EPISTEMOLOGICAL ACCESS AND AUTHENTIC LEARNING PRACTICE: A CASE STUDY IN HOSPITALITY FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

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DECLARATION

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ABSTRACT

The recent widespread Fallist student movement taking hold of South African Higher Education has raised debates and tensions relating to the economic and social transformation of academic institutions. Despite National Higher Education funding relief (NSFAS), relentless patterns of economic and social inequalities in South Africa perpetuate unequal access for many first year undergraduates that are working class, first generation and English second language students. Providing students with epistemological access is essentially the counterpart to physical and financial access. How students access these academic ways of knowing, is indeed a cause for concern. At the Durban University of Technology (DUT), compounding this precarious situation, most Hospitality Financial

Management (HSFM101) students struggle to access a financial disciplinary identity. Students find engaging with complex assessment tasks, particularly challenging especially as it requires them to align abstract theory to practical contexts. In addition, many students often report that they struggle to understand the relevance of hospitality accounting and its potential contribution to their hospitality careers. Importantly, accessing the tenets of the discipline, its discourse and practice appears to remain elusive to many students.

While Morrow (2009) argued that fostering epistemological access (EA) calls for carefully constructed pedagogical and curricula processes, he did not go on to identify the particular pedagogy that could be employed in higher education teaching. In this study, I recognise the different levels of preparedness of prospective university students, and their potential lack of efficacy in gaining access to the epistemologies of their chosen discipline (HSFM101). This study explores student experiences in an HSFM101 programme, carefully designed to integrate the principles of Authentic Assessment with the view to creating enabling conditions for student learning. In addition, this study is a response to a lacuna in South African Higher education scholarship on how students learn and are assessed in Hospitality programmes.

The study was guided by the principles of social constructivism and subscribed to an interpretive paradigm. A qualitative, case study design served as the framework to underpin the research. A purposive sample of 20 participants was selected from a cohort of Hospitality Financial Management students at DUT. Due consideration was given to a balanced representation in relation to race and gender. The rigor offered by Interactive Qualitative

Analysis (IQA) (Northcutt & McCoy, 2004) was particularly appealing as it provides a systematic protocol that makes explicit both data generation and analysis processes. Data was generated through individual in-depth interviews, student reflective online journals and IQA focus group interviews. The interpretive and qualitative lens adopted for this study enabled a rich contextual understanding of how students experienced learning and acquired epistemic access through an Authentic Assessment (AA) strategy.

Following the IQA protocol, focus groups generated ten affinities or themes of their experiences of being assessed in an Authentic learning environment. The primary theme that drove students learning experiences was *Life's Contradictions,* whilst the main outcome or primary outcome of the study was *getting it right.* Despite the tensions, struggles and contradictions that students experienced in authentic learning situations, it was recognised that a pedagogy of authentic learning (the AA strategy in this case) does have the propensity to afford many students EA. According to this study, an AA strategy further revealed that, by affording students scaffolding opportunities, they were able to seek solutions autonomously, share their ideas, or even take the lead in improving collaborative learning. In addition, students wanted to feel included and so by creating and nurturing learning spaces that value diversity in HEIs; does in fact promote cohesive learning which enables EA. The fact that AA allows for students to engage in different ways and challenge their prior beliefs and assumptions; implies that there is transformation in learning. The results of this study further suggest that learning tolerance and accepting diversity was able to advance epistemic growth and emotional intelligence. This fortifies the nexus between social participation and prosperity; hence enabling EA (Sen, 2001). Whilst this study explored the learning experiences of HSFM101 it certainly does have wider implications for curriculum planning and reform towards transformative assessment pedagogies in various Higher Education curricula.

KEY WORDS: *Epistemological Access, Authentic Assessment, Social Constructivism, Interactive Qualitative Analysis*

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this work in loving memory of my late niece, my protégé, YASHIKA who have meant and continue to mean so much to me.

Your support and encouragement in the ‘bewildering years’ will not be forgotten

LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

AA	Authentic Assessment
ART	Affinity Relationship Table
BB	Blackboard
BWC	Black Working Class
CHE	Council on Higher Education
DUT	Durban University of Technology
EA	Epistemological Access
FYSE	First Year Student Experience
HE	Higher Education
HEi's	Higher Education Intuitions
HSFM101	Hospitality Financial Management
HFM	Hospitality Financial Management
IQA	Interactive Qualitative Analysis
IRD	Interrelationship Diagram
NSFAS	National Student Funding Scheme
PBL	Problem Based Learning
SID	Systems Influence Diagram
TC	Threshold Concepts
ZPD	Zone of Proximal Development

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CHAPTER ONE: CONTEXTUALISING THE STUDY

1.1 Introduction

The first-year student experience in higher education (HE) has become a global concern (McMillan, 2014), where many universities can be observed to struggle with increasing student diversity. Meanwhile, the persistent question of how to support their students' overall academic performance remains a challenge, especially with regard to compulsory first-year courses, where failure and dropout rates are reportedly high. It has been previously noted that traditional and non-traditional students enter HE academically, socially, and financially underprepared (Tinto, 2003). Notwithstanding the investment of resources that higher education institutions in the United States have committed to improving student success over the past 20 years, limited progress has been noted (Tinto, 2012). The significant differences in students' social and cultural backgrounds, ushers in a range of diverse expectations, needs and academic abilities (Fraser and Killen, 2003). Understandably, this raises the question as to what pedagogies may (or even may not) address such diversity.

In South Africa, Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) are under increased pressure to promote the expansion of social justice and redress extensive and burdensome apartheid legacies (Cross and Carpentier, 2009; Badat, 2010). This requires that they rigorously and proactively pursue equity and democracy through their institutional policies, plans, programmes, and practices (Tjabane, 2010). South Africa has made notable strides towards access and participation, however, its present scenario of low graduation and rate of retention, as well as the circumstances resulting from the recent student protests, present a bleak scenario.

1.2 Situating access and participation of new entrants within the South African higher education transformational landscape

In order to obtain a nuanced understanding of the research problem, for the context of this study, it is necessary to firstly present a background on the South higher education

landscape. This section will further briefly foreground the interplay on the issues of transformation, access to HE , social justice and some of the challenges HEI's are confronted with, which further serves as a guide to the formulation of the research problem and questions.

The quest to increase access to South African HE has given rise to a new class of students, known as "non-traditional" students or students from disadvantaged backgrounds (Cross and Carpentier, 2009). The shift from a form of elitist education to mass education requires curriculum developers to respond to the needs of diverse (groups of) students (Department of Education, 2001; 2013). A fundamental precept forwarded in this study is that in order to reduce high attrition and dropout rates and improve the graduation rate, the Higher Education (HE) sector needs to understand the nature and extent of the academic challenges confronting students in the country. This necessarily raises questions regarding epistemological access (EA) (which is further discussed in Chapter 2) and academic preparedness (Cross & Carpentier, 2009; CHE, 2013), and calls for pedagogic strategies that support student success (McKenzie and Schweitzer, 2001). However, Mdepa and Tshiwula (2012) are of the view that equal opportunity in terms of access and success remains elusive due to systemic practices within historically advantaged universities, which evidence their resistance to transformation. Such traditional academic and institutional cultures are inclined to be dominated by historical legacies of intellectual colonisation and racialisation that continue to disrupt university learning spaces.

1.2.1 Transformational shift

The dawn of democracy in South Africa (SA) in 1994 ushered in an array of transformation initiatives. Resulting from this watershed moment, HE transformation agenda includes decolonising, deracialising, demasculinising, and degendering South African universities, while taking up the call to engage with ontological and epistemological issues in all their complexity across all pedagogical aspects including learning and teaching and the curriculum (Mabokela, 2001; Ntshoe, 2004; CHE, 2010; Badat, 2015; Heleta, 2016). The Council on Higher Education (CHE) (2010) has noted that its policy agenda has previously been

influenced by trends in the restructuring of HEIs in developed and developing countries, especially with regard to social justice and institutional change (Badat, 2010; CHE, 2012). Calls for a shift from elitist education to massification, test the capacity and capability of both the state and individual institutions. However, Lange (2006) contends that, in the South African HE context, focus is placed on promoting social justice, rather than on benchmarking an international trend.

Over the past few decades, neo-liberalism has promoted the commodification and marketisation of HE (Van der Walt, 2017). The neoliberal economic agenda seeks to reduce funding of HE, and thus, "weaken public control over education" (Prichard & Willmott, 1997; Wangenge-Ouma, 2010). This imposes an increased financial burden on individual students (Johnstone, 2004) and inevitably sidelines HEIs' role in promoting democracy and social justice.

Given the economic and social conditions in South Africa characterised by widespread poverty (Van der Walt, 2017), many students drop out of university not because they are academically unfit to cope with the demands of HE, but because they cannot afford the fees that escalate as their studies proceed (Cassim, 2005). It is thus not surprising that the decrease in state funding of universities prompted the 2015/16 student protests in SA (Fitzgerald and Seale, 2016). The #Fees Must Fall movement (also referred to the Fallist Movement) arose from calls to decolonise the curriculum and raised other issues such as the language of instruction, which remains English in most universities, as well as access to the university's academic resources (Heleta, 2016; Steyn- Kotze, 2018).

1.2.2 Transforming HSFM101

The transformation of South African HE calls for access to be granted to students from previously marginalised communities; necessitating more flexible entry requirements (Brüssow, 2007). The influx of students into HE is referred to as massification (Scott, Yeld and Hendry, 2007; Sosibo and Katiya, 2015). This meant that the admission requirements for HSFM101 had to be re-examined, and funding strategies needed to be formulated to

support an economically more diverse student population (Smit, 2012). Diversity encompasses different prior learning experiences, including personal background; socio-economic status; language; as well as cultural, and educational background. Students enter university with different levels of preparedness (Scott et al., 2007; Shay, 2017).

Increased access has resulted in larger classes, especially at first year level. Academics are now confronted with pedagogic difficulties in enabling epistemic access in even larger classes (Rusznyak, Dison, Moosa, and Poo, 2017). This calls for innovative ways to address this challenge (Morrow, 2009; Snowball and Boughey, 2012). Thus, it is recommend that they adopt a more proactive and effective pedagogy (Jawitz, 2013).

1.2.3 Teaching larger classes

Academics are accused of employing inappropriate teacher-centred or traditional pedagogies to teach large classes (Jawitz, 2013). Jawitz (2013, p143) draws our attention to the insufficiency of using PowerPoint as a pedagogical tool in larger classes, noting that "PowerPoint is currently one of the most favoured allies in this task: dim the lights, switch on the presentation, and drill home your message, one bullet at a time!" Such an approach promotes surface learning, as students accept only the summarised content of the slides, without reflecting on or engaging deeply with the content. Control of large classes may become problematic as some students may engage in disruptive behaviour. It is also difficult to ensure that each student's needs are attended to, with the result that they may become apathetic or disinterested (especially when some students dominate or disrupt the lesson at the expense of others). For this reason, creative means need to be developed to offer a greater degree of individual attention, so that students do not come to feel isolated or alienated (Hess, 2001; Treko, 2013; Jawitz, 2013). This notwithstanding, Hess (2001) posits that academics may benefit from teaching large classes, since it may allow them to reflect on their pedagogical practices and methods. Enabling hospitality students to internalise the norms and practices of hospitality financial management in order to acquire disciplinary identity, calls for innovative and creative pedagogies.

As elaborated thus far, the current HE landscape calls for student-centred approaches (CHE, 2013). Emphasis ought to be on *how a student learns and how the student acquires knowledge*. Shifting from teacher centeredness to student centeredness could promote high-quality learning (Ramsden, 2003). Academics ought to avoid traditional teaching approaches and should adopt student-centered pedagogies. This requires an understanding of both the disciplinary content and the factors that enable or inhibit learning. Likewise, the efficacy of the pedagogy employed rather than the size of the class determines student success (Lewis and Woodward, 1988; Jawitz, 2013). A pedagogy that promotes participation and engagement enhances students' autonomy in learning. However, McKenna (2013) cautions that the student-centered approach ignores the social and historical baggage that accompanies many working class students into the university. Furthermore, in a neoliberal sense, the university ultimately quantifies the student as either an achiever or a failure, tending to entirely overlook their social or economic background (Boughey, 2012) and therefore that which they have had to overcome to achieve their educational goals.

HEIs are thus often accused of facile responses to the "question of access" and their social and political commitment to cater for students that are under-prepared remains in question (CHE, 2010). While compliance with the political directive to increase access led to an increase in student enrolment, it resulted in numerous teaching and learning challenges (Morrow, 2007). It ought to be kept in mind that granting students from the previously marginalised and oppressed majority formal or physical access to the university addresses access without guaranteeing success.

1.2.4 The Access and success Dichotomy

Several studies have implied that disadvantaged students' skills and conceptual knowledge are often perceived as inadequate to a university setting (Smit, 2012). The principles of equity and redress necessarily require that all students are able to gain both access and success (CHE, 2010); and the question of the latter underscores the challenges confronting previously disadvantaged students, according to then Minister of Education and current Minister of Higher Education Naledi Pandor (2005b). However, the notion of 'disadvantage'

covers up a wide array of perceived shortcomings and has not been clearly conceptualised (Smit, 2012). In the South African context, 'non-traditional' students are also conceptualised as disadvantaged students, and these include mature students and those that are working full time or part time. In promoting access, it is critical to identify and be able to articulate students' actual profiles, especially the often-overlooked economic and social capital they bring to HE. Social capital refers to personal contexts, power, status and alternative forms of knowledge (Hiller and Rooksby, 2005) that tend to go unaccounted for in South African university contexts. Indeed, a larger number of students from working class backgrounds that are entering HE might not possess the necessary social and cultural capital. Such students are likely to struggle to meet the skewed demands of an institution dominated by an elitist academic and institutional culture (Cross and Carpentier, 2009).

On the other hand, achieving social justice[1] through HE is not feasible given condition of injustice pervading the country, where only about 27% of students entering university in SA for the first time complete a first qualification in regulation time (CHE, 2016). In addition, around 25% of those in contact public institutions fail or drop out before their second year of study, and about 55% of students that attend HE never graduate (Badat, 2005; CHE, 2016: 145). Moreover, the dropout rate among African and Coloured[2] students is significantly higher than that of White and Indian students (CHE, 2016). Improving pass and throughput rates is challenged by historical inequity (DHET, 2013). While access has been broadened, the low retention and drop-out rates of South African students, especially in first year, is of major concern (Adam, Backhouse, Baloyi, and Barnes, 2010). This calls for a review of curricula as well as teaching and learning approaches (Lewin and Mawoyo, 2014).

[1] According to Tjabane (2010) social justice, refers to the extent to which HEIs make and pursue commitments to equity, democracy and redress in their institutional policies, plans, programmes, and practices.

[2] The four main race groups in South Africa recognised in SA law are African, coloured, Indian and white. However, "black" may refer to the collective of population groups not identifying as white (CHE, 2010).

Furthermore, students that are lesser prepared for HE, have not attained the essential academic, literacy, and numeracy skills that will enable their success (Smit, 2012), calling for increased academic support initiatives (Brüssow, 2007). Keeping educational justice in mind, this call ought necessarily to be accompanied by the realisation that such challenges are not merely a symptom of cognitive or motivational deficiency (Smit, 2012; Boughey, 2007). Equally, it ought to be kept in view that deficit discourse models for academic support initiatives in traditionally white universities are based on a political agenda that aims to 'fix' such 'inadequacies' (Boughey, 2007). This study supports the argument forwarded elsewhere that the systematic intention is to acculturate the 'underprepared' into the dominant institutional culture (Boughey, 2007; Scott et al., 2007).

Given that the current student intake is confronted on enrolment by colonial pedagogical cultures presenting them with substantive epistemic challenges, this raises the question of whether HE institutions can in fact be understood to fulfil the academic demands of a diverse student cohort, according to mandate. This may include curriculum re-design that aims to enable students to gain disciplinary access in order to accomplish academic goals. Similarly, it is overdue for HEIs to ensure that students are deeply engaged in the disciplines of their choosing (Scott, 2009). Access is not simply about obtaining admission to a university, but about being able to navigate "academic ways of knowing"(Boughey and Niven, 2012 in Lewin and Mawoyo, 2014).

Students enter HEIs with a limited didactic understanding of authorial positions; leading to misinterpretation of how they recognise and engage with academic texts (Boughey, 2005). Importantly epistemological access does not only refer to the *replication of disciplinary knowledge*, but also the *production of new knowledge* (Boughey, 2005). As such, its higher goal is to bridge the respective worldviews of students, academics and inherited disciplinary knowledge, rather than simply providing students with rote academic skills or strategies.

Thus, EA is not only about providing students with the skills and strategies expected in HEI (Boughey, 2008) but involves a common understanding between the student and instructor regarding how these worlds engage with and draw upon one another. Similarly, EA enables

academic success, which is more than just the achievement of a neutral set of language and learning skills, but is closely linked to issues of identity and belonging within a particular discipline (McKenna, 2004).

In line with these findings, from a social justice imperative, it becomes necessary for HEI's to afford their students meaningful access through innovative pedagogies that will facilitate their academic success.

1.3 Statement of the Problem: Contextualising Hospitality Studies in Higher Education

Globally, the hospitality industry has often been criticised for graduates not having the essential skills that are necessary for successful hospitality management (Pratt, and Hahn, 2016; Yang, Cheung and Song, 2016; Jackson, 2015). Furthermore, studies reveal that hospitality education lacks the connection to real – world scenarios; subsequently creating a gap between the assumptions of the students and the expectations of a fast pace growing industry (Wardle and Daruwalla, 2017; Yang, Cheung and Song, 2016; Alhelalat, 2015).

More so, international scholarship reveals that post-secondary institutions are under increased pressure to prepare employable graduates and to strengthen the nexus between industry and HEI's (Chand, 2016; Alhelalat, 2015; Sugrue and Solbrekke 2017). A corollary to this tendency, is that educators tend to focus mainly on vocational oriented skills rather than critical thinking and problem solving skills. However, the hospitality industry, its rapid growth and recent complexities demand that graduates must be able to be inquiry- focused and apply their acquired knowledge to solve real problems (Maryott, 2018; Jiang and Alexakis 2017).

Hence this calls for the design of a creative and innovative curriculum that responds, equally, to the needs of the students and addressing the requirements of the industry. Concomitantly, academics may have to make the shift from the traditional didactic mode to one that is student- centred (Garris, Ahler and Drikell, 2002; Chau and Cheung, 2017). In order to conform to needs of the hospitality industry, HEI's need to take responsibility for the skills and knowledge their students will acquire during their time of learning. One particular measure to confirm this practice is to authenticate the role of assessment which

exhibits the acquired knowledge and skills, whilst defining their vocational, academic and professional achievements (Nkhoma, Nkhoma and Tu, 2018). A shift from the traditional classroom assessment to that of which aligns to the needs of the industry certainly calls for an authentic assessment practice.

Indeed, from a South African perspective teaching students with a more student-centred pedagogy does bring its unique set of challenges. In recent years, there has been growing scholarship on how students access ways of knowing, doing and thinking at the university in their relative disciplines (Morrow 2009). This is what was termed as epistemological access (later discussed in this chapter as well as the subsequent chapter) so that students are able to engage more critically, confidently and autonomously in their learning. Given that the South African higher education landscape is characterized by rapid change and enduring inequality (Goebel,2017) , and that access to university knowledge, as this has been and remains unequally distributed often along racial and social class lines, does raise many concerns.

One such concern, which serves as the impetus for this study is whether hospitality students from such diverse backgrounds are able to engage meaningfully with the knowledge they acquire at universities, since these wider social, economic and political factors appear to affect students' approaches to learning.

Hence this study aims to respond to this concern; more specifically to the first year hospitality students that are engaged in the module **Hospitality Financial Management 1 (HSFM101).**

Furthermore, the **Hospitality Financial Management 1 module** is characterised by high failure and withdrawal rates, making the subject a "high risk" one at the Durban University of Technology (DUT). As a lecturer in the subject, in many instances I have experienced students regularly complaining as to the relevance of hospitality accounting to their hospitality careers. A notable personal observation, was that students frequently express tremendous anxiety and antipathy when it came to written tests (traditional assessments), consequently leading to unfavourable performance. In most instances, the results are indicative of difficulty in grasping and mastery of financial concepts; let alone application and problem solving. Such students tend to adopt a more passive approach to learning, resulting in poor understanding of the subject discourse, leading to challenges in epistemic

access[3]. Furthermore, students from working class[4] backgrounds have indicated that the context of the hospitality discipline extends too far beyond their lived experiences for them to bridge towards the new knowledge they encounter in relation to the needs of the industry.

Although various calls for assessment reform in both national and institutional policy continue to burgeon, implementation of such assessment practice at universities are often ignored or resisted (Bloxham, den-Outer, Hudson, and Price, 2016; CHE, 2013). Drawing on my experience of teaching and assessing students in this module, for more than eight years, I argue that understanding how undergraduates learn and acquire disciplinary knowledge could assist in improving assessment practices and enable me to reflect on my own teaching and learning pathways. Engaging in such reflective practice allows academics to become the architects of their very own learning and teaching spaces (Biggs, 1999; Motallebzadeh, Ahmadi and Hosseinnia, 2018)

In view of the previous section and the scenario presented above, this study will be guided by the following research questions:

- What enables/constraints EA in an authentic assessment (AA) strategy in HSFM101?
- What explains the relationship between Authentic Learning and Epistemological Access in HSFM101?
- Why do students learn in this authentic assessment strategy in the ways that they do?

[3]According to Morrow (2009) 'epistemic access' is what a curriculum should entitle students to. Note that the term epistemic access will be interchangeably used with the concept Epistemological Access.

[4]According to Rubin (2012) working class students: a) feel less prepared for higher education than their middle-class peers; b) are less likely to be academically engaged; and c) are less likely to attain academic success.

1.4 Rationale for the study

Given the changing role of HEIs and the growing diversity of students, universities are compelled to take cognisance of their entry practices. A fundamental factor impacting on student success in HE is the gap between what the students know (from school) and that to which the university curriculum exposes them (McKenna, 2004). In being able to access disciplinary learning, students are introduced into the different ways of knowing in order to critically evaluate and authenticate their findings. It is for these reasons that academic leaders are now starting to channel their efforts towards identifying at-risk subjects and students that may be potentially "at risk".[5] This would mean embarking on curriculum re-design in order to enable students to gain disciplinary access, and achieve academic success.

This study was conducted during a turbulent time in South Africa's higher education landscape. What began as a student's protest over the unaffordable fee hike increases, soon led to a nation-wide call for free education. It triggered further protests that also brought to the fore; the lack of curriculum transformation and curricula delivery by HEI's that does not address a diverse student population (Nyamupangedengu, 2017).

Notwithstanding the country's commitment to social transformation intended to redress education access and equity, Chetty and Knaus (2016) note that the protests labelled HE as being biased according to both race and class. Students who are unable to succeed in tertiary education are typically those students that come from poorer communities, that have at best, an oppressive and at worst, ineffective public schooling system. Hence, these students are burdened in various ways, being academically differently prepared, financially fraught, and culturally unaccustomed to university learning spaces (Le Grange, 2016). It is against this backdrop that I posit that prospective university students' different levels of preparedness may impact their efficacy in gaining access to the epistemologies of their chosen discipline.

[5] 'At risk' students are those students that present a risk to attaining academic goal (Mngomezulu and Ramrathan, 2015).

The term epistemology originated from the word 'episteme', a branch of Greek philosophy concerning the study of knowledge (Collins and O'Brien, 2003: 126). The concept of EA was coined by Wally Morrow (1993) in the 1980s, during the political debate on the University of the Western Cape moving towards a flexible admissions policy. The concept of access has its own political and social agenda within South African HE. Morrow (1993) has argued that a student first needs to gain physical access to the goods of the university, followed by EA. He adds that EA involves "learning how to become a successful participant in an academic practice" (Morrow, 2009; Clerehan, 2003; Boughey, 2005; Scott, et al, 2007) and
argues that this constitutes the most important form of social access to higher education and its resources. However, EA in HE remains under-researched, especially at a University of Technology at which I am positioned to teach.

Owing to the diversity of student academic backgrounds, it is necessary to realign the curriculum, and teaching and learning approaches, in particular modes of assessment, which might enable students to gain EA, and thereby develop greater success in higher education frameworks. Most HSFM101 students are apprehensive when it comes to accessing a financial disciplinary identity, as they may be challenged by complex assessment tasks, linking abstract theory to actual situations. Thus, this study explored students' EA in an authentic environment, specifically authentic assessment. Students that learn in authentic settings are given opportunities for collaboration that create and construct knowledge, coaching and scaffolding through engagement, and the ability to critically reflect and appraise one another.

1.5 Conceptual Framework

This study was guided by a conceptual framework. It draws on a set of key concepts that relates to students learning experiences in an authentic learning environment. Whilst a conceptual framework serves as a guide to the research process; a coherent relationship between the concepts, the research title as well as the methodology that is employed in the study is essential (Bargate, 2014; Ravich and Carl, 2016; Adom, Hussein, and Agyem, 2018). For example in this study, the broad two concepts that frames the research is

epistemological access (EA) and authentic assessment (AA). An authentic assessment strategy includes a selection of interactive and engaging learning activities, affords the student the experience real-world situations (Lombardi, 2007; Mingo, 2013). On the other hand, EA refers to students' acquisition of disciplinary ways of thinking and doing and to confidently demonstrate independent learning (Morrow, 2009). In order to problematise the concept of epistemological access and authentic assessments; this study will be guided by a constructivist approach to learning. The adoption of a constructivist approach to assessment crafts an opportunity for meaningful learning through experience in a particular disciplinary context (Fosnot, 2008, p.19), 'learners learn best when they can contextualise what they learn for immediate application and personal meaning. The study will draw from the 3 P Model (Biggs, 1989). Although this model emerged in the late 1980's, it still has contemporary applications as it offers a useful framework to analyse student learning in the SA context. Just like the theories of Vygotsky and Dewey still have relevance for contemporary scholarship, several scholars, internationally, continue to apply the Biggs framework as to understand and explore teaching and learning. For example, recent studies, conducted by Song (2018) suggest that the Biggs's 3P model may be applied as a means of explaining the factors involved in students' effective learning in open online courses that is necessary for the efficacious design of courses and improving open online learning. Furthermore, Lee and Chan (2018) in a longitudinal study, demonstrates how epistemic beliefs influence academic performance through students' perceptions of the learning environment in the light of the 3P Model. Similarly, Barratucci (2017) avers that in recent years, HE has gained traction in a growing interest on how the learning environment influences students' perceptions and the value they attribute to it. A corollary to this responds to the urgency to improve the educational systems, since the influence HE have in creating a positive and supportive learning environment (Ramsden, 2003; Duffy, James, Campbell, and Williams, 2017; Richardson and Mishra, 2018).

The model conceptualises the learning process as an interactive system; comprising of three variables or three P's. The first P refers to Presage factors which includes the students personal attributes as well as characteristics of the learning environment. The second variable refers to the Process; which is students' approach to learning (process), and the

final P refers to the Product which is the learning outcomes (product). The model demonstrates how both personal and situational factors influence the approach that students will adopt for learning. Finally the approach, whether surface, deep or strategic determines whether the outcomes or even the quality of outcomes were achieved in using authentic practise strategies. This will be further explained in chapter 2.

1.6 The Nature and origin of Authentic Learning

The concept 'authentic' in the context of learning and assessment was officially and initially recognised by Archbald and Newmann (1988) which was referred to as 'authentic achievement'. The authors further expanded on the concept of authentic achievement with several characteristics that emulate the 'kinds of mastery demonstrated by successful adults' ((Newmann & Archbald, 1992, p 72-74). Subsequently they characterised authentic achievement as a mode of constructive learning, disciplined enquiry, and higher-order thinking and problem-solving. Finally they added that authentic achievement should also have a dimension, of aesthetic development, personal development that is meaningful in the wider world; implying a transfer of learning ((Newmann & Archbald, 1992). It was not long before the term 'authentic' was attached to assessment rather than achievement. The first proponent to coin the concept of 'authentic assessment' was Grant Wiggins (1989). According to Wiggins (1989), an assessment is regarded as authentic when it can actually examine student performance on worthy intellectual tasks.

In recent years, there has been a shift in the alignment of assessment tasks through emerging technologies and authentic learning environments (Herrington, Reeves and Oliver, 2014). In contrast to traditional instructional settings, an authentic learning environment exposes students to first hand, real-life experiences, (Mingo, 2013). The student is more likely to access knowledge in such a setting, as learning is separated from its context (Herrington & Oliver, 2000; Mingo, 2013). The best assessment tasks are therefore educative, and not complex. They ought to teach students about the real world, which enables them to learn, and be assessed. Students are able to demonstrate learning by integrating what they know (epistemology) and are able to deal with who they are

becoming (ontology). Tasks thus have to be designed in accordance with real-world activities in a realistic setting. Furthermore, they are attached to real-life values; where their attributes emphasise knowledge and are aligned to an epistemological focus (Vu and Dall'Alba, 2014).

Epistemology in a philosophical sense refers to what knowledge is, and knowing *how* (skills) or knowing *that*. The ways in which university teachers assess, the types of tasks or activities they design, and the kinds of learning that is hoped to be achieved by students are premised within the tenets of epistemology (Knight, Shum and Littleton, 2014; CHE, 2010). The shift to replicate or integrate authentic contexts requiring complex thinking, problem-solving and collaboration strategies will facilitate student learning outcomes; hence affording students epistemic access within their disciplinary area (Crisp, Guàrdia and Hillier, 2016).

1.7 Purpose and Aim of the study

My main purpose in this study was to explore and understand how the implementation of a non-traditional pedagogy such as authentic assessment has the potential to promote or inhibit epistemological access in HSFM101.

In this study, my connection to the research context goes even deeper as I was positioned as both a facilitator and tutor of the HSFM101 course and a PhD student researcher. My normative stance as a researcher places me in an egalitarian position as I firmly believe that there is a need for transformative pedagogies in higher education that would develop student's inherent potential. Consequently this motivated me to challenge the current dominant assessment practices. I felt the desire to procure a nuanced understanding on my students, their personal and socio -political backgrounds and prior learning. More importantly, I was concerned with establishing what enables students from poor and working class backgrounds to acquire disciplinary access through transformed learning.

The aim of the study was to conduct a rich, contextualised case study to develop insights into how students within a *Hospitality Financial Management* context acquire epistemic access in the practice of authentic learning. The study addresses a pedagogical gap in the

extant literature. In addition, the research approach of using Interactive Qualitative Analysis (IQA) proves an unexplored area within the field of Hospitality Management.

1.8 Contributions of the Study

This study hopes to yield an improved understanding of how students acquire EA and the possibilities for improved learning in Authentic learning situations. It is expected that the findings of this inquiry will augment the existing body of knowledge and literature on teaching and learning within the field of Hospitality Financial management and assessment.

Moreover, this study serves to inform the key role players of HE such as policy makers, faculty and educators in adopting and considering alternative assessment strategies that will afford students greater opportunities to acquire EA. Most importantly, it is hoped that this study will present a nuanced understanding of the lived experiences of our students and how they negotiate learning in this challenging discipline.

1.9 Location of the Study

The study was conducted in the Faculty of Management Sciences at the Durban University of Technology, located in the Hotel School of the Department of Hospitality and Tourism. The module, Hospitality Financial Management 1 (HSFM101), was the focus of the study conducted in the second semester of 2016. The average size of the Hospitality Financial Management 1 class was 150 students, from a relevant diversity of cultural backgrounds and social classes.

1.10 Research Methods / Approach to Study

1.10.1 Approach

A qualitative, interpretive methodology was used, employing case study research design. The interpretive lens enabled myself as the researcher to gain a deeper and richer contextual understanding of the participants' social reality and lived experience of the phenomenon under investigation. Data were collected and analysed using IQA (Northcutt and McCoy, 2004). The IQA research process (further explicated in chapter 3) aligns itself to

a social constructivist approach to data gathering and analysis. A key component of an IQA study is that the participants are most active in the data collection and analysis. Since it is the participants, who are referred to as constituents, are initially responsible for the analysis and interpretation of the data they generate (Tabane, 2010). In this way such an approach seeks to minimise the power relations and biases traditionally associated with qualitative research (Northcutt and McCoy, 2004). In addition, the motivation for employing an IQA approach is to create a visual representation of HSFM101 students' learning experiences in an authentic assessment practice strategy. The SID (Systems Influence Diagram) authenticates the data sources that emerged from the two levels of IQA, the first of which being focus groups, and the second of which being data from semi-structured interviews, as well as the participants' online reflective journals.

1.10.2 Qualitative research

This study was grounded in the tradition of qualitative research using the principles of social constructivism. Qualitative research is an "exciting interdisciplinary landscape comprising diverse perspectives and practices for generating knowledge"; described as "intellectual, creative and rigorous craft that the practitioner not only learns but also develops through practice" (Hesse-Biber and Leavy, 2011, p. 4).

A qualitative enquiry is aligned with the social constructivist paradigm as it studies the meaning of people's lives within given contextual conditions (Yin, 2011). Using a constructivist approach, the meaning of experiences and events are constructed by individuals, who thus construct the realities in which they participate (Charmaz, 2006). The social constructivist view of learning, based on Vygotsky's learning theory (1978) , assumes that knowledge construction and meaning making is significantly enriched through peer to peer interaction (Oigara & Keengwe, 2013). In addition, constructivist learning enables students to interpret their own meanings and build on previous experiences (Bada, and Olusegun, 2015).

This study was guided by an interpretive lens, aiming to understand how the participants construct their individual and shared meanings around the phenomenon of EA (Charmaz, 2006). Qualitative data yields rich, thick descriptions that are derived in their real context (Rule and John, 2011), through qualitative methods such as in-depth interviews and focus groups (Wahyuni, 2012).

1.10.3 Case study

Qualitative research determines the meaning that people give to their life experiences. A case study research design was appropriate to investigating how students acquire EA in Hospitality Financial Management within the context of an HEI. A case study is defined as "an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident" (Yin, 2011; Rule and John 2011). While Zikmund (1997) argues that a case study is restricted to exploratory studies, Yin (2009) states that "case studies are far from being only an exploratory strategy."

In this case study, I wanted to explore and understand how and why HSFM101 students' acquired epistemic access in an authentic assessment practice over a 16 weeks course. The case study was set in a peer-group collaborative-centred tutorial programme for the module HSFM101 at the DUT that was voluntarily attended by twenty-three students from the mainstream programme. The students were chosen based on their ability to provide in-depth information on the study topic (Yin, 2011).

1.10.4 Sample

Purposive sampling technique considers the choice of participants that are closest to phenomenon under study and are willing to share their experiences and knowledge in that regard (Etikan, Musa, and Alkassim, 2016). In purposive sampling, participants are selected according to key criteria to ensure that they are relevant to the subject matter and also to ensure that, within each of the key criteria, diversity is accounted for. Although purposive selection involves deliberate choices, bias should not be reflected in the selection (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003).

A sample of 20 was selected, as these participants were part of the tutorial group throughout the semester, and the focus group for the IQA to be implemented towards the end of the module. Northcutt and McCoy (2004) propose a class size of 20 to be suitable for teaching smaller groups. Further to this, 12-20 participants are considered ideal for an IQA focus group (Northcutt and McCoy, 2004; Bargate, 2012).

1.10.5 Data collection and analysis

The data was gathered by means of focus groups, semi-structured, open-ended interviews, and the participants' online reflective journals.

1.10.6 Interactive Qualitative Analysis (IQA)

Interactive Qualitative Analysis developed by Northcutt and McCoy (2004) was used to understand how students acquire EA within HSFM101. The choice of an IQA research design is most suited for qualitative researchers wanting to explore and understand how phenomena are socially constructed and to develop a theory of the research phenomenon that demonstrates a systemic understanding of the phenomenon (Northcutt &McCoy, 2004; Tabane, 2010).

IQA is a fairly recent method that has not been used widely, if at all, within Hospitality Education, including in the South African context (Tabane and Human-Vogel *et al*., 2010; Mampane and Bouwer, 2011; Human-Vogel, 2006; Human-Vogel and Mahlangu, 2009). Bargate (2012) applied IQA in a context similar to the field of Management Accounting in an enquiry into students' learning experiences.

1.10.7 Focus groups and semi-structured interviews

The main purpose of focus groups is to derive an understanding of the research participants' beliefs and cultures that influence their feelings, attitudes and behaviour within the context of their lived experience. Furthermore, focus groups enable participants to engage positively

with the research process by generating rich, in-depth data based on group interaction (Rabie, 2004).

As noted previously, IQA was employed to gather the data for this study. According to Northcutt and McCoy (2004), IQA is a "social constructionist approach to data collection and analysis which addresses power relations between the researchers. The aim is for the focus group to design their own "interpretive quilt" (Northcutt and McCoy, 2004) and thereafter, to create quilts of individualised meaning. The process requires participants to actively code the data by producing themes or affinities. Furthermore, IQA rigorously aligns its processes to the tenets of social constructivism, as knowledge is constructed through social participation. The data was collected at two levels.

The first level identified the participants for the focus groups, followed by interviews with the focus group, and concluded by producing combined group themes and affinities arising from the phenomena in question. At this stage, data analysis is undertaken by presenting an Affinity Relationship Table (ART) that enabled the participants to represent their interpretations by deciding on possible relationships amongst the affinities.

The next level of data collection took place towards the end of the module and included semi-structured, open-ended interviews with each participant on the subject of their reflective online entries. These probing questions arose out of the content of the online reflective journals and from the affinities presented in the ART. The final outcome of the IQA process included visual representation of the relationships amongst the affinities called the Systemic Influence Diagram (SID) (Northcutt and McCoy, 2004). The SID shows "a visual representation of a phenomenon prepared according to rigorous and replicable rules for the purpose of achieving complexity, simplicity, comprehensiveness, and interpretability" (Northcutt and McCoy, 2004, p. 41).

An intrinsic characteristic of an IQA study is that it has its own rigour. Concomitantly, it presents a transparent, systematic audit trail that accounts for a rigorous and reliable process. In addition, such a method promotes validity and reliability (Northcutt and McCoy,

2004), as it reduces researcher partiality and issues of reflexivity or trustworthiness that are associated with qualitative research.

1.11 Anticipated Problems

The sample size was only 20 students, while on average the total population of the class was around 75 students. However, I endeavoured to select a cross section that constituted a representative sample. The students were also expected to maintain and access a reflective online journal (Blackboard) that required regular updating in order to carefully monitor the effectiveness of a digital mode of data generation. While some of the participants expressed anxiety about their first time experience as research participants, as well as their roles in the IQA process and the research language, I endeavoured to ensure that they were inducted and mentored as the processes unfolded. I was further obliged to ensure that students' commitment and participation was not threatened by absenteeism or low motivation to participate in the study.

1.12 Limitations

Limitations are an inevitable part of any research (Simon and Goes, 2013), and are detailed according to several categories below:

- *Sample method* – According to Cohen and Arieli (2011), while purposive sampling is a simple sampling technique, it does not cover the larger population.
- *Sample size* – The sample for the study consisted of 20 first-year hospitality students. Determining the right sample size is a limitation in extant discourses.
- *Data collection* – The IQA is laden with unfamiliar jargon and unusual methods of data collection and analysis. However, I made every attempt to make reading more explicit to the reader, and in addition inducted the research participants on some of the terms that related to their role in the study.
- *Focus groups* – The focus groups comprised a selected number of participants and excluded the views and experiences of additional tutors, the faculty and its support services, lecturers or related stakeholders. Furthermore, an underlying assumption

of the IQA is that constituents generate and interpret their own data, which could create bias (Bargate, 2012).

- *The researcher's role* – The researcher's subjectivity could have impacted on the study, as the lecturer for the Hospitality Financial Management 1 module concerned. However, I ensured that my role as the researcher was explicitly defined and the study underscores any bias that may have arisen as it was undertaken.

1.13 Organisation of the study

Chapter 1 presented the background to the study, its purpose and rationale, and the research questions. The methodology employed to conduct the study was also briefly discussed, as well as the study's limitations.

Chapter 2 reviews the extant literature on EA and Authentic Learning. It discusses research trends on EA in HE, and the 3P Model. The chapter also highlights the theoretical underpinnings of Authentic Assessment.

Chapter 3 presents the research methodology employed to conduct the study. It explains IQA and its use in this study. The approaches adopted to gather and analyse the data are discussed, and the use of an online reflective journal as a data collection method is highlighted. The chapter ends with a consideration of credibility and rigour and the ethical considerations taken into account in conducting the study.

Chapter 4 provides a comprehensive account of Group Reality in adopting the IQA methodology, including the framing of the IQA focus group sessions and the data. It presents the IQA research flow, and captures the group's learning experience in an authentic assessment practice. The IQA protocol, the ART, Interrelationship Diagram (IRD) and the SID receive discussion.

Chapters 5 presents the first stage of Individual Reality, expounding on the primary driver that enabled the participants to individually reflect and describe their understandings of each affinity in relation to the primary driver.

Chapters 6 presents the second stage of Individual Reality, expounding on the secondary drivers and their affiliations to the affinities.

Chapters 7 concludes with stage three of Individual Reality, describing the primary and secondary outcomes, as reflected by the participants that present their understanding of each affinity in relation to the primary and secondary outcomes.

Chapter 8 presents an abstraction and the findings arising from the ten affinities from the three stages of individual reality.

Chapter 9 concludes with a discussion and the implications of the findings for pedagogical reform as well as my reflections and the study's limitations. This chapter also makes suggestions.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

The previous chapter presented a synoptic overview on the tensions and debates that HE's are confronted with both from an international and national perspective. The challenges of teaching and learning in larger classes in HE in SA, as explicated in chapter one raises concerns on the issues of staff-student ratio which may preclude the provision of a real-life learning experience pertinent to a hospitality environment. This would mean that academics would have to identify and introduce effective and innovative pedagogy that align to the knowledge relevant to this vocation (Patiar, Ma, Kensbock, Griffith and Cox, 2017). In this study, one possible direction is to consider the delivery of an innovative strategy that would enable students to access the required skills and knowledge necessary for their chosen career. One such strategy identified is the introduction on an authentic assessment practice.

It is against this backdrop, this study seeks to understand how an authentic assessment [dis]enables students the necessary epistemic access. Importantly to understand this phenomena, a nuanced understanding of the learning experiences of diverse students in HSM101 becomes imperative. In order to respond to these questions this chapter will offer a conceptual understanding of epistemological access (EA) and authentic assessment (AA) by reviewing the contemporary issues and literature that supports these concepts.

There is a paucity of literature dealing with these concerns in Hospitality Education specifically, at both a national and an international level. This provides the rationale for the current study on exploring what enables or constrain student learning in HSFM101 in an authentic learning environment. The current chapter provides a review of literature to expand on the previous chapter.

Internationally it is the case that the first-year student experience is regarded as crucial, not least because high attrition rates have a direct negative impact on HEIs' reputation, as well as the government funding it is to some extent contingent upon (Wilcox, Winn and Fyvie-

Gauld 2005; Thomas, 2013; Tinto, 2014). Furthermore, Keup (2013) asserts that these institutions have a responsibility to society, and should thus be in the habit of delivering effective pedagogies to their students. As presented in chapter one, South African HEIs have made substantial strides in terms of transformation and equitable access in recent years. However the gap remains in the success rates of diverse groups[6] of students (CHE, 2012). The concept of epistemological access (EA) was borne out of the urgent need to address this issue. Morrow (2009) asserts that formal access does not necessarily infer EA. To promote student success, academics need to induct students into the body of knowledge in their discipline, and enable them to navigate "academic ways of knowing" (Boughey and Niven, 2012).

2.1.1 Conceptualising Epistemological Access

This chapter begins by examining the literature on EA with a view to establishing this critical construct as a lens through which to examine students' learning pathways within HE. This is followed by a discussion of the 3P Model, which has served to be a useful tool in determining whether or not an assessment strategy hinders or promotes EA (Price and Kirkwood, 2011; Bati, 2015). Finally, the chapter outlines the theoretical underpinnings of authentic assessment.

2.1.1.1 What Constitutes EA?

Over the past few decades, the concept of EA has gained traction in the transformation discourse and debates (Vorster and Quinn, 2017). Such debates centre on EA and the pedagogies that promote it (Boughey, 2005; Kotta, 2006; Mgqwashu, 2007; Ferreira and Mendelowitz, 2009; Maphosa, Sikhwari, Ndebele and Masehela, 2014; Arbee, Hugo and Thomson, 2014; Liccardo; Botsis and Whitehead, 2015; Layton and McKenna, 2016; Antia and Dyers, 2016; Mollett and Cameron, 2016; Ellery, 2016; Rusznyak, Dison, Moosa and Poo, 2017). Indeed, various scholastic findings have notably confirmed that students are not born with the language of a disciplinary discourse (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1994; Garraway, 2017). Students rather require systematic induction into the literacy practices of their fields

[6] According to Booysen, Kelly, Nkomo and Steyn, (2007:1) 'research shows that the most salient social identity groups in South Africa are race, gender, ethnicity and language'.

of study in order to find new ways of learning, meaning making, and applying knowledge. This calls for fresh approaches to learning, reading and writing, and effective management of the university environment (McKenna, 2013). Subsequently, such environments should ideally be a welcoming space that is conducive to knowledge engagement, most especially, for many first-time students.

On the contrary, first year students often find these spaces as foreign or alien, as universities' knowledge traditions and practices do not resonate with their previous culture of learning and practice (McKenna, 2013). Such dissonance may ultimately undermine their learning experience. However, if a student is able to access the *"goods of the university"*, this implies that the students might have acquired EA[7] (Morrow, 2003). Students' academic success rests on their ability to engage with the knowledge of their chosen academic discipline (Morrow 1993). The process of getting to grips with the discourses and practices of the discipline is what Morrow (1993) describes as epistemic access. First-time students enter HE with epistemological beliefs based on their prior academic experience and perceive learning as externally constructed (Gamache, 2002). They thus rely on knowledge owned by their educators, facilitators or academic resources.

In the same vein, EA is about promoting the alignment between institutional values and students' personal epistemological attributes (Morrow, 1993). This enables a student to confidently and independently access the ways of doing and thinking within a particular discipline. It may also address how new entrants to the system are confronted with epistemic barricades, that may be imposed or self-imposed (Antia and Dyers, 2016). In addition, Morrow and advocates of EA, emphasise that it is crucial for understanding how effective student learning can in fact enable students to become successful participants in their chosen academic fields (Morrow, 2009; Clerehan 2003; Boughey, 2005; Scott, et al 2007; Boughey and McKenna, 2016; Clarence and McKenna, 2017).

[7] Morrow (2007) explains EA as "access to the knowledge that universities distribute"

2.1.1.2 **'Access to Powerful Knowledge'**

Muller (2015) in his attempts to construe what *might constitute epistemological access*, deepened the debate even further to access to what is called powerful knowledge (which is access to the knowledge of the discipline that is mainly abstract and more complex). He (*ibid)* makes reference to Ryle's (1945) conception of 'knowledge that' (propositional knowledge) and 'knowledge how' (procedural knowledge) and how the nexus of such a notion should not be dismissed. This will mean to enrich Hospitality students both to 'knowledge that' and 'knowledge how' in both understanding abstract theory and concept (powerful knowledge) and being adept in application, equally affords students EA.

Similarly, Morrow criticises the notion that broadening access merely involves simplifying the curriculum and its content, while Wheelahan (2007) cautions that such an approach hinders students' EA to powerful knowledge. Knowledge is considered to be powerful since it provides parity of access, most especially, to those students that are absent of the privileged capitals (which will be explained later in this chapter) their peers may possess (Garraway, 2017). Likewise, Young (2013) warns that Higher Education Institutions (HEI's) may be at risk if its' curriculum and content is riddled with 'powerless knowledge" (p196).If for instance the hospitality curriculum downplays powerful knowledge (its theoretical base) and garners greater attention to the praxis of knowledge; such a situation may hinder students to challenge and critically interpret the world around them.

Whereas Morrow's interpretation of EA is reflected as most relevant to a university context (Harland and Wald, 2018), Gamede (2005, p.70) argues that Morrow's concept of EA, "rules out the existence of a hidden curriculum that favours some, and excludes others." Scholars point to the need to consider the deeper political and social dimensions of access to education (Gamede, 2005; Robertson and Hill 2001). They add that Morrow's conceptualisation does not pay sufficient attention to disadvantaged students, and note the lack of support mechanisms to enable them to improve their chances of academic success. Muller (2014) and Garraway (2017) concur that EA is concerned with the promotion of a moral and social justice agenda. Similarly, it is argued that whilst formal access ought to be driven by the politics of difference; EA should be driven by the politics of equal dignity (Waglay, 2013). Thus it becomes mandatory that all students in South Africa are entitled to

EA, regardless of who they are, so that they are entitled to powerful knowledge and transformation in the discipline both nationally and or internationally.

2.1.1.3 **'Learning the Rules of the Game'**

The debate on EA extends to the question of who is responsible for ensuing it occurs. Lotz-Sisitka (2009) and Slonimsky (2006) aver that HEIs hold this responsibility. In contrast, Morrow (2009, p6) argues that "in the same way in which no one else can do my running for me, no one else can do my learning for me", inferring that students also have a responsibility to commit to EA.

Furthermore, there is a need to distinguish between educational achievement, and academic achievement. Morrow states that "Academic achievement is a beacon around which our conceptions of educational achievement circle" (2009, p. 76). While educational achievement is evaluated on the level of participation achieved by a student, academic achievement is determined by how *well* the student has engaged in academic practice. The latter calls for evidence of systematic learning that demonstrate the search for knowledge. Whilst a university may guarantee formal access, the same cannot be said of EA (Morrow, 2009). A myriad of strategies may be adopted to facilitate EA, but there is no guarantee that a student will achieve this type of access. The onus is on the student to "play by the rules" (Morrow, 2009, p.77) and to put in the required effort to acquire EA. Likewise, this will also mean learning to learn, and becoming academically independent learners whom are proficient in building knowledge in their discipline, are both aspects that enhance EA (Wingate, 2007). Thus, the student's agency and level of participation will determine his or her EA. So much so, once a student gains physical access, the affordance of EA by the HEI twinned with the students' academic commitment will in fact determine students' epistemic access.

Meanwhile, enabling EA also calls for a wide range of pedagogical and curricula initiatives. Given the fact that, as Morrow puts it, students cannot run the race alone, in order to win, they require a coach or a mentor to guide and assist them. Thus, EA calls for students to immerse themselves in academic practice, as well as the meaningful pedagogy imparted by

their lecturer (Morrow, 2009, p. 78). Moreover, as Frith and Lloyd (2013) maintain, EA is about instilling self-regulated learning (SLR) in students. This would make them more goal orientated, as they are able to manage, monitor and control their learning. Self-regulated learning encompasses cognitive, metacognitive, and motivational factors that may determine the predictive value of epistemological beliefs (Zimmerman, 2000). Likewise, students need to demonstrate commitment, and ought to be actively engaged in academic endeavours. Finally, by fostering academic activities that are challenging, an active and collaborative learning environment, and an enriched learning experience, are ways to kindle student engagement, and thus EA (Strydom and Mentz, 2010).

2.1.1.4 **Towards a more inclusive University**

Almost three decades into democracy, uneven access to resources persists in South Africa. Most of the country's students graduate from an under-resourced school system. These students confront major challenges in adjusting to HE (Scott, Yeld and Hendry 2007). As a result, "Only one in four students' registered full time at universities graduate within minimum time" of three years (CHE 2013, p. 15). This raises the issues of learning, social inclusion, social justice and more importantly, EA.

Many students are not only unfamiliar with the dominant culture and practices of HE but are also fraught with the dominant discourse of HE (Boughey and McKenna, 2015; Snowball and McKenna, 2017). For instance, black working class (BWC) students struggle to engage with complex abstract concepts in a language other than their home language; this is presented as the 'language problem' (Boughey and McKenna, 2016). Similarly, in HSFM101, many students are BWC; and were taught English at second and in some cases third language level in secondary education. In response to this, it may be argued that the imperative of HEI's is to acknowledge and address diversity and difference through the enactment of transformative pedagogies (Ellery, 2016). This will also mean that providing students with *learning-context access* enables them to achieve EA.

In today's HE environment, institutions are called upon to adopt mechanisms to enable EA both as a political imperative, as well as to increase the retention of a diverse student

cohort. Furthermore, Garraway (2017) contends that, in order to ensure social inclusion, all students that enter university are in fact entitled to EA. On the other hand, Lawrence (2003) notes that students that experience barriers in accessing and mastering mainstream academic discourses are regarded as under-prepared or are branded 'intellectually deficient', denoting a 'sink or swim' approach to the issue of diversity. As mentioned earlier, students may require academic support to become familiar with the epistemological aspects of learning in HE. Equally, this would smooth their transition to tertiary education.

2.1.1.5 **Epistemic Access to 'Ways of Being'**

In addition, EA is about proving appropriate epistemic access to knowledge and ways of knowing, such that students achieve academic success and prosper in their careers or professions (Luckett and Hunma, 2014). Whilst the concept of epistemic access infers to that which a curriculum entitles a student; the current political milieu raises some debate on the social and academic agenda regarding epistemic access (Morrow, 2009; Muller, 2014). Acquiring EA means that students are able to acquire the appropriate disciplinary identity and participate effectively in the discipline's 'Discourse' [8](Gee, 2005). Students from working class homes or first generation students may encounter difficulties in grasping academic Discourses due to their limited exposure to them, where power and class can be seen to determine a student's 'ways of being' in the university (Boughey and McKenna, 2016). It is for this reason that Vorster and Quinn (2017) argue for the need to do more to facilitate ontological as well as epistemological access. Discourse within a Hospitality Financial Management context would include the values, attitudes, habits of mind, beliefs, problem solving abilities, drawing up of financial reports, and ways of communication pertinent to the hospitality manager

However, academics (as those considered to be discipline experts) may be so immersed in their disciplinary field that they find it difficult to articulate or transfer knowledge to their

[8] According to Gee (1991), Discourse, with a capital "D", connotes an 'identity kit' according to which one acts, feels, behaves or talks in a particular way within a particular discipline

students in an effective way (considered to be tacit) (Jacobs, 2007). This prevents students from understanding disciplinary content. At issue here is that EA requires that students grasp disciplinary language, which is closely aligned to the acquisition of disciplinary knowledge. Disciplinary literacy is defined as "the ability to appropriately participate in the communicative practices of a discipline" (Airey, 2011, p3). This goes beyond reading and writing and entails building, negotiating and disseminating of knowledge using a wide range of semiotic resources (Norris and Philips, 2003). For example, in hospitality financial management, drawing on a range of semiotic resources, affords students a greater opportunity in understanding key concepts that are aligned to hospitality financial management. In doing so, HSFM101 students need to justify their disciplinary literacy in report writing, reading, graphic interpretations as well as demonstrating their efficacies to communicate effectively.

Several scholars in the field observe that achieving EA is about making academic practices less implicit, and underlying knowledge systems more explicit. Likewise, Boughey (2005) and Northedge (2003) concur that EA constitutes students unblocking disciplinary codes, and expressing themselves (in written or verbal ways) within a disciplinary context. EA also makes its rules, structures and processes more explicit. Concomitantly, students being able to demonstrate their financial competencies within the discipline of HSFM101; would actually infer the affordances of EA.

One of the major challenges in facilitating EA is to enable students to become participants in and users of a shared disciplinary practice that is initially beyond their reach (Morrow, 2009). As noted earlier, Morrow (2009) highlights that EA is not an entitlement and students need to work hard to achieve it. He adds that enabling EA involves pedagogical and curricular interventions.

2.1.1.6 **Towards a More Transformative Pedagogy**

The challenge is to re-align the knowledge and task orientation that students bring to university in ways that open epistemic access to disciplinary knowledge and knowledge production (Shalem and Slonimsky, 2010). Furthermore, academics may need to review

their pedagogical practices and assessment approaches, especially in relation to students considered as *non-traditional* (Quinn, 2012).Whilst HE has foregrounded EA as key to academic success; its transformational imperative to redress students that were previously marginalised, cannot be dismissed.

As mentioned earlier, a student cannot acquire EA on his or her own. Thus, it becomes necessary for HEI's to embrace academic practices that facilitate EA (Boughey and Niven, 2012; CHE, 2010). Academics should re (examine) and re (design) pedagogic practices that promote EA among students (especially those students regarded as non-traditional or with less privileged learning backgrounds.). This can only be achieved if students acquire ways of knowing that promote academic success (Morrow, 1993). Hence, academics need to embrace pedagogical practices that induct students in the grammar, procedures, rules and logic of the specialist discipline.

If a student is able to successfully achieve a learning outcome, this implies that they have EA (Muller, 2014). Hence in order to understand whether or not a student has achieved the learning outcomes, Biggs' (2003) proposes, in his, 3P model, a useful view on the dynamics of teaching, learning and assessment in HE. The model further explicates the student factors (Presage); determine how students acquire knowledge, which, in turn, influences learning outcomes

For the sake of this study, Biggs' 3P (2003) model, which conceptualises students learning, reflects a powerful means of describing the relationship between Presage, Process and Product variables in students learning in HSFM101. The model further implies that both background and situational (Presage factors) aspects influence and motivate students approach to an authentic learning practice (process) in acquiring epistemological access (outcomes).

2.2 The 3P Model

The 3P model was formulated by Dunkin and Biddle (1974) and further developed by Biggs (1987, 1993; 1999), as well as Prosser and Trigwell (1999). The 'three Ps': presage, processes

and product, represent distinct learning factors, whose elements determine student academic success. The 3P model of learning and teaching serves as a guide in conceptualising the factors that influence learning. Scholars also advocate that knowledge can be achieved through a constructivist approach (Biggs and Tang, 2015). This will mean that the synergistic effect of learning is more meaningful and powerful when students actually share and reflect knowledge with each other. Certainly, Cummins (2003) notes that, when minds and identities come together, the acquisition of knowledge and identity formation is negotiated through this shared power.

2.2.1 Presage Factors

In terms of the Presage factors, student learning draws on previous knowledge, abilities, skills, intelligence, and preferred ways of learning, personality, and personal factors. These traits influence the way in which students' process academic tasks. It must also be noted that ethnicity, race, class, culture and language may enable or constrain EA at HEIs (Morrow, 2007; Dykes, 2018). Furthermore, students entering HE bring with them assumptions, motives, attitudes and prior knowledge that will determine their pedagogic learning experience and outcomes (Leibowitz, 2004; McGhie, 2012; Ross, 2016; Kizito, Munyakazi and Basuayi, 2016). For example, students that do not possess mathematical or numeracy skills will find it hard to succeed in business or introductory accounting courses (Beaubouef, 2002; Ballard and Johnson, 2004; Alcock, Cockcroft and Finn, 2008; Tewari, 2014). In general, a lack of numeracy abilities is regarded as rendering a student underprepared for HE. In the same vein, modules or subjects of a quantitative nature require students to engage in structured, logical thinking and problem-solving (Du Plessis and Gerber, 2012). Numerous national and international studies point to quantitative literacy as a prerequisite for academic success (Ballard and Johnson, 2005; Alcock et al., 2008; Brady, 2014; Pozo and Stull, 2006; Cybinski and Forster, 2009; Kremmer, Brimble, Feudenberg and Cameron, 2010; Stenberg, Varua and Yong, 2010; Tewari, 2014).

However, internationally, literature reveals mixed results on the impact of previous experience of studying accounting (at school or tertiary level) on success at university. Scholarly findings by Al-Twaijry (2010) and Byrne and Flood (2008) confirmed that prior

accounting knowledge did not influence student performance in accounting as a subject at HEIs. However, Rankin, Silvester, Vallely, and Wyatt (2003) and Guney (2009) concluded that previous knowledge of accounting resulted in positive academic performance. Conversely, Koh and Koh (1999) reported that prior study of accounting produced negative results.

Other international studies have established a significant relationship between proficiency in English and performance in subjects that are quantitatively driven in HE (Galligan, 2001; Barton and Neville-Barton, 2003; Yushau, 2009). Where language is used in quantitative contexts, literacy and quantitative literacy overlap, students are required to undertake a range of linguistic tasks in order to complete cognitive tasks using quantitative skills (Boreland, 2016).

Student success in finance-related modules requires sound metacognitive skills. Such modules cannot be understood by means of memorising, or rote learning. Metacognitive knowledge refers to information about personal preferences and attitudes (affected by the student's background and experiences), strengths and weakness, motivation and emotions (Flavel, 1979; Rankin et al., 2003). It also provides information about how tasks are structured and how they unfold; and information about a student's goals and plans for reaching these goals (Rankin et al., 2003; Van Velzen, 2016).

The international literature further notes that students from some backgrounds may be culturally and socially privileged, due to the schools that they attended (Tierney and Hagedorn, 2002; Strayhorn, 2010). 'Cultural capital', refers to the high-status linguistic and cultural competencies that students inherit from their parents and other 'cultural brokers', such as siblings and peers, and 'institutional agents', such as schools (Stanton -Salazar, 1997; Davies and Rizk, 2018). Some studies have found that the type and amount of capital a student brings to university is a powerful predictor of academic success (e.g., Warburton, Bugarin and Nunez, 2001; Egalite, 2016). Furthermore, numerous studies conducted in the UK found that language barriers; a mismatch with the preferred teaching and learning style; lack of familiarity with assessment methods; different views and opinions among instructors and students and their peers; and low levels of self-confidence, negatively impact student

success (Maxwell, Adam, Pooran, and Scott, 2000; De Vita, 2002; Robertson, Line and Jones, 2000; Butcher and McGrath, 2004; Wang, 2015). Academics that ignore or lack understanding of cultural differences may employ pedagogic practices that disadvantage many students. The student falls behind, performs poorly and is often labelled a 'poor learner'. Thus, it may be highlighted that academics and course designers ought to re-evaluate their teaching and learning practices; and aver that pedagogies should be tailored to accommodate all students, taking into account cultural differences, and different learning styles or preferences (Woods, Barker and Hibbins, 2011).

Bourdieu (1977) has been widely cited regarding his conceptualisation of the different ways in which parents transfer their social status and economic opportunities to their offspring. His now normative theory of cultural capital posits that students from higher socio-economic groups have a greater 'cultural capital' with which to parlay their advancement. The theory explains the inequalities between social classes, groups, and structures (Winkle-Wagner, 2010), where, what is relevant here is that students that enter HE with a greater stock of cultural capital are better able to navigate their way through its dominant discourses (Bourdieu, 1977; Boughey, 2013; Gale and Parker, 2017). 'Privileged' students come with tacit knowledge and family support, while those from lower socio-economic groups are at an impasse when faced with the knowledge they encounter in HE. Students' level of cultural capital is determined by their habitus, derived through family practices and social reproduction (Longden, 2004). The concept of habitus, coined by Bourdieu (1977), refers to a shared set of subjective, internalised, class-based perceptions that shape one's thoughts, expectations, attitudes, aspirations, and actions (Bourdieu, 1974, 1984). Bourdieu (1977) has argued that HEIs reinforce social inequality by ignoring the linguistic and cultural competence of students and their different levels of cultural capital. The main purpose of linguistic competence is to construct knowledge, which is used in a more flexible and resourceful manner. Hence, students from middle and upper class backgrounds have superior linguistic competence, as they have a better understanding of knowledge construction than their peers from working class families.

Internationally, Hyland (2000) has argued that language is modelled by disciplinary practices and epistemologies through a wide spectrum of specialisations. The literature on South African HE specifically points out that most students learn in a language that is not their mother tongue (Ferreira and Mendelowitz, 2009; Cross and Carpentier, 2009). Concomitantly, language remains a stumbling block to access and success in HE (Kamwangamalu, 2004). While the schooling curriculum dictates that English is the medium of instruction, students are often taught in their home language, or in the language that is most convenient for the instructor. Students from diverse linguistic backgrounds have a poor command of English, especially when it comes to writing skills. They also struggle to apply theory to practice, especially in case studies. Further scholars caution that students taking accounting related modules with poor English writing skills may be at risk of failing (Riley and Simons, 2016; Van Rensburg, 2015). Research conducted at the University of Cape Town (UCT) (Language Plan for the UCT: 2005–2010) notes that, in several programmes or degrees, the difference in throughput rate between English first-language and second-language students is currently more than 20 per cent (Thesen and Van Pletzen, 2006). Moreover, "the issue at hand is not just one of language proficiency but of the acquisition of discipline-specific academic literacies" (McKenna, 2004, p. 280). Hence, Hospitality Financial management students ought to have the necessary reading and writing skills in order to successfully access the disciplinary content.

In addition, presage factors include the learning climate and assessment environment, where Biggs (2011) refers to learning climate as the relationship between academics and students. Formal and informal engagement in the learning climate is required to achieve academic goals. Furthermore the learning climate should encourage students to reflect on what they learn, enabling them to identify their strengths and weaknesses. The term 'reflective practitioner' was coined by Donald Schön (1983) to describe academics that reflect on their practices, who in turn encourage students to do likewise (La Prade, Gilpatrick and Perkins, 2014). Students enter HE with their own antecedents of learning (Duff and Mladenovic, 2015) and these experiences influence the learning approaches they adopt. In fact, both students' prior learning experiences and their background characteristics (presage) are most likely to motivate their approaches to how they learn.

2.2.2 Process Factors: Approaches to Learning

The relationship between the learning approach students adopt and their academic performance is the subject of a rich body of literature (Marton and Säljö, 1976; Biggs, 1989; Gibbs, 1992; Ruhanen, 2006; Chan and Tang, 2006, Aubke, 2009). The term 'approaches to learning' in the seminal work of Marton and Saljo (1976), who refer to the process of learning that precedes its outcome. Marton and Saljo (1976) have identified two approaches to learning, namely, surface and deep approaches. Ramsden (1979) added a third category of the strategic approach to learning, and Biggs (1987) conducted further research on this concept.

The surface approach is characterised by students who study in order to achieve the required pass mark. They prefer rote learning and memorising the facts (only meant for the day of the assessment) (Svensson, 1977; Biggs, 2003, and Entwistle and Ramsden, 2015). Such students mainly study to fulfil the minimum requirements for their qualifications (Tait and Entwistle, 1996; Cassidy and Eachus, 2000; Biggs 2003). For example, students may ask "*what must I learn in order to pass*?" Students that adopt such an approach have a propensity to learn in a passive manner, prefer to work alone, and perceive learning merely as coping with tasks in order to pass under assessment.

In contrast, students that adopt a deep approach to learning appropriate the most suitable cognitive activities to promote meaningful engagement with tasks and activities (Biggs, 2003). They make a genuine effort to connect with and understand what they are learning. Entwistle and Ramsden (1983; 2015) and Tait and Entwistle (1996), state that this approach is associated with intrinsic motivation, where students learn for the sake of acquiring knowledge and self-development. Furthermore, scholarly findings on constructivist theories of learning support a more student-centred approach to learning (Baeten, Kyndt, Struyven and Dochy, 2010). A constructivist approaches to learning are built on four main characteristics in that students are able to: construct their own meaning; new found knowledge accumulates from prior knowledge; meaningful learning is augmented through social networking; and that learning progresses through the enactment of 'authentic' tasks (Cooperstein and Kocevar-Weidinger, 2004, p141). Hence, it may be argued that such

students prefer a constructivist approach to learning and enjoy sharing and deliberating on their learning.

Scholars further note that the deep approach to learning leads to positive academic achievement, with the surface approach having the opposite effect (Entwistle and Ramsden, 1983; Entwistle et al., 2000; Biggs, 2003; Cano, 2005; Phan, 2006). Questionably, the deep approach thus represents a more student-centred approach and the preferred approach to learning. In the same vein, it can be noted that students adopting a deeper approach towards learning HSFM101, have the propensity to be motivated and more engaged towards the learning of the discourse; thus, ultimately acquiring EA.

However, depending on their academic goals and the learning environment, some students may adopt a combination of deep and surface approaches. An example would be the amount of time they have to prepare for an assessment. Ramsden and Enstwistle (1981) and Biggs (1987) describe this as the strategic approach that involves taking an inventory of the cognitive processes that may promote achievement (Entwistle, 1995: 47). Students that employ the strategic approach often use 'cues and clues' (Ramsden, 1979; Sutton, 2016) in relation to assessment, and are mainly motivated by outcomes such as obtaining the highest possible test scores. Such students may be regarded as competitive and persistent in achieving their goals.

Whilst it was earlier mentioned that students build on prior learning, Maton (2014) observes that such cumulative learning enables them not only to integrate and expand on their prior learning, but also to apply their new understanding to novel contexts. Maton (2014) and Wheelahan (2012) argue that both the nature of pedagogic processes and the forms of knowledge that are taught guide cumulative learning. Maton (2014) adds that educational knowledge can either promote or restrict such learning. Cumulative knowledge-building is applied in a particular context, where previous knowledge offers a firm foundation for future knowledge-building, and can be adapted in innovative ways in various contexts (Maton, 2014). In HSFM101, students build on their threshold concepts such as costing and double entry and is expected to apply such knowledge in authentic simulated contexts.

2.2.3 The Product

Learning outcomes make up the Product factors that describe students' cognitive and affective learning processes (Wang et al., 2013). Learning outcomes for a particular module are understood to be the knowledge, skills and attitudes and values that students are expected to internalise and are capable of performing upon completion of that particular module (Cervetti, Ryne and Shaffer, 2012; Freeman and Hancock, 2011).

In earlier times, scholars have long since pointed out that learning outcomes should consider the cognitive, performative, and affective domains (i.e., knowledge skills, and attitudes) that will prompt students to think critically (higher-order thinking) outside of the classroom (Bloom, Engelhart, Furst, Hill and Krathwohl, 1956). Recent studies also confirm that the use of technology in teaching and learning led to significant improvement in learning outcomes (Price and Kirkwood, 2011; Henderson, et al, 2015). Concomitantly, students in hospitality financial management are expected to adapt to the demands and latest trends of cutting edge technology as prescribed by the industry. Similarly, incorporating a blended pedagogical strategy in HSFM101 enhances students' opportunities to engage more meaningfully with technology.

2.2.4 Constructively Aligning Teaching, Learning and Assessment

According to Biggs and Tang (2007), diverse student populations and large classes are some of the reasons why students struggle to acquire subject-specific knowledge. This raises the question of identifying appropriate approaches, strategies and techniques to enhance teaching, learning and assessment. Biggs and Tang (2015) propose the Constructive Alignment pedagogical approach that is rooted in the constructivist learning paradigm and emphasises the alignment between intended learning outcomes and assessment tasks.

The term 'constructive' refers to the way in which students are able to enact meaning through learning tasks and activities. Thus, knowledge is not transferred from the instructor to the student, but is created by the student. The 'alignment' component describes a learning environment that complements learning activities.

The constructive alignment of tasks and activities to learning outcomes extends learning beyond the classroom. Calls have been made for HE to replace the traditional classroom (Biggs, 2003; CHE, 2013) with a learning environment that fosters peer engagement, independent learning, and motivation for academic success. Rather than being regarded as passive recipients of knowledge, students should be given the opportunity to become *active agents in their own learning* (Boud and Falchikov, 2005).

Academics must clearly communicate to their students what needs to be learnt. This is known as declarative knowledge, which is succeeded by known knowledge (Ryle, 1949). Being able to grasp such functional knowledge enables the student to see the world differently, and behave differently, such that they become experts in their chosen disciplines.

Biggs (2003) notes, that, knowledge should be constructed within the discipline and students should be able to apply and understand its relevance. Constructive alignment is a deliberate course planning tool to ensure that students acquire EA through discipline knowledge. Constructively aligned courses would foster deep learning approaches and augment cognitive learning (Blumberg, 2009, 2016), and have gained recent currency in curriculum design and delivery both locally and internationally (CHE, 2017; Blumberg, 2016). Biggs (2003) advocates that students need to be placed in situations where learning is likely to happen, and that such activities should be aligned to assessment tasks in order for outcomes to be achieved.

As noted earlier, many South African students' EA is inhibited by an extraordinary set of circumstances that include historical injustice, socioeconomic oppression, learning in a language not their own. As a result of this complex pedagogical problematic, they tend to exhibit a lack of competence in ICT and learning approaches or styles that encourage logical and abstract thinking (Mammino, 2015). It stands to reason then that when moving into an HE context, disciplinary content that is not sensitive to South African realities delays EA to a greater extent than might ordinarily be the case in transitioning between secondary and tertiary education. Academics thus need to be aware of whom their students are, and the

learning contexts they bring to HE, to an extent that is much greater than is currently apparent. They would then be in a position to identify and design appropriate pedagogic practices that scaffold and support students (Ellery, 2016).

When it comes to the field of hospitality in a South African context, students must be able to align theory to real world issues. Such studies have noted that students should not only be familiar with hospitality principles, but ought also able to determine their value and true meaning in a real-world hospitality setting (Smith, Butcher, Litvin and Frash, 2015). Acquiring content knowledge of a module means that students must be able to meaningfully demonstrate its processes, resources and attributes. One means of getting academics to achieve this outcome is to identify and develop critical reflective and problem solving activities through the careful design of authentic assessment (Litchfield and Dempsey, 2015).

Moving further into the context of the module under study here, most HSFM101 students are apprehensive when it comes to accessing a financial disciplinary identity, as they confront challenges in engaging with complex assessment tasks, and aligning abstract theory to actual situations. While Morrow argued above that fostering EA calls for carefully constructed pedagogical and curricula processes, he did not go on to identify the particular pedagogy required. This study thus takes upon itself to explore student experiences in an authentic environment, and more specifically, under authentic assessment. This will lead to richer understandings as to how an authentic learning strategy enables EA Hospitality Financial Management.

2.3 Assessment in Authentic Learning

2.3.1 A Background to Assessment in Authentic Learning

The higher education sector is debating how best to equip students for the global shift to a knowledge-based economy (Shay, 2015). Challenges relating to access to knowledge have led to a review of curriculum interventions to close the gap between secondary and tertiary education (Scott, 2009; CHE, 2013; Shay, 2015). The way in which academics go about assessing their students will influence how and what a student might hope to learn. Higher

education institutions need to explore alternative ways of addressing first-year students' academic needs in order to ensure that they access knowledge that will enable them to learn and perform in their careers. Assessment practices that promote deeper learning and engagement will enhance student success (Biggs and Tang, 2007; Alfallaj and Al-Ahdal, 2017).

Whilst students perceive assessment to be a key driver of academic behaviour (Osborne, Dunne and Farrand, 2013), the learning resources they engage with, and the manner and level at which they engage in lectures and their studies are very much controlled by the demands of assessment. Hence, the pedagogy of assessment is a perfect target for pedagogical innovation. Equally, students often prioritise assessments as their passport to academic success. While a course is structured by first identifying the outcomes, followed by activities and tasks and finally, how it will be assessed (Biggs and Tang, 2011), students see this process in reverse. Hence, for most students, assessment serves as an indicator of how and what they will learn in a module. This would also mean that understanding what students are learning (by means of assessment) can be beneficial and favourable not only for the students but also for HEI's.

In recent year's assessment as a dominant discourse at HEIs have received increased currency. More specifically, Boud (2007) underscores authentic assessment as the most powerful pedagogic influence on how students learn at tertiary level. Boud (2007) adds that assessment tasks ought to be designed to sustain a student's lifelong skills. Not only should students be assessed until the day they graduate, but the outcomes of such assessment ought to sustain and reward them throughout their lives. In contrast, many academics favour assessment for learning.

International studies have also confirmed that sustainable (authentic) assessment has the potential to assist students to acquire the skills and knowledge that will enable them to succeed in the twenty-first century (Boud 2000; Vu and Dall'Alba, 2008; Zilvinskis, 2015). Such assessment recognises both formative and summative assessment practices, placing

assessment at the heart of teaching and learning (Kearney, 2013; Lamprianou and Athanasou, 2009; Boud et al., 2010).

This calls for research on authentic learning practices in HE that advance the way students absorb, retain, and transfer knowledge (Lombardi, 2008). The concept of authentic learning was coined by Herrington and Oliver (2000) who described it as a pedagogical vehicle to prepare students for their chosen professional practice. There has been a shift towards the alignment of assessment tasks using emerging technologies and authentic learning environments (Herrington, Reeves and Oliver, 2014). However, there is a dearth of studies, within a South African HE context, to validate the effectiveness of authentic assessment strategies.

2.3.2 Authentic Assessment in Hospitality Education: A Scaffolding Experience

The motivation for employing an authentic assessment strategy in this study is to improve student engagement through incorporating scaffolding. Wertsch (1979) describes scaffolding as a support mechanism that enables the internalisation of knowledge. Students are encouraged to build and construct their own knowledge (for example, Zone of Proximal Development), hence improving their competency and abilities (Vygotsky, 1978).

Scaffolding is rooted in a constructivist framework. The role of the instructor is to provide well-designed supports known as scaffolds that will enable students to deepen their knowledge and extend their existing skills and capabilities (Vygotsky, 1978; Stanier, 2015). However, challenges may arise in immersing students in a "real problem-based learning environment" (Lau, 2011). Other forms of scaffold can be used to overcome such challenges. They include increased student engagement, the use of virtual learning and improved social interaction between students and instructors (Bleidt, 2015). Digital tools may enable students to develop critical thinking skills and self-reflection and improve joint construction of knowledge and meaning (Brindley, Blaschke and Walti, 2009; Shea, 2006; DeSchryver et al., 2009). The scaffolds are progressively removed (referred to as fading) as the student begins to demonstrate independent learning. Such a process allows students to

improve their own agency and efficacies, as they are now able to move through their zones of proximal development to a deeper level of reflection by learning through experience. Moreover, scaffolding strategies enhance students' cognitive and metacognitive skills in problem-solving (Vygotsky 1978).

In contrast to traditional types of assessment, an assessment designed within an authentic learning environment provides the opportunity for Hospitality students to be exposed to first hand, real-life experiences (Jonassen, Strobel, and Lee, 2006; Mingo, 2013). According to Tochon (2000), authentic learning refers to the connectivity of the lived experience of the student and the disciplinary knowledge that is mirrored in a pedagogical perspective. More so in hospitality education, such experiences engage students' lived experience, so that they are able to *connect the dots* with their declarative knowledge in order to improve their understanding

Hospitality higher education is confronted with the challenge of translating theoretical knowledge into practical application (Ruhanen, 2006; Smith, et al., 2015). Authentic assessment is an innovative learning strategy that motivates students to demonstrate the parallel competencies, or combinations of knowledge, skills, values and attitudes required in the hospitality work environment (Gulikers, , Kester, Kirschner, and Bastiaens, 2008; James and Casidy, 2018,). It may also be reminded that authentic learning requires that students are not only able to recognise the theory of hospitality financial management principles, but also, to distinguish its purpose and value in a hospitality setting. These students are required to construct their own understanding and ability to apply theoretical knowledge in different, real-life contexts (Biggs, 1999; Rust, Price, and O'Donovan, 2003; Smith, et al., 2015).

Assessment is a fundamental element of the academic process. According to Boud (1995; 2013), it is essential in stimulating learning and defining student capabilities. However, in order to enhance student learning, improved assessment approaches are required (Boud, 1995; Roscoe, 2013). Higher education institutions are thus challenged to ensure direct alignment between what students study and the ways in which they are assessed.

2.3.3 Re-thinking Authentic Assessment?

While authentic learning assessment focuses on real-world problems, nurtures critical thinking, and encourage autonomous learning (Rule, 2006; Zahra, 2012) it likewise calls for a shift in the student's role from a passive learner to an active inquirer. Similarly, the lecturer is no longer a disseminator of knowledge, but a facilitator and mentor (Renzulli, Gentry and Reis, 2004). This calls for more engaged learning (Herrington and Oliver, 2000; Mingo 2013) in which assessment tasks are 'educative' and not complicated, but at once teach students about the complexity of the real world. Students demonstrate learning by integrating what they know (epistemology) and what they are able to do with who they are becoming (ontology) (Vu and Dall'Alba , 2014).This is also true for hospitality students; in that students not only have to produce new knowledge but also experience a shift in identity that is recognised in a world of *Hospitality and finance .*

According to Lombardi (2007), students that are fairly new to a discipline are able to acquire "portable skills" and knowledge if they are deeply involved in authentic learning tasks. They are able to solve problems independently, drawing on a range of resources. The extant literature notes that students that are immersed in authentic learning environments are better able to judge the value of information, have the patience to follow complex arguments, and the synthetic ability to identify relevant patterns in unaccustomed contexts and are able to adapt across disciplinary and cultural boundaries in order to produce innovative solutions (Hart, 2006; Herrington et al., 2014).

An authentic learning environment focuses on the student, rather than the subject. Learning is the function of the activities, context and culture in which it is situated. In situated learning, knowledge is constructed in the social situation where it occurs (Lave and Wenger, 1991). The conceptual foundations of authentic learning are associated with Brown et al.'s (1989) theory of 'Situated Cognition', that suggests that learning is naturally linked to authentic activity, context, and culture (Brown, Collins, and Duguid, 1989). For instance, the design of such a strategy is meant to immerse hospitality students' according to their social and cultural position. Equally such an opportunity will afford students meaningful and purposeful engagement in the various tasks and activities prescribed within their discipline.

However, the quality of student engagement depends on their motivation and self-regulation of their learning (Boekaerts and Cascallar, 2006; Zimmerman, 2008; Wolters, 2010). If assessment tasks are meaningful and stimulate motivation; students begin to engage more frequently with the tasks and are more at a propensity to take ownership of their work. Mindfully, AA requires students to use prior learning, recent studies, and relevant skills to solve realistic and often complex problems (DiMartino and Castaneda, 2007; Richards, 2015). Concomitantly, an authentic learning space enables students to identify and overcome the challenges they face in their daily practice (Vu and Dall'Alba, 2014). They are able to make an ontological shift from what they already know to incorporate what they learn for the first time.

2.3.4 What Qualifies Assessment as Authentic?

Internationally, the extant literature identifies eight critical elements of authentic assessment (Ashford-Rowe, Herrington and Brown, 2014; Santos, 2017). Firstly, it must challenge the student, such that it incorporates the priorities and challenges found in the best instructional setting (Wiggins, 1990), where the tasks and activities must reflect the 'real world' setting in which the student should be able to analyse and synthesise tasks using their acquired knowledge. Newmann, Marks and Gamoran 1996 (cited in Lam et al., 2016) emphasise that the level of challenge is determined by the existing or new knowledge and meaning produced by the student. Such challenges should allow for investigation, be relatively complex and ambiguous, and be multi-layered (Gulikers et al., 2008)

Secondly, the final assessment outcome should take the form of a performance or product. Authentic assessment must be aligned to the learning outcomes of the subject. Students must be able to complete a product, task or activity and demonstrate their skills and capabilities (Brown and Craig, 2003; Archbald and Newmann, 1988). Ashford-Rowe et al (2014) add that the activities and tasks should determine higher-order problem solving and creative skills. However, it must be noted that in designing authentic assessments, it is necessary to use verbs that indicate application, analysis, evaluation, and creation (Nanavati, 2013) Moreover the authentic assessment should not only serve as an

assessment tool but should be designed in such a way that it enables students to deepen their knowledge and apply such (Moorcroft et al., 2000).

Thirdly, the assessment activity must demonstrate transfer of learning by means of demonstration of skills. This represents the student's deep involvement both in terms of cognitive complexity and intrinsic interest that is aimed at developing or evaluating skills and abilities that have value beyond the assessment itself. It is this type of assessment experience that is authentic. Learning transfer requires that students not only recall knowledge, but are able to see its logic and apply what they have been taught (Anderson et al, 2001). A student that is able to apply knowledge in real-life contexts shows deeper prior learning (Collins, 2013).

Fourthly, the assessment activity must be able to demonstrate metacognition, which Georghiades (2004) refers as becoming critically aware over one's own thinking. Flavel (1979) describes metacognition as an individual's knowledge of and control over his or her cognition. It includes planning, monitoring, and reviewing goal-applicable behaviour, which all contributes to students' academic success (Brown, Bransford, Ferrara and Campione, 1983; Nota et al., 2004; Zimmerman and Schunk, 2011). Metacognitive knowledge includes knowledge about oneself as a student, and what factors might impact performance, as well as knowledge of when and why to use different learning strategies, while metacognitive regulation involves monitoring one's cognition and includes planning activities and awareness of comprehension. Ashford-Rowe et al. (2014) highlight that through critical reflection and self-evaluation, the student is able to extend their learning beyond the classroom. Whereas, Boud, Keough and Walker (1985:19) describe reflection as "those intellectual and affective activities in which individuals engage to explore their experiences in order to lead to new understandings and appreciations." On the other hand, Schön (1987) definition of refection suggests that students are able to reflect both in action and on action, enabling effective decision-making while engaging in the learning context in an extended and sustained manner. Likewise, Lai (2011) concurs, noting that students with higher level meta-cognitive skills learn more effectively as they are able to monitor their progress, detect problems, and address them. Most importantly, metacognition stimulates

deep learning and the ability to re-apply acquired knowledge (Ashford-Rowe et al., 2014). Here in a South African education context, numerous studies have questioned whether students in HE attained or do possess the required higher-order thinking and metacognitive abilities needed for academic success (Havenga, Breed, and Mentz, 2013; Kane, Lear, and Dube, 2014; Henning, Hagedorn-Hansen and Von Leipzig, 2017).

Fifth, there should be accuracy in assessment performance that is recognised as authentic by a client or stakeholder. This critical element is two dimensional, as it firstly determines the student's intellectual potential to develop a product or perform well. It thus demonstrates the development process that results in the end product or outcome (Ashford-Rowe et al., 2014). In addition, it establishes how central the assessed skills and knowledge are to work-related applications. The intention of the authentic task is firstly to approximate and secondly evaluate a real-world test of capability (Herrington and Herrington, 2007). Students in hospitality financial management should be able to make the connection between theory and practice.

The sixth element of authentic assessment is that the assessment environment and the assessment tools (actual or simulated) must represent a real-world situation (Mueller, 1997). Realistic simulations can be used to create an authentic learning environment. The authentic tasks must be able to reflect authentic practice of real-world tasks as close as possible; instead of the decontextualized traditional based tasks (Herrington, 2006). However, this could be a laborious and costly exercise. Further studies conducted by Bell et al. (2008), confirm that there are a number of fixed costs associated with the design of simulations.

On the other hand, Smith, (1987) states that the 'physical fidelity' of the simulation materials is less important than the extent to which the simulation promotes realistic problem-solving processes. While the pursuit of realism has been the focus of high fidelity simulator design, authenticity is often considered to be an effect of the simulator, and not an object of inquiry in its own right (Rystedt and Sjoblom, 2012). Moreover, Northcote and Kendle (2000) caution that language, culture, sensitive topics and graphics ought to be carefully considered in the design of authentic assessments.

Seventh, assessment activity ought to facilitate discussion with and feedback to students. Students that engage in collaboration may experience three feedback voices, namely (in no specific order): from their peers, from the facilitator, and from within (Brown, 2015; Sambell, 2016). Hence, the role of the facilitator should be able to create opportunities that harness feedback from different sources. Wiggins (1993) observed that, for many educators, feedback simply takes the form of comments to their students. He added that students require explicit feedback on their performance that enables them to self-evaluate and monitor it. Similarly, Ashford-Rowe et al (2014) highlight that feedback serves as a guideline, while at once determining the progression or regression of student activities.

Finally, international studies affirm that assessment should promote collaborative construction of knowledge by encouraging the use of appropriate tools (Herrington et al., 2007; Kaliisa and Picard, 2017). Subsequently, students may assume responsibility for their peers' learning over and above their own (Dooly, 2008). Assessment that fosters teamwork must be aligned with industry's demands. Northcote and Kendle (2000) note that the 'socio cognitive' element of learning promotes access to a variety of views, input and ideas that are very useful in 'modelling' in authentic settings. Students that work in groups are able to draw on numerous sources and deliberate on different stakeholders' perspectives. Learning through peer collaboration not only facilitates knowledge acquisition, but is also significant in developing students' cognitive and physical abilities (Woo and Reeves, 2007). Students learn not only what needs to be learnt or done, but how to do it. Studies have shown that increased engagement in their learning enhances students' ability to grasp content at a more meaningful level (Tan, Tse and Chung, 2010; Noguera, Darling-Hammond, and Friedlaender, 2015). Similarly, in collaborative learning approaches, knowledge acquisition is not confined to the lecture hall; collaborative activities, through various platforms that today include the digital, allow students to engage more intensely with one another. However, this approach may increase academic workload as they have to consistently monitor and evaluate the depth and credibility of student engagement (Tadeu and Lucas, 2013). On the other hand, collaborative learning may encourage metacognition through peer discussions, shared knowledge construction, and pooled problem-solving.

2.3.5 Implementation

Authentic assessment ought to be guided by educators' support, supervision and direction (Vu and Dall'Alba, 2014). This guidance ensures that students are adequately prepared and enhances their learning during the assessment (Meyers and Nulty, 2009). The supportive design of the learning environment ought to eliminate any fears or anxiety that students may experience. They should also be able to question the knowledge and skills they wish to achieve, thereby developing their own ways of knowing, acting and being (Vu and Dall'Alba, 2014). Educators should promote collaboration by ensuring discursive interactions among students, and between students and the facilitator. This fosters trust, confidence, and explicit understanding (Vu and Dall'Alba, 2014). Should conflict arise, facilitators need to assist in resolving it (Vu and Dall'Alba, 2007).

2.3.6 The shift to student-centred learning

The conventional role of the teacher was one of an authoritarian transmitter of truth and knowledge (Plasschaert et al., 2007; Torenbeek et al., 2009, Christmas, 2014). Bailey and Brown (1999) describe traditional assessment as standardised, indirect, and inauthentic as it is once-off, time-bound and does not allow for feedback. Likewise, Nasab (2015) observes that traditional assessment focuses on lower-level cognitive skills, such as the memorisation of and recalling of facts. Assessment tasks and activities ought to facilitate practical application of the skills and knowledge required in the workplace (Fook and Sidhu, 2010). Authentic activities are situated in real-life contexts, and serve as a pillar for "situated learning" (Herrington and Oliver, 2000; Kwan, 2009). This situated learning will actually mean that a traditional approach to assessment has the potential to perpetuate passive, surface learning. In contrast, authentic assessment activities enable students to construct their own meaning by actively engaging in learning activities (Biggs, 1999; Herrington and Oliver, 2000; Gibbs, 2002; Jones, 2006; Rushworth, 2013). Hence, such learner-centered approaches encourage students to learn by doing, which fosters a deeper approach to learning and student engagement, and allows them to develop new skills.

The traditional approach to teaching has been blamed for students' inability to transfer academic knowledge to real life contexts (Christmas, 2014). While this approach still prevails

in some international HE settings in Hospitality education, (especially where there are large classes) transformative education policies have shifted the focus to a student-centred approach (Kim and Davies, 2014; Gordy, 2017). In addition, contemporary approaches recognise that students are active agents in the construction and engagement of knowledge (Piaget, 1974; Brown, Collins and Duguid, 1989; Hui and Koplin, 2011). From amongst these, many have accounted for the fact that a student-centred approach promotes deeper learning (Newble and Cannon, 1995; Torenbeek et al., 2009; Prosser and Trigwell , 1999; Prince, 2004).

2.3.7 Authentic Assessment across Disciplines

Internationally, authentic assessment has been used across a wide variety of disciplines. In nursing education, authentic learning environments enable nurses to take proper care of patients, enhancing their skills, and diagnosing various illnesses (Edwards et al., 2008; Reilly and Spratt, 2007; Woolley and Jarvis, 2007). In the medical field, authentic learning environments are used to build medical cases for medical students (Garde et al., 2007). Marshall, Northcote and Lenoy's (2001) study illustrates the way in which authentic activities were used to teach mathematics to indigenous adults. Authentic learning in the field of law using real life settings was found to be more effective than the conventional text book approach (Barton, McKellar and Maharg, 2007; Martens, Bastiaens and Kirschner, 2007). Rice, Owies, Campbell, Snow, Owen, and Holt (1999) describe the way in which Sports Science students used a virtual laboratory to test muscular strength, aerobic power, lung function and flexibility. Hunt, Kershaw and Seddon (2002) report on a novel orientation project that facilitated the transition from school to HE, allowing students to explore the university campus by creating video clips on culture and understanding of university life. A study conducted by Bennett, Harper and Hedberg (2001) highlighted case study models in the development of multimedia products for real clients. Furthermore, a study conducted by Vos (2015) found that academics that employ business simulations, are in fact guided by the principles of authentic assessment.

In the field of architecture (Challis, 2002), authentic assessment has seen students composing a piece of music, and then designing a scale model of it. Mechanical engineering students (Bullen and Karri, 2002) designed and created a Formula SAE race car as part of their mechanical and mechatronics engineering curriculum. Finally, chemical and agricultural engineering students used authentic learning environments to come to grips with bioprocess engineering (Sessink, Van der Schaaf, Beeftink, Hartog and Tramper, 2007). There is also burgeoning research in the use of online materials that are relevant to the workplace in literature (Fitzsimmons, 2006), and business writing (Pennell, Durham, Orzog and Spark, 1997).

In preparing pre-service teachers to use innovative strategies in the classroom, universities often use largely inappropriate reductionist methods that focus on access to technology and improving technological skills (Tondeur et al., 2012; Polly et al., 2010).
Whereas, in South African HE, fewer studies have confirmed the best practices of authentic learning strategies (Kotze, 2002; Scholtz, 2007; CHE, 2010). In recent years, one study has confirmed that the principles of authentic learning have the potential to prepare social work students to become work-ready, using technology-enhanced learning (Pillay, Bozalek and Wood, 2015).

2.3.8 Critiques of Authentic Assessment

However, as for any teaching and learning context, authentic learning environments are not without their problems. Terwilliger (1998) observes that Wiggins (1990) and other scholars' (Bailey and Brown, 1999; Darling-Hammond and Snyder, 2000) use of the label 'authentic' suggests that traditional assessment approaches have minimal or no authenticity. Wiggins contends that the latter do not promote the kind of performance that calls for higher order thinking and learning. Law and Ecke (1995) raise the issues of subjectivity, reliability and validity in relation to authentic assessment. However, Bailey et al. (1999) claims that portfolio-type assessments offer high validity, although the problem of reliability may persist. Similarly, Ghosh et al. (2017) maintain that authentic assessment enjoys content validity, as there is a direct link between expected behaviour and the final outcome of the skills or knowledge required. Sparrow et al. (2000) conclude that students in a large and

more diverse cohort with different levels of prior experience may not respond well to a new and unfamiliar learning approach, arguing that such an approach will only bear fruit if students receive appropriate orientation, and have the necessary skills. Huang (2005) cautions that some students may not want to engage in an independent mode of learning, as they prefer surface learning.

2.4 Students Learning in Hospitality Higher Education

Internationally, the literature presents a broad range of findings in Hospitality Management (Barron, and Arcodia, 2002; Berger, 1983; Charlesworth, 2007; Huang and Busby, 2007; Lashley, 1999; Lashley, and Barron, 2006; Goh and Scerri, 2016) regarding the various learning styles and preferences of hospitality students, as well as the effectiveness of various teaching methods on student learning. Hospitality students may experience learning in a range of learning environments, not restricted to particularly the lecture halls or classrooms. Hence, when taking a global perspective, HEI are increasingly pressed to best serve students in finding creative ways to prepare students for the Hospitality industry (Gravett and Swart, 1997). In doing so there is an urgency to create and construct knowledge together with an understanding of a real life scenario to reformulate the concept of knowledge in learning situations.

In South Africa, there is a dearth of scholarly findings related to students learning and curriculum studies in hospitality management in higher education (Spowart, 2011; Deen and Tichaawa, 2016; Moolman and Wilkinson, 2015; Spencer, Wyngaard, and Ivala, 2016). Accordingly, little is known in this context about how or what enables students' epistemic access in such a discipline. Certainly, to this author's knowledge (of this study), the adoption of an authentic assessment strategy that will enable epistemic access in hospitality studies has not been undertaken in a South African context.

Arguably, the hospitality industry attracts students that have gained the necessary hands-on training and practice in hospitality programmes (Srinivasan and Karmakar, 2014); it is not surprising that these students exhibit less interest in theoretical modules, such as business and finance (Shah, Nair, and Bennett, 2013; Norton, 2014). Moreover, hospitality

undergraduates give more attention and emphasis to mastering the basic practical skills required for the hospitality industry within a short space of time, with practical skills considered to be the most important graduate attribute (Shah et al., 2013). On the other hand it is imperative that Hospitality Managers harbour the necessary efficacies and skills to compile, interpret and analyse daily revenue reports, room revenue forecasts and food and beverage menu abstracts, that contribute to effective financial decision-making (Burgess, 2007, DeFranco and Lattin, 2006).

Given the nature and scope of a hospitality curriculum, promoting authentic learning in hospitality financial management not only permits students to apply theory to real-world circumstances, but also allow students to recognise the value of such knowledge in a real-world hospitality setting. Promoting assessments that are driven by surface approaches to learning contradicts student-centeredness and deep learning, which is favourable (Biggs and Tang, 2011). Allowing students to be assessed through authentic assessment practices will deepen Hospitality students' conceptual understanding of the learning content. However, augmenting a scaffolding approach to authentic activities presents students with a deeper comprehension of the content and the ability to produce authentic and meaningful results on their own (Smith, et al., 2015).

2.5 Conclusion

Over the past two decades, numerous studies have been conducted to identify interventions and strategies to improve student access, especially EA, and success in South African HE. While great strides have been made in widening access, low throughput and retention remain a reality.

The literature presented in both chapters 1 and 2 points to the need for HEIs to move away from deficit thinking in addressing the demands of the diverse student cohort. Motivated by economic and political considerations, HEIs are called on to adopt more inclusive teaching practices that meet the needs of a diverse student body. Such a call raises an urgency to craft alternate measures that will promote academic success. The theoretical construct (Young, 2014) of EA offers the possibility of achieving this objective (CHE 2013; Boughey, 2005).

As noted in this chapter, students in turn need to take ownership of their learning in order to acquire EA. One way of achieving this concern would be the adoption of a constructivist approach to assessing the ways in which students learn. Such an approach promotes reflexive learning and is more sensitive to the diverse needs of students.

Well-designed assessment tasks would present opportunities for knowledge construction. Students are able to engage more meaningfully through active collaboration and collegial peer interaction. This requires the interrogation of assessment practices and the design of innovative practices that serve to promote EA. Entrenching a deeper approach to learning through authentic assessment would facilitate the critical thinking, knowledge construction and problem-solving skills that enable students to make connections with the real-life context demanded of them after they graduate and professionalise.

Consequently, growing international, scholarly findings on authentic learning within the discipline of Hospitality studies suggest that authentic learning pedagogies that promote real-world learning activities facilitate a deeper and more authentic understanding of the learning material (Smith, et al., 2015; Chau and Cheung 2017; Ammachathram and Anderson, 2018). However, very little is known about how the employment of an authentic assessment strategy is able to facilitate learning outcomes (acquisition of epistemic access), and particularly, as relevant here, in hospitality education in South Africa.
Arguably, there is *no one cap that fits all* in a South African HE curriculum. It must be borne in mind that the issues of diversity (as previously mentioned) and the complexities that Hospitality students are challenged with in acquiring epistemic access in South Africa. Such students, ought to be given equitable chances in assessment practices in order to justify social inclusivity and epistemic access (Hénard and Roseveare, 2012; Muller, 2014).

In light of the above, this chapter presented the theories and concepts that frame this study from a survey of relevant literature. The subsequent chapter presents a discussion on the research design and methodology adopted by this study in response to the questions derived from its aims.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN

3.1 Introduction

Chapter 2 reviewed the relevant literature and the study's conceptual and theoretical framework. This chapter discusses the methodology employed to conduct the study that will assist me to deepen my understanding on the learning experiences of HSFM101 students which will assist me in responding to the unanswered questions of this study. It presents the research design and the methods used to collect and analyse the data, focusing on Interactive Qualitative Analysis (IQA).In addition, this chapter will present a structural flow and protocol of an IQA design that's meant to place the study in a greater epistemological context. This chapter also discusses the validity, reliability and rigour of the study, as well as the ethical considerations taken into account in undertaking this research.

This was a qualitative, interpretive study that employed a case study research design. As noted in Chapter 1, data was collected and analysed using IQA (Northcutt and McCoy, 2004). The data sources were the two levels of IQA, with the first stage being focus groups, followed by stage two, that includes semi-structured interviews, and data extracted from the participants' reflective online journals.

3.2 A Qualitative Approach

As discussed in Chapter one, this study adopted a qualitative interpretive inquiry. Qualitative research can be viewed as a composite of interpretive activities that does not favour any particular methodology over another (Denzin and Lincoln, 2018:12). For this study, I was interested in understanding and interrogating students' background experiences and perceptions of authentic learning that enabled or constrained epistemic access. Interpretive researchers hold an epistemological and ontological belief that reality is socially constructed (Creswell, 2014). Concomitantly, this study espoused a qualitative research approach, grounded in social constructivism to further explore the learning and assessment experiences of hospitality management students' learning experiences.

In order to gain a deeper understanding of a qualitative design, five key characteristics may identify a qualitative study (Yin, 2011). Firstly, a qualitative enquiry focuses on the meaning that those closest to the phenomenon under study ascribe to it (Creswell, 2014; Yin, 2011). In this instance, the HSFM101 students are closest and most relevant in order to relate to the phenomena. For instance, in this study, the outcome of the focus group sessions were to generate collective responses that is meant to reflect on the phenomenon under study; in this case it is acquiring EA in authentic learning situations. Furthermore, it is conducted in a natural setting, resulting in minimal outside influence (Yin, 2011; Creswell, 2014). The study participants engage in their normal daily activities, and are free to express their thoughts, feelings or emotions through personal journals, diaries, or even photography (Leedy and Omrod, 2005; Yin, 2011; Creswell, 2014). Likewise in this study, students were asked to record and reflect on their learning experiences through an online journal; which was updated on a regular basis. The second characteristic of qualitative research is its ability to represent and capture participants' views and perspectives (Yin, 2011). The results of such inquiries thus represent the meaning of their lived experiences. Thirdly, qualitative research takes place in social, institutional, and environmental conditions that strongly influence human existence. For the purpose of this study; hospitality students (participants) are provided with the opportunity to construct their own realities within their learning context. Other research approaches might be less adept to contextual conditions. The fourth characteristic of qualitative research is that it is not restricted to interpretations of everyday life; but is driven by a desire to expand on these events through existing or emerging concepts. For instance, this study may further build on concepts such as the social learning experiences of hospitality students. Finally, qualitative research aims to gather and present data from multiple sources, including interviews and observation, journals, documents analysis and artefacts. Likewise, this study; employs a variety of data sources including focus groups; reflective journals and interviews. This process of triangulation adds to a study's credibility and trustworthiness (Yin, 2011; Creswell, 2014; Berg and Lune, 2017). Moreover, qualitative data yields rich, thick descriptions that are derived in their real context (Rule and John, 2011; Wahyuni, 2012). A qualitative approach further guided the appropriate answering of the question as to *why* the students under study have certain thoughts and feelings that may influence the way they acquire epistemic access (Sutton and Austin, 2015).

Similarly, this approach enabled an examination of *how* Hospitality students acquire epistemic access (Berg and Lune, 2017: 12). However, most often it is quantitative research that dominates most Hospitality journals, where most published studies lack rigorous data analysis (Sandiford and Seymour, 2007).

As mentioned earlier, my goal was to situate the study within the social constructivist paradigm. The constructivist approach posits that individuals construct the meaning of experiences and events, and thus that they construct the realities in which they participate (Charmaz, 2006). The study was also guided by an interpretive lens that aimed to understand the way in which the participants construct their individual and shared meanings of the phenomenon of EA in authentic learning. The interpretive approach enables the researcher to probe into the social complexities of the lived experiences of those who actually live it (Schwandt, 1994) as reality is socially constructed (Cavana, Delahaye and Sekaran, 2001; Mingers, 2001). However, post-positivist researchers believe that the content of data better reflects reality, even though it does not directly measure such reality (Henning, Van Rensburg and Smit, 2004).

3.2.1 Case study

For this study, I employed a case study research design to examine the way in which students acquired EA through authentic learning in Hospitality Financial Management within the context of a higher education institution. Advocates of case study refer to case study as an explorative, in-depth inquiry of a phenomenon within its real-life context (Yin, 2015; Rule and John 2011). A case study method creates an opportunity for the researcher to engage deeper, both, with the data and participants within a specific context. Hence such a method becomes reliant upon the context of the phenomenon being studied. Similarly, in this study the newfound bond between, me as the researcher and the students as the participants, harvested a fertile platform for knowledge creation.

It is noted that case studies are commonly aligned with a constructivist paradigm that posits that truth is relative depending on one's perspective (Yin, 2011; and Stake, 1995). A further

observation is that constructivists seek to reconstruct participants' understanding of the social world as a *briocleur (*Denzin and Lincoln, 2018:11). As in the case of this study the bricoleur or quilt that is built in an IQA study refers to the themes or affinities that are bound by its *stitches* or relationships. While they acknowledge the creation of meaning, the notion of objectivity is not entirely dismissed. Searle (1995) notes that constructivism is rooted in the notion of the social construction of reality. By enabling participants to set out their views on reality, the researcher is able to gain deep insight into their experiences (Robottom and Hart, 1993). This increasingly results in meaningful collaboration between the researcher and participants (Crabtree and Miller, 1999). Indeed in this study, the shared trust built with the participants allowed for a greater perspective in understanding their shared experiences and views on reality.

According to Yin (2014:14), the following can be said about this form of research: (a) a case study seeks to answer 'how' and 'why' questions; this study aims to respond to *how do hospitality management students learn in authentic leaning situations in order to acquire EA and why do they the learn in the way that they do* (b) the researcher has no control over the behaviour of the participants; as in the case of this study, I as the researcher have no control in how students acquire EA (c) the phenomenon can only be studied in context; in this instance the phenomenon of how students acquire EA could only be understood in their natural setting hence (d) there are no clear boundaries between the phenomenon and context. Whilst it may be argued that a case study is only suitable for exploratory studies (Zikmund, 1997), Yin (2009; 2014) maintains that case studies are more than just being an exploratory strategy. Hence this study employed a case study as the preferred form of inquiry; as it is able to explore a wide spectrum of complex issues, chiefly when it involves human behaviour and social interactions that are central to understanding a phenomenon.

3.2.2 Sample

The case study was conducted in Hospitality Financial Management 101 at the Durban University of Technology. A purposive sample was selected of 20 of the 68 students registered for this module at the time of selection. I deliberately chose the students due to

their ability to provide in-depth information on the research topic (Yin, 2011). Purposeful sampling is frequently espoused in qualitative research, as it relies on the identification and selection of information-rich cases that highlights the phenomenon of interest (Paton, 2015). In purposive sampling, participants are selected that are in the best position to provide in-depth information to answer the research questions (Yin, 2011; Paton, 2015; Emmel, 2013). Whilst it is recommended that that the sampling strategy ought to fit the purpose of the study; for this study, purposeful sampling was considered to be an appropriate strategy, as it offers rich information that enables greater insight and in-depth understanding. However, while purposive selection involves deliberate choices, the researcher ought to avoid biased selection (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003). Similarly in this study; all those students, that were invited, applied to participate in the study were equally accepted as prospective research participants.

A sample of 20 students was considered adequate for the participants in the tutorial group throughout the semester, and the focus group for the IQA towards the end of the module. It is also argued that a smaller sample size may yield improved understanding of students' learning experiences (Crouch and McKenzie, 2006). The quality of the data thus compensates for the low quantity of data. Furthermore, a class size of 20 is suitable for monitoring and study of participants' learning, (Bargate, 2012) whilst Northcutt and McCoy (2004) recommend 20 participants as an ideal size for an IQA study.

Prior to the commencement of the second semester of 2016, I made a call to all HSFM101 students registering for the 2016 semester to participate in the study. A large number responded positively. Interested students were invited to attend a meeting, where they were briefed on the context and nature of the research study and how it would positively contribute to their learning and assessment of HSFM101. These prospective participants were informed that my role as their lecturer will further extend as a tutor and a researcher during the course of the study. They were then requested to complete a semi-structured questionnaire that covered aspects including gender, prior learning, socio-economic status, home language, ICT experience, and whether or not they had studied Accounting in Grade 12. Thereafter, I conducted interviews in order to refine the sample. The students were also

informed via an informed consent letter (refer to appendices 7) stating that they would be free to withdraw from the study at any point, and that this would have no negative consequences for them.

3.3 The Authentic learning project

At the first HSFM101 lecture, all students were provided with a learner study guide that included the authentic learning project as a formative assessment, details on this project, the sub-tasks needed to be undertaken, and the way in which it would contribute to their summative assessment (see Appendices). At the start of the semester, the selected participants were further orientated regarding the research outcomes, as well as their role in the study. The sample group was invited to be part of the eLearning experience, and all students (research participants and non-participants) were inducted on how to access and use the online software Blackboard (BB) as a learning tool. Furthermore, the sample group was also invited to attend a weekly tutorial which was conducted by myself, also the researcher in this study. Consequently, I found necessary for my own personal reflection as mentioned in chapter 1. The tutorials ran parallel to the mainstream lecture content; here students had opportunities in smaller sessions to engage collaboratively with additional activities and feedback. My role as a lecturer changed to tutor. I made every endeavour to ensure that the tutorial environment was accommodating and relaxed to allow for engaged and cohesive learning. During these sessions I was able to recognise student's epistemic strengths and weaknesses. Concomitantly, the tutorial sessions provided opportunities for students to report on their progress of the AA and if at any time they were falling behind; they brought this to my attention.

Furthermore, for the purpose of the study, the participants were required to regularly record their learning experiences that unfolded through authentic practice in Hospitality Financial Management on a daily basis using the online journal. Students were further orientated on how to access, upload and download BB online activities. Students were constantly reminded about posting their reflections on the online journal. A corollary to this is that recording thoughts (Cui, 2012) facilitates reflection that gives rise to new ideas and conclusions. Reflective learning is discussed later in this chapter. In addition to seeking to understand what enabled or constrained students' EA in HSFM101 in an authentic learning

encounter, this research opportunity afforded participants additional tutorial support (as mentioned previously that the researcher also assumed the role of the lecturer and tutor).

3.4 Data Collection and Analysis - Interactive Qualitative Analysis (IQA)

I obtained data from focus group discussions, semi-structured, open-ended interviews, and the participants' online reflective journals. The IQA method developed by Northcutt and McCoy (2004) was adopted to understand how students acquire EA within HSFM101. This qualitative method blends the tradition of phenomenology[9] with systems theory (Sanchez, 2007). Focus groups are used to obtain information from participants that are most *au fait* with the phenomenon under study. The IQA approach creates a process that invites participants to generate their own data, while at the same time minimising the interference on the researcher's role. It prescribes a constructionist approach to data collection and analysis (Northcutt and McCoy, 2004) and promotes continued engagement between the researcher and participants. The main feature of IQA is that it creates an opportunity for focus group participants to decipher qualitative content in the form of codes, which the group then arranges into categories of meaning, providing a central theme or affinity that binds each of the codes generated in a category. The data generated during the brainstorming session (as explained later in this chapter) was further clustered and refined into common themes. According to IQA protocol, (Northcutt and McCoy, 2004), these themes, generated amicably by focus group participants, are regarded as affinities. The authors further highlight that the main assumption of IQA is that participants who are close to the phenomenon are in the best position to report on it. Furthermore, the IQA approach enables students to enjoy freedom and autonomy in generating their own data. My role (as the researcher) involved facilitating the process and to guide and assist students (Northcutt and McCoy, 2004).

[9] Phenomenology is a qualitative research approach that describes the lived experiences of a person or a particular group in order to have an improved understanding on the nature of a particular phenomenon (Creswell, 2013).

3.5 Background and rationale for employing IQA in the study

An IQA is a systems method for qualitative research in which its fundamental purpose is to identify and describe the elements within a system and their relationships with each other in order to understand a phenomenon/a is being researched. The IQA research method, which is grounded in systems theory, is premised on the representation and meaning of a phenomenon/a by a mind map (Jan, 2018) by interrogating the elements of a system. The design of an IQA system, (Northcutt and McCoy, 2004) derive its roots from grounded theory, path and factor analysis, total quality management theory (TQM), Foucauldian concepts of power and knowledge, (Heizmann and Olsson, 2015) and systems theory. Advocates of IQA, (Northcutt and McCoy, 2004) further argue that IQA positions qualitative research in a theoretical and epistemological space different from the one it usually occupies. Contrarily, to many theoretical works, IQA develops the theory into a complete and transparent set of protocols for research design, observation, analysis, and interpretation. Furthermore, the construction, interpretation, and comparison of recursive systems of meaning, or mind maps, is articulated in detail (Jan, 2018).

Two noteworthy strengths further serves as a rationale for adopting an IQA approach. The first one is that IQA relies primarily on the participants to code their thoughts and ideas into generating the themes or affinities of the study (Paz Dennen, 2005). Disparate from the traditional research methods, IQA optimises focus group techniques, by allowing the voice of each member of the group to be heard with no interference from the researcher, facilitator, or other participants (de Preez and Stiglingh, 2018). In this way these members generate affinities which help refine the research questions objectively and are uninfluenced by the researcher's pre-determined opinions or biases. Secondly, IQA provides a clear and concrete procedural structure for qualitative researchers to follow as compared to other less-well specified qualitative approaches.

Furthermore, what separates IQA design from to the traditional qualitative approach, is that an IQA design encourages the quantifying qualitative data in order to create rigor in a

Qualitative study. Since I have a strong quantitative background, as I have been immersed in the field of finance for many years; opted to conduct a qualitative study that will enable me to understand the learning experiences of my students (Hall and Ivaldi, 2017; Lynam, and Cachia, 2018). My interest was further awakened when I found that a qualitative research design can in fact provide a transparent, systematic, accountable and rigorous process of data collection and analysis as mentioned in the previous paragraphs. (Tabane and Human-Vogel, 2010; Goebel, 2017).

Since IQA delivers the quantitative rigour of algorithmically-generated data analysis, combined with the qualitative descriptiveness of interviews, personal bias on my part as a researcher does not interfere with the data, because the usual concerns of subjectivity, bias and reflexivity in qualitative enquiries are eliminated. This is rather a recent method that has not been used extensively, if at all, in Hospitality and Tourism research generally, and in South African hospitality research in particular (Tabane et al, 2010; Mampana and Bouwer, 2011; Human-Vogel, 2006; Human-Vogel and Mahlangu, 2009; Bargate, 2012; Goebel, 2017). In one study, Du Preez (2015) adopted IQA to explore taxation students' perceptions of open-book assessment in the qualifying examination for South African chartered accountants. Similarly, Bargate (2012) applied IQA to probe fourth year students' learning experiences in a context similar to the field of Accounting (Cost and Management Accounting) and Goebel (2017) espoused IQA in a study relating to the economics threshold concepts framework. It is a matter of interest to note that these studies relate to the findings of traditional universities[10] in a South African context (in this study, the context is within a university of technology, UOT).

3.5.1 Underlying Philosophical Assumptions of IQA

A philosophical examination of the existence of human kind seeks to answer three questions, namely: what is considered to be real; how do we know what we know; and

[10] The UOTs are referred to as the new-generation knowledge Institutions. This conceptually differentiates between the UOTs and the traditional Universities (TUNIV), which can be defined as science and theoretical and research intensive institutions of higher learning (Matiki, 2014).

finally, what is good, ethical, etc.? As mentioned in chapter one and previous sections, this study adopted a constructivist paradigm. For Denzin and Lincoln (2008:22) a paradigm is explained as "the net that contains the researcher's epistemological, ontological, and methodological premises." The *ontological position* of IQA affirms that a mutual and direct nexus exists between knowledge and power between the participants and the phenomenon related to the study (Northcutt and McCoy, 2004). This defines who the constituents[11] are; the power and knowledge held by them and their relationship to the phenomenon under study through their membership of the focus group.

For the purpose of this research study, the constituents were elected on the basis of their registration in the HSFM101 module, and their participation in the Authentic Assessment. The focus group had the freedom to reflect on their experience of learning in that module. Whilst the *epistemological position* of IQA is that both deduction and induction are necessary in meaning making (Northcutt and McCoy, 2004), the IQA focus group constructs its own interpretive quilt of meaning or *bricolage* (Denzin and Lincoln, 1998). Figure 1 below presents the research flow that was implemented for this study:

[11] According to the IQA language, the participants of the study are referred to as the constituents (Northcutt and McCoy, 2004). Constituents and participants will be used interchangeably throughout the study.

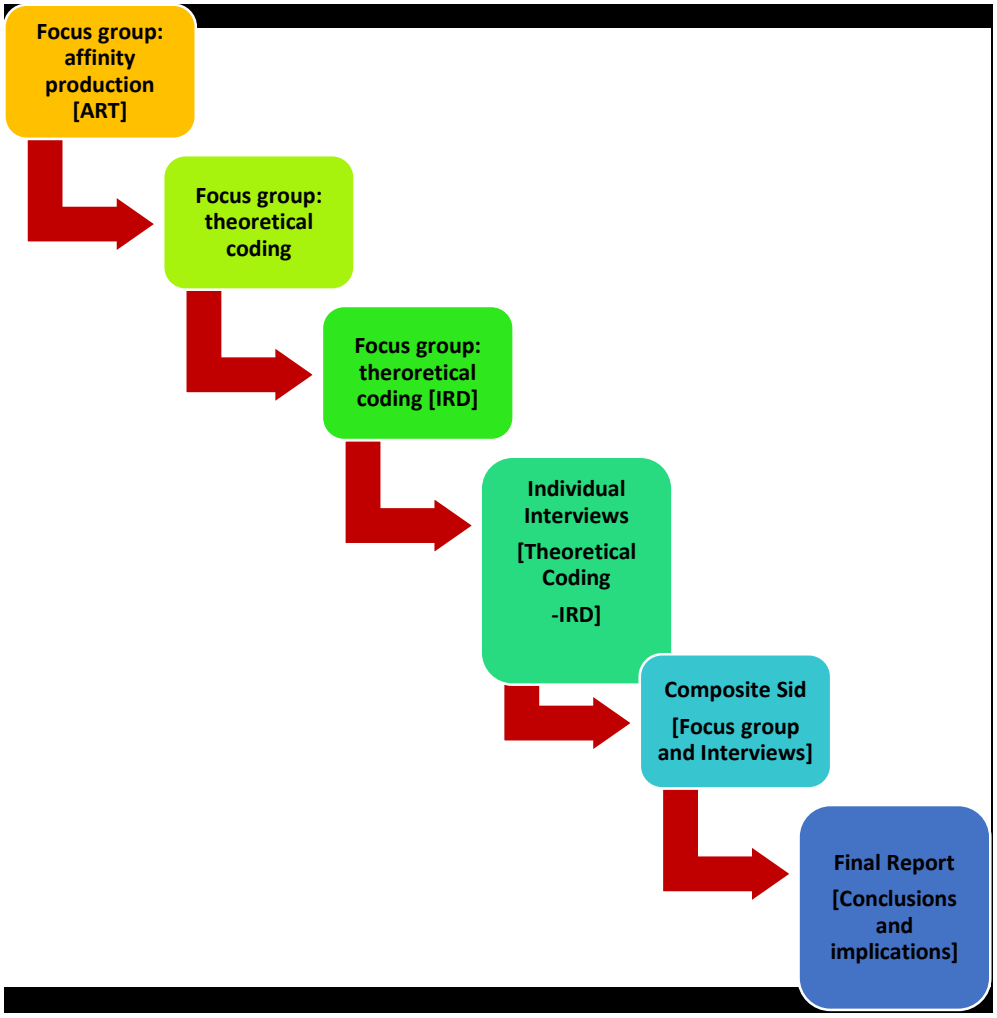

Figure 1 – The IQA Research Flow

Adapted from Northcutt and McCoy (2004)

3.5.2 Focus groups

The main purpose of focus groups is to understand the research participants' beliefs and perceptions that influence their feelings, attitudes and behaviours in the context of their lived experience. Such groups enable participants to engage positively with the research process by generating rich, in-depth data based on the synergy of group interaction (Rabiee, 2004). This study began with focus groups as the first stage of data collection, in order to gain an improved perspective of socially constructed reality.

The focus group data was generated by means of IQA. Given that an IQA research design favours a socially constructed ontology; the focus group recognises that various phenomena

are social constructions infused with social meaning. Hence, the aim of IQA is to enable the focus group to design its own 'interpretive quilt' (Northcutt and McCoy, 2004:43), and thereafter to create a series of quilts composed of individual meanings. Northcutt and McCoy (2004) have identified five characterises of focus groups in IQA. Firstly, the focus group must be information rich in terms of knowledge and experience that speaks to the phenomenon. Secondly, the group must be able to reflect on the question, and be able to convert reflections into words or phrases. Third, focus group members must invest time in the focus group sessions. The fourth characteristic is that focus groups should be homogenous in terms of distance and power. Finally, members of the group must all be able to express their thoughts and no-one should be dominant or subservient.

In order to satisfy these criteria, two focus groups of 8-10 students were convened (see Annexure 6 for a brief description of each member). Participants were of diverse ethnicities; they were working class; and most were first generation students. In terms of gender, the group included a relatively fair mix of male and female students. This enabled a probe into the variety of diverse issues that may have surfaced during the focus group session, which in turn presented an opportunity for group members to identify, unpack and account for such a heterogeneous framework by identifying its causes and effects (Finch and Lewis, 2003; Northcutt and McCoy, 2004).

3.5.3 The IQA Process

The IQA process requires constituents to actively code the data by producing themes or affinities within it. Such themes or affinities were generated through social participation (focus groups). Data was collected at two levels, the first level of which involved the identification of participants for the focus groups, which was followed by interviews with the focus group. This process concluded by producing combined group themes and affinities arising from the phenomenon. In this stage, data analysis is undertaken by presenting an Affinity Relationship Table (ART) so that the participants can represent their interpretations, by deciding on possible relationships amongst the affinities.

3.6 The IQA focus group protocol

The IQA focus group process is designed to yield the themes or affinities that relate to the phenomenon under study. Two focus group sessions were conducted on two separate days. The sessions began with a guided warm up exercise, where the participants are asked to present all their thoughts or experiences relating to the phenomenon on index cards, with one thought or phrase per card, but no limit on the number of cards. This process, referred to as the Brainstorming session is set out in in Table 1 below.

3.6.1 Brainstorming session

Table 1 - Sample Guided Reflective Exercise

The Undergraduate Experience Focus Group - Warm-up Exercise
• During this semester I would like you to reflect on your learning experience in HSFM101 Spent at the university. • So let's get started… • Firstly… • …please allow yourself to be as comfortable as possible. • I want you put your thoughts from the day aside so that you are able to only focus all your attention on this topic. • Close your eyes, be calm, relaxed and now think back from your first day you started this course, up until now and reflect on your experience. • Picture yourself engaging in all the activities of the learning experience. [long pause] • Now I want you to reflect on the project – from start to end. • Notice your surroundings. [long pause] Looking around you, take in the sights, The sounds that are associated with being in the environment of the authentic learning experience. [long pause] • Allow yourself to become aware of your environment with all of your senses. • Focus on what it feels like to be totally absorbed in the environment of the

Learning experience. Be there in your mind. [Long pause]

- Analyse your reflections right up to this moment. [pause]
- Allow all these thoughts to remain calmly in your consciousness and ready to be revealed.
- Thank you for allowing these valuable observations and reflections to come alive.

Please allow yourself to gently allow your consciousness back to this time and place and when you are ready, open your eyes. Good.

Thank you for participation.

And now, with all your recollections — that is, all that you just noticed — please write down your thoughts, phrases or words on these cards provided.

Capture each thought, phrase or words on one card only, however, you may use as many cards as you may need.

3.6.2 Generating the affinities

The next step in the process is the participants' identification of the *affinities.* The researcher's role is merely to facilitate and not to contribute in any way. The participants are requested to silently group the themes or affinities by meaning. This is referred to as *inductive coding.* The participants affix the name cards in groups to a wall, once again with no interference from the researcher. Once the groupings are allocated, each group of cards is allocated a main theme referred to as *axial coding*. The next step is to enable each group member to determine the nature of the relationship of the identified affinities; referred to as the ART (Northcutt and McCoy, 2004). If the group realises that they may have categorised incorrectly, they are able to refine and re-organise the affinities and are encouraged to reduce the meanings of the affinities and their categories to the smallest possible number. Northcutt and McCoy (2014) state that in IDA, if there are two focus groups with participants that are members of the same constituency, the data sets should be merged.

For the purpose of this study, two focus groups were convened on the same topic and the groups were equally differentiated in terms of gender. The final outcome of the focus group sessions was to identify the affinities and present a mind map to guide the questions in the interviews that followed. A group's mind map serves as a means of inductive coding; according to systems theory, it contains a set of relationships from which hypotheses can be deduced (Human-Vogel, 2006; Northcutt and McCoy, 2004).

The next level of data collection took place towards the end of the module and included semi-structured, open-ended interviews with each constituent on the focus group affinities and their reflective diaries. These probing questions arose from the online reflective accounts and the affinities presented in the ART. This phase enabled the participants to investigate the affinities established by the group and interrogate their own data (affinities) by developing probable cause and effect relationships. This process is referred to as *theoretical coding*, which enables group members to reflect on and create their own meanings of the phenomenon. The final outcome of the IQA process includes a visual representation of the relationships amongst the affinities called the Systems Influence Diagram (SID) (Northcutt and McCoy, 2004). The SID represents a mind map or *bricolage* of a phenomenon prepared according to rigorous and replicable rules "for the purpose of achieving complexity, simplicity, comprehensiveness, and interpretability" (Northcutt and McCoy, 2004: 41).

3.7 Semi-structured interviews

The second level or stage in the IQA process is followed by semi-structured interviews, with questions based on the affinities established by the focus group members. This stage begins with the interview of each constituent, individually, starting with leading in-depth, semi-structured questions. Posing leading questions allows the research participants to freely express their views according to their own understanding (Warren and Karner, 2005). In addition, this interview process is meant to add thick, rich and deep descriptions of the meaning of the affinities produced in the ART (Bargate, 2012), and delves deeper into the participants findings during the focus group session (Tabane, 2010). Semi-structured

interviews are best suited to education research, especially in a case study, as they enable deep exploration of constituents' experiences (Freestone, 2012). The affinities produced by the focus group were used to frame questions by means of which to solicit more complete descriptions of these affinities, as well as rich, thick descriptions of relationships among them. Each member of the focus groups was interviewed individually.

The interview protocol included two stages. The first was an open-ended axial interview, where the respondents provided in-depth descriptions of the affinities that emerged. Stage two involved formulating the ART where the respondents identified the relationships among the affinities. The ART enables all the possible relationships between the affinities to be identified. In the next step, the researcher presented a copy of the ART to the respondent and prompted them to establish whether or not there was a relationship between each affinity and to explain why they believed this, based on their experience. They were then asked to describe the nature of the relationships. Each member indicated the relationships through a cause and-effect analysis. In the end, a quantitative analysis of the relative frequency was made for each possible relationship. This was used to construct a bricolage or mind map of the group's system of meaning.

The interview stage concluded with the transcripts for each member. The data from the interviews was then coded, to arrive at a combined Axial Code Table (ACT), which is a combination of individual experiences of the affinities of the phenomenon.

3.8 Reflective online journals

Reflective practices have gained popularity in pedagogical practice, especially in higher education. The practice of reflective tools enriches learning by probing experiences with a view to effective improvement (Weatherall, 2015). The concept of reflective writing practices was coined by Dewey (1933), who believed that researchers should pay more attention to examining and evaluating the experiences of research participants, rather than the research outcome (Murray and Kujunzic, 2005). Given that a reflective journal is able to record the user's thoughts in a systematic way, this inevitably presents opportunities for the

researcher to unremittingly delve deeper into their own research practices and assumptions (Nadin and Cassell, 2006).

In recent times, there has been growing interest in pedagogical research in online learning reflection such as blogs. Blogs are a useful online tool for personal and social reflection (Weatherall, 2015). In line with this study's constructivist orientation, it should be noted that reflective blogging was influenced and constructed by the students themselves. The online journal for this study was facilitated by Blackboard. Reflective blogging is a valuable tool to encourage authentic and deep learning among students (Weatherall, 2015). However, while reflective journals provide a means by which to reflect on the research experience and yield viable data, few qualitative studies have been conducted on their use, and there is limited guidance on using this method (Borg, 2001).

The reflective journals served as an additional source of data to determine the themes or affinities arising from IQA and were also used as a reflective tool in the semi-structured interview phase. The participants were advised regarding how to maintain an online reflective journal and informed as to the purpose and merits of reflection as an enriching avenue for self-progression and consolidation of knowledge. The reflective accounts were designed to highlight their daily experiences of engaging in HSFM101 and the authentic tasks that needed to be demonstrated. Consequently, they provided responses to questions such as "what did I learn or not learn today?" and, "what enabled or inhibited my learning?" Students were also given feedback on their journal entries.

3.9 Validity, Reliability and Rigour

While the issues of validity and reliability were previously embedded in a quantitative paradigm, scholars have also sought to apply these principles to qualitative research (Patton, 2002; Davies and Dodd, 2002; Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Leininger, 1994; Golafshani, 2003). Qualitative research methods highlights that such methods are both flexible and context sensitive, as they are mainly concerned with understanding phenomena in a natural setting (Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Leininger, 1994) and that the researcher's effort and ability

becomes the instrument. However, the concept of *reliability* is misleading in qualitative research "if a qualitative study is discussed with reliability as a criterion, the consequence is rather that the study is of no significance" (Stenbacka, 2001, p552). However, it may be argued that all studies ought to be judged according to their own terms and standards (Healy and Perry, 2000). This may require an understanding of the researcher's origins and the conceptual framework underlying qualitative research in general. It can be difficult for those that come from a quantitative background to recognise quality in qualitative research. While reliability and validity are the criteria used to determine quality in quantitative research, in qualitative paradigms, these principles are recognised by means of concepts such as credibility, confirmability, dependability and transferability (Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Golafshani, 2003).

It is imperative that validity criteria highlight quality issues, rather than providing a checklist that restricts a researcher's freedom and flexibility (Yardley 2008). For instance, there are several core principles identified as determinants to assess the validity of qualitative research and acknowledge the different conceptual frameworks underlying such research. These principles are: sensitivity to context; commitment; rigour; coherence and transparency; and impact and importance (Yardley 2008).

3.9.1 Validity

In an interpretivist paradigm, validity is determined by the strength of the research method used to conduct a study (Lewis and Ritchie, 2003; Mason, 2002), and the degree to which the researcher is able to gain full access to the constituents' knowledge and meaning (Remenyi, 1998). Although some qualitative researchers question whether the term validity is applicable to qualitative research, Creswell and Miller (2000) state that it is influenced by the researcher's perception of the validity of the study and the selected paradigm. It is for this reason that many researchers have established their own meanings of validity and have adopted what they consider to be more relevant terms, such as quality, rigour and trustworthiness (Davies and Dodd, 2002; Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Stenbacka, 2001). In order to confirm validity for this study, the data gathered, addresses and responds to the

research questions; and the transparency of each step in data analysis is monitored though an audit trail.

3.9.2 Reliability

Reliability can be achieved in qualitative studies through being transparent and reflecting on the procedures that led to the research findings (Lewis and Ritchie, 2003). This involves checking and analysing the researcher's interpretations; conducting rigorous, consistent fieldwork; confirming that all participants were given adequate opportunities to define and relate their experiences; and backing up evidence. Similarly, in this study, the voices of HSFM101 students are recognised and most noticeable during the IQA focus group sessions, as well as the individual interviews, and the more close knit sessions of reflective journaling with the researcher.

3.9.3 Generalisability

According to Polit and Beck (2010), generalisation identifies broad outcomes through observations, and is highly contentious in qualitative research. It is therefore argued that the aim of most qualitative studies is not to generalise, but to offer a rich, contextualised understanding of certain aspects of human experience Yin 2003). As employed this study, the case of HSFM101 offers a rich thick descriptive account of students' experiences of epistemic access in authentic learning situations. Furthermore,

> [A] [...] common concern about case studies is that they provide little basis for scientific generalisation. How can you generalize [sic] from a single case? In this sense, the case study, like the experiment, does not represent a 'sample', and, in doing a case study, your goal will be to expand and generalize [sic] theories (analytic generalization [sic]) and not to enumerate frequencies (statistical generalization [sic]) (Yin, 2009: 15).

In addition, the term inferential generalisation may be used to reflect the concept of transferability in different contextual settings (Lewis and Ritchie, 2003). Transferability will depend on the congruence between the context in which the research was conducted, and the research findings that were applied. Hence, for this study, conforming to an IQA protocol meets the validity expectations.

3.9.4 Transferability

A third model of generalisability, also known as *case-to-case translation* (Firestone, 1993) refers to the transfer of the outcomes of a particular inquiry to a completely different group of people or setting, referred to as *transferability* (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). Since the findings and conclusions of a qualitative study are mainly relevant to a small number of environments or participants, it may be onerous to demonstrate that they are applicable to other contexts. The task of transferability becomes the responsibility of scholars and consumers of research that decide whether or not research findings can be extrapolated to other contexts (Yin, 2009; Polit and Beck, 2010). Hence, the case study and sampling method adopted for this study are adequate for the purpose of transferability since it intends to offer rich thick descriptions not only of the participants' experiences and behaviour but also the complexities of the context in which they learn. In addition, whilst transferability draws on the parallel likeness of the original research (situation) and the situation to which it is transferred; this study conforms to such a notion. For instance how first year students acquire EA in authentic learning situations accords to and may possibly apply to similar contexts in South African HE.

3.9.5 Trustworthiness

Many positivists also question the trustworthiness of qualitative research as the concepts of validity and reliability cannot be addressed in the same way in a real life setting (Shenton, 2004). In turn, trustworthiness is determined by the adequacy of the data and the adequacy of interpretation during data analysis and presentation. Feeding back data to participants are means of strengthening the data; most especially when both researcher and participants analyse the data through different lens (Guba and Lincoln, 1985). In this

study participants were engaged in member checking, which confirmed the trustworthiness of data received.

3.9.6 Credibility

Guba and Lincoln (1994) argue credibility to be one of the most critical factors in establishing trustworthiness. Triangulation of different research methods is one way to promote credibility (Polit et al., 2001; Burns and Grove, 2005). Triangulation has a dual purpose, namely: to 'confirm' data; and to verify that data are 'complete' (Casey and Murphy, 2009). The authors add that if the data is derived from different sources and methods and juxtaposed, credibility is confirmed, enhancing confidence in the findings. According to Geertz (1973, 2000) and Guba and Lincoln (1994), in general, credibility can be achieved by prolonged engagement with participants. It is also enriched by thorough description of source data and a fit between the data and the emerging analysis as well as by 'thick' descriptions; this relates to the multiple layers of culture and context. To ensure the credibility of this study, I engaged with the constituents during the entire semester and triangulated data from multiple sources; focus groups, semi-structured interviews, and online reflective journals.

3.9.7 Rigour

While the flexible feature of qualitative research should be contained, intentional and innovative, research strategies to confirm rigour in a study must be established. Interactive Qualitative Analysis is one such strategy (Northcutt and McCoy, 2004). The motivation of an IQA methodology for this study confirmed a transparent audit trail of the steps that prescribes to a set of rigorous, reliable, and replicable rules resulting in the elimination of researcher bias, reflexivity, or trustworthiness (Northcutt and McCoy, 2004). This fresh approach to qualitative studies aims to minimise the authoritarian positions and biases conventionally associated with the qualitative paradigm, as my position as the researcher was confirmed as the facilitator during the conduct of focus groups sessions. Furthermore, as the facilitator in most instances I had to ensure that maximum data was generated by the participants. Concomitantly, participants were encouraged to analyse their own data; with minimal interferences from the facilitator.

During the IQA process, constituents are the main actors in data collection and analysis, as their voices supersede that of the researcher. Likewise, my role as the researcher is merely one of facilitation, thus eliminating any bias. Interactive Qualitative Analysis is different from other schools of qualitative inquiry in terms of meaning and rigour. According to Northcutt and McCoy (2004:38-40), rigour refers to data collection and analysis procedures that:

- "are public and non-idiosyncratic;
- are replicable within reasonable bounds; and
- Do not depend (especially for analysis) on the nature of the elements themselves; that is, the IQA rules for constructing a system that is independent of the content or nature of the elements. "

A corollary to the IQA process is that it applies rigorous protocols according to its rules of rationalisation (though visual representations) together with an audit trail. This is intended to reduce any bias that may arise during the data generation and analysis phases. Likewise in this study, I strictly conformed to the IQA's rigorous protocols to each of its stages. This was confirmed in the focus group sessions; through the generation of the affinities, and the establishment of visual representations such as the Interrelationship Diagram (IRD) and finally determining the SID (Systems Influence Diagram).

3.10 Ethical considerations

In a qualitative study, the relationship between the researcher and participants may present ethical challenges for the researcher. In order to create a safe and guarded engagement with the participants (Schurink, 2005, p. 43-44), the consideration of ethical issues and protection of participants' rights was highly sensitised during all stages of the study.

Concomitantly, honouring the research under sound and ethical codes justifies the quality and trustworthiness of the study (Rule & John, 2011). In order to endorse the ethical code of the university, from the inception of the study, I obtained the necessary

gatekeepers' permission and ethical clearance (see appendices: 7) from the various authorities to conduct the research and had to comply with the following requirements:

- The invited participants were initially informed on the purpose of the study and the role that they will serve, more especially they were briefed and inducted on the IQA process.
- These participants were also reminded that their participation and contribution was purely voluntary, and that should they want to opt out, that they have the right to do so at any stage of the study.
- All participants of the study had to complete an informed consent form (see Appendix). The participants were also reminded their confidentiality will be protected and respected at all time and that everything they share will be treated as private.
- Participants were also assured that any controversial or sensitive information that could reveal their identities or if they felt any discomfort in sharing such information was omitted from the transcriptions and not be used in the study.
- Finally the participants were assured that the data collected for this study would be used solely for the purpose of research, and I being their lecturer will strictly assume the role of the researcher (and in some instances facilitator) and has no bearing on their regular grades or final academic results.

3.11 Limitations of the Study

Limitations are an inevitable part of any research (Simon and Goes, 2013). According to this study the following limitations were uncovered:

Sample method and size – whilst a purposive sampling is a simple sampling technique it does not cover the larger population (Cohen et al., 2011). Determining the right sample size is a limitation in extant discourses. The sample size of this study was only 20 students, while

on average the total population of the HSFM101 2016 Cohort was an average of 75 registered students.

Data collection and constituents – The unfamiliar jargon and unusual methods of data collection and analysis associated with IQA could have inhibited understanding. However, this is to be expected with a novel approach. While some of the participants expressed anxiety and concern about their newness as research participants as well as their roles in the IQA process and the research language, I endeavoured to ensure that they were inducted and mentored as the processes unfolded.

Furthermore, the participants, when compared to previous studies conducted within higher education (Tabane, 2010; Bargate, 2012; Du Preez, 2011) that included more mature students or those in their senior years of study, distinguishes itself as being conducted with students at their first year of study. It is thereby a novel addition to recent IQA findings. The students were also expected to maintain and access a reflective online journal (Blackboard) that had to be updated regularly. This was required in order to carefully monitor that this digital mode of data generation worked effectively. I also had to ensure that students' commitment and participation was not threatened by absenteeism or low motivation to participate in the study.

Focus groups – The focus groups comprised a selected number of participants and excluded the views and experiences of tutors, the faculty, lecturers or related stakeholders. Furthermore, an underlying assumption of IQA is that constituents generate and interpret their own data which could create bias (Bargate, 2012).

The researcher's role – The researcher's subjectivity as the lecturer for the Hospitality Financial Management 1 module may have impacted the study. However, I ensured that my role as the researcher was explicitly defined, and highlighted any bias that may have arisen during the course of the study.

3.12 Conclusion

This chapter described the research design and methodology that underpinned this study. I further highlighted the need for IQA as an alternate means to address the research questions. Apart from the focus groups sessions and individual interviews, the adoption of reflective online journaling as the third data source was a novelty to an IQA study. Finally, I concluded with how issues of validity, reliability and rigour and the limitations were addressed in this study. In Chapter 4, I deliver a detailed account of the IQA process through group reality, showing how the Systems Influence Diagram (SID) and the telephoto SID will unfold via focus group protocol.

CHAPTER FOUR: INTERACTIVE QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS: GROUP REALITIES

4.1 Introduction

The previous chapter provided a broad overview of the research paradigm, design and methodology. This chapter represents the students' voices, where the data presented was elicited by the participants of the study. Moreover, this chapter describe the IQA process according to which the elements of the system (affinities) are defined; determining the nature of the relationships that exist between these affinities (affinity relationship table); the process of rationalising the system (interrelationship diagram) and finally, the creation of a mind map that will represent the influences and outcomes in a system (systems influence diagram).

4.1.1 Strategy of Inquiry

This study draws on the principles of qualitative research, using Interactive Qualitative Analysis. IQA is a refined data collection technique that blends the tradition of phenomenology with that of systems theory (Northcutt and McCoy 2004, Sanchez, 2007). Furthermore, IQA is rooted in systems theory that is able to identify the perceived casual relationships amidst affinities of this system by members of a particular group, who experience the same phenomena. The affinities are referred to as the elements of a particular system. These elements are depicted in a visual representation resembling a 'mind map' or *montage* that clearly reflects the phenomenon experienced by the group members, dovetailed by an individual interview protocol (Northcutt and McCoy 2004, Bargate, 2012). Furthermore, once these elements are identified; the relationships that exists amongst these elements needs to be described, along with how they relate to one another.

This chapter foregrounds the collective voices of the participants as the interpretations and inferences drawn by the participants of this study, surpassing the subjectivity of the researcher. At this stage, the role of the researcher is to facilitate the process and execution of data collection. It is for this reason that the credibility of the study is maintained and the researcher may only later exhibit an audit trail for any arguments that may emerge in the study (Northcutt and McCoy 2004; Lodewyckx, 2005). The underlying premise of IQA is that

those that show greater power and distance relationships over a phenomenon/a are most suited to present an architecture of meaning; as this study intends to explore student's experiences of epistemological access in an authentic assessment case.

The IQA systems map adheres to a set of "rigorous and replicable rules for the purpose of achieving complexity, simplicity, comprehensiveness, and interpretability" (Northcutt & McCoy, 2004: 41).

4.1.2 Focus groups and Constituency

The initial step in the IQA research design commences with focus group sessions. The focus groups are participants (also referred to as constituents) of the study, and in this case, it is the Hospitality Financial Management 1 first year students. I adopted a purposive sample strategy, as a deliberate selection of students that share certain commonalities, such as similar background and experiences of the phenomenon/a. I formed two focus groups; the first group comprised thirteen members, and the second was made up of twelve members.

The groups were both presented with the same issue statements (see Table 1) over two consecutive days (Wednesday and Thursday). I identified a conducive and comfortable venue to commence with the focus group sessions. Subsequently, the initial step for each focus group began with a 'silent brainstorming' or 'guided imagery' stage. It is at this point that I guided students on a tour of the system; starting from the first day, when they were assigned with the authentic assessment project. This exercise probed students to reflect on both their positive and negative experiences of the project,[12] which either enabled or constrained their epistemological access. Thereafter, I presented each focus group with the issue statement, as shown in Table 2, below:

[12] I would use the term project interchangeably with the tem assessment; since the participants made a similar reference.

1. What aspects that enabled you to gain knowledge was found to be most helpful and meaningful, and why?
2. How did you know that you had understood a certain concept, or a method of calculation?
3. What challenges and problems did you experience in this module and why?
4. Were there aspects, concepts or methods you thought you knew or understood, but you understood it differently during the authentic assessment?
5. Did you acquire any specific skills, knowledge or abilities you've acquired or improved after completing this module in HSFM101?
6. What changes, if any, has this module brought about in the way you perceive this subject? If so, explain how.
7. Did your personal background, context, or learning approach have influenced the ways in which you've learnt? If, yes, explain how.

Table 2: Issue statement

The authors of IQA underscore that this stage is highly useful, since it evokes the affective dimensions of the phenomena (Northcutt and McCoy, 2004). Each member of the group was required to transcribe their experiences on the authentic assessment of the subject on index cards (or Post it™); limiting to one thought per card. The next step was the exercise of axial coding.

During this phase constituents were instructed to attach their index cards on a pin board in a silent and non-consultative manner. Once all thoughts or ideas were fixed on the board, I asked them to group these thoughts, ideas, feelings etc. into common themes. This process was also conducted in a silent manner; as students were cautioned not to create any disruption; it is only when they requested guidance that I stepped in to facilitate the process. This was referred to as the inductive coding process. Subsequently, I probed them to decide on a name for each grouping, which was referred to as a deductive coding process (Mampane & Bouwer, 2011; Du Preez and Du Preez, 2012). The main purpose of this phase is to identify the themes or affinities (names from each group). This stage proved to be quite onerous and exhaustive for most constituents. At multiple junctures, the themes had to be

openly discussed, explained and clarified to those participants that were becoming confused or who were in some doubt. This process, referred to as axial coding, reached its conclusion after a deliberation of reorganising, clarifying, and renaming of the affinities were finally determined, once consensus was reached by focus group members.

4.2 Affinity Production and Reconciliation

The affinities production stage allowed the constituents a large degree of reflexivity. Affinities are essentially the building blocks that complete an IQA system (Northcut and McCoy, 2004:346). The common thoughts shared amongst the members are now categorised as affinities, and as mentioned earlier, my role was to merely facilitate the process. In addition, the focus group members, also in some instances, generated sub-affinities. The entire process averaged around four to five hours on each day, for both groups. It was decided for both groups to meet together on a separate day in order to compare and reconcile the affinities produced. Once again, members were given the opportunity to reflect on all the affinities, produced by both the groups.

As the discussion amongst the participants progressed, I began making notes on the comments that came out frequently and quite strongly. Thereafter, the constituents merged common affinities, and I merely guided their final thoughts; more especially when groups differed in opinion. It was realised that Wednesday's group (see Table 2) had too many themes (as some themes appeared to be redundant); it was thus decided to eliminate those redundant themes and clarify them to ten each, with the IQA protocol in mind. The groups finally came to an amicable conclusion where they identified ten affinities that they noted were relevant to their learning. The affinities for both groups on Wednesday and Thursday respectively are depicted in Table 3 and 4 as follows:

Table 2 - Focus Group 1

1. Family impact • Positive • Negative
2. Good feeling
3. Friends involvement
4. Problematic areas *overcoming them * still a challenge
5. Study groups
6. Project • Positively challenging • Negatively challenging
7. Effects of Strike
8. Learnt from FM
9. Motivation to pass
10. Time management
11. Registration
12. Benefits of Blackboard • Positive • Negative
13. Practice
14. Social media
15. Tutorials
16. University environment • Positive • Negative
17. Financial management challenges

Table 3 - Focus Group 2

1. Family impact and background
2. Project day
3. Learning to pass
4. Lecturer room
5. Learnt from project
6. Overcoming challenges
7. Tutorials and technology
8. Good feeling
9. Different attitude towards financial management – motivated
10. Personal finance management

The final stage in the focus group session allowed participants of both groups to merge the themes and to move from draft themes or affinities to that of the final refined affinities. There were times at which the participants requested my guidance and clarity. This final step is reflected the final affinities (in bold), as demonstrated in Table 5 below:

Table 4 - Refined Themes Combined from Focus Groups 1 and 2

1. *Life Management Refined to* ***Life's Contradictions***

2. *More Practise With Activities Refined to* ***Intense Frequent Engagement***

3. *Getting Help refined to* ***Collaboration***

4. ***Hospitality and Finance Language***

5. *Tutorials And Using E-Resources And Library Refined to* ***Learning Resources***

6. ***University and Lecturer Environment***

7. *Not Understanding HSFM101 Refined to* ***Learning Challenges***

8. ***Motivation and Changed Attitude***

9. ***Acquired Abilities***

10. *Getting It Right Refined* ***to A New Understanding***

4.3 Affinity Write-up

At the end of the affinity production stage, the members became quite exhausted and as time did not permit for the write up on each affinity. I decided to assume my role as the facilitator by typing out the affinities and preparing a brief description on each affinity (based on the comments made during the affinity production stage). In providing a discussion on the affinities produced, I will begin with a discussion on the findings that arose from the focus group sessions, followed by a tabular representation of the data extrapolated by the e-constituents.

4.3.1 Life's Contradictions

The most overwhelming response was evident in this affinity (refer to appendices 7: Life's Contradictions). This affinity exemplified the personal lives and prior learning of the focus group members and how this influenced their learning experience at the various stages and activities of the assessment. Some reported that their background factors influenced the outcomes positively; whilst the majority indicated that their personal lives and prior learning negatively influenced their epistemic access. For example, many had other family and personal responsibilities to attend to at home, or the type of dwelling that compromised their academic learning time and engagement. A significant observation made was that, with the exception of one participant, the remaining majority are first generation students that mainly came from both academically and economically impoverished backgrounds. Owing to this, their academic support (and in some instances emotional support) that they received from home was negligible. However, very few students reported that their learning was encouraged by the supplemental academic and emotional support from either their siblings or their parents.

4.3.2 Intense frequent engagement

This affinity came out strongly as practice and engagement with the various assessment activities as an enabler to positive learning (see appendices: 7 Intense Frequent Engagement). The participants emphasised that frequent practice ranged from class, tutorial and homework activities to that of the subject content from blackboard (eLearning). Subsequently, this reinforced their understanding of the subject matter, allowing for a more

confident approach to the assessment activities and progressive stages. They also realised that frequent engagement with content activities enabled them to reflect on their learning, as they were now able to see the 'light at the end of the tunnel'. It was also interesting to note that a few members admitted that their limited engagement with content led to a negative outcome

4.3.3 Collaboration

The affinity on collaboration also received quite an overwhelming response amongst the constituents (see appendices: 7). This affinity reflected the way in which the assessment stimulated collaboration through the group activities. There was a polarising effect resulting from this affinity, ranging from positive to negative.

4.3.3.1 ***Positive***

Many of the participants found this interactive way of learning most useful, ranging from class activities, meeting outside the classroom as a group, or through social media and blackboard (e-leaning). They found that peer learning served benefits as both a reflective tool as well as a support tool. It was further highlighted that collaboration served a scaffolding effect on their learning experience. Consequently, the shared experience gave rise to an exchange of different ideas, eliciting a new understanding of the subject HSFM101. Most of the participants found that working with others was a means of improving their confidence and communication skills.

4.3.3.2 ***Negative***

Some of the participants were resistant to group activity, and preferred working in independently. A few comments such as group conflict and group dynamics with specific group members gave rise to negative attitudes towards learning. Furthermore, power struggles and leadership amongst group members exacerbated further problems towards the accomplishment of academic goals. As a result, the preference to work alone was subtly highlighted.

4.3.4 Learning Resources (tutorials, library resources, social media, e-learning)

This affinity represented as a supplemental resource or even a scaffold that was required in executing the assessment (see also appendices: 7). The focus groups identified the following sub affinities that made up the above affinity.

4.3.4.1 *Tutorials*

The students highlighted that being taught in smaller groups contributed significantly to learning, since participants described that they became more familiar and clear with the assessment outcomes. In the face-to-face tutorial discussion, they were able to raise all their challenges and problems they experienced with the assessment during their planning stages, as well as the execution stages. Contrary to the lecture contact times, it was only during tutorials that students felt accommodated and included in terms of question and feedback sessions. Interestingly enough, the participants revealed that the lecturer‘s role as a tutor further benefited them.

4.3.4.2 *Library support*

The various services, such as online tutorials, the writing centre, and referencing support staff that the library offered, were helpful to them in executing their assessment.

4.3.4.3 *Social media*

The students took ownership of creating a social media forum. Many of them found that this forum contributed significantly towards their achievement of both group and individual goals throughout the different stages of the project.

4.3.4.4 *Blackboard (BB)*

Participants found that BB as a learning and reflective tool added value when it came to the different ways to approach the assessment. The online reflective activities were an added benefit to their learning. The maintenance of an online journal further improved their engagement with the lecturer, as well as their reflexive learning.

4.3.5 University and Lecture environment

The participants of both focus groups alluded to the fact that the both the university and lecture environment restricted their academic access in various ways (see for example appendices: 7).

4.3.5.1 **University as a whole**

This affinity concerns the way in which the constituents perceive the culture of the university environment as an influence in their approach to the assessment. The students perceived the university environment as rather overwhelming, grappling with its learning culture. Furthermore the strike that caused disruption during the #*Fees Must Fall* and the student activism it forwarded further escalated their anxieties. Their attempts to adjust and recuperate in such a turbulent time, presented them with further learning challenges.

4.3.5.2 ***Lecture environment***

This sub-affinity presented a challenge to most of the constituents. They found learning to be problematic in larger classes, as this increased their anxieties even more. The lecture venue in terms of space and physical layout was not conducive to learning. In addition, the group expressed that this sub-affinity restricted active engagement and collaboration with the assessment activities.

4.3.6 Hospitality and financial language

The focus groups described how the design of the assessment contributed towards overcoming the language barrier (see Appendices, Table 9).

Apart from most of the participants, being second language learners; the disciplinary language of the HSFM101 restrained student epistemic access. Due to most of the group members never having the experience of staying or visiting a hotel, they expressed that the discourse of the Hospitality as a discipline itself was rather foreign to them, owing to their limited exposure to the industry. Further to this, many had limited or no financial background knowledge and grappled with the financial jargon that was applicable to HSFM101. For this reason, as the practical activities of the assessment began to unfold, their

exercise and application in such activities enabled a fresher and more explicit understanding of the discourse of HSFM101 for most participants.

4.3.7 Learning Challenges

This affinity represented a myriad of challenges for the participants (see Appendices: Table 10), whilst achieving the desired outcomes of the assessment. This could be represented in the sub-affinities; presented by the focus groups, as described below.

4.3.7.1 Diversity

This sub-affinity indicates that those students with diverse backgrounds were inhibited in interacting with each other. This further escalated their challenges faced in achieving the desired goals of the assessment. For most students, whilst this affinity was regarded as a positive challenge, a minority were not comfortable to work with different people with diverse ideas, thus wrestling with the outcomes of the assessment.

4.3.7.2 Threshold concepts

Students found this affinity to be rather “troublesome”, as they failed to understand the theoretical content and procedures for most of the threshold concepts, such as double entry; costing, and profit and loss. Due to students becoming “stuck” in these sections of the module HSFM101; their academic persistence was curtailed. However, as they saw these concepts being enacted in practice, their view to understanding improved.

4.3.7.3 Accounting in school

For many students this sub-affinity presented mixed responses. Whereas a few felt this project presented a positive challenge for them, others expressed a further sense of anxiety and low confidence. Consequently, they felt that their poor numeracy skills, and not having accounting in secondary education, stifled their progress to learn.

4.3.7.4 Time management

This affinity also presented a challenge in executing the assessment. They found time to be a crucial construct for preparation, coordination and reaching consensus during the initial stage of the assessment.

4.3.8 Motivation and changed attitude

The group reported that this affinity (see Appendices: Table 11) represented a new change in the way they felt about the HSFM101 module. This was largely owing to the design, and their enactment of assessment tasks. Consequently, they elaborated that their engagement and practice with the assessment brought about a positive change in their epistemic beliefs. Similarly, participants mentioned that the project stimulated confidence, and improved their self-efficacy. The assessment was able to override their initial fears, anxieties and tensions felt at the start of the semester, replaced by a new sense of encouragement, good feeling and optimism as to the final outcome of the assessment.

4.3.9 Acquired abilities and skills

This affinity (see Appendices: Table 12) represents how the focus group members acquired abilities and skills whilst engaging with the assessment. They felt that the assessment was able to unleash their hidden potential. Moreover, the constituency made mention of the skills and abilities acquired from the assessment, ranging from team work, to leadership qualities, communication, time management, numeracy, business, and even entrepreneurial skills.

4.3.10 A new understanding

This affinity (see Appendices: Table 13) indicated the way in which the participants were able to demystify their misunderstandings of threshold concepts, calculations, and learning approaches only through sincere commitment and rigorous engagement with assessment tasks. The participants described this sub-affinity to represent their initiation of critical reflection; mainly with regard to their shortcomings and limitations. In addition, the assessment design gave them an opportunity to realise the aspects of and reasons why they were unable to previously understand Hospitality Financial Management content.

4.4 Confirming the authenticity of the assessment

In chapter 2, the literature review highlighted the eights critical elements of authentic assessment (Ashford Rowe, 2014).According to the findings presented by the participants, six out of the eight elements were identified in this study that confirms the authenticity of the assessment. The first element determined is *whether the* ***assessment tasks or activities presented the students with challenge*****?** For most of the students, the tasks and activities inherent to the AA presented students with a considerable amount of challenge. This was evident in the findings that many of them expressed that their exposure to non-traditional assessment was a novel and unfamiliar experience. Consequently, the key challenge was that students had to negotiate the various learning tensions that emerged as they had to team and collaborate in diverse groups. Secondly, ***did transfer of learning occur in order to demonstrate skills acquired?*** Drawing on the findings, many students expressed their astonishment upon discovering their innate abilities and capabilities. A corollary to this realisation, provided students with opportunities to meet and communicate with other people, most especially on diverse lines and to reflect on their entrepreneurial and business skills, only to mention a few. *Thirdly, d****oes the assessment activity require that the students demonstrate metacognition, by means of critical reflection? T****he design of the assessment task allowed students to maintain an online reflective journal. Most students valued this practice as IT allowed them to reflect and critically evaluate their strengths and weaknesses in what was already learnt. In addition, the tutorials further increased their opportunities to reflect and self-discover. The feedback received from their facilitator improved their confidence and quality in completing their assessment tasks and activities along with the mastery of concepts .the *fourth element describes whether* ***the assessment activity create opportunities for discussion and feedback? T****he design of the assessment activities frequently created opportunities for students to collaborate and discuss .Apart from the facilitator's role in providing discussion and feedback, the peer led activities that was evident in the social media group chats, tutorials and online group discussions created effective forums for dialog, debate and feedback. The *fifth critical element enquires whether* ***the design of the assessment tasks create opportunities to collaborate.*** As mentioned on previously, the authentic assessment undertaken by students was characterised dominantly by group led

activities. This forum served as a catalyst to stimulate brainstorming and deliberation sessions. Furthermore, students exchanged ideas and comments through online discussions on BB. Finally ***is a performance, or product, required as a final assessment outcome?*** The final stage of the project required students to present all their tasks and assessments in a form of a portfolio. This portfolio is representative of the tasks that students had to engage with during the entire semester. These documented tasks must authenticate the practices of the hospitality industry. Whilst many students lauded their engagement of authentic learning as they had the opportunity to make their own decisions as they progressed and relied on the strengths of their peers.

4.5 GROUP REALITY: DETERMINING THE ELEMENTS OF THE SYSTEM

4.5.1 Detailed Affinity Relationship Table (Detailed Art)

Once the affinities of the system were determined, each participant was asked to describe the nature of the relationship of the respective affinities by exploring each affinity pair. This process is referred to as a Detailed Affinity Relationship (ART). However, since the exploration of each affinity pair is an arduous task for each member, IQA suggests *dyad coding,* by allowing two group members to work as a team and collectively probe the relationships of the affinity pairs. It is argued that this process is much quicker when compared to individual exploration (Northcutt and Mcoy, 2004). Nevertheless, the process did result in becoming rather time consuming and frustrating at certain points, especially when the dyads were in conflict in reaching consensus. It was at this stage, I once again had to intervene and facilitate the process and only stepped in to offer guidance and control until unanimity prevailed.

The process of analysing the ART by each dyad can be illustrated by the following example: Determine whether the affinity of collaboration influences the affinity of motivation. This can be illustrated as follows:

Collaboration → motivation (means collaboration influences motivation)

Or:

Collaboration ← motivation (means motivation influences collaboration)

Or:

Collaboration <> motivation (means no relationship exist between the affinities)

Further to this, the dyad team had to write down by describing statement that reflects their experiences and advocates the cause and effect relationship between each pair (see Appendices: Table 14). This perceived cause and effect relationship is referred to as theoretical coding.

4.5.2 Theoretical coding

It is through this process that IQA is able to determine whether there is a direct influence between every possible affinity pairs within a particular system. This will, at a later stage present the groups' mind map (SID) that is able to describe the phenomenon/a through group reality. Theoretical coding is able to resolve three pertinent aspects when analysing these relationships. Firstly, it takes into account the level of detail when designing perceived relationships. This is followed by how the groups ought to be structured when analysing these relationships. Finally, it is necessary to consider how the entire system that represents the entire group ought to be designed.

4.5.3 Determining the Group Composite through Pareto Protocol

An IQA research design may create the IRD by either analysing the ART at an individual participant level or at a group level. For the purpose of this study, I chose the analysis of the group level in order to create the IRD. In order to achieve rigour and maximum consensus of a focus group; IQA suggests using the Pareto Protocol. The argument for applying the Pareto principle, also known as the 80/20 rule, is a theory maintaining that 80 percent of that which emerges (output) from any system is determined by 20 percent of that which goes into it (input). Furthermore this 20/80 rule suggests that addressing 20% of a problem results in 80% of the problem being resolved.

This statistical method demands more of the researcher's time and effort, as the Pareto Composite requires a precise count of each relationship code. The added benefit of this method is that it is able to determine votes that have a very close relationship, as well as votes that result in conflicting relationships.

Once all the relationships in the ART is accorded, the number of occurrences (frequency) of each relationship is populated on a spreadsheet (see Table 6). This study employed A Microsoft Excel Spreadsheet to present the relationships.

Number	Affinity pair relationship	Frequency	Number	Affinity pair relationship	Frequency	NO.	Affinity pair relationship	Frequency
1	1 → 2	9	31	2 → 9	8	61	5 → 6	2
2	1 ← 2	1	32	2 ← 9	2	62	5 ← 6	6
3	1 → 3	13	33	2→ 10	14	63	5 → 7	7
4	1 ← 3	2	34	2 ← 10	1	64	5 ← 7	4
5	1 → 4	4	35	3 → 4	8	65	5 → 8	9
6	1 ← 4	5	36	3 ← 4	2	66	5 ← 8	1
7	1 → 5	4	37	3 → 5	10	67	5 → 9	6
8	1 ← 5	1	38	3 ← 5	2	68	5 ← 9	3
9	1 → 6	8	39	3 → 6	5	69	5 ← 10	13
10	1 ← 6	2	40	3 ← 6	4	70	5→ 10	1
11	1 → 7	8	41	3 → 7	4	71	6 → 7	2
12	1 ← 7	1	42	3 ← 7	5	72	6 ← 7	4
13	1 → 8	10	43	3 → 8	4	73	6 → 8	3
14	1 ← 8	2	44	3 ← 8	2	74	6 ← 8	4
15	1 → 9	2	45	3 → 9	7	75	6 → 9	1
16	1 ← 9	3	46	3 ← 9	2	76	6 ← 9	4
17	1 → 10	6	47	3 ← 10	1	77	6 → 10	6
18	1 ← 10	0	48	3 → 10	15	78	6 ← 10	3
19	2 → 3	7	49	4 → 5	6	79	7 → 8	4
20	2 ← 3	5	50	4 ← 5	5	80	7 ← 8	3
21	2 → 4	11	51	4 → 6	5	81	7 → 9	1
22	2 ← 4	3	52	4 ← 6	3	82	7 ← 9	6
23	2 → 5	4	53	4 → 7	8	83	7 → 10	7
24	2 ← 5	6	54	4 ← 7	3	84	7 ← 10	4
25	2 → 6	3	55	4 → 8	6	85	8 → 9	5
26	2 ← 6	8	56	4 ← 8	2	86	8 ← 9	3
27	2 → 7	2	57	4 → 9	1	87	8 → 10	7
28	2 ← 7	11	58	4 ← 9	3	88	8 ← 10	6
29	2 → 8	5	59	4 ← 10	1	89	9 → 10	9
30	2 ← 8	3	60	4 → 10	7	90	9 ← 10	2
subtotals:		149			146			136
						Grand Total Frequency 431		

Table 5 - Frequency in Affinity Pair Order

Table 6 indicates that a total of 431 votes were casted in accordance to 90 computations (possible relationships).

The Pareto Cumulative Frequency chart allows for groups members to come to concurrence when conflicting votes arise. Once conflicting votes are eliminated, the relationships from the frequency table (Table 7) are then rearranged in descending order. Subsequently, the Pareto Chart is created by calculating the cumulative percentage for each relationship.

This step serves a dual benefit. The first is to deduce the fewest number of relationships that signify the highest amount of variation that is most comprehensive and rich. Furthermore, those relationships that attract the lowest amount of votes are eliminated from the group composite. Secondly, this process eliminates any relationships that may appear to be abstruse.

Number	Affinity pair relationship	Frequency	Cumulative frequency	Cumulative percent relation	Cumulative percent frequency	Power
1	3 → 10	15	15	1.099	3.480	2.381
2	2→ 10	14	29	2.198	6.729	4.531
3	1 → 3	13	42	3.297	9.745	6.448
4	5 ← 10	13	55	4.396	12.761	8.365
5	2 → 4	11	66	5.495	15.313	9.819
6	2 ← 7	11	77	6.593	17.865	11.272
7	1 → 8	10	87	7.692	20.186	12.493
8	3 → 5	10	97	8.791	22.506	13.715
9	1 → 2	9	106	9.890	24.594	14.704
10	5 → 8	9	115	10.989	26.682	15.693
11	9 → 10	9	124	12.088	28.770	16.682
12	1 → 6	8	132	13.187	30.626	17.440
13	1 → 7	8	140	14.286	32.483	18.197
14	2 ← 6	8	148	15.385	34.339	18.954
15	2 → 9	8	156	16.484	36.195	19.711
16	3 → 4	8	164	17.582	38.051	20.469
17	4 → 7	8	172	18.681	39.907	21.226
18	2 → 3	7	179	19.780	41.531	21.751
19	3 → 9	7	186	20.879	43.155	22.276

20	4 → 10	7	193	21.978	44.780	22.802
21	5 → 7	7	200	23.077	46.404	23.327
22	7 → 10	7	207	24.176	48.028	23.852
23	8 → 10	7	214	25.275	49.652	24.377
24	1 → 10	6	220	26.374	51.044	24.670
25	2 ← 5	6	226	27.473	52.436	24.964
26	4 → 5	6	232	28.571	53.828	25.257
27	4 → 8	6	238	29.670	55.220	25.550
28	5 ← 6	6	244	30.769	56.613	25.843
29	5 → 9	6	250	31.868	58.005	26.137
30	6 → 10	6	256	32.967	59.397	26.430
31	7 ← 9	6	262	34.066	60.789	26.723
32	8 ← 10	6	268	35.165	62.181	27.016
33	1 ← 4	5	273	36.264	63.341	27.077
34	2 ← 3	5	278	37.363	64.501	27.139
35	2 → 8	5	283	38.462	65.661	27.200
36	3 → 6	5	288	39.560	66.821	27.261
37	3 ← 7	5	293	40.659	67.981	27.322
38	4 ← 5	5	298	41.758	69.142	27.383
39	4 → 6	5	303	42.857	70.302	27.444
40	8 → 9	5	308	43.956	71.462	27.506
41	1 → 4	4	312	45.055	72.390	27.335
42	1 → 5	4	316	46.154	73.318	27.164
43	2 → 5	4	320	47.253	74.246	26.993
44	3 ← 6	4	324	48.352	75.174	26.822
45	3 → 7	4	328	49.451	76.102	26.652
46	3 → 8	4	332	50.549	77.030	26.481
47	5 ← 7	4	336	51.648	77.958	26.310
48	6 ← 7	4	340	52.747	78.886	26.139
49	6 ← 8	4	344	53.846	79.814	25.968
50	6 ← 9	4	348	54.945	80.742	25.797
52	7 → 8	4	352	57.143	81.671	24.528
53	7 ← 10	4	356	58.242	82.599	24.357
54	1 ← 9	3	359	59.341	83.295	23.954
55	2 ← 4	3	362	60.440	83.991	23.551
56	2 → 6	3	365	61.538	84.687	23.148
57	2 ← 8	3	368	62.637	85.383	22.745
58	4 ← 6	3	371	63.736	86.079	22.343
59	4 ← 7	3	374	64.835	86.775	21.940
60	4 ← 9	3	377	65.934	87.471	21.537
61	5 ← 9	3	380	67.033	88.167	21.134

62	6 → 8	3	383	68.132	88.863	20.731
63	6 ← 10	3	386	69.231	89.559	20.328
64	7 ← 8	3	389	70.330	90.255	19.926
65	8 ← 9	3	392	71.429	90.951	19.523
66	1 ← 3	2	394	72.527	91.415	18.888
67	1 ← 6	2	396	73.626	91.879	18.253
68	1 ← 8	2	398	74.725	92.343	17.618
69	1 → 9	2	400	75.824	92.807	16.983
70	2 → 7	2	402	76.923	93.271	16.348
71	2 ← 9	2	404	78.022	93.735	15.714
72	3 ← 4	2	406	79.121	94.200	15.079
73	3 ← 5	2	408	80.220	94.664	14.444
74	3 ← 8	2	410	81.319	95.128	13.809
75	3 ← 9	2	412	82.418	95.592	13.174
76	4 ← 8	2	414	83.516	96.056	12.539
77	5 → 6	2	416	84.615	96.520	11.904
78	6 → 7	2	418	85.714	96.984	11.269
79	9 ← 10	2	420	86.813	97.448	10.635
80	1 ← 2	1	421	87.912	97.680	9.768
81	1 ← 5	1	422	89.011	97.912	8.901
82	1 ← 7	1	423	90.110	98.144	8.034
83	2 ← 10	1	424	91.209	98.376	7.167
84	3 ← 10	1	425	92.308	98.608	6.300
85	4 → 9	1	426	93.407	98.840	5.433
86	4 ← 10	1	427	94.505	99.072	4.566
87	5 ← 8	1	428	95.604	99.304	3.700
88	5→ 10	1	429	96.703	99.536	2.833
89	6 → 9	1	430	97.802	99.768	1.966
90	7 → 9	1	431	98.901	100.000	1.099
91	1 ← 10	0	431	100.000	100.000	0.000
		431				

Table 6 - Affinities in Descending Order of Frequency with Pareto and Power Analysis

Explanation of calculations in Table 7 (Northcutt & McCoy, 2004, p. 160)

- *Cummulative Frequency*

This column is populated with the running total or cumulative frequency. The frequency of the votes casted for each affinity pair is added to the preceding total.

- *Cumulative percent (Relation)*

This represents the cumulative percent based on the 91 possible relationships that resulted in this study. Each relationship is indicative of 1/91 that is equivalent to 1, 09 % of the total possible relationships. The cumulative percentage represents one of the two factors in the power index.

- *Cumulative percent (Frequency)*

This represents the cumulative percentage responding to the 431 votes that was established. Each entry represents the percentage of votes cast for each affinity pair and is added to the preceding total.

- *Power*

This serves as the degree of optimisation of the system and is determined by finding the difference between the Cumulative percent (Frequency) and the Cumulative percent (Relation)

4.5.4 The MinMax Criterion

According to decision theory, the decision maker ought to select the course of action whose worst (maximum) loss is better than the least (minimum) loss of all other courses of action possible in given circumstances. This may be referred to as the minmax criterion.
In this instance, the decision depends on selecting the final two columns of the Pareto table that will determine the relationships that will appear in the group IRD. Since the Pareto table presents the relationships in descending order, the cut-off point becomes easier to identify. Nevertheless, relationships that attract a minimum or no vote also need to be considered when constructing the composite IRD. Take for example relationships from 66-90, which cast only 2 or 1 votes, while relationship 91 cast no votes.

4.5.5 Accounting for maximum variance

According to the Pareto concept, an evaluation on relatively few of the possible 91 relationships accounts for most of the variation, for example, the first ten relationships

(11% of the total) account for nearly 27% (26.682%) of the total in the system; whilst 24 relationships (26%) account for more than half (51.044%) of the variation in the system, and the first 50 account for more than 80% (80.742%) of the total variation.

4.5.6 Maximum variance: Frequency

The variation accounted for each succeeding relationship is depicted in Figure 2 below.

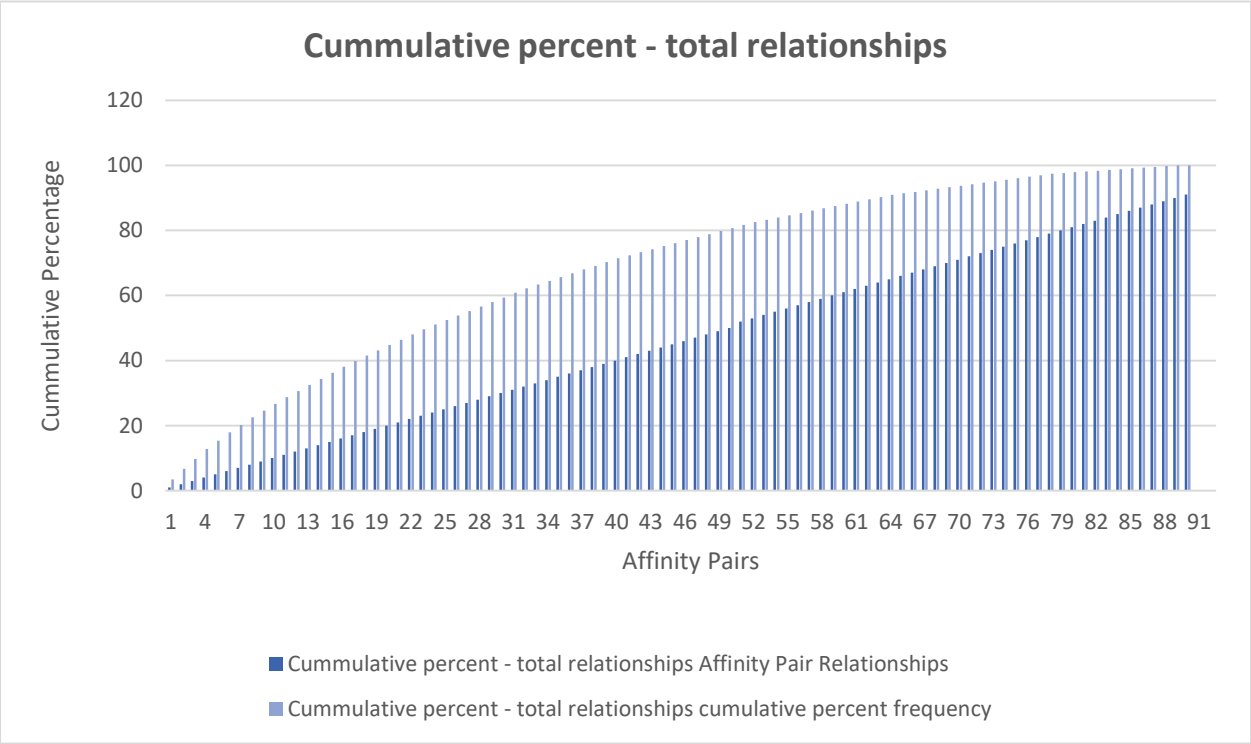

Figure 2 - Accounting for Maximum Variation

4.4.7 Minimising the number Affinities Power

Power reaches a maximum at affinity pair 40, which accounts for more than 71% (Figure 3) of the variation in the system. For this reason, the first 40 affinity pair relationships will be included in the group IRD.

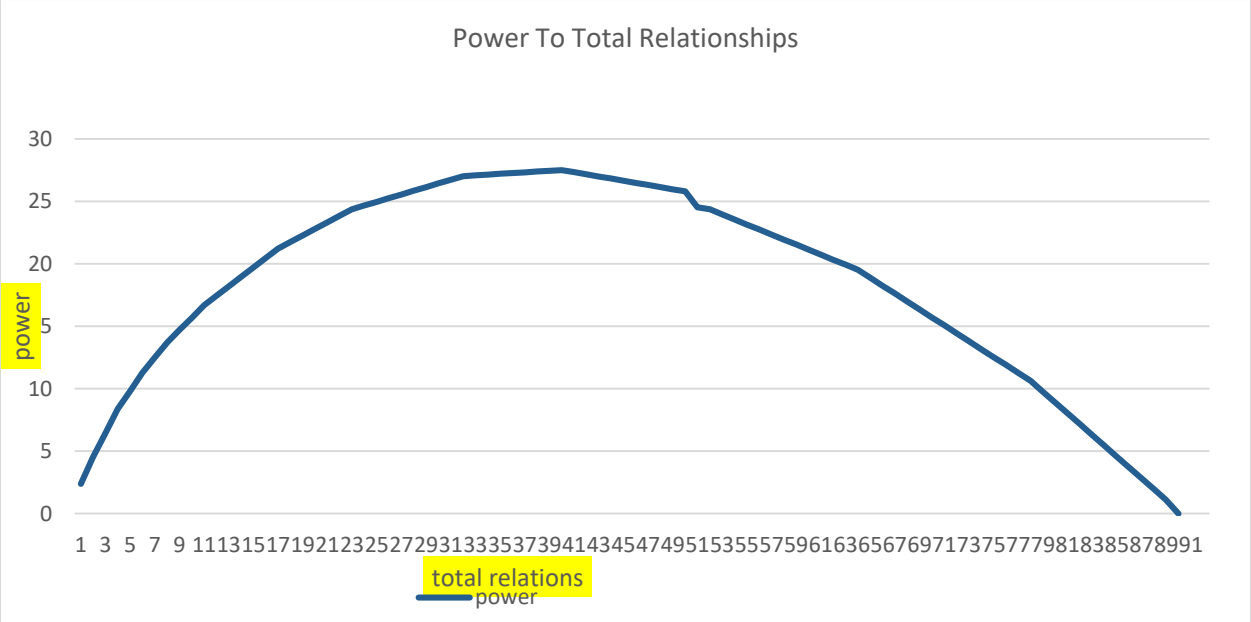

Figure 3 - Power to Total Relationships

4.6 Designing Group Composite: IRD

An interrelationship diagram (IRD) is a matrix that maps each affinity pair or relationships in a system. In the matrix, arrows indicate the type of relationship between the affinities. When an arrow points from affinity 1 to affinity 2, it indicates that 1 influences 2, or that 2 is influenced by 1. For every affinity pair, two arrows are used, one pointing upwards (↑) and the second pointing in a left direction (→). At this point, affinities are divided into drivers or outcomes in order to draw the SID. The direction of the arrows determines whether the each affinity in a pair is a perceived cause or effect, or whether no relationship exists between the affinities (↔). Take for example the affinity pair 3 → 10; this interprets the affinity 3 (collaboration), which is a cause, to be influencing affinity 10 (a new understanding), which is an effect. The IRD adopts a similar principle of double entry in accounting, where for every debit, there has to be a corresponding credit. In this case, for every (↑) there has to be a corresponding (→). This means that there is double recording in order to ensure that all relationships are recorded.

In Table 8, the 'out' represents all the upwards arrows (↑) and 'in' represent all the leftwards (→) - arrows. The deltas (Δ) are calculated by subtracting all the 'ins' from the 'outs' (Table 8). Thereafter, the table is rearranged in a descending order according to the

deltas (Table 9). The shaded diagonal areas represent placeholders as affinities that don't influence themselves and each half is a mirror reflection of the other.

Table 7 - Composite Focus Group Tabular IRD

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	OUT	IN	Δ
1		→	→	←	→	→	→	→	←	→	7	2	5
2	←		→	→	←	←	←	→	←	→	4	5	-1
3	←	←		→	→	→	←	→	→	→	6	3	3
4	→	←	←		→	→	→	→	←	→	6	3	3
5	←	→	←	←		←	→	→	→	←	4	5	-1
6	←	→	←	←	→		←	←	←	→	3	6	-3
7	←	→	→	←	←	→		→	←	→	5	4	1
8	←	←	←	←	←	→	←		→	→	3	6	-3
9	→	→	←	→	←	→	→	←		→	6	3	3
10	←	←	←	←	→	←	←	←	←		1	9	-8

Table 8- Composite Focus Group IRD - Sorted in Descending Order

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	OUT	IN	Δ
1		→	→	←	→	→	→	→	←	→	7	2	5
3	←	←		→	→	→	←	→	→	→	6	3	3
4	→	←	←		→	→	→	→	←	→	6	3	3
9	→	→	←	→	←	→	→	←		→	6	3	3
7	←	→	→	←	←	→		→	←	→	5	4	1
2	←		→	→	←	←	←	→	←	→	4	5	-1
5	←	→	←	←		←	→	→	→	←	4	5	-1
6	←	→	←	←	→		←	←	←	→	3	6	-3
8	←	←	←	←	←	→	←		→	→	3	6	-3
10	←	←	←	←	→	←	←	←	←		1	9	-8

For this study, the IRD assisted with the data that converts the affinities into the drivers and outcomes. According to Table 9, affinities with positive deltas, (1, 3, 4, 7 and 9) are described as causes or drivers, whilst those affinities with negative deltas (2, 5, 6, 8 and 10) are described as outcomes or effects.

The classification of the affinities is described in the tentative SID assignments in Table 9.

Table 9 - SID Assignments

AFFINITY	IRD VALUE	SID ASSIGNMENT
1. Life's contradictions	5	primary driver
9. Acquired abilities	1	secondary driver
7. Learning Challenges	1	secondary driver
3. Collaboration/getting help	3	secondary driver
4. Language [Hospitality and Finance]	3	secondary driver
2. Intense Frequent engagement	1	secondary driver
5. Learning Resources	-1	secondary outcome
6. University and lecturer environment	-3	secondary outcome
8. Motivation and a changed attitude	-3	secondary outcome
10. A new understanding	*-8*	primary outcome

4.7 Focus group: System Influence Diagram (IRD)

4.7.1 Cluttered SID

The composite focus group IRD provides the data for a cluttered SID. A cluttered SID represents a visual representation of all possible links (relationships) of an entire system. The design of a cluttered SID (Fig. 4) commences by spreading out all the affinities (according to the tentative SID assignment in Table 18) in a spherical design. This is followed by placing the primary drivers on the extreme left hand side, and the primary outcomes on the extreme right hand side. The secondary drivers are then placed on the left whilst the secondary outcomes are place more towards the right hand side.

4.7.2 Clean SID

However, the interpretation can become complex in having too many affinities with multiple relationships resulting in too many conclusions. It is for this reason that possible relationships in the cluttered SID may be eliminated. This allows for redundant links to be removed, as a path from the driver to the outcome can be realised through an intermediary affinity. Once all redundant links are removed, a: CLEAN SID" is formed (Fig. 5).

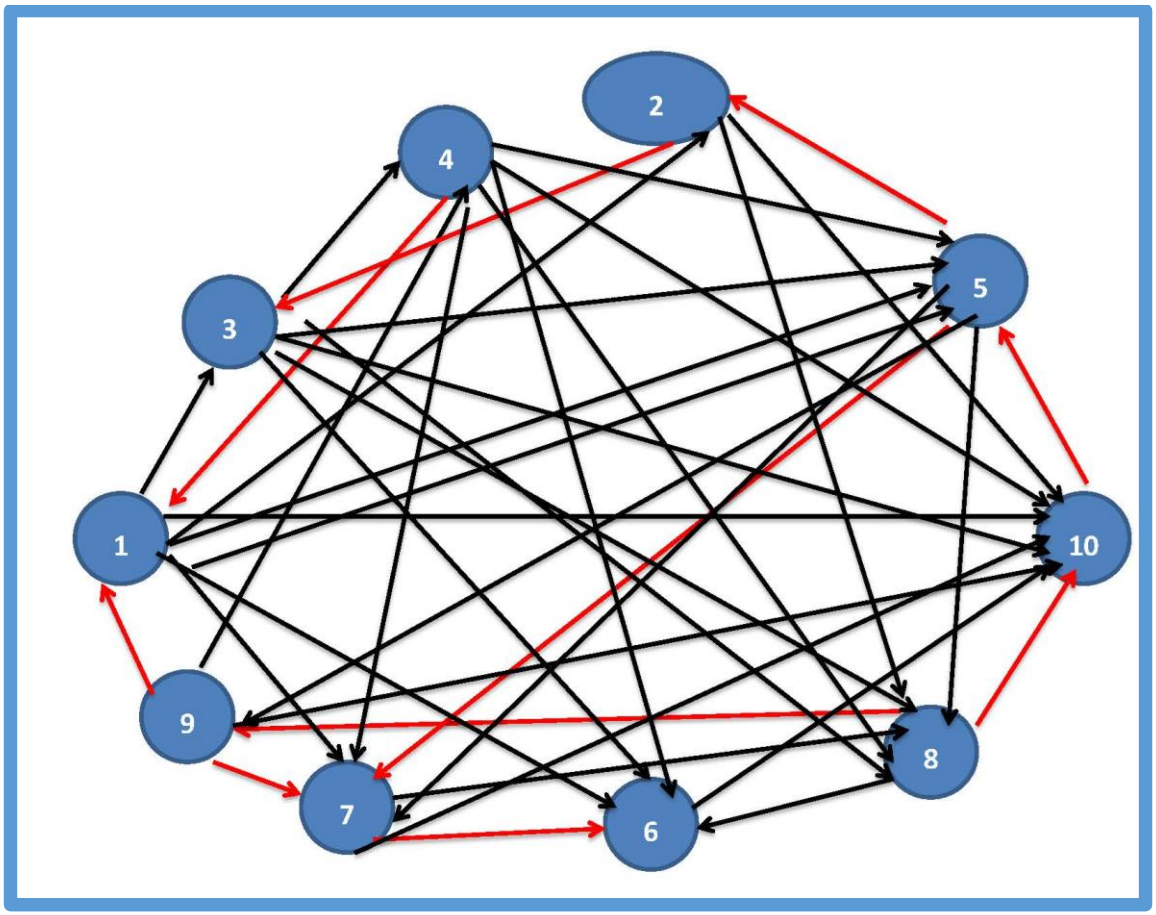

Figure 4 - A Cluttered SID

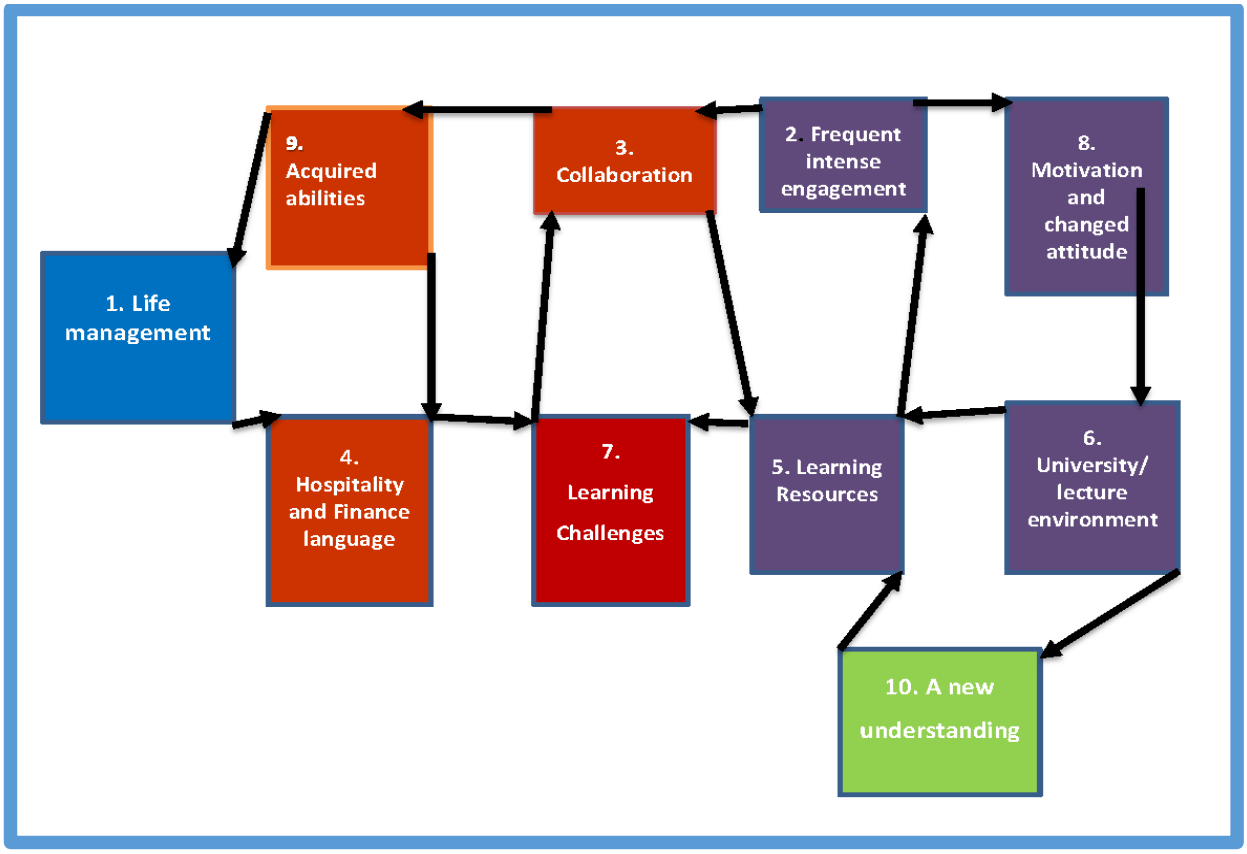

Figure 5 - An Uncluttered SID

4.8 A Journey through the System

A students' learning experiences of epistemological access through an authentic assessment can be described as a journey, which commenced with their personal background and prior learning (life's contradictions) and ends with what was finally understood in HSFM101 (a new understanding).

An uncluttered SID is now able to provide this refined interpretation. The learning experiences of HSFM101 students in an authentic assessment are driven by their personal life management, and this influences their understanding of the Hospitality and Financial language. These languages are in turn influenced by the many learning challenges they experienced. These challenges are either compounded or reduced through the way in which students collaborate. Collaboration provided new opportunities for students to be able to self-discover and reflect the hidden abilities, as well as new acquired abilities, through the

optimum use of learning resources. The application of learning resources promotes participants with active and frequent engagement of all activities, which allowed them to become more acquainted and familiar with the assessment activities that now grant them an improved sense of encouragement and confidence. This new feeling of motivation enables a positive or negative physical learning space, resulting in a change in attitude that will finally determine whether they were able to reach to a new understanding of the module HSFM101.

4.8.1 Multiple Views of Reality: Zooming and Recursions

The interpretation now extends itself to identifying different views within the system, thereby creating subsystems. This process can be referred to as 'zooming in' or 'zooming out'. Zooming serves as a valuable lens for the researcher in terms of interpretation. This process allows for feedback loops or recursions to be created, permitting fewer branches and lesser feedback loops. A feedback loop may be referred to as an influence pattern that recirculates and intensifies the effects of influences within a subsystem (IQA suggests a loop not consisting of three or more affinities). This form of recursion allows for *reflexivity*, and *reciprocity.* Each feedback loop or subset is renamed. This study presented two feedback loops.

4.8.1.1 **Feedback Loop 1:**

Affinities are: Language [Hospitality and finance, Learning Challenges, Collaboration /getting help and Acquired abilities].

A new "super affinity "replaces this subsystem and is renamed as *Working Together Innovatively, To Overcome Challenges*

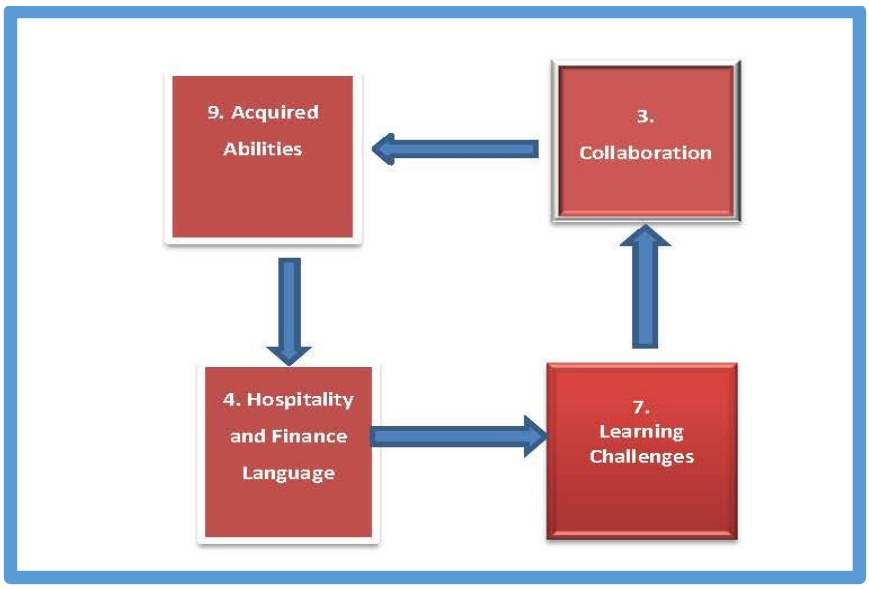

Figure 6 - Feedback Loop 1 [Subsystem 1]

4.8.1.2 **Feedback loop 2**

Affinities are: intense frequent engagement; learning resources; university and lecturer environment motivation; and changed attitude.

The "super affinity "for the second subsystem is retitled as *Stimulating Confidence and Self Efficacy*

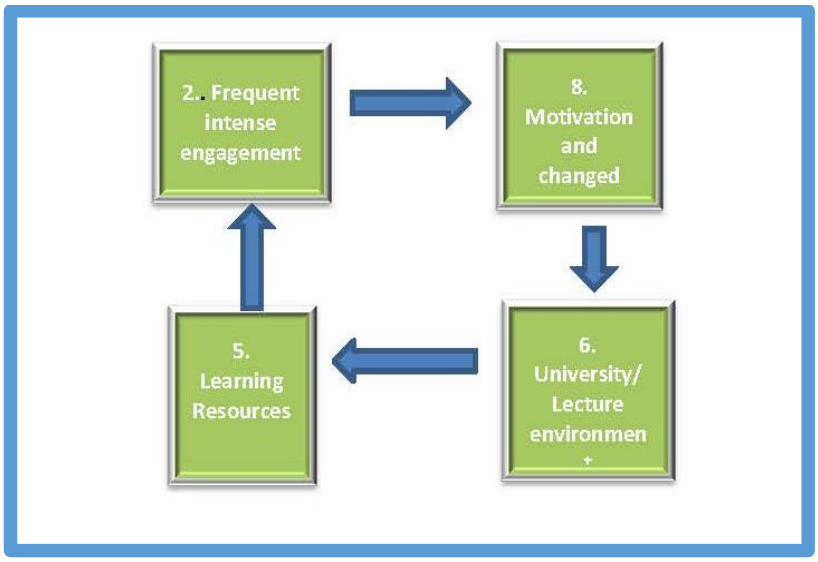

Figure 7 - Feedback Loop 2 [Subsystem 2]

4.8.2 Telephoto View Sid

The" collapsed system" (zoomed out) now produces a higher-level outlook on the phenomenon. This close-up or telephoto view of the SID (Fig.8) has eliminated any further branching, and will be able to draw conclusion at the end of the study.

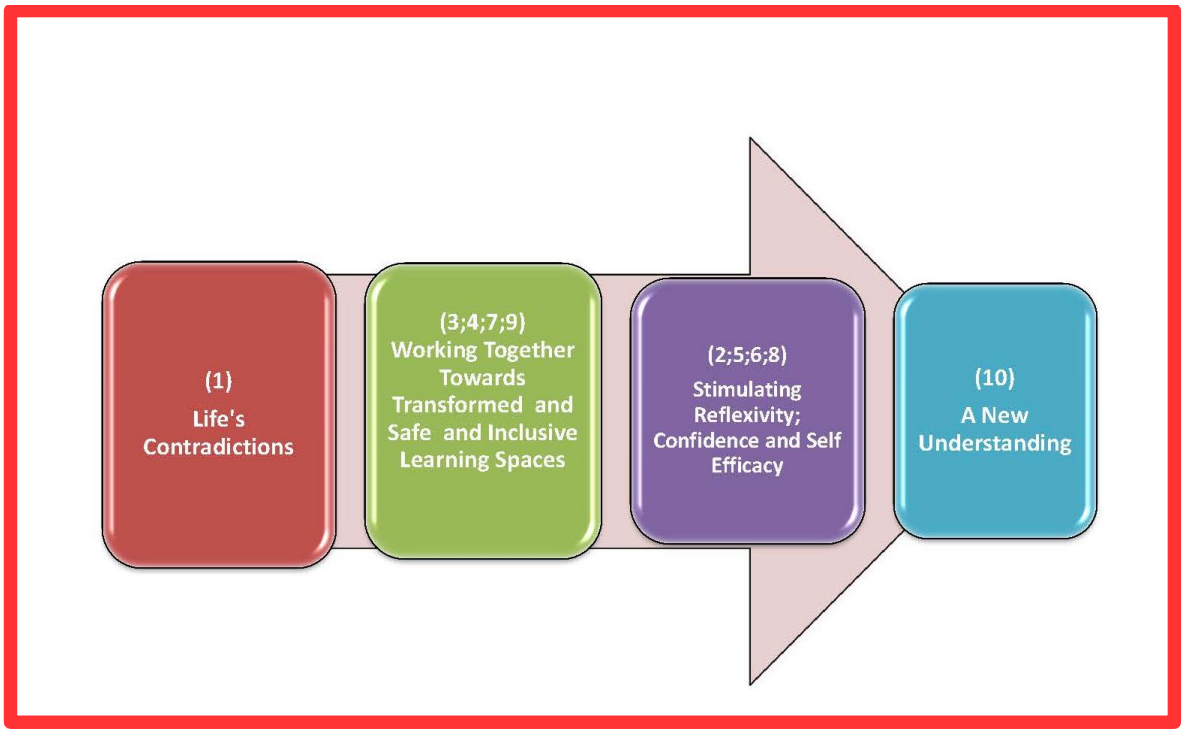

Figure 8 - Telephoto View SID

4.9 Conclusion

This chapter presented the findings of the IQA focus group. The chapter began with the naming of the affinities in the ART and the description of these affinities in the IRD. The chapter concludes with the design of the SID and finally refined to a telephoto view. The following chapters five, six and seven (presenting individual reality) provide a nuanced discussion on the experiences or perceived relationship of the affinities by each individual participant, which draw from the interview stage as well as the reflective journals.

CHAPTER FIVE: INDIVIDUAL REALITY PART ONE: REFLECTING ON AFFINITIES AND THEIR RELATIONSHIPS – PRIMARY DRIVER

5.1 Introduction

The previous chapter explained how affinities were created through the focus group session, using the IQA protocol. These affinities unveiled a shared experience of the phenomenon in question. One of the main goals of the focus group phase was to collectively generate the affinities necessary for the individual protocol. However, the focus group protocol alone does not lend itself to enriched and in-depth knowledge of the affinities (Northcutt & McCoy, 2004, p. 302). Consequently, the IQA Study process recommends the interview protocol as a follow up to confirm reflexivity and rigorous engagement with the researcher. As noted in the previous chapter, data from the individual interviews and online reflective journals ranged from positive to negative. The primary and secondary drivers and outcomes were identified in Chapter 4. The discussion includes the SID (systems influence diagram) assignment (Chapter 4) of the drivers and outcomes. The primary driver and its relationships to the respective affinities are discussed in this chapter. The secondary drivers are explored in Chapter 6, and the outcomes (both primary and secondary) and their relationships to the respective affinities are explored in Chapter 7.

This chapter and the two that follow it consider the participants' experiences of the affinities derived from the focus groups sessions, based on the interviews and the online reflective journals. This comprises two stages. Firstly, each participant was asked to relate their experiences of the ten affinities; this is referred to as the process of axial coding. Secondly, each participant was asked to discuss the relationship among the affinities; this is referred to as theoretical coding.

5.2 Individual interview: Axial code

This study employed semi-structured interviews with 15 participants from both focus groups. The questions were based on the affinities and sub-affinities produced by the focus groups (refer to Chapter 4). These included: "what does this mean to you?"; "what caused

this?" and "what was the result of this?" Questions such as these in an IQA interview serve a dual purpose. Firstly, they add further richness and depth to descriptions of the affinity by tapping into each participant's own meaning, which could not have been independently achieved in the focus groups. Secondly, this process was the initial step in creating a mind map of the phenomenon for the individual (Northcutt & McCoy, 2004).

The individual interview transcripts were recorded by documenting all statements that signified a range of meaning, from positive to negative, for each interviewee. The axial coding was arranged according to affinity name, and, thereafter, statements or quotes that resonated with the relevant affinity were transcribed. The axial data was used to form a collective database of all individual interviews. To add richness and depth, the data were further reconciled with the quotes and statements from the reflective online journal (Blackboard). Grammar and spelling in both the interview transcripts and online journals were standardised and lightly edited in compliance with IQA requirements and procedures. For example, distracting verbal tics such as "um", "er" or "you know" were deleted in most instances.

All quotations and statements were rearranged, interwoven and condensed in order to relate a narrative on the *Authentic Assessment experience of HSFM101 students and what enabled or constrained their epistemological access*.

5.3 Composite Individual interview: theoretical coding

The composite interview schedule provides a description of each affinity and how it interweaves with another, followed by a discussion on the nature of the relationships. The discussion follows the following format: the main driver (affinity) is in a **bold font**; and the sub-affinity is in *italics.* This is followed by the collective quotes of each participant (composite description), which is indented and in quotation marks.

The affinities of a system may have different meanings for different people (Northcutt & McCoy, 2004, p. 345). Hence, in some affinities, a blend of positive and negative comments

was documented. Due to such variation (another source of comparison for interpretive purposes), where relevant, the discussion includes a comparison of negative and positive comments. It commences with the primary driver of the study, viz. life's contradictions, which drove seven of the nine affinities.

5.4 Primary Driver: Life's Contradiction

Life's contradictions were the primary driver of the students' experiences of epistemological access in an authentic assessment in HSFM101. Life's contradictions describe the participants' biographical characteristics and the way in which they are able to manage and balance their personal, social and academic lives. The participants' comments suggest that many are from a working class background, and that most are first generation students.[13]

The sub-affinities that emerged from this affinity were home environment; responsibilities at home; commuting to campus; family values and support; economic status; and prior learning. Students indicated that this primary driver steered the nature of the assessment activities in a favourable or unfavourable direction, thereby rendering it a determinant of epistemological access. As depicted in Figure 9, it had a direct influence on the affinities in the *system*.

[13] First generation students (FGS) are those that are the first in their family to attend higher education or their parent or guardian has not attended college or university (Mehta, Newbolt, and O'Rourke, 2011; Van Zyl, 2013)

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Figure 9 - Life's Contradictions Influence on Drivers and Affinities

5.4.1 Life's Contradictions Drives Frequent Intense Engagement with the Activities

Whilst a few of the students' personal lives and home fronts created a positive learning climate, many experienced various challenges in terms of completing and extending their academic activities at home. This negative impact restricted their learning and academic engagement outside the formal learning environment. The discussion on the data presented below begins by identifying how life's contradictions positively drive frequent intense engagement with the activities.

5.4.1.1 **Positive drivers**

A few participants commented that their personal and family lives played a supportive role in ensuring that their academic studies extended beyond campus. These participants

acknowledged and valued the guidance and motivation they received from family members towards their academic goals.

> *My family is behind me all the way. After campus they make sure that I get along with my studies and additional work. If I need any help, they are always trying to be there in whatever way they can. They also ask me about my studies and if I need any help even if they don't know the stuff; I still feel blessed to have them in my life and the support they always give.*

Whilst family members may not have the necessary academic capital to assist students in their academic endeavours; the familial support and encouragement was most acknowledged and appreciated by this particular student. More so, these participants noted that their parents or siblings felt that academic activities such as homework, assignments and projects should take priority over personal or household chores etc. Moreover, some received assistance from family members. It was noted that a supportive family and home environment fosters a positive learning environment. This makes them want to show their appreciation, and "give back" by persevering. Family support is likely to nurture meaningful engagement, and thus academic success. This suggests that the students' affective domain motivates their academic goals.

Many of the participants resided on campus and the majority reported that this had a positive effect on their academic activities. The student support programme within residences, especially for first-year students, offers them much support.

> *At residence we always lucky to get help most of the time. Students from other years (second and third) and from other courses (like accounting) helped us in whichever way they could. When we stuck with homework, they help us, and also the project if there was something confusing in it that we could not understand. Sometimes they even marked our work, and this helped us do more exercises. So that we got enough practice. We also*

formed our own study group in practicing the exercises Mrs. Maniram gave. This study group was very helpful, since we could understand a lot better.

For many students (especially First Generation ones) HE is a new and bewildering cultural, social and academic environment. Residence life offers such students, particularly those from rural areas, support in dealing with the complexities and unfamiliarity of tertiary education. The participants stated that senior students living in residence provided assistance and guidance in their academic and assessment activities. Since assessment encompasses a range of sub-tasks that must be independently executed, this was indeed a valuable source of support. Given that many of these students come from schooling backgrounds that did not adequately prepare them for autonomous learning, senior students' assistance scaffolds a certain level of autonomous learning. First-year students that sought academic support and assistance from their seniors at residence reported that this rendered their assessment activities less challenging and complex.

Interestingly, some also formed their own study groups. This promoted deeper understanding of the module:

…the extra practice on project activities with study group made me realise what I know and don't know and how I can improve…

5.4.1.2 **Negative Drivers**

However, some participants made negative comments such as "*were unable to practice activities at home".* Focus group members explained that they were expected to do certain chores at home such as taking care of siblings, doing housework, working in the family business, or even assuming the role of parent. This prevented them from completing assignments or even reading. A few added that their families' expectations were based on their cultural values and beliefs, where not fulfilling such expectations is considered disrespectful.

When I get home, I have to help with the household chores and attend to my siblings that are younger than me. There is no time for my studies and therefore I am unable to work on activities given. My parents do not allow me to study at home- so my study time IS LOST!… is not respectful to go against their wishes.

For these students, household chores take priority over academic work and they are at a disadvantage compared to peers not burdened by such expectations. They attributed their poor understanding of and engagement in assessment activities to this factor, and noted that it resulted in poor academic output and performance.

Indeed, one student commented that she avoids going home during the university holidays or long weekends, as this restricts her completing practice assignments and assessment activities:

…rather spend the hols or long weekends at res, friend's place, so that I can do more constructive work. At home, family expects me to take care of my smaller siblings and household chores. No time for additional work.

This student demonstrates a high degree of commitment to achieving academic success and resilience in the face of challenges on the home front. While she might appear to 'neglect' her personal and family responsibilities, her responsibility to academic engagement displaces all others. Thus, for some students, campus residences was described as an 'academic refuge' that enables them to engage more effectively and favourably in academic assessment activities. Whereas, a student that is distracted (due to household chores and family responsibilities) may be less engaged in such activities, with negative effects on epistemic access.

A few participants mentioned that they are single parents and motherhood takes precedence over academic commitment and goals.

I have a two year old son. When I get home I have to give him all my attention and attend to household chores… never time to do my FM homework. Sometimes I am unable to attend campus when he is unwell… I

miss out a lot and my study falls behind... also times when I have to take him to the clinic or doctor, and then I miss out on my lectures…and project meetings.

Apart from maternal responsibilities, household chores present her with time management challenges, as she could not control how they allocate their time. Being absent from group activities due to childcare responsibilities diminished her understanding of their academic work, hindering cognitive development. Moreover, she acknowledged that, at times, she failed to uphold her obligations to other members of the group. While such a student's motive might be to restore honour to the family (the consequence of teenage pregnancy), her shift in identity from a student to a mother could well diminish her level and quality of epistemic access.

One of the participants stated that he had to assist his father in his bakery every afternoon. His father's small scale business is the reason he is studying hospitality. While he feels morally obligated to his father, working for his business cuts into the time he can devote to his studies:

After school, my dad expects me to help him in his bakery. As this goes right into the night and sometimes early parts of the morning, I am unable to do the additional exercises Mrs. Maniram gave as extra work… This is our bread and butter! It pays my fees. I tried for NSFAS [National Student Financial Aid Scheme], *but did not qualify.*

He added that if he did not help out in the business, money might not be available for him to continue his studies. This demonstrates how personal financial circumstances can negatively impact academic study. Students in such situations are often caught between a sense of duty to their parents, and their personal academic achievement. While the parents of most first generation students have high aspirations for their children, their own lack of education may impede their children's academic growth. Owing to a lack of cultural capital, parents may not be well equipped to understand and support their children's academic activities.

One participant became emotional recounting that, due to the fact that she was still waiting for NSFAS funding, she had to work as a domestic worker in order to secure accommodation and food.

> *I am still an unregistered student, still waiting for NSFAS to sort my fees. My home is in Pietermaritzburg. My mother is hoping one day I will qualify and help at home as my brother is a drug addict and he has taken everything we owned; we were hoping that he will work and help at home as I don't have a father. I am studying in Durban because Pietermaritzburg does not offer Hospitality. And I have no food and shelter, and am staying at a house as a maid in order to get a place to stay and food to eat. In the evenings, there is a lot of work for me to do, and in the mornings, I have to clean up with nothing to eat, and then walk from Mayville to DUT. The system has failed me. I am always late for lectures, and have no time to catch up and understand my work. My project group complains why I don't attend meetings…*

This student lacks basic subsistence to sustain her whilst she pursues her academic studies. She walked approximately 12 kilometres to campus daily. On many occasions she arrived late, tired and hungry, resulting in poor concentration and engagement in class activities and group work. Group members were dissatisfied with her contribution. This student may lack the physical, cognitive, and emotional resources required to meet the demands of assessment activities under her restrictive circumstances.

While tertiary education is regarded an opportunity for students from poor socio-economic backgrounds to change their circumstances for the better, this is difficult to achieve when their economic conditions impact on their ability to achieve academic success. There is thus a connection between a lack of financial resources and trying to be successful as a university student. The academic success of a student confronting such a predicament is likely to be severely compromised. The education system that is unresponsive to the basics needs of

economically disadvantaged students causes frustration among such students, and undermines their well-being.

Another student described her home environment as an unconducive space to learn. Disruption and domestic violence hindered her from doing homework or additional work.

> *The place where I live is so cramped up. We were evicted and I had to live in a transit camp. There is always noise and people swearing and fighting. There are lots of kids around, and there more noise. I am never able to do my work or practice on the class activities I was given during the day. The only place I get to work in peace is when I am on campus.*

Harsh living conditions and violence at home and within the community may have significant, negative impact on academic progress. The student is unable to focus, with negative impact on their identity and ability to fulfil the expectations of her group. In contrast, students from more privileged backgrounds are more likely to have access to academic and social resources, as well as mobility and dispositions that enable them to successfully navigate the academic system. The lack of a favourable physical learning space that supports independent learning and offers family support is a harsh reality for this student. Her engagement with academic tasks (homework activities) that consolidate and develop confidence and fluency is limited to the university environment. Apart from the routine adjustment required of a first year student, trying to reconcile academic demands and the rigours of a university with her home environment threatens to compromise this student's well-being and epistemic access.

5.4.2 Life's Contradictions drive Collaboration

This affinity demonstrated how life's contradictions influenced collaboration. The collaboration affinity includes two of the sub-affinities, namely, e-learning and social media (group chat). The participants also indicated that collaboration meant getting help from friends and family, either at home or at the campus residence. Many indicated that life's

contradictions had a positive effect, whilst the minority stated that such contradictions did not support collaboration. The discussion begins with negative influences on collaboration.

5.4.2.1 **Negative influence**

Some students stated that their parents prohibited them from meeting with friends after campus to complete homework or attend class activities or meetings to discuss authentic assessment.

> *I was not allowed to invite my friends over cos my dad never liked the idea. They said I must attend to the work at home and help my mum. When we needed to meet as group to discuss the project or homework, I was punished and sometimes never attended campus the following day.*

The parents of these participants were of the view that activities outside university hours had a social, rather than an academic purpose. Others felt that there was no time for such activities as chores needed to be done at home. Many families or relatives of first generation students have insufficient social and cultural capital, such as knowledge of the university environment, its values, and the rigour required for academic success. It is thus difficult for them to understand the need for the student to spend time on academic activities outside university hours. Authentic assessment is a collaborative effort that occurs both within and outside university academic hours. The participants felt that their family‘s reluctance to support academic collaboration was an obstacle to epistemic success. Family dynamics clash with the university culture. This may influence how students interact with their peers to accomplish assessment goals. Academic study becomes as if a battleground, as power relations at home become at odds with university demands. Students are faced with the choice of defying their family or accepting and obeying their expectations.

A student indicated that her dwelling space was one room that was occupied by five family members and that the physical space restricted group work. Her poor living conditions thus frustrated her in achieving her academic goals.

> *My home of just one room with five of us does not have space to invite my colleagues to go over school stuff, so I don't waste my time meeting them, although I know it will help me great deal in my project.*

Her personal and physical living conditions may limit this student's social interaction and interfere with her social identity. Her lack of economic capital inhibits her academic progress, since she is exposed to a university curriculum that demands engagement that is favourable to students from more middle class backgrounds. A working class student may struggle to adhere to the goals and tenets of assessment since it conflicts with her expectations and status. Her group members may assume that she is evading her assessment responsibilities and tasks, and accuse her of being lazy and non-cooperative. This could eventually lead to group conflict and poor academic outcomes.

On the other hand, one student revealed that he is not allowed to engage with social media, due to religious beliefs:

> *My dad and pastor do not allow me to go on group chat. I can afford a phone but they won't buy me one cause of the church we go to. So at many times I don't know what's happening, especially at strike times, my friend used to inform me only when I am on campus, and sometimes this is too late.*

For this reason, he did not communicate with his peers on the group chat that they formed. This restricted him in measuring the progress of the authentic assessment (project) or any updates. The religious, cultural and community values and ethos in which students are raised may negate the culture and value system of a higher education system. Such students tend to place higher value on their cultural and religious beliefs, undermining their academic goals. Inability to take part in group activities undermines collaboration. Consequently, this student understands themselves to be perceived as an outsider by his fellow group members. This could be detrimental to the personal well-being and social identity that contributes to effective and positive learning.

A few participants also shared their frustration in accessing e-learning, as they could not afford virtual collaboration, such as the internet or Wi-Fi:

> *At home there is no computer to work on or the Wi-Fi as we cannot afford these luxuries. My friends try to get hold of me or they have their own discussions through WhatsApp, and because I don't have the Wi-Fi, I am unable to know what's happening. When I get back to school the next day, they talk about their discussions the previous night, and by I feel so left out!! At school there is Wi-Fi. This means the lights for me go on at school, but goes off when I am at home.*

A lack of digital connectivity restricts Blackboard activities and social collaboration, as well as online reflective learning. Such students felt "left out" and "alienated" from academic activities that would support their learning. Whilst some students noted that social media promotes community engagement, those that lacked access felt a sense of exclusion. Lack of access restricts collaboration, undermining the academic goals of the assessment and arresting epistemic access.

However, some students indicated that Life's Contradictions positively influenced their collaborative efforts.

5.4.2.2 **Positive influence**

Many of the participants indicated that they collaborated both physically, and in most instances, virtually, at home, outside campus, and on weekends.

> *Whenever I am not at school, because I maybe sick or did not have transport to go to school. I am able to use the Wi-Fi or WhatsApp to help me know what happening at school. I can also go on to BB to see what activities are there to complete. Our communication improved as we were just first year students and we depended upon each other. Other times we*

meet after school at someone's house and we discuss the project or the exercises that was for homework. Sometimes if cannot meet at a home we meet at the local library and work together.

While some of these students did not have Wi-Fi access at home, they were able to obtain it elsewhere. Even if they did not attend classes (for legitimate reasons) the project group chat (social media) updated them on their various activities. Furthermore, it was noted that academically, they were on par with others, especially in terms of Blackboard activities. They added that they derived academic benefit as they were able to engage and communicate with the lecturer. Students expressed their appreciation for the online feedback received from the instructor or their peers as it enabled critical reflection. Some mentioned that e-learning was a novel approach to learning and that it progressively advanced learning outside of the classroom.

One participant highlighted the importance of assistance and academic support from their siblings, parents or relatives.

At home I am able to get the help with my university activities – most of the time... my mum or elder brother assist me in whichever way they can and they make sure that my work is completed and we work together. There is good communication between us as they always support my studies.

Engaging with someone at home improves and reinforces understanding and learning. These students expressed their appreciation for always having someone to help or guide them at home, whether the academic outcome was positive or negative. The moral support positively improved the affective domain of their learning.
Similarly, one group of students mentioned working together (study cohorts) after campus at student residences.

After campus we meet at Res. around 5pm-6pm we start moonlighting – we get together and sometimes others from, for example, Accounting join

and we begin with study groups. Lucky at residence we have the facilities (internet) to help us with our additional work or assignments… our understanding is much better…

Student residences thus offer positive learning spaces for students to meet and work on class activities and homework or conduct project meetings. Many students expressed appreciation for the resources offered at student residences, which facilitated collaborative activities. They also indicated that peer learning was a positive form of academic engagement that ultimately facilitated positive academic performance.

Moreover, these students found that working together brought about a positive learning experience and they were able to overcome many learning challenges. They confirmed that they relied on one another's cognitive abilities, which allowed them to reflect on their own learning style and approach.

...Working together was very helpful because we can learn from each other and using the Wi-Fi and BB helped us. If we were at home, like our other mates, we will not get this opportunity. If I go to my home, I am unable to get this opportunity, so for me life at res was a great help to my studies. Sometimes we would chat on WhatsApp with those not in our res group, and help them with their problems.

The majority of the participants observed that learning and studying together resulted in sharing and co-constructing knowledge. This explains why some students seek 'academic refuge' at student residences. Furthermore, it was noted that Blackboard activities and the social media forum enhanced their collaborative learning after university hours. The students expressed their appreciation for the various collaborative tools offered at student residences that scaffolded their learning and engagement in HFSM101. This is likely to create a fertile learning environment for academic success and also encourages students to think differently as they are exposed to diverse ideas and experiences. They are thus likely

to develop a richer and deeper understanding and enhance their critical thinking skills. Shared knowledge acts as a catalyst in 'learning to learn'.

5.4.3 Life's Contradictions drive Learning Resources

Life's Contradictions drove the various sub-affinities relating to learning resources. The focus group identified the sub-affinities for Learning Resources as textbooks, the library, e-Learning (Blackboard), social media (WhatsApp, Group Chat), and tutorials. Whilst the intention of these resources is to augment and scaffold student participation in authentic assessment activities and tasks in HSFM101, the responses were both negative and positive.

5.4.3.1 **Negative responses**

Students mentioned that the negative responses were due to their personal financial and economic status (such as being unable to purchase textbooks or access the internet at home) and poor time management (due to household commitments and other responsibilities at home, students do not have time to access Blackboard activities or sign onto a group chat).

> *I am unable to afford the textbook so I am always falling behind. The textbook is available in the library and it can only be borrowed for a short while on the same day. Sometimes I don't even have money to make the photocopies. We don't have internet and electricity at home so not able to go on Blackboard after school.*

While many had to spend time attending to household chores, several students that did have the time to devote to their studies lacked learning tools in the home. Not being able to afford the textbook presents challenges in reading and preparation for assessment. This results in failure to complete assessment activities and limited understanding of disciplinary content, ultimately undermining academic performance.

A few students further complained that they were inundated with their responsibilities at home.

> *There is not enough time at home to do extra work cos I have other things to take care of. I also sometimes don't have the time to attend tutorials, as I have to rush*

home to do other work, and my mum is expecting me at home to help out as she is working… No Time for WhatsApp or BB activities… I have to go to work.

This limited their learning and engagement in a 'flipped classroom'.[14] In some instances, part time jobs took precedence over academic activities. There is thus dissonance between the expectations of their home lives and that of the academic curriculum. On the other hand, many participants found that life's contradictions drove learning resources in a more positive way that enabled the achievement of academic goals.

5.4.3.2 **Positive responses**

One of the positive aspects noted by some participants was that online pedagogic tools fostered greater interaction amongst group members.

At home I am able to use the blackboard and group chat cos we have internet, I am also able to go on Google and YouTube to help me with my problems, my practice. I found that by helping each other, I learnt in the process and no longer feared difficult exercises.

The participants highlighted that e-learning resources created a flexible learning space, where learning was not restricted to the classroom, but extended to the home environment, and could be engaged in at any time. Students that miss a lecture are able to use the social media platform to get up to speed. Furthermore, the collaborative nature of these tools increased their understanding of the subject content. The participants expressed their appreciation for the social constructivist learning approach to the assessment.

[14] A flipped classroom is a blended learning environment where students are provided with access to relevant and meaningful online learning material given their different needs and capabilities (Davies, Dean, & Ball, 2013).

Working with other students… using the BB and WhatsApp made me understand better and enjoy the exercises… and able to work on my own…

Consequently, participants revealed that they had achieved a greater level of agency, as they became more active participants in the learning process. They no longer perceived themselves to be passive learners, but to be more interactive and responsible. The students claimed that they made optimal use of these learning tools, since the assessment activities invariably demanded the implementation of the learning resources. This improved their self-efficacy and inculcated self-confidence, motivation, and epistemological belief.

Sometimes there are some tutorials taking place at res in the evenings and this helped me a lot for the project… I also learnt from other tutors... also how to learn different ways… I feel I understand better at res tuts cause able to do the project tasks…

A residence tutorial programme was offered to students doing accounting in their first year. Those that attended said that this improved their understanding of the assessment activities. Additional academic support from a different tutors improved their approaches to learning and cognitive development and hence, their confidence in attempting assessment activities and tasks.

5.4.4 Life's Contradictions drive the University and Lecture Environment

The participants indicated that the contrast between their personal lives and prior learning environment and the university and lecture environment significantly impacted on how they acquired knowledge.

…was a huge problem at first, cause first time I am in such a big class. There are people of different colour and race and language and in my school we were all Zulu speaking, even my teachers taught me in my Zulu language. So now I had to communicate in class and to my friends in English. I also wished that Mrs. Maniram put me in a group that I am familiar with and that we can speak the same language.

This was an overwhelming experience for most of the participants. Many acknowledged that it took some time to make the transition, whilst others reported it as a challenge that both positively and negatively impacted their learning. They pointed out that accepting and adjusting to diversity (race, culture, language and gender) initially hindered the achievement of academic goals. There were mixed reactions regarding how they were taught in school, compared to the university. Most stated that English was not their home language, and that they communicated in their mother tongue at school. On campus or in the lecture venue, they initially found switching to another language to be a challenge, and this hindered their progress. Trying to unpack and make meaning of the assessment and its sub-tasks was also challenge. The participants also noted that they found it difficult to communicate with their diverse peers in English.

One student expressed his discontent with the fact that female students assumed a leadership role in his group. He explained that this conflicted with the gender dynamics espoused by his community and culture.

> *...certain things they did was offensive to my culture for example the female students is telling me what to do and giving orders in my group. In my culture this is disrespect as I am a male. But I now learnt this is how the industry works and have to get used to it. Lucky the group project helped us overcome this cos we now respect each other and we can communicate better in class now.*

This participant was not used to 'taking orders' from females. Male students who are deeply entrenched in traditional notions of masculinity may find it difficult to accept that women can exercise leadership. They may feel a sense of powerlessness when female students take on so-called 'masculine traits', such as leadership and dominance. This was initially a culture shock for this particular student. However, as he became educated on the demands, norms and practices of the hospitality industry, he was able to accept and adapt. He subsequently

acknowledged that he would not have been able to fulfil the requirements of the assessment if he clung to these beliefs.

On the other hand, another student became emotional when she stated that she did not feel that she belonged in this class, as she is racially different (the only white woman). She reported that she went to an all-girls, former Model C School[15] in the suburbs.

> *The classroom and university environment was not a great place to be. Some people of different habits and values offended me and I came to know about their gossip and they say that I am privileged cause I am 'white' and I stay in La Lucia and I have a car.*

According to this participant, she was subjected to numerous racial confrontations, and also found it difficult to communicate with her peers of the opposite gender. Her peers perceived her secondary education as having been 'privileged'. She argued that her race and prior learning should not be used as an identity marker. She noted in mitigation of these factors that she is an orphan (adopted and raised by her aunt), and that her personal possessions had to be earned, and were not handed to her on a platter.

> *This hurt me because I am adopted and I lost my mum, and my aunt is my new mum. I also work during weekends to get myself going to pay for my transport. I wish I could be accepted in the class. I am not sure if I will be here next year. I came from an all-girls school and we loved each other and showed respect. This environment is harsh and the environment is hard to adjust to. Sometimes I just feel like staying back at home because I feel so hurt. In the project some of them did not want to hear my ideas and yet I did all the running around like buying the ingredients etc.*

[15] The former "Model C" schools in South Africa were reserved for white pupils only under the apartheid government and were partly funded by a governing body; enjoying improved resources and quality in education (Christie and McKinney 2017)

This was a negative learning experience for this particular student. The assessment requires that students work and engage with a diverse group of peers, and that this continues to be a challenge for some students, especially if they allow stereotyping to influence their perceptions and attitudes. Those that are victims of such perceptions often find that their academic goals are not achieved. Mutual trust and respect amongst group members are necessary in order to achieve the desired academic goals of the assessment.

Two students described the differences between the university's teaching and learning approach and that adopted at their high school.

> *My teacher taught me very differently from Mrs. Maniram. Firstly I was taught in my home language and the teacher explained all the sections very slowly and went on to new ones only when we understood this. Mrs. Maniram teaches fast and says there is no time cause the semester is short, and must attend tutorials to get a better understanding.*

These students' prior education conflicted with the present one. Learning in their home language and at a slower pace at school, made it difficult to adjust to the new methods at university. Students that are not taught in their mother tongue often experience poor cognitive development. This could be due to the fact that cognition is the result of mental construction. Hence, students may acquire new knowledge by connecting new information to what they already know. Being taught in English and at a faster pace made it difficult for them to complete the assessment tasks and achieve their academic goals.

Moreover, a few students complained that they had not adapted to the technological tools and pedagogic style at tertiary level in this discipline.

> *I was taught very differently from Mrs. Maniram teaching. She will use different methods and technologies as compared to my school environment. She also teaches and not lectures. In school my teacher will*

put all the notes on the board and tell us to take it down and so… we had notes and… hardly discussed. But here at DUT Mrs. Maniram does more explanation and lot discussions and expects us to go to library to read more and use BB to make up the notes. I am not sure if this is good or bad? Sometimes she overloads us with work and this becomes a problem at home because I may not have the time to finish cause of my other subjects and home duties.

Most students that enter Higher Education come from poorly-resourced schools. The use of technology and digital platforms initially put them in an uncomfortable and incompatible learning space.

This is the first time that I was doing a project like the one in FM. In school we just had tests and an assignment, where I went to the library to research and submitted to my teacher.

These students commented that they were more accustomed to a teacher-centred pedagogy and depended on study notes and text books as the only source of knowledge at school. This conflicts with the self-regulation and independent learning expected in their discipline at tertiary level. According to these students, they expected more guidance from the lecturer and that they would receive study notes. It seems that many expected the teaching and learning approach to be similar to that at school (with minimum or no research and independent activities).

Moreover, students complained that research and group activities were novel and unfamiliar. Consequently, authentic assessment presented them with challenges and they had to make adjustments in order to meet the academic goals of the assessment.

…Here we are doing a big project with about 5-6 in the group and every day have to work towards it cause each stage something is due. So I guess I have to get used to this cause it's expected at university; and this is how it works here, so different from school.

The cognitive overload this created also conflicts with their responsibilities and commitments at home. It should also be noted that a few of the students indicated that working in diverse groups for assessment was a new experience. That caused anxiety and concern. Furthermore, the rigorous demands and nature of the assessment presented many students with a challenge in terms of adjustment. They expected that assessment would take the form of a written test on material presented during lectures. Despite these challenges, these students acknowledged that they came to terms with the assessment, and found ways to adapt.

5.4.5 Life's Contradictions drive Learning Challenges

The focus groups identified the following sub-affinities: *diversity, threshold concepts, accounting in school, time management,* and s*trike disruption.* However, the construct's relation to Life's Contradictions did not pertain to all the sub-affinities but mainly to diversity, prior learning of accounting, and time management. The only two sub-affinities influenced by this driver were diversity and accounting in school.

5.4.5.1 **Diversity**

Some participants found race, culture, gender and language differences a challenge:

> *…first time I am in interaction with people that are so different from me… was a challenge.*

Many students reported that they had minimal, and sometimes no prior opportunities to meaningfully engage with their diverse peers (predominantly along the lines of race, language, socio-economic context, and cultural and religious beliefs). These students confronted diversity for the first time when they entered university.
Engaging at a meaningful level remains a challenge:

> *I find it very difficult to work with someone from a different culture because we do things different at home and community… this causes a problem*

when we have to agree on something and then when we don't agree we are never able to meet our goals and then nothing is learnt.

Differences include communication, work ethic and behaviour. Prior learning also influenced their reaction. Two students stated that their community culture clashes with that of the university culture. They argued that they wasted time making decisions due to differences of opinion rooted in cultural beliefs.

One student admitted that, whilst in his culture, men do not take instructions from a woman, he had to conform to group values:

…I have to take orders from a girl and she is the leader of our group… have to accept what the group wants… becomes a problem, cause if my dad knows this, he will be very cross; cause in our culture a female is supposed to listen to the male. Now, I have to listen and learn from this female who our group leader is. At first it was a… problem… now I understand that we have to accept one another so that we can learn. And of course that was my learning challenge!"

Students that go through such experiences experience guilt and fear as they override what they valued and believed in for most of their life. This could adversely impact their affective domain of learning.

Similarly, two students complained that teaming up in a group with the opposite gender (male) posed a learning challenge:

I have a problem with learning with males in my group; as I came from an all-girls school, it becomes a challenge. I sometimes have to realise that males do things differently from us females and it can become quite frustrating and time wasted! Many times we disagree. But this something I have to accept and learn and try to stop calling this a challenge. Working with a different gender is something new for me!

They complained that work ethics of males and females differed, such that time was wasted in reaching consensus, resulting in poor group achievements. However, on the day of the assessment, students finally realised the synergistic benefits of working together. They subsequently acknowledged that this was not an impasse, but a learning curve.

One student admitted that being taught by an educator from a different race and culture threatened his adjustment to learning and epistemic access:

> *…I now have to accept how someone of a different race teach me the activities cause it's different way on how I was taught at high school in all my years. At many times I struggle with this…*

He indicated that he had to accept the university culture in order to achieve academic progress. The adjustment process may be a stumbling block in negotiating epistemic access. Creating and building interpersonal relationships within diverse groups enables the achievement of group academic goals. Students that are uncomfortable with being instructed by some one of a different race of gender or participating in a group made up of diverse members might find it difficult to succeed academically.

5.4.5.2 **Accounting in school**

Many participants did not take accounting at school:

> *As I did not do accounting in school, trying to cope with subject is a challenge for me to understand. I feel if I had this background knowledge I would appreciate this subject and learn quicker… did only in Grade 8 and 9 and hated it then, cause I did badly in the subject… course was my enemy subject, and I fear it cause it's so hard to understand… but now with more practice with the assessment activities in the subject, made understand and enjoy this subject...*

Limited background knowledge in Accounting posed an epistemic risk. These students admitted that they were not confident in engaging with HSFM101, as they did not have a

'safety net' (prior knowledge of the subject) to provide them with the necessary self-assurance. Moreover, the novel form of assessment increased their anxiety and fear of the discipline. However, some said that they found ways to adapt and understand as the assessment began to unfold.

Two participants indicated that whilst they had an Accounting background at secondary school level, their understanding and engagement with HSFM101 remained a challenge:

> *I did do Accounting in school and was not my favourite. I always did bad, just managed to pass in Grade 12. This is still my challenge... I find the way my lecturer explains differed from school, and this too is another challenge for me.*

A change in learning methods takes students out of their comfort zone. They are more receptive to learning if the pedagogical mode of instruction is consistent with the prior learning approach. If not, they may become anxious and discouraged. This requires adjustment to the different teaching style.

A few students indicated that the introduction of technology as an instructional pedagogical tool provoked further anxiety and discomfort in learning.

> *Mrs. Maniram uses a different method of teaching us in school which we were not used to such as using technology like BB and PowerPoint. I am trying to understand and get used to this method and then again this becomes a problem for me to understand and learn this subject.*

Students from schools with limited instructional resources (especially technology) find it hard to adapt to Higher Education and its curriculum that emphasises a blended approach to learning. Whilst students expressed their concerns and difficulties in understanding HSFM101; the mode of delivery cannot be taken for granted.

5.4.5.3 **Time management**

A few participants indicated difficulties in time management. Whilst one of the tenets of the 'hidden curriculum' in HE is that students have the flexibility to manage their own time; this may be an overwhelming task, especially for first-year students that are still finding ways to adjust and cope with the demands of new modes of learning.

Two of the participants indicated that time management was a daunting task as they are single parents. They found that time was against them when it came to maintaining a balance between parenting responsibilities and academic activities:

> *As I am a parent I have to attend to my child's demand after school and this gives me no time to go through my exercises and project tasks. I finally got time keeping skills that helped me a lot in my FM work.*

One of the features of the assessment design was to complete a variety of mini-tasks within a stipulated time period. These participants complained that they experienced time constraints in completing the tasks. This put them at a disadvantage as they were unable to optimise the academic tools made available to them. However, in due course, one reported that she was finally able to achieve appropriate time management skills that enabled her to achieve her academic goals. The other participant maintained that it was still demanding to adjust to parenting and find time to devote to academic activities after hours:

> *…still I am having problems with balancing time and work. Others that are coping well in class say that if you go over all activities even on BB you will get a better picture of what's happening.*

Apparently, this student was motivated by the progress made by her peers. She concluded by acknowledging the flexible benefits offered by technology in addressing her time constraints.

A few other participants reminded the researcher that they had family responsibilities or were employed after hours, which limited their academic time:

At home I have to see to other chores and responsibilities that I often have lesser time to go over my work or to learn in general.

They added that this constrained their academic progress as family commitments took priority on the home front.

On the other hand, a few participants made mention of the need to balance their time to cater for the other subjects for which they are currently registered.

I have too much of work to cope with. Sometimes there is a test or assignment due in for example in other subjects that I have small time for FM. The project has too many activities and we also have tutorial homework to do; it's tough to cope.

This resulted in cognitive overload. The students noted that the various sub-activities and tasks of the assessment took much of their time, causing them to neglect their other subjects.

5.4.5.4 **Strike disruption**

The majority of the students commented that the Fallist movement or ongoing students' protests interfered in various ways with student learning.

I am still an unregistered student, and worried cause not sure if I will be accepted in the system. Sometimes when we write a test we are allowed to write but not allowed to receive our script, so I don't know how well or bad I did and what I need to improve on.

Those that were unregistered highlighted that their learning was unstable as they were not sure whether or not their funding had been approved. They reported that they spent many hours at the finance office, neglecting their academic activities. Being unregistered (pending

NSFAS) interrupted their learning as they did not receive feedback on written assessments, and could thus not assess their progress.

Furthermore, the feeling of uncertainty raised undue stress and anxiety amongst these students:

> *There was one time when Mrs. Maniram started the section on costing and I missed the lesson because I was sitting at finance trying to sort my NSFAS. I missed out terribly and now finding it hard to do costing.*

These students said that they felt "left out" and missed many contact lessons and group activities that could have been academically beneficial. In such instances, students found themselves struggling with certain threshold concepts due to erratic and poor attendance.

In another instance two students commented that the strike disrupted their progress in learning as, whilst they finally understood the content, they were told to stay away from campus for more than two weeks.

> *After a few weeks into the subject I was finally starting to like it and understand. But what happens next? We are chased out of the classroom and it is now a strike for more than two weeks. I go back home in Eastern Cape and don't have the internet or electricity or to do extra work. Now I am lost and back to Stage 1 – confused!*

Returning home where there is limited or, in some cases, no access to learning resources raised tensions and uncertainties and halted learning.

Interestingly, one student reported that she used the two weeks 'lost' during student protests productively to catch up. She was able to complete all the assessment activities and achieve the assessment goals:

The strike was a blessing for me! I got the time to update my work and complete all my tasks and to work with our groups. So, here I was able to overcome my learning challenges… as I found time to go over and revise the tasks, especially those on BB.

According to this student, her study group worked independently, and she was able to overcome her learning challenges through meaningful engagement. This put her on par with others that were progressing successfully. She noted that online and e-learning activities deepened their understanding, and that the group was able to attain all the assessment goals.

5.4.6 Life's Contradictions drive Motivation and a changed Attitude

This affinity relationship received an overwhelming response in terms of how the participants' personal lives shaped their motives and desire to learn. Some related how their personal lives motivated and changed their attitude to their studies.

My baby is the reason why I want to learn. I had the baby whilst in grade eleven and after that mistake I decided that I won't allow my studies to fall apart again… every time I see my baby's face it reminds me of my mistake… I have to… do my best so that one day he will look up to see as his proud mum!

For this student, what was regarded as a 'mistake' became the motivation to succeed academically.

Moreover, half the group stated that living in poverty and having a disadvantaged background prompted them to study.

I grew up in very poor living conditions. My mum is a single parent and there are four of us at home. My mum works as a domestic and has to support us. She always told us to study well at school so one day we don't have live this life again. My aim is to complete my studies and find a good

job that will take care of my family and my future. This is the reason for studying hard.

As first generation students, many hoped to fulfil their parents' aspirations for them and improve their social and economic status. Whilst these students noted that they lacked cultural and social capital and their drive to succeed highlighted persistence and determination.

However, some students noted that the hospitality industry was one that serves the privileged (middle class) and that they had never visited a hotel but had only seen one on television:

This industry was beyond my reach as we could never afford staying at a hotel (only saw on TV!) but being employed in one, will give me that opportunity. I am getting there one day!

Many students from a working class background aspire to careers that will enable them to escape the poverty trap that their parents experienced.

Furthermore, many participants indicated that their life's contradictions determined whether they were intrinsically or extrinsically motivated to learn:

My parents are the reason why I need to work hard. They struggled all their lives earning very little and making those sacrifices for me and making sure my education was number one. I now owe to them by making sure that I do well and make them realise all this was worth it in the end.

Growing up in an under-privileged home and bearing witness to their parents' struggle to educate them was reason to strive in their studies. From an intrinsic point of view, the desire to improve one's economic position influences their academic goal. The participants commented that they would not want to repeat the financial struggles and challenges they experienced whilst growing up.

5.4.7 Life's contradictions drive a new understanding

A few of the participants noted that the support and encouragement they received on the home front contributed to a new understanding. They argued that resilience and determination uncovered new ways of thinking that are important to succeed in their academic goals.

> *My family stood behind me all the time, tough and good times and this made me realise what their purpose is and why I should value my education.*

Some elaborated that they were able to manage their personal lives through trial and error. Their affective dimension of effective learning thus relies on family support. For these students, discovering new coping mechanisms and making adjustments in their family lives led them to new understanding. According to most of the participants, achieving academic success meant prioritising their academic goals.

> *I came to realise that my time management and life's contradictions betrayed my studies… but the project* [assessment] *group allowed me to make new friends that we were able to help each other… so I found new ways by asking around and trying things out to cope.*

Some students confessed that their personal lives and poor time management caused tension and stress in their academic endeavours. However, the group assessment activity fostered friendship and trust amongst group members. They shared ideas with one another and were able to overcome their challenges. Such group camaraderie was a source of comfort and dependence and the call for reflective practice and deeper engagement was all too evident. This practice made similar subsequent trials easier and promoted academic success.

5.5 CONCLUSION

This chapter comprises part one of the discussion on Individual Reality and focused on how the primary affinity drove the other affinities of the SID. The affinity relationship showed that, although students' experiences were generally positive, a few reported negative experiences. The primary driver of the study, *life's contradictions* that drove most of the affinities informed the struggles and obstacles students experience in order to acquire epistemic access. Similarly, most of the students that were categorised as non-traditional or FSG found that the design of the authentic assessment (in many instances students described this as activities, tasks or project) enabled and provided a scaffold to achieve academic goals. Chapter six comprises is an extension of this discussion (chapter 5) and focuses on the secondary drivers, followed by the conclusion of Individual Reality in Chapter 7 that discusses the primary and secondary outcomes.

CHAPTER SIX: INDIVIDUAL REALITY: REFLECTING ON AFFINITIES AND THEIR RELATIONSHIPS – SECONDARY DRIVERS

6.1 INTRODUCTION

Chapter 5, that formed part one of this discussion analysed the individual reality that reflects and describes the participants' views on the relationships between the affinities, according to the SID. While it focused on the primary drivers, the current chapter examines the secondary drivers of the affinities and their relationships.

6.2 Secondary drivers

Secondary drivers are driven by the primary drivers, with a relative cause and effect on affinities within a specific IQA System (Northcutt & McCoy, 2004, p. 172). In this study, the secondary drivers according to the SID Assignment are collaboration; hospitality and finance language; acquired abilities; learning challenges; and frequent engagement with activities.

6.2.1 Collaboration

Collaboration in carrying out the HSFM101 authentic activities and tasks drove a number of affinities, namely, hospitality and finance language, the university and lecture environment, learning resources, motivation and a changed attitude, acquired abilities, and a new understanding at a secondary level. This can be depicted in figure 10 below:

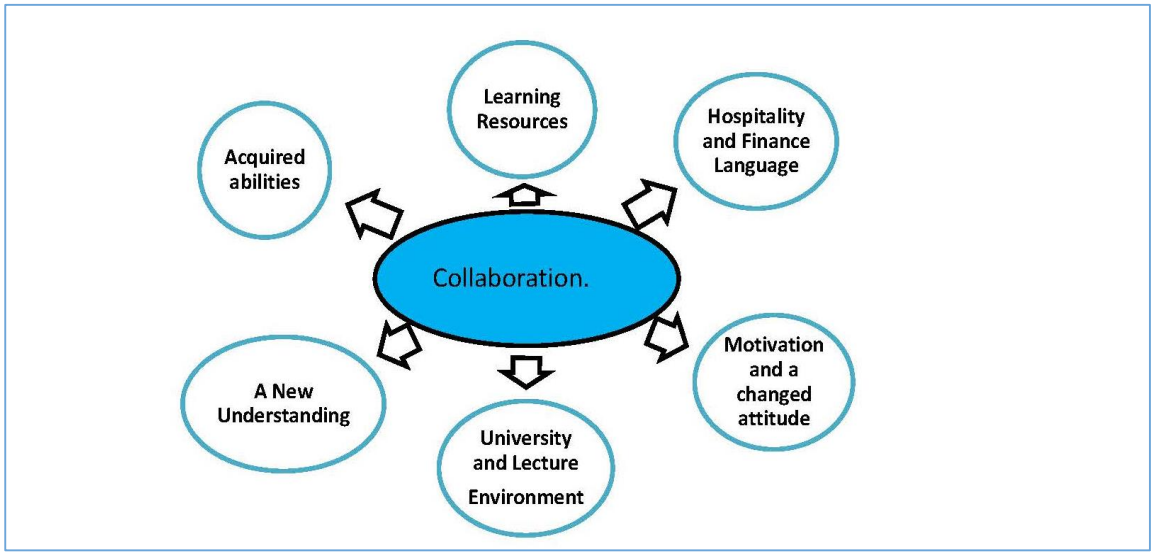

Figure 10 - Collaboration as a secondary driver

While two members of the group declared that, in certain instances, collaboration did not work for them, the majority of the participants stated that this affinity presented them with a more positive learning experience. The ability to work with and adapt to diverse cultures; exploration and sharing of ideas; active engagement rather than working in isolation; the surfacing of hidden potential; and the ability to start thinking critically; tapped their knowledge domains. Students that implemented this 'scaffold approach' to learning created a new learning community through social construction. Some acknowledged that, while collaboration was challenging, they appreciated its many underlying benefits.

6.2.2 Collaboration drives hospitality and finance language

The participants indicated that collaboration played a significant pedagogical role acquiring the disciplinary discourse and content in the HSFM101 through an authentic assessment.

> *…English is my second language and we only speak Zulu at home. So understanding these new words in finance and the industry is so new to me and it's a problem to apply this language if you firstly don't know what it means...*

English was the second language of many participants, and their lack of or minimal exposure to finance or the hospitality industry complicated their conceptual understanding of HSFM101. However, through collaborative efforts, the formation of this learning community resulted in the transformation of course content from the tacit to the explicit, enabling disciplinary identity. The assessment design prescribes that participants converse in the disciplinary mode, and this enabled the students to move the language from abstraction to a condensed and simplified level. This was evident when they were able to read financial and hospitality related transactions.

> *…the more we spoke to each other in finance language the better we understood… what was so difficult to understand is now making more sense…*

The students added that the assessment tasks encouraged them to interact and network with their peers. Such epistemic support improved their learning experience.

> *…But working in a group was able to help me a lot. We started learning from each other and some things my friend did not know, I knew, and the other*

way round, so we could share this and work together to get a better understanding of this world we got ourselves into…

They described each participant as a learning pillar, as they depended on one another's contributions. A participant noted that this assisted in reducing the 'jargon' of the language to a simplified level.

When I am at res, I get a lot of help from students that are from the Accounting Department. They are able to tutor me and explain what this finance words mean and how to interpret them.

A few participants reported that other collaborative networks formed at student residences further improved their understanding of this complex language, further contributing to improved understanding and interpretation of HSFM101.

Then I go onto the group chat and if anyone asked for help, and I got the meaning, I was able to assist in whatever way I could. When I meet my group on campus I am happy to report what these words finally mean and we are able to read the transactions as the meanings make better sense now. Then, when I explain to my friend, I able to understand even better. So I also found that what I learn from someone else I am able to share this information with others that are still in the dark… benefits me big time!

Moreover, the students commented that online engagement facilitated and supported learning, enabling them to find deeper meaning in content, language and context. Students that experienced difficulties in reading and analysing transactions were able to overcome this challenge by sharing or asking for support from one another. This enhanced their ability to analyse transactions.

When I don't understand the words and transactions I am able to ask Mrs. Maniram on BB. Then she explains it to me, and of course I explain my group. Some students that are not part of our research group also come to me for help, so I try to use my explanations but sometimes I am still not able to explain to them and then they go to the tutor for help. I used to have a different view of the word for example capital, has so many meanings, but Mrs. Maniram made understand it in its correct setting.

Collaboration was described as a positive experience, as the students were able use available tools and resources that overcame language barriers to learning. While some resisted using the library as a learning space, the majority stated that the support they received from the subject librarian or the writing centre developed their reading and writing abilities and ultimately improved their understanding of threshold concepts.

> *The library can be a scary place, cos so many books and all in English! ... I fear books cause of the big words, but when we go as a group and we busy with our research* [assessment project]*, we are able to help each other, sometimes we go to Bongi our subject librarian or to the writing centre and they help us a bit. So they explain to us what those words mean and how to apply them.*

6.2.3 Collaboration drives Learning Resources

Collaborative efforts through the use of learning resources such as Blackboard, tutorials, the library, and the group chat offered a range of benefits for many of the participants. Most embraced these resources as useful and novel. Students stated that both virtual and physical learning tools ignited a learning network and sustained continuous engagement. The participants commented that their confidence and enthusiasm in engaging with the assessment and discipline improved. The positive collaborative experience that drove learning resources is discussed below:

6.2.3.1 Positive drivers

> *At first I had problems getting used to it but later I realised its benefits, and I felt in this subject I was ahead of everyone, because it kept me focused and learning for me happened all the time. I so glad to know that from next year that we going to use it in all other subjects. I really felt excited to know that we were going start a new way of learning and communicating through BB.*
>
> *…for me using technology was great cause I enjoy being up to date with new stuff, and we never used this in school before, so it was great. We were even able to communicate with the lecturer through the WhatsApp.*

While this was a new way of learning for many of the participants, they described it as a welcome supplement:

> *For me, backboard was first a challenge, but once I got to know how to access it, then also the BB helped, 'cause we were given more activities besides the class ones to help us practice, and that helped with the project a great deal… and the best part was when I used to help my friend with this information, as they had no internet, and could not access Blackboard.*

Thus, the benefits and strengths of BB overshadowed its drawbacks. Virtual classrooms were able to address their areas of concern, and they welcomed the feedback received. Similarly, students appreciated the types of activities displayed on BB. They were subsequently able to apply their improved knowledge to the assessment activities with ease and confidence. Some also assisted fellow students that lacked internet access. Collaboration thus motivated the students to learn.

> *I would like to say at first I was so afraid when I heard about this word "Blackboard". I had never used a computer or did not even know what 'Wi-Fi' is. I realized if I want to pass I have to overcome my fears by taking the first step to learn what this world of technology is all about.*

The participants also expressed their appreciation for the support they received in accessing digital tools. This improved their confidence in attempting the assessment activities, and the constructive engagement that followed. They overcome their fear of new technology and adopted a more flexible attitude to this learning tool.

> *And when my friends helped me to access the journal, and activities, I realised what I could have missed out on… The assessment activities posted on BB helped a lot and the online discussions were able to get me back on track. I learnt that you can only fail when you never tried.*

The students also noted that reflective writing, especially the online journal, created a positive and comfortable learning space. They appreciated the rapport between themselves and the instructor (myself).

> *The reflective journal was a great source of help. I am rather a shy and private person and talking to people and expressing my ideas can be a challenge for me. At least when I don't understand something I am able to communicate with my lecturer using the reflective journal, and she was able to help me in many ways. Technology was something new for. But this online journal made it easier for me to communicate and express my ideas. As the project needed us to work in groups and share our ideas. So the online journals also made it easier for me to chat to Mrs. Maniram and also to share my problems and most of the time I got very useful answers. So it's the best way of communicating for me. It was my like having my own little classroom and that I had the teacher all for myself (reflective journals). I was able to ask all the questions that troubled me…*

They reported that this learning forum prompted them to think more openly and creatively, with no inhibitions or restrictions caused by personality clashes. Some participants stated that reflective journaling enabled them to share their concerns and fears. This reduced the pressure and anxiety of the assessment. Students valued the dialogue and the feedback received that encouraged reflective learning. It encouraged them to become more active participants in the writing and reading processes. They added that they were able to revise, defend, and rethink their reflective writing. Such reflection contributed to a better understanding of the course content and writing.

Moreover, the participants highlighted that collaborating through social media prompted active engagement and effective communication such as updating and notifications on assessment progress.

> *Then there was the WhatsApp group chat, which kept us up to date with our work and when we wanted to meet or discuss anything we used the WhatsApp. The group chat was very useful for me, as it kept me up to date on what's due, our meeting dates and our different responsibilities that each one had for the project. I managed to get myself a smart phone, and was now able to go on the group chat. The class interaction was amazing.*

Social media also enabled the students to express and share ideas. They added that by critically reflecting on the dialogue through interactive engagement, the stages of the assessment became meaningful and achievable. This forum also allowed group members to define and assume responsibilities and learn to meet deadlines throughout the various stages of the assessment. While one participant stated that she had to purchase a smart phone in order to gain such epistemic access, it was worth the cost, since she was able to more easily meet the demands of assessment.

Most of the focus group members appreciated the tutorials. They stated that moving from the large lecture class of 170 students to the smaller group of 20 made an impact on their cognitive development.

> *Tutorials were excellent, as our numbers were much smaller than in the big class. So here to we had great opportunity to interact with one another and understand better. I found the tutorials to be more helpful; the classroom was a nightmare, as I was not used to so many being in a class. But tutorials made my understanding much simpler and easier. I could raise my questions about the project; we also had group activities during tuts which was monitored by the tutor. We enjoyed the vibe at tuts and was more relaxed and got closer with each other.*

They contrasted the "hostile and uncomfortable" formal lecture environment with the vibrant, free and enjoyable tutorial setting. The students added that they learnt more during tutorials, as they were each given the opportunity to reflect, analyse and enquire about content that baffled them. Close interaction in a small group fostered deeper understanding and confidence in undertaking the assessment activities and tasks.

Despite the fact that the majority of the participants endorsed collaborative learning resources, a handful expressed some negativity. This was due to limited or no access to such tools, leaving them feeling "left out of this social academic learning network".

6.2.3.2 **Negative drivers**

One participant stated that group chats (social media) were a waste of time:

> *I am not for the group chat thing 'cause I prefer doing things on my own. Sometimes I feel people just waste their time on these chats, instead they can* [use] *the time to be more constructive and maybe work on their own instead of asking others for help. Cause in the exams, who's going to help you?*

This student could be regarded as a loner that believes that they will achieve more by working on their own. Another participant stated that the social media forum interfered with independent learning and self-discovery, as one became too reliant on the group dialogue. These participants valued independent learning, with limited or no social interaction. Their beliefs may confirm that the style of learning adopted in a formative assessment could prepare them for the rigours of a summative assessment.

Furthermore, one participant opposed technology as a supplement to learning. She stated that the traditional way of learning (adopted in her secondary education) was preferable to the blended mode of instruction.

> *Another point is that I am not in favour of BB. I prefer the old fashion way of learning 'cause it's a big mission to on BB and look for activities, and then we cannot download the info 'cause to print it's too expensive. I prefer that we be given the handouts. I also am not in favour of telling someone else on how I feel; would like to personally keep my feelings to myself and not to share with others. Well, that's who I am.*

This participant stated that she is a private person, and is not in favour of expressing her emotions and feelings to others, especially on social media. She also raised the cost of downloading and printing additional activities and exercises as an inhibiting factor to online access.

6.2.4 Collaboration drives the University and lecture Environment

6.2.4.1 **Lecture environment**

The university and lecture environment presented many challenges to collaborative learning in the assessment activities.

> *Our lecture room is so small compared to so many of us in the room. Sometimes we don't even have a seat… miss out a lot in the project discussions. When we are put in groups we have to sometimes share a seat or just stand and then I get bored and wait for the lecture to finish while the other are busy discussing the project, 'cause I am so uncomfortable. When we have a very large venue, then we can hardly hear the lecturer.*

Firstly, the physical layout, acoustics, and size of the lecture venue were not conducive to engagement. Many of the participants complained they felt cramped and claustrophobic when the venue was too small and if it was too large, sound and interaction with the lecturer became an issue. These challenges distracted them and boredom set in, hindering effective learning.

One students [who sits at the back of room] actually observed that when his peers began to get bored [as they were not included in discussion] in the lecture, he will find them playing with their mobile phones thereby causing distraction and disturbances. This occurrence impacts very negatively on his learning.

> *…watching from the back of class I see some students getting bored and busy playing games on their phones also distracts me and others…*

Furthermore, one student stated that she never had the opportunity to participate in class as she is sometimes unable to hear the lecturer due to the noise from outside.

> *When we are in the venue, there is so much of noise coming from outside that I cannot hear the lecture; and when she asks me a question I look so stupid as I cannot answer it, and look like I am not paying attention.*

Whilst this student is making diligent attempts to focus and engage during the lecture, disturbance from outside the lecture hall makes this impossible.

In addition, two participants mentioned that due to time constraints and large class sizes, many students do not have the opportunity to ask questions during lectures.

> *There are more than 140 students in the class. And when it comes to question and answer session, everyone's hands are up, and the questions gone on and on and I don't have a chance to ask mine as the time is up. The lecturer says I must ask go on BB - but I can't access at home!*

Furthermore, some participants stated that they felt discouraged and indifferent during lectures as their peers ridiculed them.

> *There are times when me or my group members will give our answers or do our presentations in class, you will get some horrible students that will make fun or poke a joke at our presentations. This makes us feeling very low and we don't participate in activities after those kinds of incidents.*

One student stated that when she made a comment, some of her peers mocked her due to her being a different race; the implication is that she thinks knows it all. Such racial and cultural tensions in the classroom fed into negative emotions. This student added that a hostile and cold learning environment stifled the collaborative energy for which many students had hoped. It is clear that some students do not practice social inclusion and learning in harmony. Consequently, whilst the assessment calls for students to work in groups, those that are victims of such predicaments may achieve poor academic outcomes.

> *I sometimes don't like to participate in discussions, 'cause when I do, there those few students that will sneer and pass nasty comments, just because I am white or that I know too much. This really hurts!*

6.2.4.2 **University environment**

The participants also made mention of the limited physical space for learning at the university, which hinders collaboration in group activities outside of lectures. It was noted that the library is the only physical learning space that fosters such engagement.

> *On campus there are not enough places for us to sit and work with our group… no shade or very few benches available, and sometimes, if we use a*

classroom, we are chased by the guards. We can use the libraries, but there too there not enough place for all of us… too much noise. Sometimes the librarian will chase us out when we are having our discussions… so planning and preparing in our groups for the project was difficult.

The university infrastructure thus hampers collaborative group work. However, a few students argued that the library offers them a space to work as a group, provided that they make a prior booking with the librarian.

We always use the library to do our group work. We book in advance and we get a space. If you don't then you may not get one. We try not to be too distracting so that we don't get chased out by the floor librarian. There are many resources available in the library that helps us with homework and project tasks.

These students took full advantage of the scaffolding tools and benefits offered by the library by being proactive and seeking assistance and guidance from the writing centre support staff. Such students may be characterised by strong resilience and determination to succeed and are prepared to work against the odds to the best of their ability. Similarly, they are willing to take advantage of the resources that the university offers to achieve the goals of the assessment.

6.2.5 Collaboration drives Motivation and a changed Attitude

Most of the participants endorsed the collaborative activities required by the authentic assessment. They remarked that active engagement fostered motivation and changed their views on how they felt about the subject.

...Learning new ideas and finding ways to understand this subject (which I dreaded) made me feel motivated and now more excited about this subject. It was great to see how your peers are always there when you most needed them. Our group activities were all done in togetherness and we were able to overcome many of our challenges…

They concurred that learning from one another and sustaining this new learning community kept them focused and on the right path for the entire semester. Furthermore, they stressed reliance on one another for academic guidance and support. It was noted that their

initial fears and anxiety regarding this module were greatly reduced through positive interaction. When they realised that they can depend on others, their confidence and enthusiasm soared.

> *At first, when Mrs. Maniram put me in this group, I was so worried, 'cause I was not used to different* [diverse] *people, but as we got along, I found that this project was able be to make me learn from other cultures and races and we helped each throughout the semester. We understand the sections (most of them – not all yet) much better than before, through each other's help.*

Furthermore, since they were first year students, this approach helped them get on with one another by adapting and accepting other cultures that brought new ideas and different ways of approaching the assessment activities. These students appreciated input from diverse groups and their perceptions of others improved. Moreover, many participants noted that e-learning (the reflective journal) encouraged positive learning. The collaborative exercises dispelled their negative feelings and opinions about the subject. They gained more meaningful insight into and positive attitudes towards the HSFM101 module.

> *Whenever we are stuck, our group chat and also Mrs. Maniram in the journal, helps us out and this communication makes my learning become more clear for me… I now enjoy this subject so much with no fear and hatred as I learnt so much in the activities…*

The participants stated that, when they were first presented with the assessment, they were alarmed at its various tasks and cognitive demands, but working as a group afforded them the identity of team players. In this way, they were able to overcome personality clashes and support one another in order to achieve positive outcomes. They stressed that their synergistic efforts achieved favourable results and that learning together can be exciting.

> *…first time I worked in a group. I was so worried when I saw how big the project is and whether I be able to cope. But working in group took care of most my fears. Although we experienced some hiccups in the start, we later realised how much we need other and how much we can learn from each other. In every way the group taught me to be strong and focused and not*

to lose courage. In the end we …did fantastic in the project as our group scored a fantastic mark. This was through the combined effort of all the members and most important that learning became fun for us!

However, one member maintained that such activities did not work for her, as she experienced many problems, and would have preferred to work on the assessment on her own. This is attributable to previous learning experiences and approaches. Furthermore, it was noted that not all group members work at an equal pace and that some put in more effort than others.

In school we always did things on our own… working in a group was not a good idea at all. From the beginning to the end we always disagreed. Some did more work than others. And this was truly frustrating… waiting for this project to come to an end. I prefer just writing a test and doing an assignment on my own.

This can create conflict and tension, with negative attitudes towards the assessment. Nevertheless, this student changed her attitude when the assignment was successfully achieved.

I found many problems as this affected my studies as whole. I am not a person to socialise and get along with others (especially if you did not know them) […] *prefer being alone. The only thing positive came out from was the project day when we made a profit my attitude changed slightly, but I would prefer in future that Mrs. Maniram don't give us group activities again.*

6.2.6 Collaboration drives Acquired abilities

Since the assessment demanded a range of group activities that called for collaboration, students gained skills and capabilities. The tasks was designed in such a way that such skills and abilities surfaced unexpectedly:

When learnt about BB, and that we have do access online activities and communicate through the reflective journal, I was hopelessly scared! I did not have any technology skills or even used a computer before. This word 'Wi-Fi' and social media was totally new to me. That [was] *when I was forced to buy my own smart*

phone and try to use all these new tools. I was as surprised with myself as nobody taught me, but I learnt through observation from the members in my group and […] *in fact I now know more than them, as they always asking me to sort their phones and access BB these days!"*

Furthermore, participants reported that some of the skills developed through collaborative exercises benefited them in their everyday lives. Similarly, whilst many stated that they lacked information literacy, they nonetheless valued the shared learning as it improved their technological skills. These scaffolding resources nurtured self-regulated learning and self-efficacy.

One participant reflected on how, through collaborative effort, the assessment enabled her to appreciate her marketing skills.

…a very shy person and on project day, I was shocked at my marketing skills and entrepreneurial skills when I was the one that sold most of the products. My group gave that confidence… This assessment has brought about more than just good marks… one day I am going to open my own Business!

While she tends to be introverted, the group assessment activities served as a catalyst to recognise her inner strengths and potential. This boosted her self-confidence and she recognised this as an enabler to epistemic access, concurrently, raising her aspirations in the future. Similarly, one participant commented that the group assessment tasks helped her take financial decisions in her everyday life. She added that her entrepreneurial abilities were brought to the fore.

…through group work… I also am now able to use finance in my everyday life, knowing how to open a bank account, learning to budget, and choosing the best price when I buy anything…

The business skills I learnt made me understand why we do hospitality finance. Before, I thought It was just a waste of time and that it's more for someone becoming an accountant… completing the project, I realised how important finance is in hospitality and now the sections makes more sense to me in a group... Most importantly, I can now know what I am studying!

Not only did the group work sharpen this student's business acumen and understanding of business concepts, but the skills enabled her to appreciate the subject content and to engage more meaningfully in the discourse.

Another student proudly reported that she acquired leadership skills due to the group's faith in her. She has previously assumed that this trait was not part of her make-up.

> *I was told that I am going to lead the group, first I did not accept, but the members all had faith in me, and I proved them to be right… and us so organised.*

She added that this made her believe in herself. Furthermore, the collaborative activities enabled the students to critically examine and evaluate one another's strengths and weaknesses, thereby highlighting their unique capabilities. They reported that they were able to listen to one another (some admitted that this had initially been a weakness).

> *As…the eldest child at home, my problem was that I never listen to others… but others must listen to me. But this project taught me so much and I mainly learn to listen to others and give others a chance… to become a team player. And in the end their ideas proved to be better than mine as our work was a success in the end…now use this skill – 'to listen and to learn' in my everyday life and it has changed me as a better person.*

Some commented on the value of being a team player, as this is a valuable trait in the hospitality industry. They were also able to critically examine their own progress and understanding that is required to yield positive academic outcomes.

A few participants mentioned that they developed effective time management skills through the group or found improved ways to cope with this challenge.

> *…Members taught me about using time management skills. The project was about getting tasks done on certain dates and it required time management. Once I learnt it, it was great 'cause when it came to final exams, I was able to use it and it helped a lot in all my exams.*

This is also an important attribute for effective hospitality financial management. Similarly, the participants stated that the effective time management skills developed through collaboration improved their epistemic access.

6.2.7 Collaboration drives a New Understanding

The participants observed that the collaborative nature of the assessment provided them with a different understanding and new perspective of HSFM101. Many indicated that the group activities taught them how to overcome learning challenges such as content, threshold concepts and numeric procedures.

> *My lights turned on for me, when I finally got the costing right! Fortunate for me, my friends at res who was always there to help me... as she knew costing… She showed me a simple way of doing the conversions AND getting the method right etc… I learnt more about who I am and my capabilities and weaknesses.*

Through learning by doing, these participants were able to make sense of what was previously considered to be abstract and complex. The students stressed the significant academic support they received from their group members in looking at alternate ways to solve problems. This exercise also enabled them to critically reflect on their own practices, resulting in improved understanding of HSFM101.

Moreover, through the various collaborative activities, the participants gained a new understanding of the subject and its content, the use of technology, people from diverse groups, and most important, they came to understand themselves.

> *I know finally got it right, thanks to my group members and how they helped me so many times, till I finally got it right. The BB was another great help, as I experienced problems. I was always asking Mrs. Maniram to assist and she explained to me where I went off. Social media also helped a great deal, as we kept in contact with all the activities.*

This engaged form of learning enabled the students to learn from one another through trial and error. Many stated that the assessment provided them with an enriched learning foundation. Their self-confidence improved and they were able to apply concepts and

problem solving. It was also noted that many of the participants crossed the threshold and achieved that 'aha moment'.

> *My friends and I practiced on the activities all the time. We enjoy working together as this project has brought us together. Through this learning group that we formed, we were able to understand what was confusing us, and how to finally get the financial statements and double entry right.*
>
> *I was able to apply double entry now as I understood the basics after attending tutorials and the group chat. This made me feel good about myself, that I started looking at more activities that were not in the text book or BB but in the library. I now can go to the library and able to read transactions from other books. This has made me realise how far I have come, especially from never doing accounting in school before.*

This new found self-confidence resulted in academic progression. The enjoyment students experienced through collaborative efforts ignited zeal for academic learning. Thus, self-confidence enabled epistemic access and renewed effort.

6.3 Hospitality and Finance Language

Hospitality and finance language within the HSFM101 authentic activities and tasks drove a number of affinities, namely, the university and lecture environment as shown in figure 11 below. This affinity drove, learning resources, motivation and a changed attitude, learning challenges and a new understanding at a secondary level.

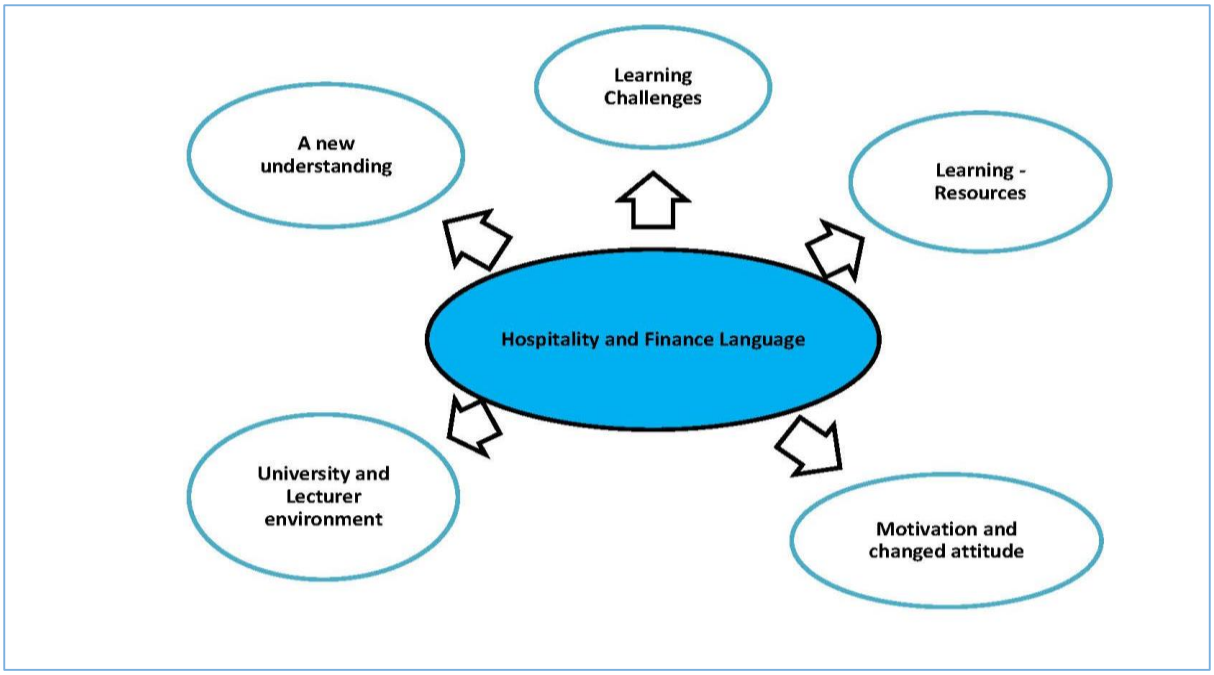

Figure 11 - Hospitality and Finance Language as a secondary driver

6.3.1 Hospitality and Finance Language drives Learning Resources

Learning resources such as the textbook, activities on Blackboard, and the tutorials presented certain challenges to some students in relating to the discourse and language of the discipline. In this situation, students mentioned that they found it difficult to understand what certain words and phrases meant, thereby misinterpreting the context.

> *Experience many problems in reading the transactions in the text book and sometimes BB and end with a completely different answer, only to find out later that my understanding was all wrong, because of not knowing what the words really mean!*

However, through engagement with the assessment, many were able to finally relate to most of the disciplinary language. Due to the fact that, for most of the participants, English is a second or even (in some cases) third language; students struggled to read finance-related material, hindering epistemic access.

However, most of the participants said that the Blackboard activities and text book were reader friendly.

> *I actually was able to understand BB activities and I only got the exercise wrong because I did not do my calculations correctly. The text book is*

simple to understand compared to other books… but the project also made it clear for me to understand.

The assessment thus enabled them to understand transactions and concepts and how they should be applied. The reflective journal also allowed them to reflect on the disciplinary content, thereby enabling them to overcome most of the challenges in understanding and applying content.

6.3.2 Hospitality and Finance Language drives the University and lecture environment

Some of the students reported that the language of hospitality and finance only posed a challenge to them during lectures, as the lecturer used words or phrases with which they were unfamiliar.

Mrs. Maniram would talk about a hotel amenities and use words like reimburse, such languages were never heard of. It is as though I have done accounting before or I have been to a hotel to know what amenities are.

The participants felt that the lecturer assumed that they had previously visited hotels or other amenities, or were familiar with the hospitality industry. They added that large classes and the nature of the lecture venue made matters worse, limiting epistemic access.

6.3.3 Hospitality and Finance Language drives Learning Challenges

Most of the students indicated that English was their second language. This presented challenges to their learning and acquiring disciplinary identity. Whilst many stated that they were ultimately able to overcome this challenge, a minority identified this issue as the root cause of not understanding the discipline.

If I was born speaking English, I would not have had this problem of understanding this subject. Words like capital, costing and debit and credit very hard to understand so unable to do transactions… but project tasks made me understand better as I can see it better now.

Language thus posed a barrier in understanding and unpacking what the various threshold concepts stand for. However, the assessment tasks resulted in improved epistemic access and success.

6.3.4 Hospitality and Finance Language drives Motivation and a Changed Attitude

Given the fact that many students identified language as a learning barrier, the assessment activities created a pathway by means of which to access disciplinary content. Most declared that the interactive nature of the assessment allowed them to draw from actual practice in order to make the connections with theory, enabling a richer understanding of hospitality and finance language.

> *…during the assessment I finally understood what most of the words meant and how they must be applied… made me realise how these transactions fit in the real world. I am so grateful for my friends help when I went off track... I wrote test 2, I saw a big difference in my mark, because I now finally understood this language hospitality. ..Am now so excited and waiting to write the exam as I have prepared myself well after getting a true picture of this subject and finance!*

As noted earlier, students found that they gained an in-depth knowledge of practice by connecting theory to reality through the assessment, enabling disciplinary identity to emerge. In addition, they expressed newfound enthusiasm and elation as they began to acquire such identity. This outcome improved their self-confidence and appreciation of the subject such that their initial feelings of hopelessness and fear were replaced by a more positive approach to HSFM101.

6.3.5 Hospitality and Finance Language drives a New Understanding

Once students were able to acquire disciplinary content, they were able to critically reflect on their learning. Most mentioned that a better understanding of hospitality and finance language enabled them to better relate to content and application.

> *…Test 2 I saw a big difference in my mark, cos doing many of the project activities made me understand these words and how it is used the industry more appropriately. When I wrote Test 1, my learning was incorrect as I just rehearsed the words (even knew how to spell them) but never understood what its real meaning was. Test 2 was different that is why I performed better here because my understanding has improved.*

Moreover, the participants described the way in which the various assessment tasks and activities demystified their blurred understanding of hospitality and finance language. They added that their rote way of learning or surface mode was substituted for a deeper and richer understanding of content and being able to overcome challenges in problem solving. Most of the participants commented that they came to the realisation that their previous way of learning was ineffective. The nature of the assessment activities nurtured this new way of thinking that ultimately resulted in epistemic access.

6.4 Acquired Abilities

"A New Understanding" was the only affinity driven by the secondary driver, acquired abilities in this study as indicated in figure 12 below:

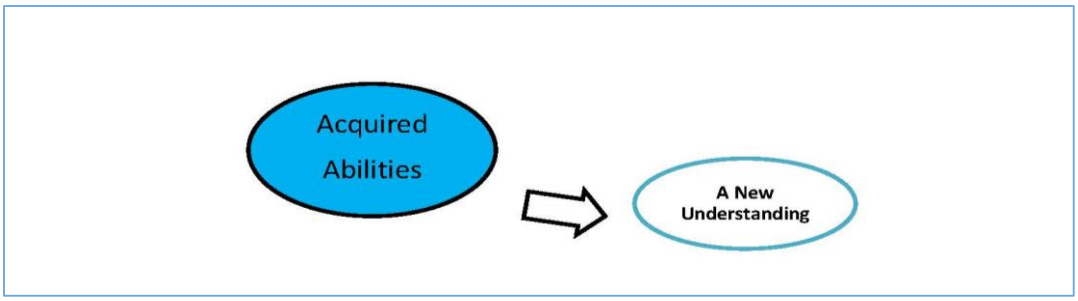

Figure 12 - Acquired Abilities as a secondary driver

6.4.1 Acquired Abilities drive a New Understanding

The participants found that the different assessment tasks activated their potential, by enhancing a range of abilities that gave them a rich perspective of HSFM101. The abilities or skills raised by the participants were either hidden from them or were achieved through the collaborative efforts involved in the assessment.

> *…business skills, and such skills made me see financial management from a business perspective… able to finally understand how the double entry concept works, by finally knowing that two accounts are affected in a certain way and why it affects the accounting equation. Before I had to memorise the rules but never really understood it. Now it makes so much of*

sense. And if you know double entry, then the other sections all can fall in place.

…my numeracy skills finally came right when doing the costing. I now understand costing which used to give lots of trouble. I able to do the conversions and calculate the mark up and know how profit is made. I no longer make those silly mistakes, as I have better approach of doing FM sections, especially in costing.

Furthermore, the students indicated that this self-efficacy was reflected in improved understanding of the module content. Awareness of such skills enabled deeper and more meaningful insight. They were able to understand threshold concepts through application and practice of the assessment. Some stated that, through reflection, they were able to evaluate their strengths and weaknesses.

Interestingly, two students reported that the soft skills acquired during the assessment changed the way in which they learnt. These students developed listening or time management skills that enabled them to revise their learning methods and style, promoting improved understanding in HSFM101.

Through this project I learnt how to pay attention to what others say and give them a chance to participate as previously I was not like this… learnt the hard way but… I benefited from this. ..In class I am now able to pay attention… listen to other students' questions and answers which improved my learning big time!

…beginning, I was so afraid cos there were so many tasks to complete and so little time. But… the group pointed out my mistakes, I realised... I don't have proper time management and I now learnt from them to adjust in a better way. When I wrote the test2 and exams I was able to complete my paper on time.

The assessment activities had deadlines and developing their time management skills ultimately improved these students' writing and conceptual skills, enabling epistemic access.

6.5 Learning Challenges

As shown in Figure 13, learning challenges as a secondary driver influenced the affinities motivation and changed attitude and a new Understanding.

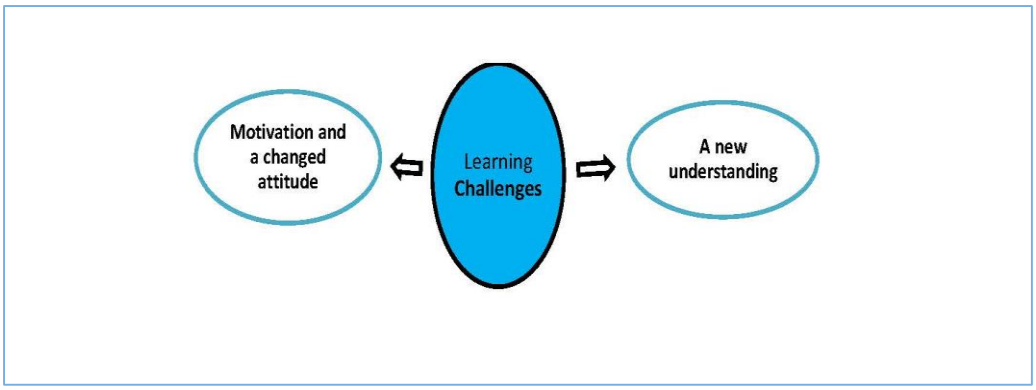

Figure 13 - Learning Challenges as a secondary driver

6.5.1 Learning Challenges drive Motivation and a changed Attitude

Most of the students mentioned the different learning challenges they experienced (the sub-affinities previously discussed in Chapter 4) in the assessment, and ultimately the module HSFM101. Those that were able to overcome these challenges supported and favoured collaborative and engaged activities, as this made them feel worthy, confident and stimulated in attaining academic goals. Learning challenges such as diversity (which they initially feared) were resolved by the nature of activities that caused them to realise that diversity improves learning.

> *Learning from other races and cultures made me a better person. Although… at first… we may not get along and that we will have disagreements, but when I listened to their lovely ideas and ways of doing the activities, it made erase those old ideas I was brought up with and instead to accept others and learn to work* [as] *a team* […] *as in industry this is a requirement..*

Sharing input from other cultures, races and even genders made them realise how little they actually knew. They acknowledged that their personal perceptions were blurred by ignorance, and that they had been guilty of stereotyping. Furthermore, they stated that powerful learning was achieved whilst working in diverse groups. Thus, epistemic access required that the participants respect and accept the diverse ideas of other students.

However, a few students felt that their lack of an accounting background impeded their time management abilities.

> *…learnt just by getting my time management skills right (which was a big problem for me)… I had better coping… more confident to attempt the activities and exercises. This was a sense of relief for me… as I gained better time management… I look forward to activities and really enjoy them now! Best is that this subject is our major.*

The design of the assessment activities evoked a sense of calmness and composure. The assessment allowed room for them to reflect on and improve their time management. They were able to overcome this challenge, improving epistemic access. Once they were able to manage their time well, other aspects of their learning fell into place.

Nonetheless, a few students found the authentic assessment highly challenging, and were left feeling demotivated and unwilling to participate. They commented that they preferred working on their own due to personality differences and opinions, rather than working at an equal pace.

> *I did not like working in a group from Day 1. We always disagreeing and never meeting our targets. Most of the time, I have to carry the weight of the group, which I felt was not fair. I asked Mrs. Maniram to please let me work alone but she never allowed. So this really made me feel discouraged and was just waiting to submit the final portfolio and be over with this thing.*

These students claimed that some group members tended to evade their responsibilities, resulting in others being burdened with a cognitive overload. They acknowledged that the assessment made them feel less productive, and that they did not learn much from this exercise. Such students remain entrenched in their traditional learning approaches and style.

6.5.2 Learning Challenges drive a New Understanding

Despite experiencing a myriad of learning challenges, most of the participants stated that the authentic assessment promoted new understanding. This novel type of assessment enabled them to come to grips with the curriculum.

> *The best part of the project was that it was kind of real and we felt like we running our own business… able to see how transactions relate to a business and finally understood what it means… if not for the project I would still be in a confused state.*

Learning by doing (active learning) in the assessment reinforced their conceptual understanding of threshold concepts and content. Furthermore, the participants noted that role playing and locating the assessment in a 'real life' context gave meaning to learning and improved their understanding. This enabled them to tackle problem solving activities, thus enabling epistemic access.

However, one student maintained that her learning challenges resulted in poor understanding of the module and that she did not see the benefits of the assessment. They added that they still did not understand threshold concepts.

> *I could not understand debit or credit or even do the costing… still struggling with this. I was hoping – just like my friends – that I would know how to understand transactions; but still even the project did not do much for me, there although I learnt some other things and we made a profit. Maybe business and finance is not for me.*

This student may have made the wrong career choice, since she is unable to connect the tenets of the assessment to the career demands of the hospitality industry.

6.6 Frequent intense Engagement with Activities

This is the final secondary driver that drove the affinities collaboration, hospitality and finance language, motivation and a changed attitude, acquired abilities, and a new understanding (see Figure 14). The assessment was designed in such a manner that it

demanded continuous practice of various activities ranging from class/lecture activities, to tutorials, homework activities, and Blackboard.

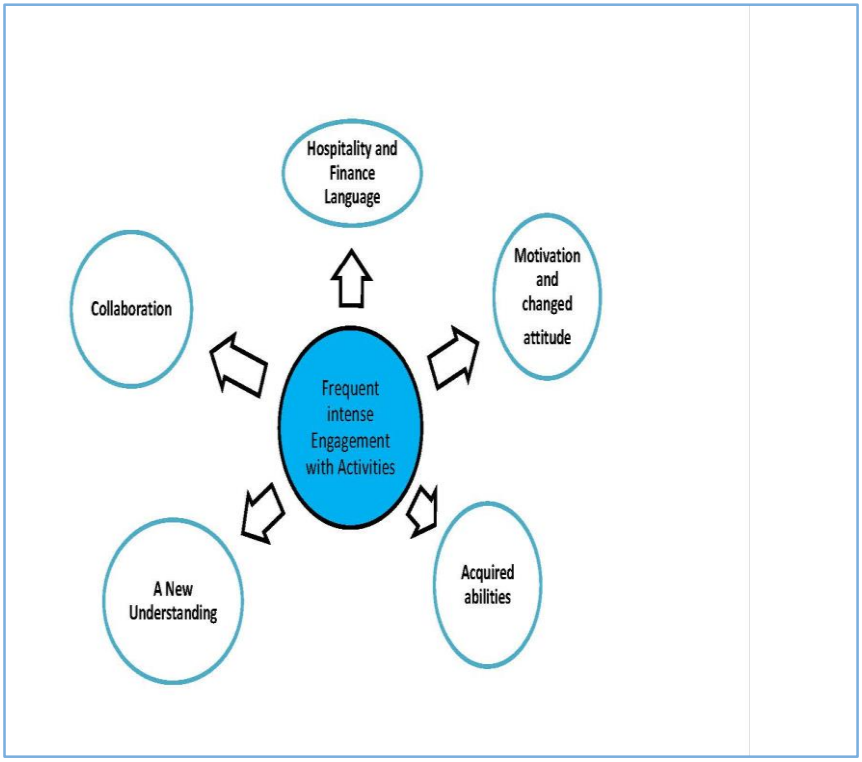

Figure 14 - Frequent intense engagement with activities as a secondary driver

6.6.1 Frequent intense Engagement with Activities drives Collaboration

Frequent intense engagement with activities received an overwhelmingly positive response (Chapter 4). The participants commented that engaging through the various platforms such as the group activities, Blackboard, tutorials, and even social media enabled them to accomplish most of the tasks required by the assessment.

> *Blackboard helped us to practice on additional exercises; it was good 'cause we could discuss over BB what and where we went wrong… The WhatsApp groups was also very helpful. Sometimes I will just ask the groups what a certain word means or if my answer is correct, and you will everyone responding to me… I start all over again if it is wrong.*

They added that completion of most of these activities would not have been possible were it not for the collaborative and engaged effort. The students highlighted that sharing

knowledge and peer review enabled them to reflect on their own progress. A common comment was that their understanding of threshold concepts improved through frequent practice, especially in collaborative activities.

> *…more practice I had the better I understood most of my work. Most of the time when we work in groups, we are able to see where our problems are and tell each other what is the right or wrong way.*

Students that lived at student residences receive additional tutorials from the residence tutorial programme. They noted that the more activities they were exposed to, the more understandable the complex and abstract concepts became. Some students also received assistance and guidance from other students in other faculties or departments, especially in numeracy and problem solving.

> *At res we meet and practice on all the activities. This is very good as we learn more from each other and also help each other. We also found that more practice together makes us perfect. We not so lost in our difficult sections anymore.*

However, two participants stated that whilst additional practice benefited learning; engaging in activities through collaboration was not a positive experience. They added that their friends would sometimes confuse them even more or they would discuss other issues when they were supposed to be working together.

> *I feel that you rather practice alone, cos others may you feel more dumb, then you just give and do it yourself… working in groups is not a good idea… do their own thing by talking about like the tv soapies and forget the work they had to complete… go off track... waste time.*

As noted earlier, some students prefer to learn on their own, and may resist working with others. Such students would not subscribe to group goals, resulting in poor academic outcomes.

6.6.2 Frequent intense Engagement with Activities drives Hospitality and Finance Language

More than half the group agreed that by continuously practising activities, the language of hospitality and finance no longer seemed abstract and became more familiar. They also

commented that through frequent practice, they found it easier to comprehend, read and understand the activities in the text book or other books in the library.

> *…more exercises, the words were now starting to look familiar and making sense…I realised you practice more, you will learn more… the language in finance confused you before… I make more sense now… as I practiced more… started seeing the meanings of the words myself.*

A few students mentioned that as they attempted different activities, the 'jargon' in hospitality or finance seemed to make more sense. This newfound confidence enabled many students to assume disciplinary identity.

6.6.3 Frequent intense Engagement with Activities drives Motivation and a changed attitude

The participants stated that the continuous practice of activities and exercises changed how they felt about the module. They acknowledged that they initially felt anxious and perplexed, but once they engaged in the activities, they started to enjoy them, whether or not they were compulsory.

> *…used to worry… how I am going to pass… worst fears. But Ma'am* [lecturer] *told me to practice all the activities, and when I did, whether it was right or wrong… getting somewhere even through trial and error. It made sense and started enjoying this subject. I started enjoying this course as it became a positive challenge for me... Cause I am someone that … aim at my best.*

Engagement and enjoyment led to a new depth of understanding. Self-reflection promoted a new focus and appreciation of the subject, ultimately leading to quicker epistemic access.

6.6.4 Frequent intense Engagement with Activities drives Acquired abilities

The participants reported that continuous practice improved their reading and conceptual abilities, as well as their time management skills.

> *The more I practice… the better my reading abilities became… with practice of the activities, I was able to test my time skills… did more and more examples, my skills got better…*

6.6.5 Frequent intense Engagement with Activities drives a New Understanding

For most of the participants, active, repeated engagement in the activities enabled them to see new meaning and gain conceptual understanding of the subject. It allowed them to critically reflect on their work and identify the gaps in how they learnt. The students added that this made the subject less intense and abstract.

> *… practised… I started seeing my strengths and weaknesses in understanding… how wrong I used to learn* [...] *started improving my learning methods and found… to see new light in the subject and that it was making so much of sense. I realise it is not as confusing and difficult as everyone says… you realise your learning mistakes and then this can help you improve.*

6.7 Conclusion

This chapter that is part two of Individual Reality discussed what drove the affinities (the affinity relationship). It showed that, by and large, the participants' experience was positive, although a few reported negative experiences. Chapter 7 presents part three of Individual Reality that discusses the primary and secondary outcomes.

CHAPTER 7: INDIVIDUAL REALITY: REFLECTING ON AFFINITIES AND THEIR RELATIONSHIPS – PRIMARY AND SECONDARY OUTCOMES

7.1 Introduction

Chapter 6 presented a discussion on individual reality that reflected and described the participants' experiences of the relationships between the affinities according to the SID, focusing on the secondary drivers. The current chapter constitutes part three of individual reality, and describes the effects of these drivers (primary and secondary outcomes) of the system.

7.2 Secondary Outcome

7.2.1 Learning Resources

As a secondary outcome, learning resources includes e-learning, tutorials and library resources as its sub-affinities. Learning resources played a significant beneficial role for many students, as it assisted them to overcome their various learning challenges. Students stated that this was due to the new abilities or enhanced skills they acquired, which were reflected in the good test results. They felt encouraged and hence developed a positive attitude to HSFM101 (see Figure 15).

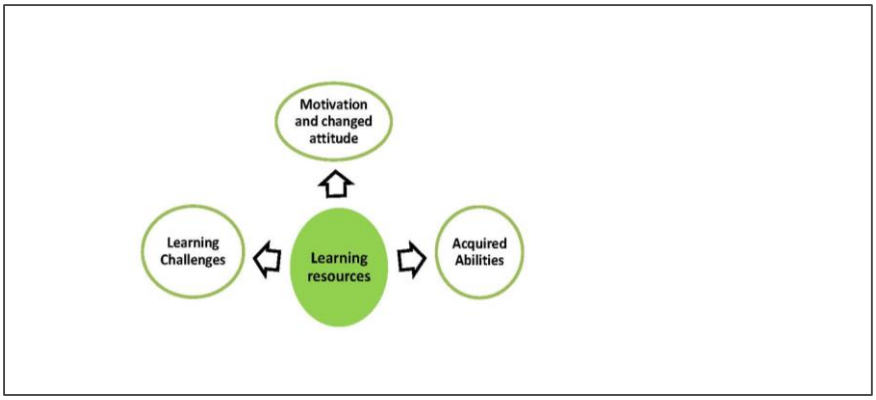

Figure 15 - Learning Resources as a secondary outcome

This affinity establishes how the various learning tools offered at the university; either enabled or constrained knowledge acquisition in HSFM101. For most students, applying the relevant learning tools developed their time management and numeracy skills and improved

their self-confidence. This outcome was due to learning barriers that hindered their understanding of threshold concepts and quantitative literacy being addressed.

7.2.1.1 Learning Resources drive Learning Challenges

7.2.1.1.1 *E-learning*

E-learning offered a pedagogic advantage, where students were able to overcome many learning challenges through authentic learning. Whilst the majority stated that these learning resources motivated them to learn, they added they enabled them to gain deeper insight into the subject matter, thus making the knowledge more meaningful and improving their confidence to learn.

> *…Whatever sections gave me problems like costing for e.g., she would explain it… to me …My journal entries to Mrs. Maniram… was able to communicate with her at the same time.*

These participants highlighted the way in which their meta-cognitive abilities and self-directed learning came to the fore. They mentioned that whilst using the Blackboard reflective journal, they had the opportunity to engage with the lecturer and highlight their learning difficulties. The additional activities shifted their learning from tacit to explicit, especially in relation to the sections they found difficult.

Many students welcomed the feedback they received through the reflective journal writing, as this promoted self-critique and self-awareness. It encouraged them to think about their own learning and promoted critical thought and self-discovery, since they were able to evaluate their own self-efficacy and self-worth. Whilst online learning was a new approach, its novelty stimulated high levels of satisfaction and motivation.

> *BB…feel good about myself as I never had online training before… was something new… I really enjoyed… I… had the chance to see what I was doing was wrong, and could correct by myself… able to do the exercise on my own and finally get it right on my own!*

Some students indicated that due to their introverted personality, they felt awkward or uncomfortable asking questions in lectures. The reflective journals provided a forum to

participate and express themselves. Students with such personalities may put their learning at risk if they fail to seek clarification and guidance. However, in this instance, scaffolding reflective tools present opportunities to enrich explicit learning and reduce ambiguity. This enhances students' confidence and improves their self-efficacy, enhancing academic performance.

> *Prefer BB journals… rather… in class as I am so shy and ashamed to ask questions* […] *what I could not understand* […] *making more sense as she simplified her explanation… feel better now…*

Furthermore the students reiterated that cultural, gender and social diversity presented a learning challenge. Blackboard and social media (WhatsApp - group chat) learning forums helped to address these challenges.

> *…I had a problem with working with people from other cultures,… realised… was a wrong way of thinking, 'cause when we go on the WhatsApp, we are all helping and respect each other and not thinking about the different culture, or if it's a boy or girl… sometimes… was surprised that other students from different cultures… give some answers… I would have never thought of and that are as helpful… was able to learn more from them and look at my own way of learning… this was a great help in getting more ideas and ways of doing things…*

The online forum cultivated a healthy and open space for learning and freedom of expression, enabling the students to appreciate and adapt to diversity. The participants noted that they received online assistance from students from diverse cultures and came to acknowledge the negative stereotypes to which they had previously subscribed. Gradual group cohesion led to positive learning outcomes. Consequently, this forum enabled students to reflect on their own learning.

> *…BB and group chat… can say what we want, nobody is judging you, like they do in class, and for me this was helpful 'cause I could express my thoughts and others could correct it if I was wrong. So I enjoyed this online learning better than classroom… also, we have Mrs. Maniram all to ourselves 'cause she is able guide and to answer most of our questions. But she also makes us work alone…*

Whilst some students expressed their preference for the pedagogy of online engagement rather than a face-to-face approach, being coached and mentored enabled self-regulation and autonomous learning.

However, the online mode of engagement presented challenges to some participants that did not have access to Blackboard (as they do not have internet access or a smart phone).

> *…not able to get on to BB… don't have internet at home… don't… own a phone… my friends are scoring great marks,* […] *are getting more because of practice on Bb and also they have Mrs. Maniram and the group chat to help them out. So I am losing out here. Sometimes I am lucky, my colleagues will give the exercises if they can download it. Now printing is another cost for me!*

These students felt isolated and disadvantaged, resulting in a sense of insecurity, driven by the fear of poor academic outcomes. Alternate ways of securing access are constrained by cost considerations.

One student stated that he could not access online learning as it was against his father's religious beliefs. While he was aware of the benefits of this pedagogic tool, he felt that he had no option but to obey his father's prescripts.

> *I feel very left out, as my father and our pastor told me not to use the WhatsApp, or even the internet. My friends are now doing more work* […] *and they are understanding better, while I am all lost and behind. But I cannot let my father or the church down.*

He added that this posed a threat to his learning. As the facilitator, this requires that I reflect on how I will practice religious and cultural tolerance to enable this student to engage effectively. The design of the assessment must be sufficiently flexible to accommodate alternate scaffolding tools. An alternative approach for this student would be a manual reflective journal, and face-to-face consultations with the facilitator.

Another student stated that she preferred traditional ways of learning and did not find Blackboard useful, as she does not enjoy reading from a computer but prefers hard copy handouts.

I am not in favour of BB, it is difficult to read from the screen and you cannot make any notes on this. But if you gave me the handout or piece of paper I can make notes and comments. So I prefer the old fashion way of learning.

Some students regard change as a threat to learning. Students that were not introduced to the pedagogy of technology in school may be afraid and insecure and lack trust in such approaches. The inevitability of enacting technology in pedagogy, especially in the hospitality industry, is something that students need to come to terms with. As we begin to immerse ourselves in the digital generation, our old habits and approaches to learning have to be reshaped and modified by the demands of the technological global village. Furthermore, this student is likely to be beset with tension and reservations in achieving the collaborative goals of the assessment. Resistance to such an approach may stifle collaborative engagement and meaningful learning.

7.2.1.1.2 ***Tutorials***

Most of the students concurred that the tutorials were significant and positive for their learning journey. They added that the lecturer's role as a tutor was an added advantage, as her style of lecturing was aligned to the style of her tutoring. For this reason, many of these participants stated that they did attend other tutorials conducted by an external tutor.

enjoyed the tuts 'cause we had Mrs. Maniram [lecturer] *taking us and her style of teaching did not confuse us… able to discuss all our problems such as double entry, costing financial statements and the understanding was much easier… not in the big classes where we could hardly hear or even sometimes not see the board… tuts was extremely helpful…*

Furthermore, the students valued tutorials since they are conducted in smaller groups, promoting meaningful engagement and problem-solving. This offered an opportunity to critically reflect on their learning approaches and styles. Moreover, the students used this space to express their underlying learning concerns such as quantitative literacy, time management and threshold concepts. This collaborative tool improved their disciplinary understanding as the close-knit interaction unpacked and unveiled what was previously complex and abstract.

A few participants reported that they were able to peer evaluate one another's work during tutorials, concurrently, reflecting on their own work. They added that the tutorials were much more enjoyable than lectures that constrained collaborative engagement.

> *…understood why I went wrong, my peers will also point out each other's mistakes so we now know why the wrong method we do etc… We not so bored like in the big class… we get lost in the big numbers… and can hardly interact with each other…*

Others highlighted that tutorials helped them to overcome social and diversity challenges. Many of the participants valued the fact that their assessment groups were heterogeneous, as this stimulated new ideas and novel approaches to problem solving and learning. Some students noted that they benefitted from learning to listen and value others' opinions. Closer interaction fostered mutual respect and an enriched and conducive learning platform.

> *"The tutorials gave me an opportunity to appreciate each other as when we went into discussion, we were able to learn from each other and also we stopped having the negative thoughts or judging each other. We came to know that learning from people of different race culture or gender is very benefitting and rewarding for our careers as well. We looked at each other's way of how they do well in certain section. In class we forgot we come from different background, but respect each other more now than before.*

Moreover, the students found that overcoming social stumbling blocks produced a richer and deeper understanding of the assessment activities. They were able to draw on one another's strengths and identify weaknesses. This enabled the students to connect, promoting constructive learning. Apart from simply giving others a voice and an ear, this forum created learning spaces for transformation. The students were able to critically reflect on their own assumptions and achieve transformed understanding through constructive engagement from multiple perspectives.

7.2.1.1.3 ***Library resources***

Most of the students made positive comments on how library resources had influenced their learning. Surprisingly, some noted that this was novel experience as they had never been exposed to a library. They reported that there were no libraries in their schools or communities.

> *…first time that I stepped into a library. In my hometown there is no public library or even in school... But later I learnt there is a help desk and they were able to assist me in whatever way. Finally cos of the project, I started going more often and got to know how to find my way around and use the eBooks as our project required doing some research and this helped me to use the library to its fullest.*

Students from under-resourced areas were initially insecure and anxious about using the facility, but as they became more familiar with this space, they realised how it could support their learning. The library offers a range of support services, especially for first time students, that enrich learning.

However, a few students confessed that they remained uneasy about using the library.

> *I dread using the library! When Ms. tells us we need to do the research for the project, I try to ignore that request as once or twice when I was there I had an embarrassing experience of not finding my way around… many months I was scared to enter, 'cause so many books, and all in English, difficult language, and to find a book that I needed was difficult…we hardly read 'cause hard to understand… So I avoid library as far as possible. Maybe just to use for studying or doing activities but not those books!*

These participants were intimidated by the large number of books, especially as most are in English, making it difficult for them to understand the text. The library appeared to be a foreign learning space, as they did not have a culture of reading. Whilst English as the language of instruction is instrumental in enabling students to access disciplinary knowledge, participants for whom it is a second language face a twofold challenge. According to these students, the first is code-switching, in which they alternate between their home language and English when discussing and deciphering the English text.

Secondly, they have to make sense of what the text means, and apply it, according to their interpretation.

Whilst support services are available (and the tenets of the assessment prescribe use of these services), these students continue to ignore the scaffolds that the media learning centre offers, stifling their cognitive abilities. A lack of the higher reading skills demanded by HE further hinders their access to knowledge.

7.2.1.2 **Learning Resources drive Motivation and a changed attitude**

Most of the participants concurred that the resources prescribed for the authentic assessment motivated them to learn. They added that the tutorial environment was an energetic and vibrant learning space.

> *We found our subject no longer frightening but exciting and the group members in the tuts really made it fun. We became competitive as some of us are aiming for distinctions now (before we were thinking how we are actually going to pass). The excitement of the assessment made us see what it takes to run a business and now we truly appreciate the whole process, although we first thought that there was just too many things to do. But at tuts we learn from each other coping skills and task management.*

Participants reported that active engagement raised their level of confidence. Their initial fear and anxiety diminished as they became actively engaged with the assessment tasks.

This brought about a positive change in their attitude, with some indicating they enjoyed the competitiveness that prevailed during tutorials. They added that this learning space and the assessment activities enabled them to identify with the discipline. Consequently, they found themselves appreciating its learning outcomes and engaging with the content more meaningfully, as the implicit became explicit. Moreover, the students observed that their goals and aspirations became more ambitious. They valued the collaborative efforts as this enabled knowledge construction and meaningful learning.

One student indicated that overcoming the challenge of using library resources enhanced his self-efficacy as he engaged in academic activities that were previously beyond his reach.

> *Coming from a rural area, where we had no electricity or exposure to internet used to be a big challenge for me. When Mrs. Maniram announced at orientation that we going to learn online, I was so confused, as I asked myself what is this online thing? …But later I learnt I had to have some technology skills… As I saw many of my colleagues in my class with smart phones and laptops and I never was even exposed to any of this. So, I told myself that I am going to learn. I got a smart phone learnt how to use it and then started accessing the BB. I was so amazed with this technology that I wanted to learn more and more. So when I visited library they told me that I can use the YouTube tutorials to assist all my concerns. Most students were unable to use this tool and they just gave up. And guess what, I did it and started showing my friends (even in second year) how to access. For me this was a real change and I am so glad that I learnt more than just Accounting!*

This student assisted others to overcome their challenges. He added that the various assessment activities enabled him to acquire graduate attributes and become independent. He proudly explained that he accessed the digital tools and resources on his own to scaffold his learning.

Another student stated that he initially tried to avoid posting online journal entries. When the lecturer queried his lack of entries, he admitted that he assumed this was a female habit that would undermine his masculinity and ego.

> *…first I was scared to use the journal, as I thought that for girls only… but when Ma'am* [lecturer] *and other male friends told me its not like that, and I saw how they were improving, made me to think again… I use it now and it's great.*

He acknowledged his false perceptions and realised that they were precluding his reflective and critical learning. After updating his entries, he was converted to the practice based on its merits.

7.2.1.3 **Learning Resources drive Acquired Abilities**

The learning resources enabled many participants to reflect and search deep within themselves to unleash their skills and abilities. In some cases, they facilitated the development of new skills and abilities. Students reported that applying these skills in the discipline allowed them to measure and evaluate their self-efficacy, thereby improving their self-confidence. This is explained by one student that highlighted how she was able to overcome her passive and introverted nature that hindered her learning.

> *…Tutorials, we are put in little groups to do problem solving and I had to be a team leader. First I was shy and did not know that I was capable to present our answers and lead the group, but when I saw that we on the right direction, I felt so good and also that I could teach others, same time teaching myself and learning more.*

The tutorial provided a platform for this student to draw on her hidden leadership skills and make a presentation. She added that by providing cognitive support to others, she improved her own cognitive abilities, through self-reflection and self-evaluation.

Another student stated that, while he had not previously been exposed to computers and digital technology, he was able to access the e-learning resources independently.

> *The library resources allowed me to see my computer skills at its best. I never thought I had these skills but going online and accessing all the stuff requires many steps, and I can find it very quick, so this helped me a great deal in my project and also understanding…project tasks got me more excited to learn… I also used the YouTube to watch certain activities. So if I had a problem in a certain section, e.g. like costing and F/S*[Financial Statements]*, I would use this YouTube to assist me, and also searching on Google, and remember I never was exposed to computers before.*

The assessments tasks thus motivated him to use his self-determination to take optimal advantage of library resources. This newfound self-reliance took his digital access to greater heights and enhanced his understanding of threshold concepts as well as his quantitative literacy. Self-regulation enabled him to independently navigate his epistemic access.

Some participants commented on the benefits of the Blackboard reflective journal. Reflective writing enabled them to discover their inner abilities (self-efficacy), and to critically evaluate their strengths and weaknesses. This created a greater sense of acceptance and appreciation of the module.

> *…I started writing down how I felt and this made me feel much lighter and accepting the subject in a positive way. I also was able to see what I was doing right and wrong and the feedback I got was very useful, as it showed where I went wrong. Those difficult words make more sense on actual day of project and as I also work the tasks ... able to do the transactions better now.*

Students mentioned that that as they engaged through the online forum, their confidence and self-esteem improved and they started to interact more meaningfully in the discourse of finance. Furthermore, these participants discovered that the meaning of financial jargon became less abstract, enabling improved understanding and meaningful learning. Financial transactions started to make more sense as they played by the rules of the game (enactment of the main assessment task) and critically reflected on their own epistemic understandings.

7.2.2 The University and Lecture Environment

As a secondary outcome, the university and lecture environment created a positive learning experience for most participants. They developed New Understanding (as depicted in Figure 16) of the module HSFM101 through an authentic learning experience.

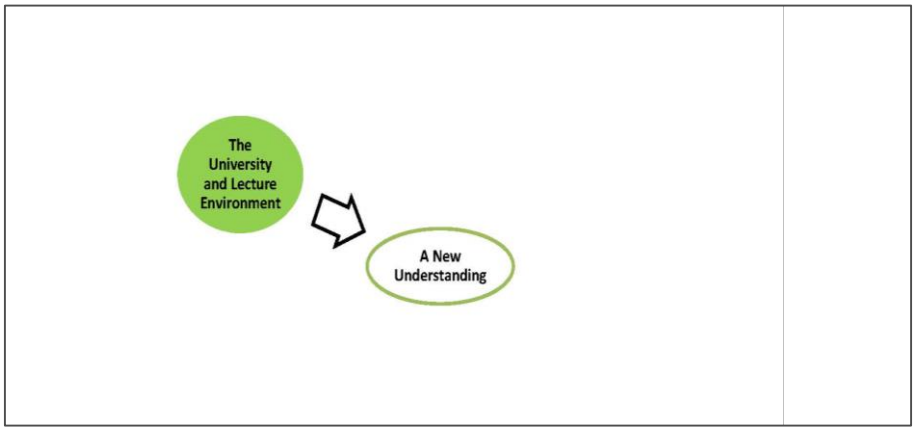

Figure 16 - The University and Lecture Environment as a secondary outcome

The University and Lecture Environment Drive a New Understanding

Most students reported that the lecture and university environment initially presented many challenges. Their prior expectations were not met and the learning environment seemed alienating and unfamiliar.

> *…finally came to the realisation that how I used to learn and do things in school cannot be done the same way here at university… example I used to memorise and by heart learning. This is not acceptable in the project… especially in Finance, I learnt most important is to understand what you learn. I found that the project taught me this to learn through understanding and put things in reality then you can have a clear picture of what's going on.*

However, the assessment tasks and activities enabled them to overcome most of these challenges by changing their mind-set and adapting to the dynamics of a university culture and environment. They commented that their previous ways of learning (rote and surface learning) were not congruent to the pedagogy of higher education (deep and self-regulated learning). Moreover, whilst the design of the assessment fostered self-regulated learning, students lauded the benefits of rigorous engagement. Knowing by doing deepened their cognitive abilities and enriched their understanding. Most importantly, these students confessed that their previous surface approach to learning would not suffice in a HE environment. Acquiring a deeper approach to learning resulted in academic success.

Some participants added that they considered some senior students who were regarded as high achievers, as role models to shape their commitment, responsibility and accountability for learning.

> *I watched other in second and third year and they also told me that my learning ways is not right, so I changed my old ways by now reading more, especially before the lecture and practice the activities even if you get it all wrong. So when I went to class I could see exactly what my fault was and able to correct it then.*

They began to reflect on their own learning approaches, styles and habits and were guided by these senior students to apply the most suitable approach. The benefits became apparent as this improved their disciplinary understanding of HSFM101.

A few participants commented on the differences between the lecture environment and school. As noted in previous chapters, many also initially held negative stereotypes and generalisations about other groups.

> *I soon realised that learning in big classes is part of the university style… working with the project tasks helped me to change my ways of thinking and start accepting those from other cultures and races and gender… as I realised that I will benefit in the end. …I also learnt skills and ways to do things required in hospitality finance… After achieving this change, my learning was no longer such a challenge and my liking to the subject even improved.*

The deep level of engagement required by the assessment activities made them realise that a university culture demands adaptation to diversity and learning in larger groups. They began to value the diverse ideas that emerged in these learning spaces. As students started adjusting to a university culture and environment, they began to see positive results in their epistemic beliefs. This signalled a changed attitude to HSFM101 that resulted in positive learning outcomes.

However, a few students struggled to adjust and adapt to the lecturer's learning and teaching style. Most of these students admitted that they still preferred their old style of learning.

> *So much of work at DUT…have to sort your own self out… my teacher should give us all the notes and we did not have to go to the library at school... projects demands too much from us… hard to cope…but had to give in…*

These students had different academic expectations of a tertiary environment and achieving the assessment goals was a challenge that undermined their academic success. However, in the end they had to accept the new way of life.

Furthermore, some students had to make the transition from teacher dependency to self-dependency in order to achieve the academic goals of the assessment and a university environment. These participants highlighted that they also had to embrace technology as part of their learning; this was a novel pedagogy for most students.

…lecturer used PowerPoint and told us about BB… so scared 'cause in school we never learnt this way… on your own here! So I had to learn to access the Bb. Taught myself to provide my own discussions on the power point slides… use the library quite often and my reading now is much more broadened.

Many noted that they were initially intimidated by the technologies associated with teaching and learning. Due to lack of preparedness, they were distressed by this independent and autonomous learning mode that the assessment required. However, frequent visits to the library, reading and expanding on the summarised PowerPoint slides enabled their self-regulation and sovereignty. They finally came to accept and recognise the value of technology and autonomous learning in HE.

On the other hand, a few students commented that the authentic assessment outcomes facilitated a new way of thinking and understanding.

I now know why I had to do so many little tasks and activities of the project because each one ties up to the other and at the end when we presented the portfolio this tasks that were all complete made me think wow I did this finally and although it was so demanding and time was not on my side I could see what it was leading to, and how it relates to the subject itself.

They described the way in which, each time they completed a mini-task, they derived new meaning and conclusions that enabled a holistic understanding of the subject. The fact that these tasks were broken down into sub-tasks gave students the opportunity for more in-depth engagement with the assessment activities. Consequently, those that were able to complete the tasks/activities made the connections and finally appreciated the learning outcomes of the assessment, enabling them to arrive at a revelatory moment.

7.2.3 Motivation and a Changed Attitude

The authentic assessment motivated students to acquire new abilities and achieve new understanding (see Figure 17). The participants indicated that as they achieved a higher level of self-efficacy, this motivated their learning. Most of the participants indicated that the assessment tasks resulted in metacognitive gains as they were able to come to grips with problems. They added that as their understanding increased, they experienced a sense of reinforcement that significantly improved their attitude to the module.

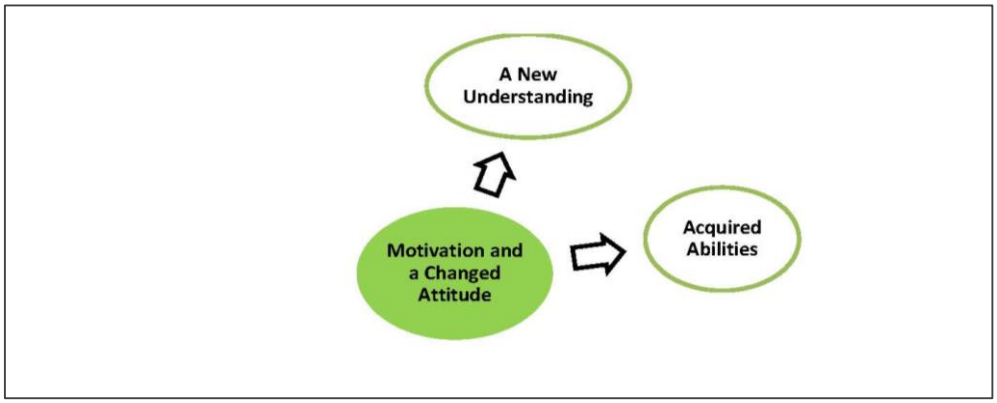

Figure 17 - Motivation and a changed attitude

7.2.3.1 **Motivation and a changed attitude drive Acquired abilities**

Most participants claimed that the authentic assessment surfaced a range of abilities that were either unknown or newly discovered by them. They reported that by applying these 'unknown' skills, they were able to accomplish certain tasks, increasing their confidence and motivation to learn.

> *The different skills I achieved in this assessment now made me more knowledgeable in attempting all other activities in both HSFM101 as well as other modules… everything makes a lot sense now. I really feel motivated and uplifted in my studies; that I am looking forward to second year, and don't have the fear of FM anymore.*

The skills acquired in HSFM101 were also applied in their other learning areas. This self-efficacy not only drove their learning, but caused them to start appreciating the module. The assessment tasks enhanced their understanding of the module's relevance and significance to the hospitality industry. Furthermore, the experience caused them to look forward to their second year of study.

7.2.3.2 **Motivation and a changed attitude drive a new Understanding**

The various authentic assessment activities enabled students to tap into their inner potential and they felt a sense of accomplishment and motivation to learn. This altered their mind-set to accommodate reflective learning.

> *The project activities made me feel excited and wanting to learn. This motivation helped see what I did was right or wrong and I could change my incorrect thinking. For example, I now can understand why costing is needed and how it determines the profit we made. It really kept me thinking… for me this was a big 'wow moment', as I previously struggled with costing and the calculations and the project which real practice gave me a clear picture to my understanding.*

The assessment was more enjoyable for these participants than the traditional assessment methods to which they were accustomed. This motivated them to learn, deepening their understanding. Students commented that they were now able to reflect on their cognitive domains and that this critical reflective exercise enabled them to come to clarity over the course content. Consequently, they found that their conceptual understanding of threshold concepts and quantitative literacy made much more sense. These students were motivated to learn as they were able to access something that was previously remote and out of reach. However, for some students a new understanding had different connotations. As reported by two students, a new understanding meant a change in their style and approach to learning that was motivated by the assessment.

> *The activities was really fun and exciting and this made wanting to do more and more and as I continued practising I realised, that the way I was learning, especially alone and that's how I used to learn in school now has to be changed, because I failed Test 1 as used the wrong method and style of learning. The team members also motivated me and this showed me how they learn, and now I know I was using a silly old approach before.*

They added that while they were initially reluctant to change, applying the new learning approach and style eventually led to positive academic results. This was mainly due to the collaborative nature of the assessment that called for critical reflection when it came to

their learning. The changes meant that they had to expend less effort and they had greater passion to achieve academic success.

7.3 Primary Outcome: A New Understanding

The primary outcome, *a new understanding* that influenced of the system is depicted in Figure 18. This affinity reflects how the participants came to understand the purpose and value of the learning resources and how they enhanced their understanding. These included library support services, especially the online library, as well as being able to access Blackboard. The application of the various activities and the use of reflective journals further expanded their understanding.

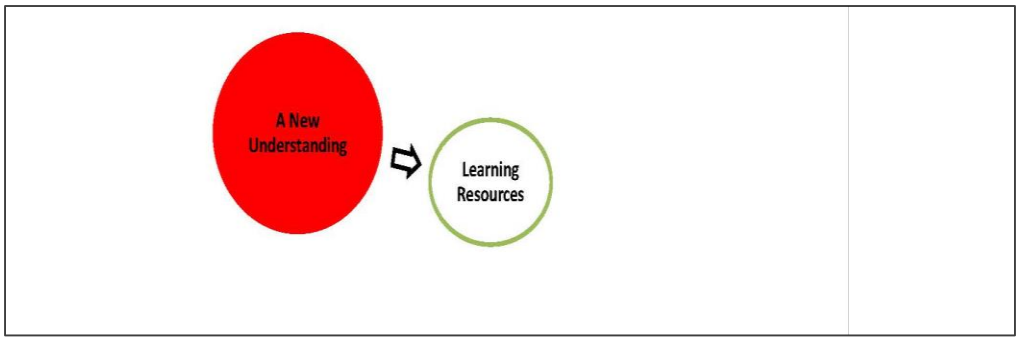

Figure 18 - A New Understanding as a primary outcome

The participants recounted their initial frustration, challenges and difficulties in accessing the library learning resources associated with the assessment tasks.

> *I really struggled to use the library and its online facilities, and often saw my friends trying to open them with no problems. But I finally practised and tried and was shocked as I was finally able to see why I was not able to. So I corrected my mistakes and now know exactly what to do when I want to go to library tutorials or e-books or even finding books on shelves.*

Witnessing their peers accessing such resources motivated them to try harder. They were pleasantly surprised when, through trial and error, several attempts and self-discovery, they were finally able to identify and overcome their limitations.

A few participants initially experienced difficulties in accessing and understanding Blackboard in order to use the online reflective tool.

> *The BB was my challenge… I used to feel left out when others are using and especially having the opportunity to communicate with Mrs. Maniram. So I told myself that I have to learn myself. I practiced and sometimes asked my friend to assist, and finally I was able to open BB and start attempting the activities and updating my journal. Although I started a bit late, at least I know and next year I won't have this problem as BB is a big help for me.*

These participants had not used this software before, and were thus uneasy. However, determination and persistence enabled them to achieve the assessment goals. While they had a delayed start, they gradually became familiar (with some help) with its technicalities and trouble shooting. Moreover, these participants came to appreciate the merits of reflective writing and that the constructive feedback they had missed out on limited their academic progress. Their determination to self-discover and work independently, allowed them to reflect on their own efficacies.

7.4 Conclusion

This chapter concluded the discussion on individual reality. It reflected and elaborated on the secondary and primary outcomes of the IQA process. The participants related their experiences through the ten affinities that they generated and how these affinities relate to one another by presenting the drivers and outcomes of their experiences in the authentic assessment. Whilst most participants stated that the authentic assessment strategy enabled epistemological access, some raised challenges that constrained such access.

The following chapter 8, provides a more detailed account of the affinities or themes that emerged from the IQA study.

CHAPTER EIGHT: DISCUSSION

8.1 Introduction

Chapters 4, 5, 6 and 7 presented both an account of Group reality (focus groups) as well as Individual reality (semi-structured interviews). The espousal of IQA as a research approach enabled me to identify the elements of the system and their relationships (created by the participants) and the dynamism of such interaction. In addition, the rationale for this qualitative design served as guide to attain a thorough understanding of the participants' learning experiences, by drawing on the participants' voices and how they construct their realities.

This chapter proposes to merge the aforementioned chapters into a discussion of the key affinities or themes identified in this study. The established affinities reconnoitre what constitutes epistemological access through authentic learning. The enactment of authentic assessment pedagogy was construed as a vehicle to advance learning. In their entirety, the findings of this study suggest that integrating an authentic assessment into the HSFM101 curriculum validates epistemic access; as this was well received by most participants.

The belief held by most hospitality students that finance is neither relevant, nor a prerequisite for the hospitality manager was reconsidered by students. Consequently, the initial resistance and fear students experienced prior to the commencement of HSFM101 were dispelled during the enactment of the authentic assessment. During the authentic learning stages, students came to the realisation that frequently engaging with HSFM101 activities, being able to overcome diversity in learning, and reflecting on their own learning, enabled them to acquire the practical skills, along with discursive and linguistic practices of the discipline. Such affordances signalled intense confidence, motivation, and efficacies that contributed to meaningful learning and aspiring to successful academic performance within the disciplines.

In order to understand the phenomenon of what enables or restrains epistemological access in HSFM101 students through authentic assessment; in this chapter, I revert to the review of

literature. Furthermore, the review aims to understand the meaning of the phenomenon holistically and the ability to make *intrasystemic inferences (*Northcutt and McCoy, 2004; Rowe, 2014). This means that participants arrive at logical assumptions or conclusions on how each element or affinity of the system relate to each other.

Given the complexities of the way in which students learn in an authentic pedagogy; I will draw and extract the most pertinent findings of the ten affinities and their relationships (in some instances) as described in an IQA system. I will begin with the primary driver, Life's contradictions, as this affinity presented an overwhelming response. This powerful primary driver included both tangible (material) and intangible (family support structure and care) resources, which undoubtedly, was an agent, which either could enhance or hinder students' epistemic access.

8.2 Life's Contradictions

The extent to which students acquire epistemic access in the module HSFM101 is complex and multi-layered, and needs to be understood in context. Evidence from the findings (Chapter Five and Six) suggests that HSFM101 students are perplexed with a range of contradictory aspects of their personal lives, gender, economic status, culture, religious beliefs and family situations, in acquiring epistemological access. In many instances, student engagement in authentic activities was constrained in various ways that were often in conflict with their social, family responsibilities, and other expectations that were widely held in their personal lives and life management.

For many of these students, their personal lives and background (social, economic and cultural) out of formal learning environment is viewed as a limitation to acquiring epistemic access. Owing to the complexities of the students' home environment and personal lives, many are deemed as working class (and in some cases poor, indigent students; that mainly have single parents or guardians that are unemployed or living below the poverty line), and are the first generation members in their families to attend higher education. Given this scenario, their families do not have the academic or economic capital and resources that

may augment or guide their academic achievement. Their prior schooling has not adequately afforded the opportunities to be able to think and work independently, allocate their time resources effectively, or to manage the relevant study skills and approaches that a higher education institution demands. Some students as single mothers are required to balance their personal and financial resources to accommodate their academic activities. Note that this description of context is not meant to pathologise the plight of such students, but to offer a description of the circumstances from which students launch into higher education studies.

The perceived burden of being an FGS presents students with a certain amount of vulnerability when it comes to their learning, and concomitant academic and non-academic challenges in their pursuit of epistemological access. In this study, the non-academic challenges include the type of accommodation, rurality, commutation, financial resources, family emotional support, being a young parent, personal problems, family stress and pressure and violence at home that inadvertently influenced student's epistemological access. Contrary to students that have families or parents that obtained post-secondary qualifications, first generation students are perceived to be lacking the academic capital and affective support that may contribute positively towards epistemic access. Parents with higher capital resources are more likely to support their children's academic goals positively which increases their chances of epistemic access and success (Bourdieu and Passeron 1979).

It can be argued that the socio-economic backgrounds of first-year students are not sufficiently foregrounded by HEI's when planning for the successful implementation of first-year student support programmes (Mkonto, Kakaza and Esambe, 2017). Furthermore, the causal relationship between financial resources and academic achievement cannot be ignored (Steyn, Harris and Hartell, 2014; Ngalo-Morrison, 2017). Scholarly findings also heed to the lack of financial affordability and difficulties that account for many of the reasons why students compromise their academic goals. An alternative to fund their studies is the securing of part-time employment, or working in their parents informal businesses, which divert time and energy from commitment to assessment and group activities, see for

example (Chow, 2007; Robotham, 2009). This presents a hurdle to student epistemic access, as they are obliged to balance their work, academic activities, personal and social lives in order to cope with the perpetual engagement of the assessment.

The findings on this affinity (Chapter 5 and 6 and 7) also indicate that students that stem from socio-economically deprived backgrounds are unable to bear additional costs of financing their higher education activities. In this instance, the authentic assessment burdens students with additional costs, such as securing capital for the project, media/digital and stationery costs necessary for the success of the learning outcome. Clearly, these students are not prepared for this constraint. However, the design of the assessment created opportunities for students to identify resourceful ways to overcome this financial hurdle. Subsequently, this initiative engenders reflection and problem solving as an epistemic means to succeed academically.

On the other hand, some of the students indicated that, apart from the additional costs associated with the project, they also had to identify ways for daily subsistence and survival. Hence time and energy was absorbed in these challenges and finding the required time and energy to complete assessment tasks was relegated to a bare minimum. Low socio-economic status is most commonly associated with BWC students (Padgett, Goodman, Johnson, Saichaie, Umbach and Pascarella 2010). Most participants in this study were BWC, and many of them originate from remote rural and township areas, where many of them struggle to secure suitable accommodation that is conducive for learning, whilst a few students' students were fortunate to secure spaces at student's residences. With regard to accommodation, BWC students can only afford accommodation in townships geographically situated on the outskirts of cities (Walker 2005). Studies also found that students from impoverished backgrounds may have the potential to succeed at university, but may fail to comprehend the actual financial expectations that a tertiary institute may burden them with (Hannaway, 2013).In such a context, students may tend to explore other options, such as even abandoning their studies or look into alternative sources to finance their studies.

Another finding that came out strongly was the acknowledgement of financial access to academic resources such as text books computers or even mobile technology. Concomitantly, these resources were the most tangible and determining factor that facilitated their epistemic access in higher education. For participants who able to access to these resources, expressed their determination to optimise available opportunities to the best of their abilities. Providing access to these resources means that students have the potential to engage optimally in both the academic and social activities that underlie the tenets of the assessment.

Students also cited the fact that having no access to decent accommodation, transport and food were amongst other reasons that posed barriers to their epistemic access. For many, the lack of a conducive learning environment or even food for that matter (that is required for students' cognitive performance that ensures academic success), fundamentally, derails their pathways to towards epistemic access. The urgency to provide accommodation and food, most especially in the case of first year students that emerge from rural and impoverished backgrounds, cannot be under-emphasised when considering the teaching and learning and academic success of students in higher education (DHET, 2013). Students who do not have the financial means to meet the basic subsistence needs are at greater risk of academic failure. A corollary to this includes restricted engagement with their academic activities and poor interaction with group members during the enactment of assessment tasks; and in some instances they may want to withdraw from all academic activities altogether (Letseka and Maile, 2008; Kassier and Veldman, 2013; Dominguez-Whitehead, 2017).

Coupled with accommodation was the cry for safe, affordable, and reliable transport for many of the participants. All too often, students will stay away from campus to address their subsistence needs. This is because they cannot afford the escalating costs of transport or in some cases the absence of reliable and safe transport deters them from attending campus. Whilst the design of the authentic assessment demanded that students comply with regular attendance; since the tasks are enacted progressively, students that are inattentive or absent in group activities and class activities may be at risk in updating and getting on terms

with their assessment tasks. For this reason, regular attendance is crucial. Likewise, students that display and adhere to regular attendance and engagement have a significantly greater prospect of academic success, in contrast to those who do not (Steenkamp, 2009).

Moreover, the digital demands of coursework outstrip home resources. In order for students to engage effectively with the assessment tasks; the employment of ICT'S tools becomes a material imperative of the home environment. However for [m]any students the absence of such a home facilities impedes their efforts and academic progress. Many failed to complete assessment tasks. In such cases, these students felt excluded when it came to engaging with their assessment activities.

Unfortunately some students living in poverty were unsuccessful in securing accommodation at students' residence, and/or obtaining the NSFAS loan that would provide this resource. Many students embarked on a wave of protests in 2015/2016. Hence, in such instances, students that did participate (or were intimidated to partake) in the protest neglected their academic commitments.

Given that public transport is often beyond their budget, some students were living in accommodation that is neither safe nor conducive for studying. Such a scenario necessitates greater urgency for the university to provided accommodation at students' residences on or close to campus. Similarly, this finding accords with Tinto's Student Integration Model (2000) that favours the promotion of student's accommodation at student residences for two reasons. One is that, it positively promotes student integration and engagement and secondly, the social supportive residential setup structures enhance academic success and persistence.

A counter-argument, however, is that viewing students through a deficit lens does not necessarily mean that these students are devoid of traits that may enable their epistemic access. There are those students that were able to draw from amongst a variety of resources such as: the strength of personal aspiration; family or community support; as well as the efficacy to navigate through social institutions in order to succeed in the academic

environment. Likewise, many of these students enter HEIs with internal and external assets that ought to be recognised and nurtured. Hence, the ability of working class students to transcend all adversities in the desire to academically succeed; certainly attributes resilience as a latent trait that should overrule this deficit thinking. Similarly, comparing students of a working class or in poverty to the elite and making evaluations often masks the various unspoken assumptions and deductions associated with a deficit mentality regarding their relative performance (Devlin, 2011; Yosso, 2005).

For some of the participants, the construct of disadvantage is perceived rather as a motivating factor that positively motivates them to produce desired results. These accounts demonstrate not only that student are able to build on their non-cognitive strengths such as perseverance, grit[16] and resilience, but also the desired agency that propels them to transcend the challenge of their lived circumstance. When students are convinced that knowledge is a source of power they often become invested and immersed in their leaning; (Duckworth, 2016; Kundu, 2017). Hence they are able to act and change the circumstances around them.

Likewise, the religious, cultural and community beliefs of students also offer useful insights on their goals for academic success. For some of these students, their resilience and perseverance to attain academic success was largely motivated by their strong religious ethos and community upbringing. This is also confirmed by a number of research findings that signpost the role of religion as significant in the worldview of BWC people (see for example, Dumangane, 2017; Adegoke, 2015).

Reflecting on some of the participants' narratives (Chapters 5, 6, 7) it became apparent that contextual barriers to epistemic access can be compromised. However, the perseverance, resilience and tenacity of many of the participants became evident, as they were able to overcome some of the challenges experienced during the assessment activities. Given such

[16] Recent studies indicates grit highlights the importance that "passion and persistence towards long-term goals" can in fact aid students in overcoming their daily challenges (Kundu,2017:69).

constraints, for many of these participants the desire to succeed academically surpasses all calamities and is indeed a momentous feat as described by them. Griffin (2006) has argued that some BWC students' foreground themselves as academic leaders that inspires and provide hope to the underserved members of their community as a means of escaping from their poverty and calamitous circumstances. In this way they attain academic success in higher education, which they perceive as the threshold to financial and personal success, as well as restoring family and community pride (Kamper and Steyn, 2011).

8.3 Frequent intense Engagement

This secondary driver of frequently engaging with assessment tasks emerged most strongly by participants as an affordance to epistemic access. The design of the assessment engaged students in an array of activities ranging from the structured to the unstructured. Structured activities comprised the traditional contact lectures, tutorials, homework activities, and textbook. Unstructured activities ranged from blackboard online activities to students' residence activities (informal tutoring). Student's frequent engagement with activities confirmed that students invested their time, effort and resources in the various activities prescribed by the assessment. A corollary to this enabled their optimal experience, practice and commitment towards the fulfilment of positive learning outcomes (Trowler, 2010). For many students, the affordance of regularly engaging with assessment tasks and activities created room for reflection and interpretation. It is imperative that subjects such as Hospitality finance ought to allow students to think critically, interpret, and organise financial information (Berger, 2008; DoE, 2008). This implies that students ought to be provided with opportunities to learn through practice or active learning (Fortin and Legault, 2010). In such situations, frequent practice of activities and feedback allowed students to ask questions such as *how and why*.

International scholarly findings suggests that promoting student engagement significantly and positively correlates to academic performance (Strydom and Mentz 2010; Kuh, 2009; Harper and Quaye, 2009; Schreiber and Yu, 2016). Whereas in a South African context, students' engagement is viewed as a predictor for student persistence and institutional practices that may enable or constrain student success (Wawrzynski et al, 2012).

Learning spaces for most students were reconfigured as student centeredness; since students began to take ownership of their own learning. This was resulting from the tasks associated with the authentic assessment, enabling students to become more actively engaged both inside and outside the classroom. Adopting a student-centred teaching approach ensures that students are actively engaged, increasing the responsibility and accountability of each student (Jaijairam, 2012). The narrative accounts of participants indicated that student's repetitive encounters with the various assessment tasks and activities began to displace the initial myths, fallacies and perceptions they held in respect of accepting and valuing Finance in a Hospitality environment. These participants were able to draw upon both their cognitive and affective strengths since the frequent engagement with tasks was recognised as enlightening learning moments. Owing to the perpetual engagement with activities, students acknowledged that they felt a stronger sense of self-confidence, and to a certain extent, a sense of independence, as they began to take responsibility for their own learning as new tasks unfolded in the project. Taking ownership for learning was evident, as students understood that there was no prescribed solution or memorandum to the project, noting that a key feature of the authentic assessment task is that the activities and tasks are ill-defined (see Chapter 2; Reeves et al., 2002; Ashford-Rowe et al., 2014).

As many students cited, the enjoyment of the tasks not only stimulated higher confidence levels, but they also began to see new patterns of understanding financial concepts and processes that began to make sense to. Hence, a corollary to this cognitive active behaviour replaced the students' initial feelings of alienation and anxiety and enabled them towards a deeper understanding and approach to learning.

It would seem that students displayed the three dimensions of behavioural engagement (Trowler, 2010), as students participating in this study can be observed to reflect enthusiasm and interest in interacting and engaging with activities whenever possible. The emotional dimension was represented by students' enjoyment of and confidence in undertaking the assessment tasks and activities. Thirdly, the cognitive dimension represented students' deeper understanding and disciplinary meaning of content that

enabled their epistemic access as they embarked in progressively in the assessment activities. The authentic learning experience allowed students to make connections to the theoretical knowledge, and to explore new knowledge deeper into context, as noted elsewhere by Lombardi (2007). Owing to these connections made, students had the opportunity to engage into deeper learning, most significantly by means of the various authentic activities and settings (see also Lombardi, 2007).

8.4 Collaboration

For most of the students in this study, access towards knowing was mainly attributable to the collaborative nature of the authentic tasks. The social constructivist nature of the authentic assessment advocates for students to work collaboratively. According to this study, collaborative efforts were raised across different platforms, ranging from the assessment group activities (most recurrences), tutorials, reflective online learning, as well as students forming their own private study cohorts (which they referred to as moonlighting – see Chapter 4).

The majority of the participants in this study expressed their appreciation for being collectively assessed. For most of them, the initial anxieties and tensions they felt at the start of the semester were mainly reduced through group activities. The shared camaraderie elevated student confidence; thus increasing their willingness and excitement to learn.

A collaborative approach to learning is in keeping with Vygotsky's (1978) Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), in the sense that such an approach steers students to push beyond their individual level of thinking, and thereafter, scaffolds their cognitive processes. Students admitted that they had long felt alienated and disengaged from HSFM101, as the synergistic benefits of the assessment perpetuated the need to work together, as well as independently. Collaborative learning under the guidance of a facilitator can lead students to deeper learning and thinking, and has the ability to develop positive interdependence and individual accountability (Mills, 2009). Students felt that the group's activities, the

tutorials and the reflective engagement built and increased their self-confidence and enabled them to even work independently.

On the other hand, students did admit the initial tensions and discomfort they experience when working together; most importantly, when they could not reach consensus during their assessment activities. Conversely, these negative experiences were raised and resolved in other platforms of collaboration, such as the smaller group tutorial sessions, as well as the reflective experience, at most times. However a few of the students reported on their dissatisfaction and discomfort experienced with group activities. These participants commented that they did not derive any benefit from the group activities; since they found such an approach as discouraging and unfair, as they had their reasons not to share their knowledge. These students found that they could not rely or trust other people's efforts or input, and preferred to work in isolation. Furthermore, these students indicated that they are burdened with most of the assessment tasks and responsibilities, whilst the other members are passive and fail to contribute towards group goals and achievement. It is well documented in the literature (see for example Levin, 2005; Knight, 2007; and Byrnes and Byrnes, 2007) that students oppose working in groups, and can actually achieve more academically if they work independently.

However, a significant finding of this study extends the understanding of academic competencies and goals in the field of hospitality. Concomitant to this expanded definition does in fact reflect that the majority of participants actually appreciate the opinions, views and input of their peers and to work harmoniously as a team player. The participants came to the realisation that a core skill required in the hospitality industry is having the ability to collaboratively communicate, interact and solve problems. To corroborate this, a growing body of scholarship confirms that deploying a collaborative learning strategy affords students the opportunity not only to learn better from one another towards qualifying with competency in their chosen field, but also to build positive interrelationships with each other in the classroom (Powell and Kalina, 2009; Atkins, 2010; Thondhlana and Belluigi, 2014). Moreover, these scholarly findings affirm that a collaborative learning platform allows for students to communicate and interact socially and intellectually.

A further observation that was made in this study, was that fostering collaborative activities improved and developed more than students' interpersonal skills, teamwork, communication and problem-solving skills. It also invested value in their emotional intelligence and capabilities (Spowart, 2009; Bagul and Marzuki, 2007 and Cheng; 2008; Kovari, 2011; Bharwani and Butt, 2012). Hospitality students that display emotional intelligence traits add value to the discipline of hospitality, as they become improved team players and are able to handle conflict and stress situations in a more approachable manner (Bharwani and Butt, 2012). Studies also confirmed (Chew, Zain and Hassan; 2013) that students who were more emotionally intelligent did in fact perform better when compared to those who lacked emotional intelligence. Likewise, Malik and Shahid (2016) concluded, in their study of management students, that the curriculum design ought to adequately reflect the emotional intelligence of our students, as emotional intelligence is a key strength towards managerial success.

In addition, collaboration presented students with opportunities to reflect on what they knew, and their own learning. In one study, Levin (2005) advocates that working together in groups affords students an academic learning opportunity, as they become immersed in the assessment and processing of alien values and ideas, and react to unfamiliar 'knowledge' territories. Being able to reflect, allowed the students to channel their efforts towards evaluating their current learning. Hence, these reflective exercises deploy and develop metacognitive abilities to tackle what students know and need to know, and to lead to new understandings, planning regulation strategies, monitoring, reflection and analysis (Boud et al, 1985; Yang et al., 2016).

The above findings have important implications for the effectiveness with which one can perform academic tasks, or achieve academically. This will be determined by whether a student prefers to become alienated or engaged during the assessment of group-based activities (Chemers, Hu and Garcia, 2001; Masika and Jones,2016).

8.5 Language

A majority of the participants confirmed language to be a constraint to their epistemic access in HSFM101. According to these participants, the language of hospitality and financial jargon proved abstract and foreign to most of them. Further to compound this complexity of conceptual understanding, the disciplinary language of HSFM101 is presented in a language of instruction (English) that they are unaccustomed to. Certainly, the hospitality service industry comes with its distinct lexicon that hospitality students are expected to be familiar with. However, many of these students being BWC students from very rural and remote backgrounds never had the exposure to hotels or fine dining restaurants in which a career in hospitality takes place. Likewise, students that lack the tacit or implicit knowledge (see for example in Chapter 2) of fine dining/hotel accommodation experience are indeed confronted with greater complexities in interpreting and understanding hospitality financial transactions. Similarly, these challenges were also presented with most of the students that lack a finance background or accounting at secondary level that further restricted their access to the discipline. Given that most of these students are BWC; it was evident that many of them did not have exposure to everyday basic financial literacy that evolves from their habitus (see chapter 2). A corollary to students that are less versed to the application of business concepts and terminologies does indeed limit their EA. Bourdieu (1997) views language as a social and a cultural value that children bring from their families, relatives and communities that influence the academic success of students.

For many of these students, the language of instruction taught at school was in their vernacular, and not in English. Although students mentioned that in school, their tests and examinations were presented in English; their English preparedness nonetheless fell short of academic requirements (Kamper & Steyn, 2011). Students grappled in lectures, with the written texts and activities presented in what in practical terms amounts to an unfamiliar language. For most of these students the added exposure to disciplinary jargon sharply steepens the gradient of their learning curve. Some studies have revealed that students' language proficiency is a predictor of success in introductory financial accounting (Steenkamp, Baard & Frick, 2009).

Likewise, students' acquisition of knowledge may be hampered since their linguistic and communicative background does not accord to the expectations of a university (Van Wyk, 2008). In this instance, students are at a language disadvantage, owing to the unfamiliar nature of such a non-traditional type of assessment.

Moreover, the language of the assessment criteria and its requirement presented students with interpretation challenges. Students that are English second language speakers (in some cases third language speakers) may struggle to conceptualise the lecture content, which can discourage positive learning for such students, given the difficulties they encounter in expressing themselves (Langtree, Razak, and Haffejee, 2018).

The narrative reflection of some students indicated that as they were placed in a group that did not include their friends or those of the same vernacular; they were forced to communicate in English. Whilst this was reported as an initial challenge and restrained cohesive learning, the frequency of mutual engagement soon began to diminish. Consequently, the regular acquaintance, guidance and support that was gained collectively, assisted in disabling these negative concerns. This affiliated support from one another, meant that students were beginning to recognise, and reduce most aspects of language barriers by assisting one another. This included improving their fluency in English, discovering *the rules of the game* (see for example, Morrow, 2009) and becoming familiar with the disciplinary jargon that is affiliated to that of a hospitality environment. The additional language support from peers also assisted students in deciphering financial texts and being able to apply financial transactions. Hence, it was soon discovered that the synergistic effects of group effort helped students to improve their understanding of course content, reporting that it lead to greater clarity as their learning confidence increased.

8.6 Learning Challenges

This secondary driver highlighted the challenges presented to participants in acquiring epistemic access. The four pertinent sub-affinities of this driver included diversity, threshold concepts, and a lack of secondary level accounting, and time management.

8.6.1 Diversity

This sub-affinity ranging from a web of cultural, racial, ethnic and gender posed many epistemic challenges for most of the participants during this constructivist mode of assessment.

The affective learning domain of students reflected their attitudes, preferences and resistance towards their group members. A significant finding was that students were reluctant to associate with peers who were perceived as being different; as this impeded their expressions to cultural and religious values. A number of studies conducted in higher education within a South African context reveal that negative interactions exist amongst diverse students at South African universities (Moguerane 2007; Van der Merwe, 2009). The negative stereotyping and negative beliefs and assumptions that students hold with regards to their peers came across as a hindrance to academic goal accomplishment. More than two decades after the demise of formal apartheid, stereotyping and racism persists relatively unabated. One of the damaging effects of stereotypes is that they fail to recognise and accept the differences in social groups, leading to mistaken perceptions and/or unsuitable reactions towards others (Bergh and Theron, 2009).

Another prevalent finding was the reluctance of male students to cooperate or take orders from female students during group activities. It is also noted that social naiveté; intermingled with cultural chauvinism – where one believes that one's own cultural ways are the benchmark by which everyone needs to conform – presents a barrier to epistemic access (Bhandary, 2017). For students that experienced these cultural differences their epistemic access, during the initial stages of the assessment, was compromised.

However, as students began to share their input and exchange ideas, group members began to see the value of their peers' contribution. For most groups, a gradual sense of mutual trust and confidence developed. One or two groups experienced dissonance amongst their members, where the students performed and presented poorly, and highlighting epistemic gaps in learning. Those students that enacted inclusively benefited thereof, mentoring and guiding those members in most need through the tasks, and learning from each other as

they worked. Significantly, such cohesive groups afforded students epistemological access, where the design of the assessment revealed its potential to harness diversity.

8.6.2 Threshold Concepts

The “troublesome” nature and failure to understand the theoretical content and procedures for most of the threshold concepts *(TC)* such as double entry, costing, and profit and loss was cited by many of the participants. However, students did not add any responses to the contribution of the authentic tasks to double entry principle, but rather largely cited the TC of costing and profit and loss. Students cited the epistemic value of the authentic assessment tasks on the latter two threshold concepts. The participants’ interactive active engagement with authentic tasks included that learning *by doing* entailed not only *know that* but rather *know how.* Consequently, in most instances, where students felt at an impasse, this was replaced by “aha” moments, as the nature of the activities allowed them to gradually move away from liminality and enter a threshold, crossing over into new knowledge. Students that experience difficulty in understanding threshold concepts may be left in a state of 'liminality', a suspended state or 'stuck place' (Land, 2012). Whilst assessment activities may create opportunities for students to experience troublesome knowledge and a lack of familiarity, their perception of these assessment activities allowed for deeper reflection into their current understanding of the concepts (Springfield, 2017).

8.6.3 Lack of Accounting in school

The participants presented mixed responses towards this affinity, where they did not have accounting as a subject in secondary school level left most of them feeling alienated and citing low levels of confidence. Different studies researched in South African context indicated that not having done accounting at matriculation or Grade 12 level placed first year accounting students at a significant risk (Baard, Steenkamp, Frick, and Kidd ,2010; Papageorgiou, 2017).

However, the social engagement proved by the design of the assessment, in many instances, reduced these feelings of discomfort and fear for students. Likewise, the participants expressed their excitement about the assessment that actually motivated them to appreciate finance and its contextual meaning in a hospitality environment. For those

students who did do accounting at school, whilst this subject was never their favourite in school, they developed an affinity for Finance, and even began to consider it a career option.

8.6.4 Time management

For most of the participants, this sub-affinity presented a challenge. Most significantly cited was that most students had very limited time to engage with assessment activities, owing to the nature of their home life. Some students also mentioned that had part time employment, whilst others had to travel long distances to and from campus. These findings also concur with those of Steenkamp *et al.* (2009) who confirmed a lack of transport or no transport as a constraint to students' academic success. An interesting finding was that although students did have the time (especially those that lived at residences), the experience of managing their time due to a lack of familiarity with a tertiary environment and the novelty of the project, presented them with difficulty in executing the assessment tasks. They found time to be a demanding aspect of the task when doing preparation, coordinating and coming to group consensus during the initial stages of the assessment. Similar studies also verified that the success of students' first-year performance is significantly influenced by how they manage their time (Fraser & Killen, 2003; Jansen & Bruinsma, 2005, Steenkamp et al., 2009).

The findings when it came to these sub-affinities confirmed the challenges with which students are confronted, where in most cases access was constrained. However, the nature of an authentic design in most instances presented the different ways to overcome these perceived and enacted challenges.

8.7 Acquired abilities and skills

The findings on this secondary driver suggest that students acquire abilities and skills during the engagement of the authentic assessment that are necessary for the hospitality industry. Likewise, students cited that the experience of the assessment released their special attributes and talents, bringing to bear their dormant potential. According to the students' report, these skills and abilities derived from the assessment, ranged from being an effective

team player with developed leadership abilities; efficient communication skills, effectively managing their time; while improving their numeracy skills, and entrepreneurial abilities. Hence, connecting disciplinary knowledge into authentic tasks in finance-related courses is likely to develop and nurture professional skills (Hui and Koplin, 2011). A hospitality graduate requires a distinctive mixture of both hard and soft skills (also known as pervasive skills). However, ensuring that the student is able to perfect and demonstrate so-called 'soft skills' proves challenging to assess in the traditional classroom. A notable finding in an accounting study (Barac and Du Plessis, 2014) was that heads of departments perceive the acquisition of some pervasive skills can be most effectively demonstrated by Accounting students whilst in employment, rather than by means of the theoretical confines of the university pedagogical framework.

Given that some studies describe hospitality students as mainly kinaesthetic learners, most consider learning by doing to be more meaningful (Yan and Cheung, 2012). 'Learning by doing', 'action learning' and 'gaining experience' are seen to be some of the main benefits that hospitality students gain in praxis and this is often perceived by students to be a more meaningful form of learning in comparison to the traditional method of learning (Chen and Shen 2012). As a result, the nature of authentic activities gave students the confidence to develop and shape their disciplinary identity, enabling meaningful learning. In another instance, Pajares (2008) supports the fact that using *authentic* mastery experiences, understood as a source of self-efficacy belief, enhances skill development. Similarly, a students' mastery experience will enhance his/her self-concept, just because of his/her authentic capabilities. Likewise, students focused on mastery experiences are most likely to practice more critical thinking and processing strategies, as well as becoming more resourceful.

8.8 Learning Resources: Tutorials, library, e-learning

Learning Resources, a secondary driver of this study, was inclusive of three aspects: tutorials, library support, and Blackboard activities and was cited as scaffolds (see chapter 2 and 4) that enabled epistemic access during their authentic learning experience. However, social media (which was not part of this study) was an introduced scaffold formed by the participants that somehow enriched their learning experiences. I will begin discussing each

'scaffold' separately, since the relative importance of each 'scaffold' may vary across contexts, as each enabled positive learning differently.

8.8.1 Engaging through face to face tutorials

Engaging with a large number of students simultaneously in large lecture halls was expressed to have been daunting and alienating by most of the participants of this study. A growing body of literature holds that learning in larger classes contributes to poor academic outcomes in South Africa (Simpson, 2015; Govender, 2015). Hence one of the outcomes of massification within a South African context (see Chapter 1) created the urgency for a tutorial system that accounted for the ethnic, racial, cultural, socio-economic and linguistic backgrounds of the student cohort, with the intention of providing epistemological access to a traditionally under-served student majority (Clarence-Fincham and Petersen, 2014; Frade, 2017).

Many of the students reflected that the tutorial learning space made them feel welcome, more interactive, and was more inclusive towards their learning style and approach. This is contrary to learning in large lecture halls, where they felt lost and disengaged. Hence, it can be asserted that to a greater extent, the provision of tutorials for most of the participants (Layton and McKenna, 2016) guided them successfully to the realisation of the assessment goals. Similarly, some of the participants reported that the tutorial sessions enabled them to gain a deeper conceptual understanding of procedural processes of the subject that guided them to apply what they had learnt in a different context.

To this end, participants commented that engaging and collaborating in smaller numbers made a positive change to their learning, where they were better acquainted with the expectations and requirements of the assessment outcomes. This closer, face-to-face learning platform provided opportunities for them to raise and reflect on all their learning challenges and hindrances that they encountered during the various enactment stages of the assessment. Similarly, research findings have established that the facilitation of small-group, face-to-face discussions more readily stimulate student engagement, deeper learning, and critical thinking skills when compared to large-class discussions (Hamann,

Pollock and Wilson, 2010). This forum accommodated most of their learning needs and facilitated question and feedback sessions juxtaposed to the large lecture groups. Applying scaffolding tools and promoting feedback is an element of authentic learning (Herrington, Reeves, and Oliver, 2009) which allows reflection on learning areas that require immediate attention.

Students also expressed the freedom to participate freely amongst their peers, which was very limited during formal lectures. Consequently, in these tutorial sessions, as highlighted by the participants, engagement with theirs peers fed into dialogical learning. This created an energetic learning space that propelled greater confidence, curiosity and learning satisfaction amongst the tutees. Equally, the participants indicated that the processes of negotiating and constructing knowledge together honed their socio-cognitive skills (see, for example, Bandura in Chapter 2). Accordingly, the multi-faceted role of the tutorials fostered mutual trust and respect amongst participants in valuing each other's shared input, which culminated in a sense of social inclusion.

Participants notably reported that the lecturer's role as a tutor was in fact an added benefit to their learning and achievement of assessment goals. For the sake of this study, students were afforded the opportunity to attend my tutorials (since I am the lecturer for the subject) as well as those led by senior students. Most participants noted that two different people teaching them gave rise to confusion and conflict in understanding subject content and procedural knowledge. Whilst some of the participants expressed their preference for the lecturer also assuming the role as the tutor; they further explicated that the lecturer nurtured a space for them to reflect critically on their learning and the ownership of their assessment goals. Pappalepore and Farrell (2017) argue that students ought to alter their perceptions on power relations in terms of lecturer and tutor. These authors further recommend that students ought to perceive their lecturers and tutors on an equal epistemic plane and not to hold the traditional hierarchal belief that educators are the only source and gatekeepers of knowledge. This point also raises concern for the induction and training of suitable tutors, where students may not experience inconsistency and contradiction in their learning.

In addition, a few participants cited in their reflective entries that they saw a different side of the lecturer during the tutorial sessions. Students perceived my teaching in larger venues as abstract, noting that I spoke at a faster pace, and rushed the lesson. Concomitantly, they perceived my role as a tutor to be more accommodating and empathetic. Whilst this allowed me to reflect methodologically, the tutorial session also presented an opportunity for me to come to know the students and their individual learning needs. This situation provided me with an insight into students' perceptions and how they might place a higher value and level of confidence in their lecturers, as they may appreciate their lecturer's expertise and teaching experience when compared to the tutor (see for example Dorasamy and Balkaran, 2013). However, a few participants did appreciate the role of the senior tutor as a friend and felt more comfortable confiding in and disclosing their epistemic nuances that in fact facilitated positive learning.

In summation, the tutorial as a scaffold to learning created a safe, close-knit and warmer space that contributed towards positive learning outcomes.

8.8.2 Blackboard (BB) a safe, relaxed and transformed space to learning

The phasing-in of digital learning into the design of the assessment presented most students with a novel approach to their learning. Students affirmed that this innovative approach to learning scaffolded their learning journey throughout the various stages of the assessment. They added that, apart from its main benefit as a reflective and feedback learning tool, its repository of activities, tasks and interactive engagement enhanced their learning experience, thereby enabling epistemic access. The collaborative, flexible and creative nature of this learning tool positively enhanced most participants' engagement and cognitive development. This enabled students to construct and confirm meaning through sustained reflection in online participation (Bozalek and Watters, 2014).

However, fostering students to be digitally engaged in meaningful and rewarding instructional activities in such learning environments was expressed as a real challenge for some of the participants (CHE, 2010). This was confirmed when a few students mentioned that were unable to access BB owing to their lack of connectivity and financial constraints

(see for example, in chapters 1 and 2), felt excluded, which was a disadvantage to their learning. In South Africa, access to computers is often embedded in economic and/or power relations, where digital technology is unevenly distributed, and digital access for the less privileged is rather rare (Kajee and Balfour, 2011).

On the other hand, most participants admitted that a blended approach to learning was rather a learning novelty to them. Hence, their limited self-efficacy towards a blended approach to learning was attributable to limited confidence and certainty. Consequently, this may have compromised the benefits of adopting and internalising such pedagogy (Pillay and Gerrard, 2014).

In one instance, a student admitted that when he was told that his daily authentic learning experiences needed to be diarised, his initial reaction was one of reluctance and anxiety, where he felt that this was *a girl thing*. Once he uploaded his online entries and received feedback, he started acknowledging the benefits of this reflective tool, and this stereotype held by him was soon dismissed. This clearly demonstrates that holding such negative gender stereotypes may limit his academic progress. However, a disruption of authentic learning in this particular student's belief, confirms a transformation in this particular students' learning. Since, their learning orientations reflect their individuality as deliberately depending on their personal strengths, they show persistence and deep desires to strategize and to self-manage their learning successfully (Takalani, 2008). Likewise, students that are able to demonstrate their conative abilities (to act, decide and commit) favourably endorses epistemic access in authentic situations (Herrington, Reeves and Oliver 2009). This message may also signal some of the affective outcomes that well accord with the generic attributes that many higher education institutions claim to instil in their students, most particularly for hospitality graduates.

Interestingly, according to some of the students' reflections, this online learning platform created a safe, relaxed and approachable learning space that heightened their confidence, morale and emotional engagement (see for example Wimpey and Saving-Baden, 2013). Students appeared to value online interaction, as they had the opportunity to engage at

their own leisure, simultaneously, allowing for introvert and passive personalities to become heard and acknowledged during these engagement sessions. Likewise, this digital avenue has the potential for the articulation of deep-seated emotions of one's identity, in which students can share feelings of anxiety, fear of embarrassment, failure, or lack of confidence, which is not often found in a face-to-face tutorial (Arendt, Huma, Hutchings and Mondo, 2017).

The main message coming from these reflections emphasises that apart from cognitive learning as a contributor to academic success; the students' efficacy to engage in critical thinking and problem-solving may significantly facilitate or deter participant learning. In saying so, a body of research confirms that the affective elements such as student's attitudes, beliefs, expectations and motivation may well influence students' epistemic access in authentic learning situations (Sophomore, 2014; Shephard, 2008).

8.8.3 Library a scary space to be

According to some of the reflective accounts, participants confessed that they perceived the library as an alienating, unfamiliar and intimidating space. Whilst the assessment prescribed and encouraged students to make optimal use of learning and media resources, many of them astonishingly confessed that being exposed to the library was a first time experience to some of them (see Chapter 2). These participants further highlighted how a vast range of books presented in such unfamiliar written text presented a set back to their epistemological access. This resonates with what Garraway (2017) (in chapter 2) refers to as students experiencing a certain measure of parity of participation. Students that emerge from under-resourced schools and communities (see also Chapter 2) are placed on a less equal footing, and may be left feeling partly excluded and disenfranchised. This set of circumstances raises the debate as to how faculty and academics might seek to negotiate social inclusion and epistemic justice.

However, during reflective engagement, these concerns pertaining to library access (see also chapter 4) were raised by some of the participants. Hence, owing to these concerns, I personally introduced students to the library support staff and the media resources that

were available to them that would fortify their epistemic access. Concomitantly, students commented that the various support services such as the library support staff, library online tutorials, writing centre, and referencing support staff contributed favourably in most instances towards the execution of the assessment. For some students, this new founded learning space brought students much closer their epistemic goals.

8.9 University and Lecturer environment

According to this affinity, students strongly expressed that the university and the lecture environment at most of the times (although a few instances positive comments were reported) constrained their epistemic access. This is discussed as follows:

8.9.1 University as a whole

The participants gravely raised their concerns and apprehensions as the university environment, in most instances, to be a deterring contributor to their academic interests and success. Accordingly, most of the participants (whom are mainly BWC) expressed their perceptions of the university environment to be rather alienating and intimidating spaces for learning and struggled to adapt to its academic culture. These stressors that students experience may be mainly attributable to the difficulties in adjusting to the university culture and context, and limited institutional support (Lewin & Mawoyo, 2014). This confirms that race and class (see Chapter 2) contributes to students' academic success (Steyn, 2016). Likewise, the findings of Rubin (2012) indicate that students feel less prepared for tertiary studies in comparison to their middle-class peers. Consequently, students may display lesser academic engagement and interest that may feed into poor academic goals.

Concomitantly, these students bring to universities, their own expressions of cultures and identities that often clash with the traditional hegemonic culture of a university environment. In South Africa, universities often perpetuate and mask a hegemonic culture and its system 'remains a colonial outpost' up to this day (McKaiser 2016; Heleta 2016). Students confessed that their learning behaviours and approaches to their learning and assessment tasks conflicted notably with the expectations of the university and assessment

prescription. For example, their reliance for learning through a teacher-centred approach clashed with the unfamiliar student-centred approach of the assessment. Owing to this, their initial reluctance and degree of confusion restricted them from accomplishing the goals of the assessment timeously.

Furthermore students voiced their feelings, attitudes, and in some cases their concerns about the 2016 strike disruption *#fees must fall*. According to the participants, the outbreak and rage of student activism influenced each participant differently in terms of their progress towards the assessment. The few participants that were in support of the student protest defended the fact the irrefutable legitimacy of their concerns. Consequently, these participants that condoned all actions of the disruption, reported that they too felt financially excluded, rejected (as they did not receive NSFAS funding although they were entitled to) and were denied access to all academic activities. Contrary to SA HE transformative initiative to redress the social ills of the past and to respond to social justice promise; actually engenders mistrust and disillusionment for many young and aspiring SA students (Habib, 2016). A response to address this anger and discontent of protesting students not only will be in the best interest of students' academic access and success, but would also push the boundaries of inclusive economic development, inclusivity, and parity in HE.

On the other hand, students that were not entirely in support of the students protest raised their concerns and anxiety about time being lost, and not being able to engage effectively as a group towards the assessment activities. Some of the students felt a sense of intimidation and coercion, owing to the violent attacks on campus and vandalism of university property. Students feared that the loss of lectures likewise poorly influenced their cognitive development. It was realised that these students worked momentously, and the intermission of the protests disrupted their train of thought and epistemic progress. Nevertheless, students took it upon themselves to maximise the resources and tools that was offered from the online engagement, as well as forming their own social media group chats, that kept them in the learning loop.

Surprisingly enough, a few students admitted that the strike *came as a blessing in disguise,* whilst these students effectively optimised this time to become up to date with their assessment activities. Apparently, these participants complained (through their online diaries) that the authentic assessment signaled a cognitive overload, and the time was necessary to adjust and to recapture lost time, which enabled them to recover academically.

8.9.2 Lecture environment

According to this sub-affinity, the participants alluded to the learning environment at most times being a learning space that constrained their epistemic access. A recurring feature cited by most students was the notion of learning in large lectures halls (refer to Chapter 2). Consequently, one of the findings emphasised that because these students felt *lost,* they became highly disengaged in these large venues. Apart from their linguistic and social capital (Chapter 2), students struggled to find a voice in what constitutes a large, intimidating space. For example, a few students pointed out that during discussions, they urgently wanted to ask questions relating to the assessment, or just to be heard and be part of this learning community, but instead remained passive so as to avoid embarrassment or ridicule. This self-censorship reflected by students compromised their academic access, as it obstructed the need for academic engagement. This highlights that the lecture environment becomes a learning battlefield for those unable to acquire ontological access (see Chapter 2), where only the fittest survive.

Likewise, a few students confessed that the lecture venue, with its poor acoustics, poor seating plan, and limited number of seats, limited their epistemic access. For these reasons (see also Chapter 1), they only attended lectures to be marked present, failing to take in the content delivered in the class. Their assessment activities are placed at risk in such a scenario, since the class activities incorporated learning the elements and processes of the theory, and then applying what is learnt to authentic learning activities and tasks.

Some students expressed a different scenario. They concluded that they enjoyed learning in larger venues that signalled high energy and vibrancy that contributed to meaningful

engagement. This can be attributable to a *psychosocial learning environment*, which is an environment that describes the social climate in educational environments, when students perceive a positive psychosocial learning environment, they are more likely attain learning satisfaction and enjoyment that feeds into improved academic success (Ashford, 2014). Hence, learning in larger lecture halls ought to be treated as a special event, not to be missed. That is, it is necessary to draw on the excitement and emotion associated with the gathering of large crowds, with the subtle intention to ultimately in this way facilitating successful learning.

8.10 Motivation and a changed attitude

This secondary outcome revealed that the entire constituency reported that their perpetual engagement with authentic activities and tasks shaped their attitude, which in turn had a direct influence on the acquisition of epistemic access. The design of the assessment prescribes for students to engage at all levels. Hence, as they engaged meaningfully, they started building their self-confidence and self-esteem, concomitantly eliminating the initial negative emotions and stereotypes they held at the start of the semester (see Chapter 2).

Likewise, their confidence grew and was ready to anticipate the challenges that premised the assessment. This was explicitly expressed by most of the students as the revelations of their joys and enthusiasm relating to outcome of the assessment was shared online. Furthermore, participants highlighted the height of this excitement was most evident on the day that the entire project was executed. As an assessor on this day, I observed this likewise. Coupled with this new found attitude was the passion for wanting to learn. I myself witnessed the energy, enthusiasm and vibrancy that came alive, and most of all the expressions of accomplishment that students undeniably demonstrated. In so doing, students started acquiring a feel of disciplinary acceptance and identity (for example, see Chapter 2) as they witnessed the culmination of their ongoing efforts, energy and commitment into ‘profit and cash’.

A new sense of appreciation towards HSFM101 and valuing its relevance to the hospitality industry was most evident through authentic learning. Similarly, in authentic learning situations, students take cognisance of how relevant and meaningful of what they are learning so that they can genuinely transfer this into their future professional goals (Hui and Koplin, 2011). The fact that students had the opportunities to express their ideas and innovations, even by learning through trial and error heightened their motivation and enthusiasm to learn. For example, Rule (2006) confirms that students are able to guide their own learning into meaningful task-orientated work by the choices they make. In addition, authentic learning as a powerful tool for engaging and motivating students augments learning in an environment that is "inherently multidisciplinary" (Lombardi, 2007: 2).

Likewise, students that display a positive learning attitude towards their learning activities are more likely to generate favourable learning outcomes (McRobbie and Fraser, 1993). The enactment and ability to complete authentic tasks through progressive stages allowed for students to recognise their own self-worth and learner autonomy. Subsequently, students who are efficacious are able to measure and see the progress in their goals, and are motivated to improve to the next level (Schunk and Zimmerman, 2011). In the same vein, students also advocated how their self-efficacy in internalising HSFM101 tasks was improved as their motivational levels increased. The perceived self-efficacy that is developed through experience of the authentic learning tasks and the feedback received by students may well contribute to students' performance accomplishments (Bandura, 1993; Gist and Mitchell, 1992).

The change in attitude and motivation to learn and enjoy HSFM101 was mainly and most significantly attributable to the three elements of the authentic assessment; collaborative learning, scaffolding, and reflection and feedback (see for example, Rowe, Herrington and Brown, 2014). The collaborative engagement of authentic tasks not only served as a constructivist support pillar, but also a learning pillar towards problem-solving for most of the participants, and concomitantly, drove reflection and articulation towards learning (Rowe, Herrington and Brown, 2014). For example, Vygotsky (1978) underscores the support and guidance of peers, mentors and facilitators that enables cognitive growth and reflection of

independent competence. The aforementioned scenario is reported by participants who admitted that they previously never had access to technology and the internet, but that the scaffold support and coaching received significantly contributed to their successful adaptation to the digital world. This in itself served as a motivator for reliance on collaborative effort and scaffolds, in order to accomplish self-regulated learning. Equally, feedback and reflection served both as a means of establishing the need for academic improvement that effectively propels epistemic access (Jackson and Marks, 2016). Some students also indicated that collaborative efforts fostered a sense of being 'included'. These students brought in their own diverse knowledge as a contribution towards the assessment, which was valued by their peers. Soudien (2015) reminds us that academics and students need to pay greater attention to scholarship and teaching that addresses indigenous forms of knowledge and questions of epistemology beyond dominant Western models.

8.11 Getting it right – A new understanding

The final primary outcome of this study – a new understanding – represented a positive overall picture of how student's engagement and enactment of authentic activities and tasks enabled them to epistemological access. Many of the participants cited that most significantly, through collaborative and reflective engagement, they were able to attain a deeper insight and meaningful conceptual understanding of HSFM101. The most recurring sub-affinities of this final outcome included an improved understanding of threshold concepts, and the confidence in engaging with quantitative literacy (see Chapter 2).

Likewise, students realised that giving a voice and ear to their peers was not only beneficial to them, but also allowed them to examine their own cognitive and affective strengths and weaknesses. A very significant finding in assessment is that if students are only able to reproduce the facts in the assessment tasks presented, and show no evidence that they have acquired an understanding or are able to meaningfully transfer knowledge, consequently, there is a strong possibility that these students will never have the opportunity to develop or exhibit higher-order thinking skills (Collins, 2013).

Participants took cognisance of the epistemic value of drawing the connections to what was learnt in the classroom to the 'real authentic tasks' that was performed by them. Equally, the contextual nature of the authentic learning tasks augments deeper learning, due to their associations with a setting, activities, and people (Lombardi, 2007).

Furthermore, the scaffolding and reflective orientations of the assessment further developed their metacognitive abilities. Thinking about their own learning afforded students to realign both their understandings and their strategies on how best they learn (Zimmerman, 2008). In this reflection, participants revealed that the initial style of memorising and rote type of learning (see for example Chapter 2) did not readily allow them to access HSFM101 concepts. For those students that change over to a student-centred approach of learning, may equally be in a clash of roles with their deeply ingrained habits developed in previous learning experiences, in which they have been passive recipients of knowledge (Hung, 2011). It is also argued that students that adopt a rote approach to learning may be under the misconception that this approach may eventually guide them to complex understanding and insight of subject content (Collins, 2013).

However, the process of learning lead to insight for students into *what, how* and *why.* This was so much so the case that learning through authentic tasks not only modelled effective thinking strategies and tasks that may have overwhelmed students, but also, in most instances, the scaffolding resources that were attached to the assessment served as a reinforcement and support pillars to learning. Furthermore, the meaningful feedback that students received complemented elements of critical thought and reflection that took learning and epistemic access to its next level. Concomitant to critical thought is problem-solving and higher-order thinking that enables students to generate new thoughts, creativity, ideas, formulate new understandings, and hold new beliefs (Pappalepore and Farrell, 2017).

8.12 Conclusion

The way in which students acquire epistemological access in South Africa is complex and multi-layered. Given the diversity of students and how they academically engage, the cognitive and affective challenges they are confronted with, raises the bar in their quest for academic success. Hence, identifying the design of a pedagogy that will address such a conundrum, one that is rather enabling, creative and flexible, that gives every student an equal opportunity to epistemic access (Scott, 2017). This study establishes that an authentic learning strategy, coupled with authentic activities and assessment tasks, is one way not only to provide opportunities for epistemological access, but also to transform and transcend students' thinking. Likewise, hospitality academics ought to adopt more student-centered pedagogies primed to facilitate motivated, active and engaged students (Chau and Cheung, 2017), particularly those in the unique socio-economic circumstances that life in South Africa entails.

CHAPTER NINE: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

9.1 Introduction

The previous chapter presented the findings on the ten affinities created by the IQA focus group. The results complement much of the extant literature on authentic assessment, as well as conditions necessary for epistemological access. This chapter presents and discusses the study's key findings. It revisits the research questions and the literature review, as well as the conceptual framework. The study's methodological contribution is discussed, and I present a framework devised to understand the relationship between AA, EA and HSFM101 at HEIs in developing country contexts. The chapter closes with a discussion on the study's limitations, its implications and a final conclusion.

9.2 Overview of the study

9.2.1 Introduction, contextual background and rationale for the study

Chapter one introduced this study on how students within a *Hospitality Financial Management* context acquire epistemic access in the practice of authentic learning.

The first-year student experience in HE is a global concern (De Vilbiss, 2014; Tinto, 2014). The transformation of South African HEIs to promote diversity and enhance access has resulted in massification (Akoojee and Nkomo, 2007; CHE, 2016), posing challenges to both teaching and learning.

The Hospitality Financial Management 1 (HSFM101) module conducted in the second semester of 2016 at the Durban University of Technology was used as a case study. The authentic learning practice encompassed an authentic assessment strategy that departs from the traditional written type of formative assessment with which students are generally familiar. The social constructivist mode of this authentic assessment comprised a number of authentic subtasks and activities that required students to engage throughout the semester. This was further complemented by tutorials, online activities and reflective journals. It was noted that many students do not see the relevance of hospitality accounting and its contribution to their hospitality careers. In addition, students frequently express anxiety

when it comes to written tests, and their results tend to be poor. Given that HSFM101 is characterised as a high-risk module by the university, this study addressed the following research questions:

- What enables/constraints EA in an authentic assessment strategy in HSFM101?
- What explains the relationship between Authentic Learning and Epistemological Access in HSFM101?
- Why do students learn in this authentic assessment strategy in the ways that they do?

9.2.2 Literature Review

The international literature on hospitality financial management (Fawcett and Lockwood, 2000; Yang 2014; Ma, Chen, and Ampountolas, 2016; Chen, Hsu and Chen, 2013; Goh and Scerri, 2016) notes that financial skills are becoming increasingly important for hospitality graduates. Curriculum designers thus need to craft effective teaching and learning strategies to address this need.

On the other hand, there is a paucity of research on hospitality education in South Africa HE. Furthermore, few studies have been conducted on how students acquire epistemic access, especially through an authentic assessment strategy. In the past two decades, the concept of EA, coined within a South African HE context, has found firm purchase within the scholarly work of Wally Morrow, together with recent advocates of EA (Muller, 2014; Clerehan, 2003; Boughey, 2005; Clarence and McKenna, 2017). The primary motivation is to promote a social and epistemic justice agenda (Muller, 2014; Waglay, 2013; Garraway, 2017). These studies focuses on defining EA and interventions employed to promote it. However, very little research has focused on EA in Hospitality education, particularly hospitality finance.

While calls have been made for HEIs to conduct authentic assessment (CHE, 2010), it remains unclear as to how an AA strategy could enable EA. There is also a need for more effective and nuanced innovative assessment strategies that address the complexities of knowledge and pedagogies (Boud, 2007). In some studies, South African HE has adopted

authentic learning through virtual and emerging technological learning (for e.g., see Bozalek et al., 2013; Bagarukayo and Kalema, 2015). However, the question remains as to how students experience *assessment for learning* in a non-virtual authentic context.

Traditional assessment strategies are teacher-centred and mainly rely on rote learning and memorisation. Proponents of active and authentic learning (Biggs and Tang, 2007; Boud, 2010, Herrington, Oliver and Reeves, 2002) note this kind of learning fails to engage students in higher order thinking, meta-cognition and reflection that will engender meaningful learning. Reddy (2004) thus suggests a review of traditional testing and a shift to a more authentic approach to assessment. Concomitantly, Van Wyk and Carl (2010) argue that authentic assessment tools are essential within the South African HE context to monitor students' academic growth and development and ensure that they reach their fullest potential. However, there is a dearth of studies on such assessment practices in South Africa.

Given the diversity of students in South African HE, it is essential to understand the economic, cultural and social capital, attitudes, beliefs and prior learning they bring to university. These factors influence the learning approaches they adopt, and thus determine the quality of their learning outcomes (Biggs, 1999).

At the time this study was conducted, South African HEIs experienced a series of organised and spontaneous protests now referred to as the Fallist student movement. The issues raised by students included unacceptable institutional culture, equitable access, identity, racial inequality, and the relevance of the curriculum (Jansen and Motala, 2017; Kotze, 2018). This study must be understood in the context of these tensions.

9.2.3 Methodological Orientation and Contribution

The interpretive and qualitative lens adopted for this study enabled a rich contextual understanding of how students experienced learning and acquire epistemic access through engaging in an authentic assessment strategy. This case study enabled an investigation of real-life complex and contemporary issues in a socially bounded system over time (Creswell,

2014). A constructivist orientation positions research participants at the centre of their learning experiences, giving them a voice (Henson, 2003). Qualitative case studies explore and understand complex issues in real world settings (Creswell, 2014).

During the first semester of 2016, all prospective HSFM101 students were invited to participate in this study. Using purposive sampling, 20 students volunteered to be part of the study for the 16 weeks of the second semester of 2016. Apart from the blended learning approach that was offered to all students, the research participants also had an opportunity engage in an online reflective learning journey, as well as a research tutorial that was offered over and above regular tutorials. Notably, students considered tutorials to be *safer,* intimate spaces in which more *inclusive* and discursive learning occurs. This is contrary to the large lecture venues perceived by many students as alienating, intimidating and formidable (Layton and McKenna, 2015). A corollary to this was the finding that many of the students seek *academic refuge* in these tutorial spaces where the AA activities were given effect. (See for example, Chapter 4 and 5). This learning forum during tutorials fostered healthier collaborative relationships (Bargate and Maistry, 2015). The diverse ideas and suggestions that emerged from the tutorial sessions led to dynamic discussions and encouraged critical thinking. Some less forthcoming students that did not voice their contributions during the tutorial sessions, used the reflective and online sessions and activities to reinforce their cognitive and affective strengths.

Qualitative research is often critiqued for a lack of credibility in terms of trustworthiness, rigour and reliability (Creswell, 2014). Interactive Qualitative Analysis (IQA) addresses such concerns by reducing the power imbalances and biases traditionally associated with qualitative research (see Chapter 3 for example) (Goebel, 2017). The ontological premise underlying IQA overtly describes the knowledge and power relations between the researcher and study participants (Northcutt and McCoy, 2004).

The IQA methodological design complemented the constructivist lens used for this study. As a recent and innovative research method (Northcutt and McCoy, 2004), IQA has recently been employed in a range of HE disciplines in South Africa (Tabane and Human-Vogel, 2010;

Bargate, 2012; Du Preez, 2015; Goebel, 2017). However, an exhaustive literature search revealed that none of the existing studies explored the discipline of Hospitality studies using IQA. Furthermore, the study participants were first year students. This differs from previous IQA studies that focused on third year or postgraduate students (see for example, Bargate, 2012; Du Preez, 2015); or those in second year (Goebel, 2017). Given the on-going debate on how to enhance the first year student experience in South African HE, the study's findings add to the body of knowledge on how to improve this experience (Van Zyl, 2014/15).

In keeping with the rigour and systematic application of IQA protocols, two focus group discussions were conducted on two separate days. Ten affinities were collectively generated. Thereafter, rich analytical data was gathered by means of individual semi-structured interviews. This data was reconciled with the participants' daily online reflections on their authentic learning experiences (obtained from Blackboard (BB)). This was a slight departure from traditional reflective writing as a data source (see for e.g., Bargate, 2010; Goebel, 2017). I encouraged the participants to commit to the online reflective tool using BB. This was a dialogical process between the researcher and the participants. In this instance, I served a dual role, where at times I was the researcher, and at others I needed to engage as the facilitator. Most of the participants embraced this exercise as they recognised the metacognitive, conative and affective benefits it offered. Hence, the use of online reflection in this study is novel in relation to the IQA protocol in terms of alternative and authentic data sources. When students are given opportunities to reflect, this not only enhances insights, but also has the potential to heighten cognitive awareness, and promote critical thinking, hence, engendering individual transformation (Andrusyszy and Davie, 1995).

Note that IQA was not without its challenges. Apart from my regular workload, I had to make time to manage the online reflections and facilitate additional tutorial sessions. It was also necessary to conduct two mock IQA sessions in order for students to internalise the process and understand its outcomes. Surprisingly, the students did not complain, but instead expressed that this was a novel and exciting opportunity for them to reflect and

raise their learning concerns. Finally, while the student protests disrupted teaching and learning, some students that had previously resisted the online sessions started to engage online. Hence, the reflective and online learning tools were an added vantage to students learning.

9.2.4 Authentic assessment and epistemological access: Engaging the tensions

This section synthesises the study's key findings in relation to the research questions. The study found that six of the eight critical elements of AA enabled students' EA. It also identified trade-offs that either afforded or hindered students' epistemological access in HSFM101 that are not consistent with the AA framework. The study sought to establish the extent to which authentic assessment enhances students' EA in HSFM101.

The authentic assessment challenged most of the students with tasks that have real-life relevance and meaning, empowering them to take ownership of their learning. The students found that their performance was challenged as they engaged in an array of authentic tasks. Consequently, they were required to draw on prior learning and adopt an appropriate attitude in order to successfully exhibit the skills and knowledge required by the assessment. This compelled them to disclose the relevant skills (which in some cases they assumed they never had) required in 'real life' situations. Students also came to see that these challenges mirror the realities and expectations of the hospitality industry. Their subsequent confidence and motivation to overcome such challenges signalled their efficacy to accomplish the outcomes of authentic task.

The students' ability to apply skills and knowledge in authentic situations suggests that they acquired epistemic access. Moreover, the fact that they were able to complete some of the complex authentic tasks not only uncovered their efficacy, but also showed that they had the potential to engage with complex tasks which required higher-order thinking, problem-solving, and creative abilities.

Furthermore, the tenets of an authentic assessment activity support the idea that knowledge and skills learnt in one context can be applied or transferred within similar or

unrelated contexts. A significant finding of the study was that the students were able to connect the knowledge and skills previously learnt and transfer such epistemologies to more complex and larger tasks. Likewise, these students exhibited a transfer of knowledge and skills, as they were able to recognise the connectedness of learning. They also demonstrated mastery of what was learned as they were able to demonstrate competence and application of authentic activities and tasks in different contexts.

In addition, the students that felt that the assessment tasks facilitated more than just the integration of knowledge, they in fact also experienced an ontological and epistemic shift in their identity. They were gradually able to shift out of liminality.[17] Given the collaborative nature of authentic learning, the students found that the assessment tasks enabled and guided them to effectively engage with troublesome knowledge. For example, scaffolds such as the online reflective tools and activities as well as the tutorial support offered by the AA design provided opportunities for interactive teamwork and reflection on such engagement. Some of the students that engaged in this manner mastered the conceptual knowledge, enabling a threshold crossing.

Having crossed the threshold, students were able to demonstrate their metacognitive skills through critical reflection and peer engagement. Their internalisation of knowledge was mainly due to on-going engagement in authentic activities throughout the semester. The reflective tasks that were part of the assessment design not only stimulated the students to recognise their own academic needs, but also to take their learning to a much deeper level. In such instances, some were able to recognise their metacognitive skills merely through observation of their peers, whilst others did so through the authentic practice of trial and error. While mistakes did occur, this was a learning experience as the students were able to draw on their strengths in the tasks and activities that followed.

[17] A state of 'liminality' refers to a suspended state of limited understanding, or a 'stuck place', in which understanding approximates to a kind of 'mimicry' or mastery. It is a fluid space in which students may oscillate between old and emergent understandings (Cousin, 2006; Land, Meyer and Baillie, 2010).

In improving their metacognitive abilities, students experienced challenges in communicating with their diverse peers. Those that valued the diverse input of their peers and understood its significance in a hospitality industry environment found it easier to make the transition to conceptual understanding and learning. For example, when students allowed their peers to interrogate their learning practices, some came to realise that there are alternate and *improved* ways and means to approach a problem.

The guidance provided by the scaffolds enabled the students to complete tasks that posed difficulties. The authentic tools developed students' reflective and deep thinking skills and promoted successful academic outcomes. However, not all students were able to maximise the benefits of authentic e-learning tools (this is further discussed later in this chapter). The excitement and novelty of the assessment leveraged the challenges students experienced with the scaffolds on offer, encouraging them to address their problems, and in many instances overcome their learning obstacles. The authentic tasks also enabled the students to think about their own thinking, and evaluate their learning strengths and weaknesses. This enabled them to make the necessary shift from inculcated superficial learning to a deeper and meaningful understanding of HSFM101.

A notable finding in this study was the students' appreciation of maintaining a reflective journal. This tool not only enabled them to reflect and act on their learning, but more significantly, provided regular and valuable feedback that they internalised. Feedback not only served as a guiding tool but also assisted in building students' confidence in their conceptual understanding of threshold concepts, and being able to master the quantitative procedures that challenged them in HSFM101. Students found feedback and discussion in online learning forums stimulating, engaging and challenging. They became committed to this learning space. Likewise, the cultivation of such digital spaces as warm, inclusive and safe permitted them to shed their previous resistance and fear of engaging online. This not only motivated their desire to regularly engage in authentic ways, but also fostered a positive, enabling learning journey.

Collaboration also played a significant role in students gaining EA. This is an essential skill in the hospitality industry. The students recognised the value and significance of team work and effective communication for the completion of authentic tasks. Even introverts found ways to make their voices heard through collaborative efforts, resulting in a shift in their identities and skills.

The students also noted that collaboration provided opportunities to seek further guidance and support from external sources. This constructivist approach enabled them to reflect on a plethora of responses and critiques from their peers. The students were able to solve problems using critical reflection that gave rise to alternate ways of seeing a problem. Similarly, the assessment activities enabled the students to draw on collaborative learning while respecting all their peer group members.

The small tutorial groups offered a relaxed, safe and accommodating learning environment. These sessions not only stimulated their personal interest in Finance as a subject, but also serve to support and guide their conceptual understanding and procedural knowledge of HSFM101. Through a process of deliberation and engagement, this collaborative learning space enabled them to deeply engage with authentic activities and tasks. In contrast to traditional teacher-centeredness and text-based resources, this space offered improved access to richer forms of knowledge. While cognitive conflict[18] did surface, most students acknowledged that the tutorials enabled group goals to be set and achieved. Their collective efforts gave them the confidence and motivation to succeed to the extent that some were able to take ownership of their academic goals. Indeed, these sessions gave students a sense of their own agency as they were inspired to form private study cohorts which they referred to as *Moonlighting* (see chapters 4 and 5). Some students mimicked their peers' best learning practices (such as time management, learning approach), guiding them on a path to EA.

[18] *Cognitive* conflict can be described as the tension or discomfort one feels when his or her beliefs, values or behaviours contradict that of one another (Swan, Wake, and Joubert,2006)

The students that participated in this study come from diverse ethnic backgrounds. They found the collaborative learning space to be a safe and engaging one that permitted open discussion of cultural and ethnic beliefs. This encouraged the students to value diverse and indigenous knowledge, as an achievement towards epistemic goals. Whilst an authentic strategy strives to promote social cohesion and inclusion; their positive experiences through such engagement, stimulated their epistemic access. Even though some might have felt 'excluded' during the collaborative efforts, their interest in pursuing authentic tasks demonstrated their persistence and resilience to learn.

Despite the fact that many of students come from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds, their desire to succeed, saw them embracing the authentic learning exercise. They understood the need to invest extra effort in view of the multifaceted challenges they experienced during the engagement with of the authentic tasks. For example, some did not have access to the internet or BB, while others lacked family support, or were hampered by poor living conditions. Interestingly, some students' resilience was strengthened by their desire to succeed despite being single parents, taking care of their siblings, or having to secure part time employment in order to continue studying. Having defied the odds, these students established a positive and determined attitude to learning, and this promoted the transition towards their epistemic goals.

The students also confirmed that the authentic tasks enabled them to recognise their self-efficacy which once again strengthened their persistence in achieving EA. Consequently, students that recognised their strengths and abilities during the authentic tasks gained the confidence to take on more challenging tasks. Likewise, students that were perceived as highly efficacious demonstrated commitment to their assessment tasks, promoting EA in HSFM101. Those that realised their potential adopted a positive attitude to the accomplishment of authentic assessment goals. In contrast, students that exhibited low levels of self-efficacy felt demotivated and frustrated and had lower levels of resilience. They thus struggled to achieve both group and individual goals.

The findings of study also revealed that some students that displayed resilient traits benefitted during authentic engagement. Indigent students that hailed from low socio-economic backgrounds were determined not to have their personal contexts restrict their academic goals. For example, students that had not previously had access to a library or computer were able to overcome these challenges through collaborative learning. The scaffolds offered by the assessment strategy enabled students to make the transition, and emerge as autonomous and independent learners. This intensified their enthusiasm for learning and self-discovery. In this way, intrinsic as well as extrinsic motives enabled their EA.

However, the contradictory interplay of AA and EA in this study cannot be dismissed. The findings confirm that while many students accrued the benefits of the AA strategy that enabled their EA, a few of the participants struggled to accept this constructivist approach to learning. Students first entering HSFM101 may do so with a certain degree of confidence, with high hopes of succeeding. However, unanticipated obstacles in assessment could negatively affect their morale. The study's findings suggest that the assessment strategy presented students with some stumbling blocks that hindered their epistemic access.

Firstly, students may have ingrained attitudes, stereotypes and beliefs that inhibit their acceptance of 'transformative learning practices', in this case, an authentic assessment strategy. This could result in cognitive dissonance. Such dissonance is further exacerbated if their learning approaches and behaviours continue to be rooted in traditional classroom settings. Learning in authentic situations is a novel and unfamiliar learning experience to such students. Holding on to previously acquired learning habits that prevents them from embracing a student-centred approach that is prescribed in authentic learning situations, thereby inhibiting epistemic access.

Secondly, students that resist a constructivist approach to learning may experience discord when engaging with authentic tasks. For example, students that subscribe to the notion that the teacher is the 'sage on the stage' often find it difficult to share ideas and knowledge with their peers. Such students' cognitive abilities may be at risk, since this inhibits deeper

engagement and critical thinking. Similarly, students that prefer to work alone often adopt a surface approach to learning. Such students tend to be passive and uncritical and, this may result in negative effects on their learning outcomes.

The third significant finding of this study is the paradoxical ways in which power relations based on race and gender played out during engagement in authentic tasks. Such dynamics directly influenced students' acquisition of epistemic access. More than two decades into democracy, racial tensions continue to plague South African learning spaces. Students that harbour racist beliefs and practice stereotyping could disrupt the nurturing of cohesive and inclusive learning spaces, stifling others' creativity and innovation. Some learning spaces are restricted, narrow and hostile and students in such spaces may be afraid to express themselves freely, or interact with their peers from different race groups, due to intimidation or to avoid stirring racial conflict. This negatively impacts students' ability to engage in meaningful learning in authentic situations, and thus inhibits epistemic access.

A fourth finding is that the blended learning approach that supplements the authentic assessment design might not appeal to some students. For example, students that did not previously have access to a computer could experience anxiety and apprehension. Such students often limit their engagement, especially online. Whilst this concern was recognised and the necessary technical support was provided, some students still found this to be an intimidating and formidable learning space. Likewise, they resisted blended learning due to their lack of exposure to technology.

Participants that were not financially privileged (see appendix) or had never had access to digital learning spaces felt a sense of anxiety, given that the assessment activities had both financial and time implications. Their economic circumstances thus constrained their participation in authentic collaborative activities, resulting in them not gaining substantively from the programme.

9.3 Towards a framework for understanding the relationship between AA, EA and Hospitality Financial Management at HEIs in developing country contexts

Besides the socio-economic constraints experienced by many first year students, other non-cognitive constructs may influence EA in HE. Family capital, cultural beliefs and financial access are some of the challenges that prevent students from meaningful learning. Concomitantly, students experience HE learning spaces as alienating and intimidating.

A conceptual framework is proposed to understand the relationship between AA, EA and HFM at HEIs in developing country contexts such as South Africa. This schema takes cognisance of the assets that first year students bring when confronted with non-traditional learning strategies. Borrowing from Biggs 3Ps model (2003), and the critical elements of an AA Framework (Ashford-Rowe, et al., 2014), and drawing on the findings of this study this Framework (Figure 11), offers a lens to understand what constitutes EA through the practice of an AA strategy.

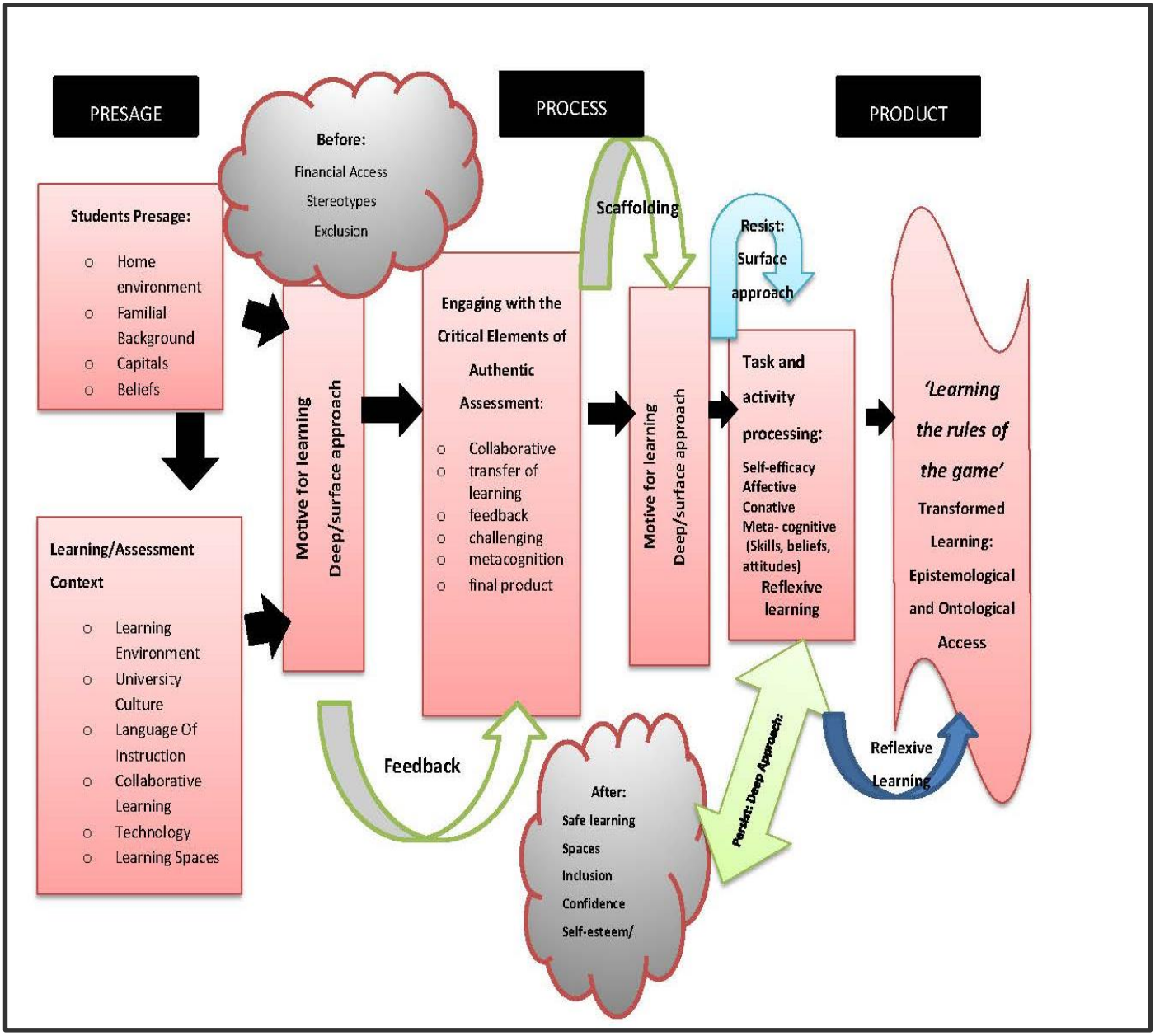

Figure 19 - Towards a Framework for Understanding the Relationships between AA,EA AND HSFM101 AT HEI'S in Developing Countries

The aforementioned challenges confronting students are brought to the fore during their engagement with some of the critical elements of authentic assessments. While scaffolds such as tutorials, online learning, and media support aim to enhance students' academic endeavours, students from different backgrounds experience authentic assessment in different ways.

Students may elect to *resist* or *persist* during authentic learning. Those that feel alienated by group dynamics, experience financial difficulties, or feel excluded, may choose a surface approach to learning. Such students resist engagement in authentic tasks and associate learning with memorisation and regurgitation that they were taught prior to entering HE.

The study found that some students adopted a surface approach to learning despite displaying commitment, initiative, and dedication to their academic work. This choice was motivated by their desire to avoid failure. It is important to note that surface learning is a *maladaptive learning style*, and does not denote a personality trait. Students that adopt this approach often struggle to balance their academic and personal lives in order to negotiate and accommodate the tenets of authentic learning.

In contrast, many of the study participants found authentic engagement exciting and challenging. They appreciated the intrinsic value of the scaffolds and the ways in which it transformed their learning. Such students exhibited high levels of enthusiasm, motivation, increased self-esteem, confidence and passion for authentic tasks, adopting a deep approach to learning. They want to know not only *what knowledge, but also how knowledge* (see for example in chapter 2). While these students found the authentic tasks challenging, they are also rewarding. Students that adopt a deeper approach to learning are able to reflect on their learning and identify new ways of engaging with knowledge, people and tasks as well as thinking, acting and believing in transformed ways.

Given the fluidity and dynamism of the hospitality industry, due consideration needs to be given to the requisite skills, knowledge and competencies of hospitality graduates. Academics in this discipline thus need to identify creative and effective ways to ensure that students succeed in their chosen career. AA is a means to this end. Traditional written assessments are not suitable in preparing students for the knowledge economy. Such assessment strategies do not extend outside the classroom to embrace technology and innovation and traditional methods to evaluate student capabilities, skills and knowledge and fail to tap their creativity and hidden potential.

A key finding of this study was that, in contrast to traditional forms of assessment, authentic assessment inducts students into ways of thinking within the discipline. Recognising how authentic tasks blend with their real world career, students were motivated to learn more meaningfully. Hence, many students that were immersed in this authentic journey experienced a shift in identity.

This transformation shaped their efficacy to engage most meaningfully. Likewise, authentic engagement is likely not to only establish students' cognitive abilities (which mainly apply to traditional modes of assessment), but also their affective and conative skills. For example, students were able to demonstrate their cognitive abilities when presented with real world tasks. In most cases, they noted that their conceptual understandings of HSFM101 'came alive' as they were able to apply this 'know that' knowledge, authentically in 'know how' situations that called for reasoning and effective decision making. Moreover, the students' metacognitive abilities were established as they began to unlearn poor, previously acquired learning habits. Many subsequently realised that rote learning and memorisation did not benefit them when applying HSFM101 activities in real situations.

The students were exposed to assessment tasks that allowed them to make mistakes, identify their learning gaps, and immediately institute corrective action. Indeed, making mistakes was a means of acquiring EA. In contrast to contrived assessment environments, students were afforded the space to learn discursively and the freedom to express their ideas, generating authentic knowledge. For example, instead of simply reproducing textbook knowledge (as they were accustomed to doing) they were provided with opportunities to self-discover. Since authentic tasks are *ill-defined* (there is no prescribed solution in authentic assessments), this fuelled their confidence and their efficacy in problem-solving.

Furthermore, the students' engagement with authentic tasks allowed them to value epistemologies that are recognised as less dominant in the curriculum. The curriculum mainly draws on western cultures that might be dissonant with students' experiences, cultures and expectations. In this instance, students were encouraged to share and apply

their indigenous, cultural and ethnic knowledge to some of the authentic tasks prescribed. This offered ways to address and mitigate the impact of epistemic injustices that some students may have encountered.

Whilst engaging with authentic tasks, students were required to take ownership of their learning.

This reinforced their trust in themselves and confidence that led an easier transition to EA. The study's findings confirm AA as one way of enabling students' learning. The study affirms that such pedagogy drives student learning towards the acquisition of key skills, knowledge and attitudes necessary for such access. One of the most significant findings was that the students were able to take an inventory of their own learning through the use of their developing meta-cognitive skills.

9.4 Implications and recommendations

The study's findings point to possible paths that could not only make a significant contribution to HE, but might also assist in understanding the needs of a diverse student population. They also have implications for assessment and curriculum design. Firstly, in understanding who our students are and where they come from, it is clear that customisation is crucial (CHE, 2016) in HIM. This calls for research to narrow epistemological lacunas through the design of innovative assessments that create and nurture a positive and inclusive student learning experience. The design of an appropriate pedagogical strategy, for example, when it comes to assessment, must promote social inclusion and cohesive learning spaces. Concomitantly, such a strategy ought to reflect the lived experiences of diverse South African students. The study's findings offer valuable insight into the possible elements of an AA strategy that may afford students' epistemic access.

Secondly, the study contributes to the emerging knowledge base of the 'first year student experience' (FYSE) (Ruszynak et al., 2017). Increasing interest among academics, faculty, HEIs, and the Ministry of Education will foster an improved understanding of both the

academic and non-academic aspects of a student's life. Thirdly, the study points to the need for further research on alternate authentic pedagogies that will foster the attributes required of graduates, as well as lifelong learning. This would improve their employment prospects and enhance their academic development (Gunn, Bell and Kafmann, 2010). Given the value of authentic assessment (see, for example, Herrington, 2006) academics ought to apply their minds to developing students' metacognitive skills. This would not only benefit students, but enable them to contribute to the progress of society as a whole (Clarence, 2013).

The study found the feedback to be an active catalyst towards students' epistemic access. Effective feedback ensures that, not only do students act on it, but improvement is noted (Boud, 2015). Such an implication is the need for incorporating feedback mechanisms into teaching and learning. A corollary to this not only focuses on providing support for students, but also enables them to develop the self-regulatory efficacy and disposition that will enhance their epistemic endeavours. The study also identified the need for feed forward as part of assessment design (as this was absent from the initial assessment plan), and further research is recommended on this issue.

This study also concludes that there is a need for academic development centres to support academics to conduct research on pedagogical best practice. The literature review noted that teaching larger classes (Jawitz, 2015) meant that academics may be forced to resort to traditional teacher-centred pedagogies. They continue to focus on *assessment of learning* rather than *assessment for learning* (Fook and Sidhu, 2010). Hence, flexible pedagogical delivery in teaching larger classes is also required so as to accommodate students from diverse backgrounds in order to enhance their cognitive and affective abilities.

Likewise, Faculty has an important role to play in authentic pedagogy design. Apart from academic development activities, academics are called upon to ensure that student-centred pedagogies are followed through. This includes the logistics and planning of assessment at the beginning of the semester; and the required resources, time etc. In addition, faculty needs to identify appropriate strategies and resources that will motivate and encourage

academics to buy into authentic learning types of pedagogies. As noted in Chapter 2, staff may be discouraged by the time and effort required for authentic assessment design. Integrating assessment within a programme rather than a module may be effective in meeting curriculum as well as students learning objectives.

The economic cost of AA for students may also have implications for the success of EA. For example in this study, students had to raise financial resources such as capital in order to start their business venture. For many, lack of such resources dampened their enthusiasm and engagement in authentic tasks. While the much anticipated free education for the poor and working class was set to become a reality in 2018, it was not clear as to when and whether student will be financially supported other than tuition and accommodation (CHE,2017) .

The support tools which constrained students' epistemic access also requires further investigation and research. For example, certain students have never been exposed to a library (see Ross, 2015). The findings also suggest that some students need to be provided with digital access that will enable them to navigate learning spaces on par with their more privileged peers.

The implications of this study also suggest that higher education institutions review their orientation programmes. Given these layers of complexities in students learning, considered student orientation programmes becomes a necessity to facilitate epistemic access (Van Zyl, 2015). Such programmes should include creative ways to promote social cohesion and inclusion, ensuring that students from diverse backgrounds interact meaningfully with one another. Such programmes should also encourage an empathetic attitude towards their peers that are most in need of support.

It is recommended that institutions identify and provide pre-scaffolding support (for example taking students on library tours and orienting them on the support services available). This may also include inducting students into basic technology. While the nature of knowledge has shifted, assessment practices have not kept pace. The study's findings

suggest that authentic learning has the potential to shape students' knowledge in acquiring the key attitudes and values necessary for success in a Hospitality environment.

9.5 Limitations of the Study

The paucity of literature on hospitality education within a South African context meant that I relied on the international literature, which necessarily has limited applicability. However, the findings can be applied in understanding the learning experiences of non-traditional students that engage in non-traditional pedagogies.

The data for this study was gathered from a sample of first year hospitality students that were taught by the lecturer who was also the researcher. The findings could have been compromised by interview bias due to the lecturer/student relationship or the desire to respond in a way that a student thought would please the researcher (Bargate, 2012). Hence, the study's findings and conclusions ought to be interpreted with some caution. Furthermore, the findings only relate to the students' experiences in HSFM101, and not their other related subjects. Since the focus of the study was only HSFM101 students, data and views were not solicited from the tutor, lecturer, and faculty or support staff.

Although my positionality as the researcher and the lecturer was inevitable, it resulted in a degree of subjectivity in terms of the design and conducting of the authentic assessment. A further limitation was some students' financial and economic status. Students were not consulted prior to commencement of the assessment as to whether they could afford the additional costs incurred. The study also omitted students that were unable to access digital platforms for reflective online accounts. Hence, the results may not present a realistic account of all participants.

9.6 Conclusion

This study explored how students within a *Hospitality Financial Management* context acquire epistemic access in the practise of authentic learning. In order to understand this phenomena, this study was guided by the lens of Biggs 3Ps model (2003) together with the

elements of an AA Framework (Rowe, 2014). Concomitantly, a conceptual framework was proposed to understand the relationship between AA, EA and HFM at HEIs, most particularly in a developing country context such as South Africa.

A key finding of this study revealed that apart from its cognitive benefits, AA also promoted transformative learning through feedback and reflective inquiry. The fact that students are able to engage in different ways and challenge their deeply held assumptions and beliefs implies that transformation in learning takes place. Learning tolerance and accepting diversity fostered epistemic growth and emotional intelligence. This strengthens the nexus between social participation and prosperity (Sen, 2001). In order for students to start thinking and acting like hospitality managers, they require some level of socialisation and enculturation into the field of Hospitality Management (Ellery, 2016). Likewise, provided that the right opportunities are made available, these students are able to seek solutions autonomously, share their ideas, or even take the lead in improving collaborative learning. Thus, creating authentic learning spaces that value and nurture diversity in HEIs addresses the need to promote social inclusion for meaningful learning to take place. The transformative power of the assessment tasks allowed students to experience learning in a more inclusive manner, enabling more meaningful access to disciplinary concept and knowledge (Garaway, 2017).

Similarly, the design of an authentic assessment that is supplemented by scaffolds, such as the use of technology and tutorials, has the propensity to augment the learning experiences of students. Subsequently, this impacts favourably on the cognitive, affective and conative learning domains of students, hence, increasing their chances towards epistemological access. Indeed, many of the students found that supplementing scaffolds in the design of the assessment, encouraged them to accept and engage more meaningfully with the assessment tasks and activities. Subsequently, this created opportunities for them to work diligently and cohesively in groups that supported team work and critical thinking.

However, the tenets of the assessment did certainly unfold the contradictions and tensions that further played out during the engagement with assessment tasks. To an extent,

students that were more accustomed to a surface approach to learning (the presage factors) were able then to negotiate their learning experienced during engagement and to switch over to a deeper approach to their learning. Conversely, this was not the case for some students that displayed resistance and dissonance towards the accomplishment of group goals. In fact these students expressed their discomfort and tensions and found no academic benefit during group engagement.

In conclusion, this study mapped the various ways in which AA enables EA and indicates that an assessment strategy such as AA, contributes significantly in promoting both epistemic and ontological access to hospitality students. Assessing and learning for meaningful access is about selectively designing assessment strategies that will afford hospitality students the opportunity to gradually develop the requisite competences, skills, attitudes and values that are required for a hospitality career.

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APPENDIX 1: REQUEST AND PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

From: Rekha Maniram

Sent: 13 August 2015 09:09 AM

To: Vaneshree Govender

Subject: LETTER OF INTENT TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

Hi VANESHREE

I am currently registered for a PHD IN HIGHER EDUCATION AT UKZN and my studies is based on how Hospitality Financial Management Students Learn – AS I am the lecture for the module – theses students will be my unit of analysis and I hereby request for permission to conduct the study at DUT. I am currently working on my proposal.

Please inform on the processes and protocol to be followed in order to accomplish this task.

Many thanks and hope to hear from you soon

Kind regards

Rekha Maniram – lecturer: Dept of Hospitality: Lecturer: Financial Management

APPENDIX 2: ETHICAL CLEARANCE AND PROPOSAL APPROVAL

UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL
INYUVESI YAKWAZULU-NATALI

5 February 2016

Mrs Rekha Maniram 214584730
School of Education
Edgewood Campus

Dear Mrs Maniram

Protocol reference number: HSS/0041/016D
Project title: Epistemological access and authentic learning in Hospitality Financial Management

Full Approval – Expedited Application

In response to your application received 8 January 2016, the Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee has considered the abovementioned application and the protocol has been granted **FULL APPROVAL.**

Any alteration/s to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form, Title of the Project, Location of the Study, Research Approach and Methods must be reviewed and approved through the amendment /modification prior to its implementation. In case you have further queries, please quote the above reference number.

PLEASE NOTE: Research data should be securely stored in the discipline/department for a period of 5 years.

The ethical clearance certificate is only valid for a period of 3 years from the date of issue. Thereafter Recertification must be applied for on an annual basis.

I take this opportunity of wishing you everything of the best with your study.

Yours faithfully

.....
Dr Shenuka Singh (Chair)
Humanitities & Social Scinces Research Ethics Committee

/pm

Cc Supervisor: Prof S Maistry
Cc Academic Leader Research: Professor P Morojele
Cc School Administrator: Ms T Khumalo

Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee
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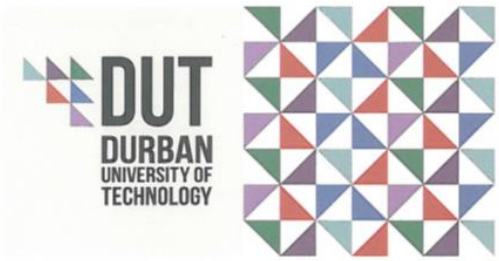
APPENDIX 3: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH



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2nd December 2015

Ms Rekha Maniram
c/o School of Social and Human Sciences
University of Kwa-Zulu Natal

Dear Ms Maniram

PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH AT THE DUT

Your email correspondence in respect of the above refers. I am pleased to inform you that the Institutional Research Committee (IRC) has granted provisional permission for you to conduct your research "Epistemological Access in Hospitality Financial Management: A case study of Authentic Assessment Practice" at the Durban University of Technology.

Kindly note, that the committee requires you to provide proof of full ethical clearance prior to you commencing with your research at the DUT.

We would be grateful if a summary of your key research findings can be submitted to the IRC on completion of the project.

Kindest regards.
Yours sincerely

PROF. S. MOYO
DIRECTOR: RESEARCH AND POSTGRADUATE SUPPORT

APPENDIX 4: INFORMED CONSENT

LETTER OF CONSENT

Dear Student

Thank you for responding to this letter of consent, however, to ensure that there is no ambiguity or doubt, I would appreciate it if you could read through the entire document in order to make an informed decision.

I am conducting research into students' learning of Hospitality Financial Management at the Durban University of Technology – Durban campus.

I, Rekha Maniram, wish to obtain your consent for participating in the research being undertaken by myself, Lecturer of Hospitality Financial Management 1 in the Department of Hospitality and Tourism in order to fulfil the requirements of a PhD in Higher Education at the University of Kwa Zulu-Natal.

The approved topic which I have chosen is:

"Epistemological Access in Hospitality Financial Management: A Case Study"

Please note that this study is being conducted in my personal capacity. Should you need to contact me regarding any aspect of this research, you can do so.

My contact details are as follows:

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Supervisor details: ***Professor S Maistry, Edgewood campus, UKZN***

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Please note that your participation in the study is voluntary and you will not be disadvantaged in any way that may impact on your studies. At any stage of the process you are at liberty to withdraw from the study undertaken.

As the study unfolds information will be required from you by means of an individual interview as well as in a focus group. In order to ensure that the information is authentic and reliable, I intend to audio (and video record; subject to your consent) the interview process. However, if you feel uncomfortable with this and wish not to consent to the recording, please make a note to this effect on the following page. Your participation in this

interview is completely voluntary. You have a right to withdraw at any time during the study. I appreciate the time and effort that it would take you to participate in this study. I would highly appreciate your participation, as it would help me complete this thesis.

This page can be retained by the respondent.

……

This page must be handed to the interviewer prior to the commencement of interview.

Please complete the section below:

I……. (Full names of participant) hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research, and I consent to participating in this study.

I understand that I am at liberty to withdraw from the project at any time, should I so desire.

I consent or do not consent to making an audio recording of the interview to be conducted.

Signature of Participant…….

Date……

I wish to obtain your consent to conduct a focus group discussion and an individual interview with you, and to draw on your all your formative assessments (formative assessment portfolio and learning journal), to triangulate the study. The focus group, interview and journal writing will reflect on how you learn HSFM101 and why you learn in that way. The duration of the focus group and interview will be about 75 and 25 minutes respectively. Furthermore, Video and/or audio recordings will be made, and discussions merging will be recorded and structured according to codes. It is also important to note that the recorded interviews and focus group sessions will remain confidential at all times, and your anonymity is guaranteed. For this reason your identities will be replaced by either using codes and/or pseudonyms, depending on your preference. The transcribed interview will be kept in a safe place within the School of Education as per research requirements. At

the end of five years the transcribed interview will be destroyed through a shredding process

I, _____ (full name of Participant) hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research project, and I consent to participating in the research project.

I understand that I am at liberty to withdraw from the project at any time, should I so desire.

…… ……

SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT **DATE**

APPENDIX 5: DETAILS OF THE AUTHENTIC PROJECT

THE AUTHENTIC PROJECT: HSFM101: MY HERITAGE DAY PRODUCT' - 2016

At the start of the semester, students were placed in groups of 6 and were assigned the main task of preparing a meal/s and selling their product towards the end of the semester. Keeping to the theme of Heritage day (in SA) – students had to produce the food that was unique to SA culture. For this they had to do an extensive research on a variety of both indigenous and food consumed and founded by SOUTH AFRICANS.

Students were given 6 weeks to prepare for the big entrepreneurial day; for this they had a range of subtasks that had timelines and various stages [also part of the Learning outcomes) such as:

- **Stage 1**
  - Research on what indigenous food will they sell on HERITAGE DAY[provide a synopsis and motivation – unique to SA CULTURE]
  - Raise their own capital [as they were not funded]

- **Stage 2**
  - Identification of the source documents and how this is recorded
  - Do a costing analysis on the product – prepare a costing sheet
  - Determine profit mark up

- **Stage 3**

Stage/phase 3 – proposed date 16 September 2016 [50 MARKS]

Apart from the practical activity that would take place on the 7/14 September 2016, you will be REQUIRED to present a **PORTFOLIO that** will include the following as part of your assessment:

- Identify the form of ownership that you would embark in your venture creation and motivate 5 reasons as to why you have chosen this form of ownership. (5)
- Identify the various ways of how you are going to raise capital to start of your project. (2)
- Identify the costs /expenses incurred for the entire project. (5)
- Determine the mark up percentage on cost that - in terms of profit achievement. (3)
- For internal control purpose Capture all source documents that are related to the project.(7)
- Prepare a simple profit and loss statement to determine profit/loss. (18)
- Overall Portfolio presentation (10)

Stage/phase 4 – proposed date 21 September 2016 [10 MARKS]

- EACH GROUP Member WILL BE INTERVIEWED INDIVIDUALLY TO ATTAIN AN INDIVIDUAL ASSESSMENT.

ASSESSMENT CRITERIA and RUBRIC

The following **learning outcomes** are relevant to the above project:

- Understand the basic concepts and policies of Accounting.
- Be able to cost and format your recipe
- Understand and explain the use of accounting practices.
- The recording of various source documents as an audit trail used in the hospitality industry.
- Calculation and determine of gross profit and net profit.
- Preparation of a profit and loss statement.

Critical Cross Field Outcomes

1. Identifying and solving problems in which responses display that responsible decisions using critical and creative thinking have been made.
2. Working effectively with others as a member of a team, group, organization, or community.
3. Organizing and managing oneself and one's activities responsibly and effectively.
4. Collecting, analyzing, organizing and critically evaluating information.
5. Communicating effectively using visual, mathematically and / or language skills in the modes of oral/ written persuasion.
6. Using science and technology effectively and critically, showing responsibility towards the environment and health of others.
7. Demonstrating an understanding of the world as a set of related systems by recognizing that problem- solving contexts do not exist in isolation.

PROJECT DAY – RUBRIC –STAGE 3

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
PRODUCT (10)								
PRICE (10)								
LAYOUT(5)								
ORIGINALITY(8)								
CUSTOMER SERVICE (7)								
GENERAL (10)								

Name of assessor Date And Sign

- stage 4
  - compile a portfolio of 3 stages above
  - prepare a report on each stage
  - include the minutes of meeting for each time group members met
  - prepare a brief reflection of each group member

YOUR PORTFOLIO PRESENTATION SHOULD INCLUDE THE FOLLOWING: [50 MARKS]

- Your product/s and description and why you chose the product
- You're planning at each stage- minutes of meetings attendance and what was discussed and decided by each member.
- Product costing analysis [recipe costing]
- Profit and loss statement

Notes: Students used social media as a main source of communication – for group collaboration

Students had to daily record their learning experiences arising from AA on BB – and if they required assistance or guidance – they received guidance from their facilitator.

APPENDIX 6: PRE INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

PRE - INTERVIEW SCHEDULE AND CONSENT FROM STUDENTS TO PARTICIPATE IN THE STUDY

Name of student	
Contact details	
Year school attended (grade 12)	
School	
Home (area)	
Any work experience (if yes briefly specify)	
Did you do Accounting in school (if yes at highest grade)	
How do you feel about studying in subjects related to mathematics or numeracy	
Do you have any fears in the subject	
What did you during a school holidays (did you go to places or stayed at home)	
Briefly tell me about your experience in the hospitality environment(such eating out – were and how often; did you stay at holiday accommodation previously – if yes describe)	
Parents or guardians highest qualifications and occupations	
What is your role in the family	
Do you have any children	

APPENDIX 7: FOCUS GROUP AFFINITY GENERATION

REFERENCE: Chapter 4 group reality – Affinity Generation

Table 1: Life's Contradictions

- The way I live. At home. Life is tough, so I am trying my best to be the best to be the best and do what's best for my family #Blood.
- I do a lot of things at home so I don't get time to study
- Financial difficulties we are facing at home is what pushes me to give it my best in this subject, I heard that a lot of people fail this subject. I don't want to be like those people I want to get out of the struggle
- The fact that no one is helping me at home previously affected me but now I push on my own.
- My home life is tough – too many problems to mention!!
- AT HOME THEY ARE SUPPORTIVE - FORMER TEACHERS CALL TO MOTIVATE ME - EXERCISES SUPPORT MY LEARNING
- My background it's not the easy and it's very hard and I do a lot to make sure I prove myself… And my sisters and brother they still at university as I do…. By hard working can make me be the best person in one day
- IT IS DIFFERENT BECAUSE I DON'T STAY WITH MY FAMILY, SO THIS YEAR HAS BEEN A NEW EXPERIENCE
- GOT LOTS TO PROVE AT HOME- FIRST ONE ATTENDING COLLEGE!!
- Cannot access BB Because my father Pastor so he don't like me to like involve me in social networks and that is challenge to me
- My family are the reason why I push so hard
- My family had a very good impact on how I'm learning because every time I'm learning I put them first
- BEING A PARENT My son is the reason why I am even in university. So he could have a better life
- Res is BEST FO STUDYING – HOME LIFE RATHER SAD AND DEPRESSING☹
- VERY CHALLENGING AT HOME because no one in my family know accounting, so when I needed help no one knew how to help me.

- I want to make parents proud so I try my best every day to make sure I pass
- I arrive late at home because I have to go and help my father AT his bakery. I don't enough time to study
- my family motivated me even though I did not do accounting
- My grandmother lifts up my strength regarding my studies she always motivates me to study hard
- My family supports me all the way
- I come from a rural area, most of time no water and electricity
- No support at home
- only one studying at home – feel privileged but also very guilty
- My previous learning is so different at school now
- We never got use libraries or visit to one
- HAVE OTHER TASKS AND WORK TO DO – NEVER TIME FO SCHOOL WORK!!
- Lots of chores to do; no time to study
- Don't have enough time to practice because of responsibilities at home
- Explaining to family how difficult the subject is & reducing house work
- My child is the reason why I strive to do better and be better
- My SCHOOL was in rural area with no proper learning environment – No access to internet since they had three computer for the whole area. – It my first time in my life to used computer
- It's my background mostly that affects my learning. Feel of oppression by the system, being under privileged and being less or not financially stable at all makes me do more of studying #finance pays a lot.
- My personal background was not good since I am the first to study from university. – Had financial problems since they was only one person whose working.
- We don't have computers at home
- I leave alone at home and I'm a parent, I also work at the sometime, I have lot of responsibilities, but I still manage to study, support my self
- I have so many struggles in my past, that sometimes it a problem to my studies. Im a bread 2.winner 4 my self

- My teachers taught me differently compared to university
- I am a supporter at home no time for studies☹
- Self-educated – no helps me at home
- At home I have lot of chores that I have to do but I make time for me to study because I love education, it is the only way to the better life. My home background encourages me to study hard so that I can change the situation at home.
- Have other chores at home
- The fact that I am the first person to actual come this far in my family kept me going
- No one is educated at home so that pushes me to work hard.
- Having a good back ground helps me because I got people to support me when I need help if needed.

Table 2: More practice – intense frequent engagement with content

- Getting other people to help me and a lot of practice!
- PRACTISING BLACKBOARD
- Previous knowledge helped me a little. I also had some private tutorials going on. So yeah.
- Tutorials helped me to understand financial management better
- I know that through practice I can get around the subject(which was not in the past)
- COMPOSURE – COURAGE – ATTITUDE PRACTISING
- I realised go over the exercises many times helps
- Practice at Res helped a lot!
- After all the practice, I learnt how to differentiate each of the different sections differently
- I realized that the more you practice, the more you understand and find the work easier.
- Revision = Practice
- By doing more gross profit statement exercise

○ Practice ○ I learnt the hard way to not practise! ○ Clear picture of concepts was better through practice. ○ Practicing every new section we learn and making sure I understand it ○ Practice ○ I learnt to go over my work all the time ○ I was able to improve my calculations skills by going over the work all the time ○ Going home and doing more practice with exercises we got in class ○ I study here at campus and practise before I leave to my father's bakery ○ Practice!!!! ○ Lots of practice ○ Practice more ○ I did become lazy to practice and it gave me big challenge

Table:3. Collaboration

Positive
• Well, I used to practise – Are on / during tutorials – Ask my private tutor – I even ask my classmates • A lot is achieved when there are other people's input Teamwork • I felt learning groups was better • I'm learning to work well in groups • Getting help from other students who understands better • Working as a group helped me a lot in understanding how to cost a recipe • That as people we are very different and unique in a special way; so it's good to learn from others • Team work leads to enjoyment • I was no longer lost as before cos someone was always there to guide me along! • Being a leader or group leader • Enjoyed working with the group • Working in groups is very challenging

- Ask for help to other students – Do more practices and read previous questions
- I used my old text books from high school – my roommates also help me since he is also doing it.
- People around me – Internet
- It helped at some point or being in class coz if I did not understand something I could ask someone next to me
- My friend helped me because she knows more about the subject – more practise.
- A friend helped me
- Asking classmates to explain for me – Attending tutorial – practising on my own
- Asking others around me. - checking books
- By asking the lecturer
- I know to understand the accoutring by practice the accounting and asking other students to help me if I have the lack of understand other sections…
- BY ASKING A LEARNER WHO UNDERSTANDS MORE about what's giving me hard time.
- Team work – Studying hard – Progressive to high school pass accounting – confidence – Tutorial attendance
- FOCUS ON WHAT I DO – TO ALWAYS DO HOMEWORK WHENEVER GIVEN – TO BE ALERT
- PATIENCE – BLACKBOARD – TUTORIALS – COMPOSURE
- Lectures – Study groups
- The ability for me to do work on my own
- Studying with someone who understands it much better than I do
- Help from friends in school
- My friend helped me where I had problems sometimes
- Making personal time to work/study with friends
- Made friends with people I didn't even think I'd ever talk to
- Studying with friends
- Asking for help
- I met new friends from other schools which I did not know but we connected

- Friends help, my friends also did help me a lot where I did not understand at all
- ASKED FOR HELP From lecturer & friends Asking other people & asking Q's during lectures

Negative

- Many "Group members" don't pull their weight (Lazy)
- Some of the group members were always late when we were meeting
- I didn't learn anything from my group members
- Too many disagreements
- Some did not pull their weight
- Conflict at times
- Group members did not really get on well… ONLY certain people.
- The group had too much conflict
- THE PROJECT DIDN'T GO EXACTLY HOW IT WAS SUPPOSED TO… WAS NOT SUCCESSFUL.
- My group members were not serious on the preparation or the project
- The group leader did not do anything meaning in the portfolio she was absent she did not contribute any money from printing and binding
- The group leader was too much controlling
- Have to do what others say
- They too judgmental
- Hard to get across members
- Sometimes watts up did not work for me – not able to communicate with the group

–Learning Resources [Tutorials, library, social media; E learning]

Table: 5 Resources [Tutorials, library, group chat; BB]

- – Tutorial also helped me
- library Resource, computer and text book

- Focus in class – Tutorial – Practice at home
- Ms Maniram was able to communicate alone with me and listen to my stories
- USING THE BLACKBOARD REALLY HELPED ME FOR THIS MODULE AND THE GROUP CHAT BECAUSE IT EXPOSED ME TO THE WAY OTHERS LEARN
- FM introduced me to blackboard
- Blackboard exercises and solutions really helped
- It changed the way I used to learn. Now I know I need to learn in a group
- Mrs Maniram giving us exercises to practice and posting solutions on blackboard.
- The group chat we had made it easy because we would as Mrs. Maniram if we did not understand anything.
- Social media keeps u alert on what's happening; not so lost now
- We create a group chart to study through social media
- Active discussion with class and Mrs Maniram on WATS up helped me!
- FM is the very first module that has ever allowed me to chat with the lecturer and ask questions
- Good support at library
- Attending all the classes at all times and tutorials
- Fell very shy in class; BB helped me to ask questions could not ask in class
- Adelaide the tutor she helped me understand better
- Tutorials helps
- I preferred attending Mrs Maniram as my tutor
- Bb found me again as I was lost in the big classroom
- Individual interaction with miss Maniram
- Tutorials makes learning easier
- Use of a good library
- As we get to have individual attention of our lecture. Its quiet few of us in tutorial
- Having tutorials
- Tutorials
- It is much easier to concentrate in tutorial than in class
- Mrs Maniram tutorial was more informative

Table: 4: **University and Lecturer environment**

- Learning with large amount of people disadvantages me. As other students tend to make noise, it's better during tutorials.
- It much helpful to me to learn in a class than at home because at home I have so many things to do. As I came late a home due to no transport.
- It helps me to learn in class room by helping each other – And learn to other students on what I don't understand…..
- sitting in big class - some student make noise that distract the teaching and learning -It also time consuming while they had to pay attention to them
- Learning in the classroom is a bit of a challenge for me because I can't ask questions. I'm afraid.
- At the beginning of semester had no space and place in lecture room – too crammed in venue –hard to concentrate and learn
- Not enough time to ask questions
- Too large classes not concentrating well enough
- No seats in the beginning – poor learning
- In class I just didn't hear anything. A large group disturbs me both mind and heart. But I tried. I think that's y I got less marks @ first b4 tutorials…..
- The class lessons help because its better when somebody explains to you
- Having a big class, it sometimes made learning kind of hard at time.

- It did help me a lot to learn to a class because it's where I express my feelings, but some of the students were making noise making it difficult to learn but I managed to pull through The class was not cooperating meaning some individuals where making noise.
- Too many students too little space

- Sometimes the class was very noise
- No seats no learning – walked out
- I forgot everything because of strikes
- The strike affected us it had a bad effect

- The strikes at school wasted my time very much. I'd be done and gone by the 8th but HAVE TO WAIT!
- STRIKE DISTURBED US FROM LEARNING IN THE BEGINNING
- I was disrupted by the strike because it took away time
- People here are so judgemental
- I am not used to this kind of environment. I came from a girl's only school now university is so different.
- Boarding school is where I lost interest in school as a whole. – emotionally draining

Hospitality and financial language

Table: 5

- English a second language
- New words never heard this before!!
- No accounting background lost in understanding – difficult language
- Not familiar with hospitality industry
- The practice of projects made the language more clear
- Never did accounting; never been to a hotel or sat at a restaurant – this is all new language to me
- Project made the language understandable
- Never stayed at a hotel or understand its operations
- Application of project helped in understanding what the true meaning of finance is.
- We did not have the opportunity to have holidays at hotels that's why poor understanding
- Having problems in understanding these new words
- Never did accounting in school now faced with this new language this is my problem!!
- Wish I had been to hotel to get a better understanding of these hospitality terms
- Finance a total gibberish language to me!!!
- Working in groups helped to know the language better
- Language is my learning problem

- Finance is my main problem
- I battle with English now have to learn this finance boy its hard!
- At least I understand most of these words and their meanings now – thanks to my friends help!
- Different words different meanings

Learning Challenges

Table: 6 Learning Challenges

- Bad thing come out conflicts was there because work as team there is a conflict….
- Lot of hard work – Group member not committed – I learned new skills and had an idea of what real industry is like. – learnt to put my feelings aside and work as a team
- As a group we worked together, even when we had misunderstandings. – the group leader helped as a lot
- Learnt to work with diff people – To work with customers
- I learnt how to overcome my anger. – I learnt how to do costing per ingredient
- It was pretty challenging for me. I am not usually an extrovert but I'm not an introvert either. We were seven. That's a lot I was shy.
- Lot of work – selling it not an easy thing – lot of loss – lot of energy needed
- LEARNING TO WORK WITH PEOPLE WAS POSITIVE – MOTIVATED TO BE IN THIS TYPE OF BUSINESS – MADE ME TO THINK OUT OF THE BOX – MADE ME TO THINK CRITICALY
- Little time
- We needed to make a profit but we made a loss this troubled me!
- I didn't know I can start something from scratch and sell everything we made
- Learnt how to have time management – How to lead a group of people
- Communication, especially in English. It little bit stress before – The time management are new skills that I've learned and the importance of them.

- Time management now I ensure that I plan and manage my time properly – take everything serious that is being teaching in class
- I overcome the challenges by studying hard and not let anything to not understand it by practice and tutorial helps me more… and practice with hard working improve me a lot… keep successfully
- Need to keep up my time skills
- Problems in Understanding why certain accounts balance
- I did not know how to do the costing question that was on the project
- I was not able to calculate General ledger account but a friend taught me
- I am not able to do all the calculation By myself
- I clearly know that receiving cash does not equal profit
- I'm horrible with numbers
- Double entry can become rather confusing!
- Poor time management
- Bank ledger gave me a lot of problems
- Statement of financial position
- Gross profit statement additional information is confusing
- I cannot seem to find a way to understand profit & loss and I get confused with T accounts (General ledger)
- Gross profit statement I did not understand it because we only did it once and it came out of the test
- STATEMENT OF EQUITY- I CAN'T SEEM TO UNDERSTAND IT (FIRST TIME)
- I had difficulties in General ledger not knowing which account goes under Dr or Cr
- Calc of profit
- Double entry
- General ledger
- Study groups
- I've always liked working with groups and I really enjoyed doing this project
- Some group members did care about the entire project

- Found it hard to work with some people because they can't work as a team – market day
- I learnt to be patience with a group or individuals I did not know.
- The ability to work as a group
- More work with groups
- Working with others
- Learning from each other
- Meeting and getting along with new people
- I did not learn anything from the FM group
- Felt bad that as a group we did not make a profit
- The leader was ordering us around. We made a loss which was sad
- I did not know I can take orders from someone who is my age
- Fear: who will be my group member, what task are they going to give me. Team: learn on how to work with other people, who has different background to mine
- The work would have been much easier if we knew how to do costing!
- MADE ME TO KNOW HOW TO DEAL WITH CONFLICT – WAS RELATING TO THE THEORY OF THE SUBJECT – WAS TIME CONSUMING
- Stressful at the beginning
- Overload

- Feel like I did not give it my best short
- While I was unregistered felt like I'm not destined to have or achieve what I want with my life
- While I was unable to register I thought my future has come to an end
- THE CLASS IS TOO BIG. THERE IS TOO MANY PEOPLE IN OUR CLASS
- Class is to disruptive
- Lectures were to later in afternoon
- Direct interaction with miss Maniram helped me in understand individual sections
- Felt like this module was rushed and that let to mis-understanding
- I felt like I did not understand some of the things because I was scared
- I overcome the challenges I had in class by asking miss to explain more further

- Too many people in the same class to fully hear & understand
- Too late hard to concentrate
- Feel tired at end of day; hard to concentrate
- It was very challenging for me as I didn't do accounting at school
- Afternoon classes too tired
- Cramped up
- HAVEN'T DONE ACCOUNTING IN HIGH SCHOOL, I AM NOT VERY GOOD WITH NUMBERS
- Too big and too many in a class hard to focus
- Losing my attention in this big class
- All lost in big classes
- Afternoon class not best to learn FM
- I am doing this subject for the first time
- Doing subject for first time
- NO ACCOUNTING KNOWLEDGE
- NO GOODS WITH ACCOUNTS
- Depsided accounting in school
- Did accounting in school but troubled me a lot
-
- I was a challenge because I didn't do accounting in school
- Confusing I did not do the subject at high school
- Studying a module I didn't take in high school.
- Sometimes I did not sleep until I got everything correct e.g balancing the financial position

- Does not have enough time to go to library and get materials to help me understand the subject much better because of the distance I walk from school to where I leave.
- Financial management is the main reason why I am now confused in university as a whole
- I felt left out like I didn't belong to this industry
- This subject is way more different than accounting I did in grade 9

- I did not do accounting at school so it was a challenge
- It was a challenge me since I did not do accounting school

Motivation and changed attitude

Table: 7 .Motivation and changed attitude

- **C**hange in attitude towards the subject – Involving the subject more in my daily plans (practising more).
- WEARINESS – TEST RESULT – CAUTION
- Project vs FM? Yes it changed the way I see it, I started loving it and changed my attitude towards it and I passed it.
- I discovered that I really belong into the hospitality industry. I did not want the project to end.
- Marketing was very interesting and I learn at as at home we have small business and learn a lot, motivating, teamwork and hardworking….
- I have stopped hating accounting. I like it now.
- After writing I get excited, that's where I get to know I got the right answer
- Began feel confident when working on something I understood
- Applied solution
- I KNOW I CAN DO IT
- I wait for homework!
- Fear not anymore -this project helped me overcome them!
- I know can take on any challenge in finance by just believing in my self
- When our workings came out correct
- My hard work paid off and it was worth the while cos understanding is better now
- I am now able to teach others on how to do most of the calculations
- When what I was thinking was correct
- Good bye stress; goodbye fear- stay motivated
- Yes I learnt to do the general ledger which I hated when I was in gr 8
- I knew I understood by getting and continuing to get it right after doing it myself
- Positive attitude

- Positive attitude towards the challenges I face
- Determined and persevered
- Being focused
- I look forward to all my finance classes – thanks MRS MANIRAM
- Work hard
- To push my self
- Stress free
- Punctuality
- By having a positive Attitude
- Admitting to what is difficult for me to do
- I now learn to understand something when studying.
- My career choice. All I wanted was to be a manager. Which type? I wanted the general one. But now. I think my mind is getting confused coz I'm starting to LOVE FINANCE
- I have become more interested in this subject, that I enjoy teaching / help other students understand it.
- Got it right in a test. – started to enjoy doing it.
- Calculation-be able to do calculation and get it correct. – Methods-do it in different ways but get some outcomes
- I am now good with numbers – I always thought acc was the worst.
- Its either when ma'am did corrections and I got it CORRECT!!! – Or, its when I feel that I just understand it and when I do it its right!
- I love doing real work than theory all the time.
- BY DOING EXERCISES AND GET THEM CORRECT
- After every lecture, I usually have that " I can't wait to do this activity, when I get to Res then I know I understood it.
- When I explained to someone in class – When I wrote the test.
- Knowing my goals and where I draw a line that feeling pity won't help me
- Willing heart by telling myself that I wanna learn and get full understanding
- Reading a section before starting it in class
- Taking the module serious

- READING TO UNDERSTAND BETTER
- I try my best to learn and pass because of who and where I come from.
- Starting to read more diligently now
- My character as I don't like to be a failure I try my best to make it
- Prayer "continuous prayer"
- TRIED TO FOCUS MORE TO IMPROVE MOVED TO THE FRONT OF THE CLASS SO I DIDN'T GET DISTRACTED
- Participating during lessons
- Read all the way
- Learning to read and understand
- Listening with understanding

.Acquired abilities and skills

Table 8 Acquired abilities and skills

- Project HELPED ME TO GAIN MORE KNOWLEDGE
- Showed me ways how to control your money
- Now I can budget with every cent I earn – Now I can able to go back and see if I made any over spend.
- I got a sales skill
- I can work in a team of people with different personalities
- I know I can open my own business
- The subject changes me how to maintain the finance and how to learn accounting and how to know finance as the issue in yourself…. To save money….
- Knowing the importance of money – the ability to sell was something new I learnt about myself.
- With every purchase I made in a store now I can check if I paid any VAT – My calculations skills are used now. I calculate everything.
- Excited at first – learnt a lot of life lessons, rather than school work. "Not everyone will be as enthusiastic as you are"
- ABLE TO NOW MANAGE MY TIME

- I didn’t know I can lead people and have good results at the end. Without shouting at any one.
- To work has team on in the project was supper cool and interesting and learn a lot to be there and one day I want to be a manager in future
- I gained the skill to promote our goods to the customers
- I did learn how to attract customers during the market day! – I met a lot of people. Those I like – made me more motivated for what I wanna be! It was real
- I LEARNT TO: WORKING UNDER PRESSURE – MEET DEMANDS – MANAGING CASH FLOW – TO MARKET THE PRODUCT TO CUSTOMERS
- Business planning is challenging. The project was like starting a business.
- The new skills I learn time management, teamwork, marketing and how to manage the business in one day …. Marketing director…
- Marketing skills
- Communication skill – with my group members
- Being patient
- Becoming a leader and leading a group taught me more
- I learn the skills of marketing
- I never knew that I was able to manage a situation in tough times!
- I didn’t think I could bake such enjoyable cakes
- LEARNT To be calm at all times
- Projecting my voice when I was asking people to come buy
- Taught me how to manage myself financially
- Able to become a team player important for getting things done
- More self-study
- I am using my fm knowledge in my daily life
- As a leader the group had full confidence in me.wow what a feeling it was!
- I learnt to know that in order to cope I need to know the basics
- I realized that FINANCE important to my career
- I am learning differently from how I learnt in school
- WHEN YOU HAVE been doing it for a while :)
- went to a great school for matriculating

- I lose concentration because of long hours
- Learning on my own
- Pressure and to cope with time
- I learnt to improve my time management skills for tests as well as assignments
- Time management

Getting the work and calculations right – new understanding

Table: 9

I learn on how to do costing as I didn't know that I should determine each product cost.

- How to apply what I've learned at in class into reality.
- Finally getting to improve by knowing the accounting equation
- Finally understanding what profit means for a business
- I know am enjoying the calculations as it now works out!
- Improve in calculation
- FINALLY KNOW BETTER THAN EVE DID!
- Finally understanding debit and credit
- A new way of looking into finance
- I am getting there….
- Costing makes more sense now
- Practice makes it jus right – able to tackle my difficult calculations
- My friends and group made me see things much different now better understood
- Proved that expectations can't be fulfilled since NO profit/ loss was made in the end
- Project improved my understanding of calculations
- Still struggle but better than before
- Wow I can see the light!
- I learnt to do calculations
- Its now making more sense
- looking forward to FM2 – cos of FM1 SO exciting!
- Calculations. Calculating Vat. – now its more clear
- I know realised why Product costing is important

- double entry makes sense now
- able to read the source docs – know why now…
- Calculating improved -I learnt more about costing a menu
- By doing it myself in the calculator and knowing which method I must do
- COSTING FROM THE PROJECT

APPENDIX 8 AXIAL AND THEORETICAL INTERVIEW INDIVIDUAL PROTOCOLS

Axial and Theoretical Interview Individual Protocol

1. The interviewer/researcher thanks the students for their participation in the study
2. The students[19] are reminded on the purpose of the interview and once again advised that their privacy and anonymity is guaranteed. They are also reminded that should they feel uncomfortable at any time during the interview process; they have the option to be excused from the interview or refrain from answering any particular questions.

3. Students were also given the right to object to any audio/video recordings.

4. Before interview begins; a brief recap on the study together with the affinities previously identified by in focus group participants are discussed.

5. The **Axial interview** begins with Audio and/or video recording.

6. During the axial interview the researcher asks the participants to reflect on their reflective recordings (online) in order to share their experience on each of the affinities. The researcher, allows for probing questions that' yields a richer and in depth account of their experiences relating to each affinity.

7. Students are once again thanked for their participation and reminded to form a pair [dyad] for stage 2.

8. The next stage is followed by the **Theoretical Interview**. Students are reminded on their confidentiality.

9. For this stage students are paired [dyads teams] to easier facilitate the process in this second stage of the interview;

[19]I used the term students interchangeably with participants

10. The dyad teams are now prodded to describe the relationship or connection between each pair of affinities by sharing examples on their learning experiences in HSFM101.

11. This stage concludes once all affinity pairs are completed. Participants are asked if they have any concluding thoughts that they wish to share as part of the interview.
12. The researcher expresses her note of gratitude for their participation and values their contribution in the study

THE AXIAL INTERVIEW (INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEW)

[The ***Axial interview*** describes the experiences shared by the student in relation to each of the affinities]

During the focus group sessions; as group members; you identified a range of shared themes or affinities that was related to your learning of HSFM101 during the authentic assessment stages. Now let's look deeper at each of these themes (starting from the first one) and I would like for you to very truthfully and sincerely describe your experiences with each one. This will help me to improve my understanding of how students learn. Please note that whatever you say will not undermine your academic achievement in any way – for this reason your honest input will be highly valued – I would also appreciate any negative or so called criticisms that you may want to describe that's related to your learning.

1. Life Management

This describes the personal lives and prior learning of the focus group members and how this influenced their learning experience at the various stages and activities of the assessment

Describe to me about what your experiences with Life Management – what it has meant to you.

2. Intense Frequent engagement

This affinity represents that practice and engagement with the various assessment activities presented students with positive learning. Explain and describe what the positive experiences were. Tell me about your frequent practices with assessment activities.

3. Collaboration

This affinity represented that collaboration that was increased through the group activities which were y, ranging from positive to negative experiences. Describe to me both these positive and negative experiences

4. Learning Resources (tutorials, library resources, social media, e-learning)

This affinity represented as a scaffold o academic support was required in executing the assessment (see also appendices: 7). The focus groups also identified the following sub affinities that made up the above affinity; tutorials, library resources, social media, e-learning. Describe how each of these sub affinities was presented to you as source of academic support.

5. University and Lecturer environment

This affinity was described by the participants that the University environment and the lecturer restricted their academic access in various ways. Tell me how these environments led to poor leaning experiences and what exactly restricted you academic goals.

6. Language (Hospitality and Finance)

This affinity was described as to how the design of the assessment contributed towards overcoming the language barrier. Describe how the design of the assessment was able to overcome most language barriers.

7. Learning Challenges

This affinity described various challenges such as diversity, accounting at school level; threshold concepts and time management that students experienced whilst learning hsfm101 though authentic practice. Describe each of these challenges and to what extent it influenced your learning in HSFM101 though authentic practice.

8. Motivation and changed attitude

This affinity was presented by the focus group as a change in attitude and how they felt about the HSFM101 module owing to the design, and their enactment of assessment tasks.
Tell me what and why you experienced a new change in attitude towards Hfm101.

9 .Acquired abilities and skills

This affinity described different abilities and skills were acquired whilst engaging with the assessment. Describe, if any, what are skills and abilities that was acquired during authentic practice in HSFM101.

10. A new understanding

This affinity represented the effectives of authentic learning leading to new understandings of threshold concepts, calculations, and learning approaches. Tell me about how and why you came to a new understanding though authentic learning in HSFM101.

APPENDIX 9: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL: THEORETICAL INTERVIEW (NORTHCUTT, & MCCOY, 2004)

Many of the themes or affinities identified have some kind of relationship; one affects or causes the other. Let's look at each theme and decide if or how it relates to each other theme. Tell me about your experiences with such relationships. Please give specific examples of how the relationships have affected your experience.

Affinity name:

1. Life management
2. Intense Frequent Engagement
3. Collaboration
4. Learning Resources (tutorials, library resources, social media, e-learning)
5. University and Lecturer environment
6. Language (Hospitality and Finance)
7. Learning Challenges
8. Motivation and changed attitude
9 .Acquired abilities and skills
10. A new understanding

Possible relationships:

1 → 2

2 ← 1

1<>2

AFFINITY RELATIONSHIP TABLE

Affinity Pair Relationship	
← / → / <>	
1	**2**
1	**3**
1	**4**
1	**5**
1	**6**
1	**7**
1	**8**
1	**9**
1	**10**
2	**3**
2	**4**
2	**5**
2	**6**
2	**7**
2	**8**
2	**9**
2	**10**

3	**4**
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6	**7**
6	**8**
6	**9**
6	**10**
7	**8**
7	**9**
7	**10**
8	**9**
8	**10**
9	**10**

Interview protocol: Theoretical interview

The themes or affinities that were identified in focus group sessions relate to each other in some way or the other; one affects or causes the other. Describe your experiences with such relationships. Now examine each affinity (theme), and you tell me whether it relates to each other and how according to your learning experience in HSFM101.

APPENDIX 10: TURNITIN REPORT

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