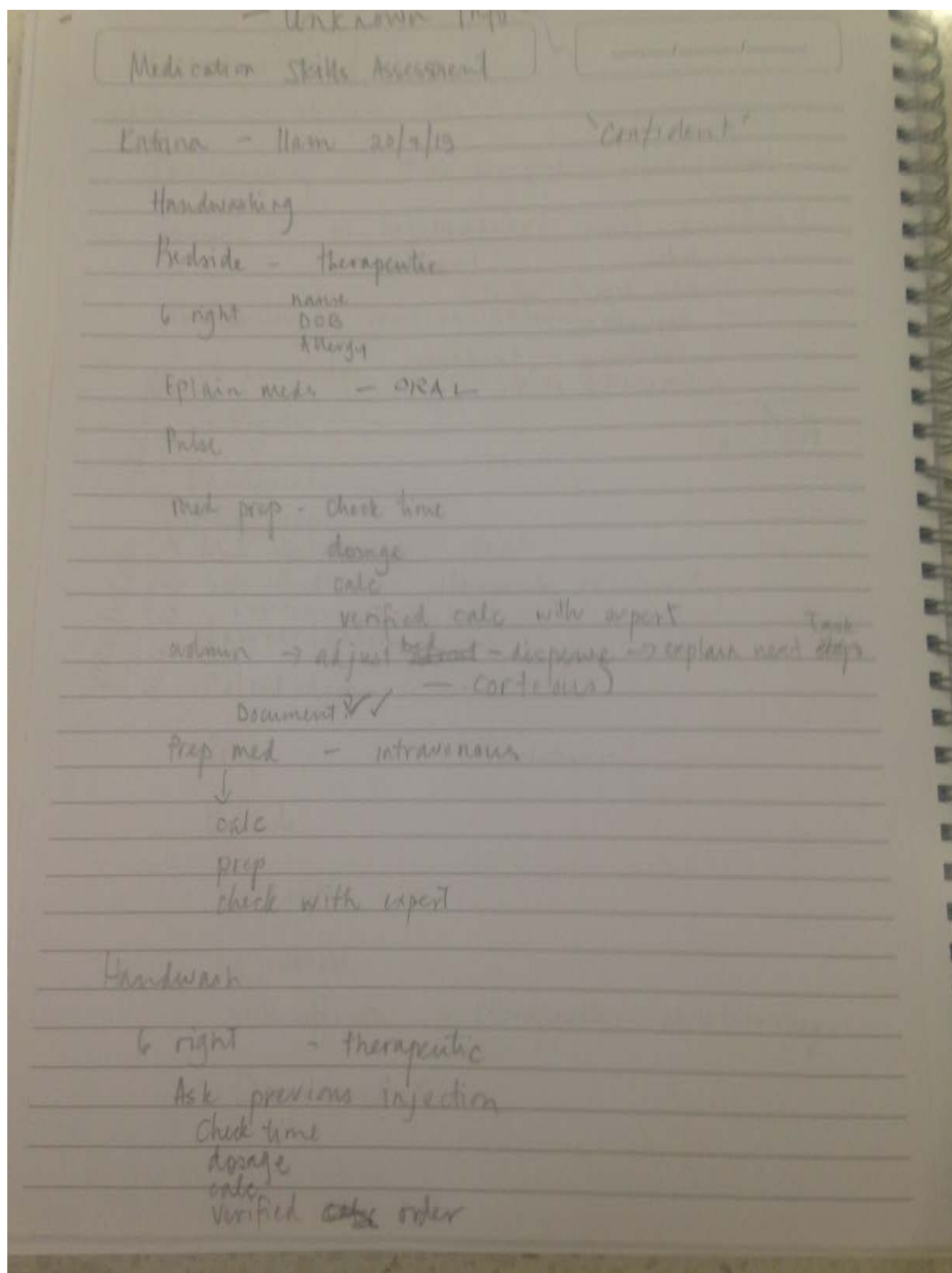
SD

T

Feedback from researcher → responded

discuss clinical situations
re-enacting possibilities
reacting, clinical inter
vention

Skills assessment



Appendix 6

Individual Interview Guiding Questions

Student Follow Up Individual Interviews

How many courses have you completed?

How many courses are you enrolled in this semester?

Think back about your experiences last year, what was it like?

What teaching approaches worked for you?

What didn't?

How about this semester – how is it going?

What is it like in class / online?

What is it like in the labs?

Tell me about your clinical placement – what is that like?

Teaching Staff Individual Interviews

Staff involved in coordinating and delivering the program

Main question	Follow up focus topics
Think back when you first thought about becoming a nurse. What is it about the profession that made you want to be a nurse?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Influences on teaching practice?
How do you feel about the BN program? Tell us your experiences in the program so far?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning and teaching interactions • Delivery methods • Approaches to learning • Approaches to teaching
In recent years, there have been increasing concerns about the readiness of nursing students to transition into professional practice. What do you think about the program and the preparation of current students?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What works well? • What does not work so well?
Another issue raised is the mismatch between what students learn in the classroom and what they do in clinical situations? Can you comment on this issue, what has been your experience?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What should be learned? • How should they be taught?
What learning support do you provide to students while completing the program?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Challenges facing students
Now let's talk about your support needs. What types of support do you need in delivering the program?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Challenges facing staff
Do you have any other thoughts about the program?	

Example of Coordinator individual interview***Flexible Delivery Coordinator***

Main question	Follow up
Tell me about your role as Flexible Delivery Program Coordinator?	What does the role of Flexible Delivery Coordinator entail?
What is the Flexible Delivery Program all about?	How long has it been running? How many students? How does this program differ to the campus-based program?
What kinds of learning opportunities are offered to Flex students?	Students' perceptions of their learning experiences? What works well? What doesn't work so well?
What teaching approaches are used in the FD Program	Your experiences teaching into the FD program? What approaches work well for you? What doesn't work so well?
What kinds of support are available to students in the Flexible Delivery Program?	What works well? What doesn't work so well? Challenges?
Anything else you would like to add?	

Appendix 7

Extracts from program and course materials

Examples of Program Level Information

Standard Four: Course Length and Structure	30
4.1 For courses leading to registration as a nurse, the minimum qualification must be a university -based bachelor degree (or where relevant a post -graduate qualification) and the minimum length of the course is equivalent to six semesters full –time.	30
4.2 The total length and structure of the course are sufficient to allow all the graduate competency outcomes to be met.....	30
4.3 Total professional experience hours are sufficient to allow graduate competency outcomes to be met.	30
4.4 The inclusion of professional experience is as early as is educationally sound in the first year of study to facilitate early engagement with the professional context	30
4.5 The academic content of the course prepares students for the timing and length of professional experience placements.	31
4.6 Total professional experience placement hours amount to no less than 800 hours	31
4.7 An extended final professional experience placement in Australia is included towards the end of the course/last semester of study to consolidate graduate competency outcomes and to facilitate transition to practice.....	32
4.8 Where the structure of the course allows for qualifications for entry and exit these are outlined and that the exit points meet standards for exit qualifications.....	33
Standard Five: Curriculum Content	34
5.1 Mapping of the curriculum against the ANMC National Competency Standards for the Registered Nurse to demonstrate how the graduate competency outcomes are to be achieved (cross reference to Standard 4).	34
5.2 That selection, organisation, sequencing and delivery of learning experiences provides students with the opportunity to attain all the required graduate competency outcome.	34
5.3 That the curriculum addresses specifically Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples history, health and culture and incorporates the principles of cultural safety.	35
5.4 That the central focus of the course is on nursing and contemporary nursing practice addressing, across the length of the course, foundation, professional and contemporary nursing knowledge and skills:	36
5.4.1 <i>Foundation knowledge and skills.</i>	36
5.4.2 <i>Professional knowledge and skills.</i>	37
5.4.3 <i>Contemporary knowledge and skills.</i>	38
5.5 That nursing inquiry is integral to the curriculum	40
5.6 That technology, including information technology and information management, to support health care is integral to the curriculum.....	40
5.7 That the curriculum addresses knowledge in pharmacology and therapeutic medication management for registered nurses.	42
5.8 That electives in the course are complementary to nursing	42
5.9 Curriculum, approaches to teaching and learning and assessment procedures are developed cognisant of best practice research and practice.	42

Standard Six: Approaches to Teaching and Learning.....	44
6.1 A course curriculum design and framework and expected learning outcomes.....	44
6.2 Congruence between content, practical application, competency achievement and teaching and learning strategies.....	46
6.3 Understanding of current Australian and international best practice teaching and learning approaches.....	48
6.4 A commitment to the development of graduates who are safe and competent for beginning level practice.....	52
6.5 A commitment to the development of graduates who have the capacity to continue to learn throughout their careers.....	53
6.6 A commitment to the development of graduates who understand their professional responsibility for their continuing competence.....	54
6.7 Teaching and learning approaches that promote communication, collaboration and leadership skills expected of registered nurses.....	54
6.8 Interprofessional learning and practice.....	55
6.9 Varied and relevant learning experiences that accommodate differences in student learning styles.....	56
6.10 That approaches to teaching and learning achieve stated course (program) outcomes.....	57
Standard Seven: Student Assessment.....	58
7.1 That graduates have achieved each graduate competency outcomes on completion of the course.....	58
7.2 That the level and number of assessments are consistent with determining the achievement of the graduate competency outcomes.....	58
7.3 A variety of assessment types and tasks across the course (program) to enhance individual and collective learning.....	59
7.4 A variety of assessment contexts to ensure demonstration of targeted skills leading to competence.....	59
7.5 Assessment in the professional experience context to establish the combination of skills, knowledge, attitudes, values and abilities that underpin quality outcomes of performance.....	60
7.6 That assessment includes the assessment of pharmacology competence.....	60
7.7 Procedural fairness, validity and transparency of assessment.....	61
7.8 That the education provider remains ultimately accountable for the assessment of students in relation to their professional experience assessment.....	61
7.9 That assessments reflect collaborative arrangements between students, nurses, academics, and health service providers.....	61
Standard Eight: Professional Experience.....	63
8.1 That professional experience supports learning activities and provides opportunities to attain learning outcomes (cross reference with standard 4).....	63
8.2 That professional experience provides opportunities for experiential learning of curriculum content (cross reference with standard 4, criterion 5).....	63
8.3 Shared formal agreements between the education provider and all health service providers where students gain their professional experience (cross reference with standard 1, criterion 5).....	64
8.4 Risk assessment of and risk minimisation for all environments where students are placed to gain their professional experience (cross reference with standard 1, criterion 6).....	64
8.5 Collaborative approaches to evaluation of student professional experience placements.....	65
8.6 Supervision models for professional experience placement and their relationship to the achievement of learning outcomes (cross reference with standard 2, criterion 6).....	66
8.7 That academic staff engaged in supporting and/or assessing students on professional experience placements are experienced in and prepared for the role (cross reference with standard 2).....	67
8.8 That nurses and other health professionals who are engaged in supporting and/or assessing students on professional experience placements are prepared for the role.....	67

Examples of Course Level Information

First year example

Rationale

To be able to provide a beginning level of practice, students require a sound knowledge of the principle concepts of nursing practice that underpin appropriate nursing and collaborative interventions and actions to respond to alterations in health patterns. These principles provide a sound foundation for students to synthesise the collection and use of data to propose and plan nursing interventions across a broad spectrum of health related circumstances.

Synopsis

This course examines the Registered Nurse's role in providing holistic care to patients/clients who are experiencing physical or psychological alterations due to illness. Patient assessment and proposed interventions within the scope of practice of the registered nurse will be emphasised. Concepts addressed will serve as a baseline framework for addressing specific disorders and diseases in varying contexts in future courses. Students will explore evidence for practice which incorporates empirical evidence, additional 'ways of knowing' and established models of care. Student will utilise techniques of inquiry such as concept mapping to facilitate their ability to synthesise information and critically appraise physical and psychosocial variations in patient/client presentation. Students will develop skills to enable active participation in a beginning level of clinical practice.

Objectives

On completion of this course students will be able to:

1. utilise systematic data collection to assess the physical, psychological and social needs of theoretical patients/clients presenting for health care;
2. plan safe and appropriate nursing care for patients/clients experiencing selected areas of compromised health by utilising effective clinical reasoning strategies which incorporate evidenced-based practice;
3. identify the appropriate scope of practice for the registered nurse in delivering independent and collaborative care;
4. demonstrate competence in professional written communication (an academic assignment and on exams).

Topics

Description	Weighting(%)
1. Nursing assessment/parameters and interventions in the areas of: homoeostasis, cancer care, pain management, patient teaching, wound management, fluid and electrolyte balance, chronic illness, surgery, trauma, infection, immunology, diagnostic procedures.	70.00
2. Scope of nursing practice, introduction to aspects of competencies.	10.00
3. Skills for assessment and planning; information gathering, communication skills, interdisciplinary collaboration, documentation.	20.00

Second year example**Objectives**

On completion of this course students will be able to:

1. Demonstrate management, planning and organisation skills by writing planned nursing care for patients/clients seeking health care for a particular stage of their illness. (ANMC competency 7).
2. Build upon a professional and ethical nursing framework knowledge base by Identify identifying the appropriate scope of practice of the registered nurse and proposing actions to respond effectively to unexpected or rapidly changing patient/client situations. (ANMC competency 2 and 7)
3. Demonstrate professional communication in oral and written form (ANMC competency 9 and 10).
4. Demonstrate academic and professional literacy skills by Synthesising knowledge of:
 - a) appropriate evidence-based nursing practice,
 - b) the underlying principles of physiological responses,
 - c) the impact of psychosocial influences, and
 - d) the expected patient responses to therapeutic interventions. (ANMC competency3)
5. Adapt concepts from the presented clinical situations to patients/clients with other physical conditions and psychosocial contexts. (ANMC competency 3,7 and 9)

Topics

Description	Weighting(%)
1. Clinical Reasoning	5.00
2. Cardiovascular disorders: Hypertension, Coronary Artery Disease, Acute Coronary Syndrome, heart failure, cardiac rehabilitation, ECG tracings (sinus rhythm, bradycardia, tachycardia);	15.00
3. Neurological disorders: Increased intracranial pressure, Cerebrovascular accident - nursing the stroke patient in the early stages; rehabilitation from Stroke	10.00
4. Medical Emergencies related to presented modules: head injury, diabetic ketoacidosis, musculoskeletal injury, acute cancer episodes, fractures and trauma, acute respiratory compromise, renal failure, resuscitation/shock	10.00
5. Musculoskeletal disorders: Chronic conditions, Joint replacement, trauma, fractures	10.00
6. Diabetes Mellitus: Type I and Type II diabetes, acute and chronic complications. Lifestyle management	15.00
7. Respiratory disorders; Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease. Acute Asthma	15.00
8. Cancers: General Cancer Treatment; Colorectal, Haematological. Evidenced based treatment options	10.00
9. Renal disorders: chronic renal failure, acute renal failure, obstructive renal failure. Evidence based treatment options	10.00

Third year example**Requisites**

Pre-requisite: NUR1099 and NUR2199 and NUR1140 and NUR1200 and NUR2000 and NUR2200 and NUR2100 and NUR2800 and NSC2500 and [NUR3200 Co-requisite or prior] and Students must be enrolled in the BNUR Program

Other requisites

Recommended prior study NUR2499 and NUR3599 and NSC2500.

A student must receive a passing grade in this course; it is not available for a conceded pass.

Synopsis

This course will draw upon knowledge from both first and second year courses and introduce professional development concepts aimed at student transition into the practice environment. As such students are required to consider, value and interpret practice through exploration of how knowledge is used to inform professional practice issues, problems and incidents. Critical skills will be developed by students through the process of critical reflection. As such, concepts covered during the semester will be analysed through a critical reflective framework which will be applied to practice and professional development situations. The course content will expand the ethico-legal aspects of nursing practice introduced in previous courses. Concepts include ethical decision making, 'Code of Conduct' and the legal parameters for nurses in clinical practice. In addition, perspectives of transition to professional practice will be discussed and analysed. Concepts include, work expectations, critical review of the role of evidence for practice, Scope of Practice, role conflict, and role boundaries, reflection on practice, "caring for self", the role of the nurse in health care, developing a professional portfolio and strategies to support lifelong learning.

Examples of Courses Hosted on the Learning Management System

- [Course activity](#) >
- [Forums](#) >
- [Study schedule](#) >
- [Teaching team](#) >
- [Resources](#) >
- [Calendar](#) >
- [Participants](#) >

Search forums

Advanced search

Expand all

Welcome to NUR1140 Responsible Nursing Practice

The topics covered in NUR1140 Responsible Nursing Practice are foundational to your development as a future nursing practitioner. Throughout this course, we will be asking *"What is responsible nursing practice and how do professional nurses practice nursing responsibly?"*. Our goal is to instill the principles of safe and competent nursing practice that encompass the core values of the nursing profession, i.e.: caring, advocacy, professionalism and holism. We aim to help you develop knowledge, skills and attitudes for working in clinical settings that enables you to appreciate what it means to promote desired professional and ethical practice. Thus, the design of how this course is taught is focused on enabling you to engage in real-life learning activities, supported by your peers and tutor. Learning in this course is therefore depending upon what you do with the information presented and resources provided, which help you develop your own understandings of responsible and safe nursing practice. Best wishes in this exciting learning journey!

The NUR1140 Teaching Team

FAQs

Group Space

Peer Support

Assessment

Submission

A-Z Glossary

Jump to

Orientation [1](#) | [2](#) | [3](#) | [4](#) | [5](#) | **[Break](#)** | [8](#) | [9](#) | [10](#) | [11](#) | [12](#) | [13](#) | [14](#) | [Recap](#)

Topic 1 | Infection control and patient handling

- Your eWorkbook
- Learning presentation
- Learning focus
- Topic 1 activities
- Laboratory class
- Facilitated learning
- Revision and self-assessment
- Assessment-related tasks

** Click the buttons below to access the course instructions **

Getting Started

Course Material

Weekly Guide

Assessment

- [Social forum](#)
- [General Course Information sharing Forum](#)
- [How mad are you? Part A - streamed video](#)
- [How Mad Are You Part B](#)
- [MSE Assignment Guidelines](#)
- [MSE Assessment video 1](#)
- [MSE assessment video 2](#)
- [MSE assessment video 3](#)
- [Information Session NUR2200](#)
- [Mental Health Act Forms](#)

Appendix 8

Peer Assisted Learning Program

[Study Buddy] Program: a brief overview

[Study Buddy] is a peer-assisted learning (PAL) program. Research indicates that engaging with and learning from peers forges an increase in students' confidence, develops their learning skills, and creates a sense of belonging to the University as a learning community.

The PAL program at [ESU] has a long history. It has been offering academic learning skills development opportunities to students for almost 20 years. The purpose of PAL in the [Study Buddy] Program is to offer [ESU] students opportunities to enhance and develop their learning skills through engagement with peers and peer leaders, both in a discipline-based context and in a general study enquiry mode.

[Study Buddy] contributes to the growth of a pool of ESU student leaders who show initiative and creativity, and demonstrate highly developed employability/graduate skills including communication, leadership, teamwork and independent learning.

Models of [Study Buddy]

Course-based [Study Buddy]

Course-based [Study Buddy] provides opportunities for students at all levels to develop their learning skills and increase their knowledge and understanding of the core concepts in their chosen discipline area. Competent, high achieving students who are doing well in their studies are selected and trained to become student peer leaders. These leaders work in tutorials with lecturers, or take sessions on their own where students work collaboratively on exercises which help them develop a deeper understanding of course or discipline concepts. Leaders also offer study advice based on their personal study experiences, which can help students engage their study time more efficiently. [Study Buddy] Sessions also help students prepare effectively for assignments and exams.

The objectives of course-based [Study Buddy] are to:

- provide a social learning platform where students can engage with their peers
- help students develop the academic learning skills needed for success in their chosen discipline
- provide students with useful and successful study strategies and techniques
- develop leadership skills in student leaders
- provide feedback to academic staff on students' needs and expectations
- serve as an explicit example of USQ and Faculty support for students

Online [Study Buddy] can also be offered in a course via a forum from the course [Learning Management System or LMS]. These forums are managed by Study Buddy leaders who provide a comfortable, informal, friendly space where students can ask questions or engage with exercises posted by the leader. Students' confidence can grow in this supported comfortable space and the interaction with the leader and other students contributes to quality learning.

[Study Buddy] Student Community [SDSC]

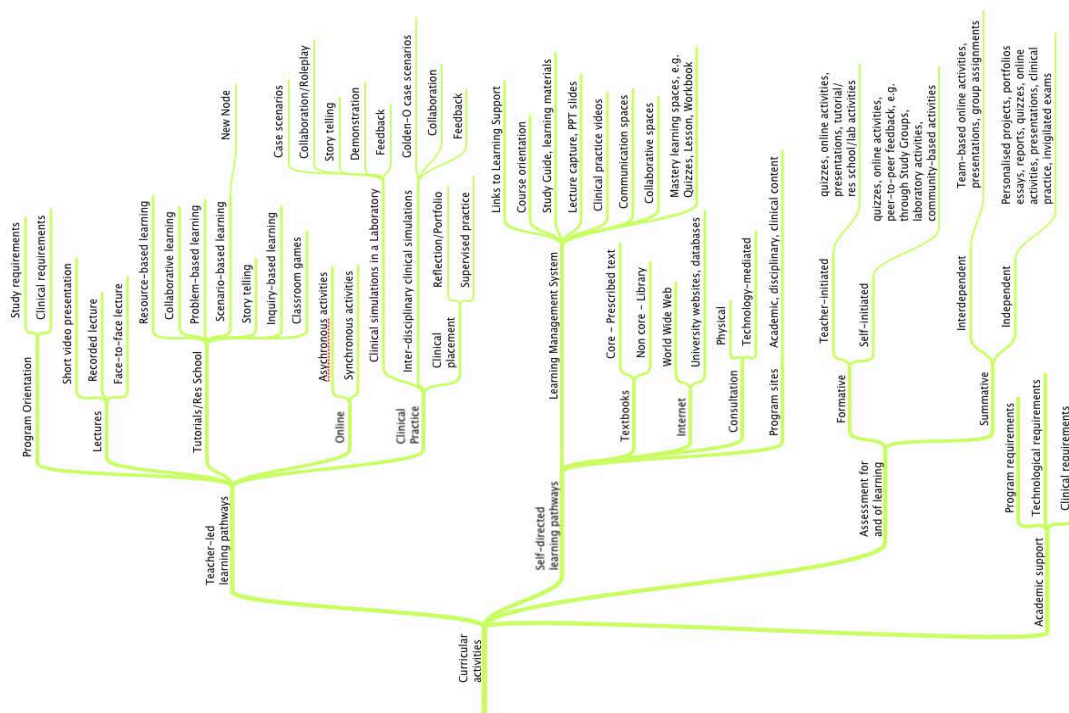
[SDSC] is a non-discipline based model of Study Buddy. This initiative was created with the specific purpose of extending the support offered by student leaders in the course-based program to cater to a broader range of students who may enjoy and benefit from peer contact. This model provides the opportunity for [ESU] students to discuss with a peer any general concerns they have about study which can assist them with their adjustment to university life and the development of their learning skills. [SDSC] leaders offer support and advice on topics such as accessing [ESU LMS], finding resources, and useful study and exam strategies. [SDSC] leaders can provide support and guidance to students about anything regarding university life. They are available online and for drop-in face-to-face chats at each [ESU] campus. Online [SDSC] leaders respond to students' questions on the community space and post study tips and advice.

The expected learning outcomes of engagement with [SDSC] are:

- Participants find the advice/support offered useful
- Participants feel more comfortable and supported at university
- Participants' confidence in their studies is enhanced

Appendix 9

Components of Educational Activities and Pathways



Appendix 10

[Study Buddy] Leader Role and Responsibilities

Duty Statement

Professional Employees

Position Title:	Student Leader in Study Buddy Program
Department:	Learning and Teaching Services (LTS)
Classification:	[ESU] Professional Staff Level 3 Step 1

Duties

1. Attend initial [Study Buddy] Leader Development Workshop and any follow-up sessions provided.
2. Attend meetings with lecturer, or correspond via email. Provide any feedback on course structure or material to course lecturer during semester. Correspond regularly with the LTS staff member on your campus and/or the [Study Buddy] coordinator. Provide them with feedback on sessions held.
3. Prepare materials required for activities in your sessions. Attend lectures and/or ensure familiarity with lecture material to assist with this preparation.
4. Lead [Study Buddy] sessions as planned with the lecturer. Take an attendance sheet for each face-to-face session and deliver them to LTS at the end of semester.

Review and evaluation of sessions

- The Leader Assistant: [Study Buddy] Program, the [Study Buddy] Co-ordinator or a Learning and Teaching Services (LTS) campus staff member may request the opportunity to attend [Study Buddy] sessions in order to provide feedback.
- Leaders are required to reflect weekly on [Study Buddy] sessions led and complete the Leader Survey each semester.
- For online [Study Buddy] sessions or forums, leaders must ensure students have the link to the online survey.
- For face-to-face sessions, leaders are required to distribute printed evaluation forms to students and deliver them to LTS.
- Professional development: leaders should consider peer reviewing another [Study Buddy] leader's session, taking notes and sharing observations and reflections.

Workplace health and safety

All employees have an obligation to comply with the University's workplace health and safety policies, procedures and instructions to ensure a safe workplace. [Study Buddy] Leaders are required to complete the University's Safety Induction and the Fraud and Corruption Module.

Equal opportunity

All employees are required to be aware of and demonstrate a commitment to the principles of equal opportunity in the workplace.

Education, experience, job knowledge and skills

Minimum of Credit level for course/or equivalent course in which student is leader.