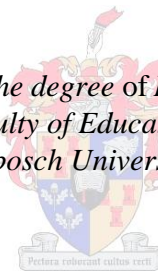# The role of context in decision making about professional learning by lecturers at a research-intensive university

by
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Declaration

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December 2015

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Abstract

The professional learning of academics for the teaching function inherently is a change imperative and it has become an important enterprise in the delivering of high quality student learning within the changing higher education landscape. The influence of context on the decision making of academics about becoming involved in the process of professional learning for teaching was explored in this study in order to inform the practice of professional learning practitioners.

The landscape of higher education has changed extensively across the world over the past few decades. In South Africa, these changes have been the result of international changes as well as national imperatives and associated institutional policies. The changes include larger student numbers; a higher level of state intervention; a discourse of performativity and managerialism; and the marketization of knowledge. Within this new landscape, academics have been confronted with a number of old, and some new issues concerning how they view their roles, set their allegiances, and identify with their work.

Being a university lecturer, however, is but one of the roles of the academic – a role which is not necessarily highly valued and for which most are not adequately prepared. Professional learning, as the continuous learning of professionals, is usually the ambit of institutional centres for teaching and learning and the practitioners of professional learning employed in these centres. At Stellenbosch University (SU), the Centre for Teaching and Learning (CTL) was established in 2003. As professional learning practitioners at SU, we have constantly been reflecting on our work, and this PhD, funded by the NRF, forms part of this reflection.

In this study, the concept of 'professional learning' is defined as the continuous learning of academics and is an interlinked and sequential three-stage process similar to the three phases of decision making. The concept of 'context' is defined as a 'contextual spiral' culminating in the daily reality of the academic as big-C-Context. The daily reality of the academic emerges at the intersection of the professional and personal spheres of the life-world through the interplay of various personal and professional considerations. The concept of 'decision making' is defined as a trade-off between alternatives with an opportunity cost attached to such a choice.

The case study design implemented in this research made use of qualitative and quantitative data gathered from permanently employed members of the academic staff at the institution in an attempt to determine the influence of context on the decision making of lecturers for participating in professional learning for teaching. The findings of the research indicate that intrinsic motivation is important for decision making and the emerging individual context is mostly experienced as a constraint to the decision to participate in the process of professional learning for teaching. Creating

an enabling environment where care for the wellbeing of academics is evident would raise the level of intrinsic motivation and could indeed be a wise step in the pursuit of reaching institutional goals and aims in relation to the teaching function and high quality student learning.

Although the findings of this study is specific to Stellenbosch University as a research intensive higher education institution, it could also contribute to the growing body of knowledge in the field of the professional learning of academics, as well as inform other professional learning practitioners within higher education.

Opsomming

Professionele leer van akademici vir hulle onderrigfunksie is inherent 'n veranderingsinisiatief en dit het 'n belangrike aspek in die lewering van hoë gehalte studenteleer binne 'n veranderende hoër onderwys-landskap geword. In hierdie studie word die invloed van konteks op akademici se besluitneming om betrokke te raak by die proses van professionele leer vir onderrig ondersoek, ten einde die werksaamhede van professionele leer-praktisyns toe te lig.

Die hoër onderwys-landskap het oor die afgelope paar dekades wêreldwyd aansienlik verander. In Suid-Afrika het hierdie veranderinge, as gevolg van internasionale verandering en nasionale imperatiewe en verwante institusionele beleide, plaasgevind. Hierdie veranderinge behels groter studentegetalle, 'n hoër vlak van staatsingryping, 'n diskoers van prestasie en die bestuur en die bemarking van kennis. Binne hierdie nuwe landskap word akademici gekonfronteer met bestaande en nuwe kwessies rakende hulle siening van hulle rol, die bou van vertrouensverwantskappe en hoe hulle met hul eie werk identifiseer.

Om 'n universiteitsdosent te wees is egter maar een van die rolle van die akademikus – 'n rol wat nie noodwendig hoog geag word nie en waarvoor die meeste nie voldoende voorbereid is nie. Professionele leer, as die voortgesette leer van professionele persone, is gewoonlik die verantwoordelikheid van institusionele sentrums vir onderrig en leer en die professionele leer-praktisyns in diens van hierdie sentrums. Die Sentrum vir Onderrig en Leer (SOL) aan die Universiteit Stellenbosch (US) is in 2003 gestig. As professionele leer-praktisyns aan die US, dink ons voortdurend na oor ons werk en hierdie NRF-befondste doktorale studie vorm deel van hierdie nadenke.

Die konsep 'professionele leer' word in hierdie studie as die voordurende leer van akademici gedefinieer en is 'n onderling-verbinde en sekwensiële drie-fase proses soortgelyk aan die drie fases van besluitneming. 'Konteks' as konsep word gedefinieer as 'n 'kontekstuele spiraal' wat in die alledaagse leefwêreld van die akademikus kulmineer as die groot-C-konteks. Die daaglikse realiteit van die akademikus kom na vore by die kruising van die professionele en persoonlike sfere van die leefwêreld deur die wisselwerking van verskeie persoonlike en professionele oorwegings van albei hierdie sfere. Die konsep van 'besluitneming' word gedefinieer as die opweeg van alternatiewe met 'n geleentheidskoste verbonde aan so 'n keuse.

'n Gevallestudie-ontwerp is vir hierdie navorsing benut. Beide narratiewe en numeriese data wat van permanent aangestelde akademiese personeellede by die instelling versamel is, is gebruik in 'n poging om die invloed van konteks op die besluitneming van dosente vir deelname aan professionele leer vir onderrig te bepaal. Die bevindinge van die navorsing dui daarop dat

intrinsieke motivering belangrik is vir besluitneming en dat die konteks wat by die instelling na vore kom meestal ervaar word as beperkend tot die besluit om aan die proses van professionele leer vir onderrig deel te neem. Die skep van 'n omgewing wat die welsyn van akademici op die hart dra behoort die vlak van intrinsieke motivering te verhoog en sou inderdaad 'n wyse besluit wees ter ondersteuning van gestelde institusionele doelwitte met betrekking tot die onderrigfunksie en hoë gehalte studenteleer.

Alhoewel die bevindings van die studie spesifiek op Universiteit Stellenbosch as 'n navorsingsintensiewe hoëronderwysinstelling betrekking het, kan dit ook bydra tot kennis op die gebied van professionele leer van akademici en belangrike inligting verskaf aan ander professionele leerpraktisyns in hoër onderwys.

Acknowledgements

I have read that research usually has two types of goals: Firstly, practical goals focusing on accomplishing something and, secondly, intellectual goals that are focused on understanding to gain insight into something. When I started my PhD journey five years ago it was with the goal of finishing it in mind, but drawing to a close, I would like to say that I have grown academically and have become a scholar in my discipline. This journey has been a bumpy but satisfying one during which I very often found myself in an uncharted ocean.

I have now come to the end of this part of the journey towards 'doctorateness', but it would not have been possible without the help and support of my fellow travellers. My sincere thanks and appreciation are extended to each of them:

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Chapter 1
Orientation to the study

1.1   Introduction

At the turn of the century, Barnett (2000) regarded higher education as a phenomenon operating in a "super-complex" world, pointing to an era in which the purposes of higher education were uncertain and essentially unknown (Brew, 2006). In the midst of ongoing debates about the purposes of higher education (Groccia, 2010), public universities are still expected to address national needs; deliver research results; produce graduates with the knowledge, skills and attitudes to take on social challenges and responsibilities; as well as being at the forefront of the rapidly changing and competitive global environment (Gumport, 2000; Hargreaves, 2000; D'Andrea & Gosling, 2005; Crawford, 2010). Higher education institutions have to adhere to these expectations while simultaneously having to deal with fewer resources, changing student demographics, and demands and calls for increased accountability (Cloete, Maassen, Fehnel, Moja, Perold & Gibbon, 2004; Eddy & Garza Mitchell, 2011); as well as calls for academic renewal (Frick & Kapp, 2009:257).

Although it is incumbent on higher education institutions to meet these stated expectations, it is the individuals employed within these institutions who have to ensure they are indeed accomplished. As Dill (1999:139) explains, it is the individuals that will collectively take the institution forward. Within any institution of higher education, these 'individuals' are the staff members employed by such institutions. Academic staff members are appointed to do research, teach students and provide service in some or other form within universities and they are thus at the centre of these expectations (Frick & Kapp, 2009:256). The teaching function, however, carries the brunt of this responsibility which is mainly due to the public nature and interest in its results (Fairweather, 2002; Marincovich, 2006), but university lecturers, at the same time, constantly have to "do more with less" (Johnston, 1998; Hargreaves, 2000; Cloete *et al.*, 2004; Frick & Kapp, 2009; Ginns, Kitay & Prosser, 2010; Bexley, James & Arkoudis, 2011). According to Hutchings, Huber and Golde (2006), being a lecturer in higher education nowadays requires a new and larger set of abilities and skills. Teaching more diverse groups of students also requires a deeper knowledge of pedagogy than before. It therefore seems evident that 'professional learning' (Brew, 2004:5) of academics, is required to strengthen their agency in dealing with the multiple challenges they face.

The process of professional learning for academics as teachers is to the benefit of the individual academic, the students, as well as the employing institution. It is suggested by D'Andrea and Gosling (2005) that any attempt by a university to improve its teaching should therefore be

embedded in some form of institutional system. Unfortunately, participation in developmental opportunities that become available for university lecturers to grow and develop is often unsatisfactory. What lecturers learn from such opportunities often is also not implemented (Herman & Cilliers, 2008). Knowledge about the influence of context on the decision making of lecturers regarding participation in such professional learning opportunities therefore becomes important.

Research into professional learning for teaching at higher education institutions is a relatively young and thinly spread area of study when compared to the available body of knowledge focusing on the professional learning of school teachers. Evidence of this is the number of journals dedicated to the professional learning of school teachers versus that of academics at higher education institutions. In line with the suggestion of other authors (Entwistle, Skinner, Entwistle & Orr, 2000; Kane, Sandretto & Heath, 2002; Viskovic, 2009), this study also drew from literature on the professional learning of school teachers.

Practitioners of professional learning are urged by Groccia (2010) to become more responsive to the changing profiles and needs of academics and students, as well as to the changing nature of academic work-life realities. According to Knight (2006:35), relatively little is known about the environments that favour professional learning for teaching and Jarvis (2012:1) states that the influence of everyday life on human learning is "a strangely unresearched subject". Research informing professional learning practitioners about the influences playing a role in the process of professional learning of academics for their teaching function thus is needed. This study attempted to contribute to the current body of research on the professional learning of academics for teaching at a research-intensive university and is an attempt to inform the practices of professional learning in this regard.

1.2   Motivation for the study

The process of professional learning for teaching comprises a complex endeavour influenced by many challenges. One of the challenges often faced by professional learning practitioners in higher education institutions, is that academics are expected to teach, but often have neither gained much teaching experience nor a teaching qualification (Johnston, 1998; Smith, 2001; Donald, Maria, Efendiev & Tukhfatullin, 2005; Cilliers & Herman, 2010). This 'under qualified' status (Austin (2002) in Toews & Yazedjian, 2007) or feeling of "flung in at the deep end" (Allan, 1996:viiii) might lead to a situation in which academics feel ill-equipped for the challenges of teaching in higher education and student learning might not be optimal. This, in turn, might lead to lower levels of motivation; unsatisfactory performance appraisals; and lower job satisfaction, potentially resulting in high staff turnover (Knight & Trowler, 1999; Bland, Seaquist, Pacala & Finstad, 2002).

Guskey (1986) notes that professional learning for teaching does not always lead to change in the teaching practices of academics. He attributes this to the possibility that professional learning practitioners sometimes fail to take into account the factors which motivate lecturers to engage in professional learning, as well as the ways by which changes in practices usually occur. Trowler, Fanghanel and Wareham (2005) also point out the unreasonable expectation of assuming that courses on teaching in higher education, usually focused on individual academics, could bring about fundamental changes to the teaching practices and values and attitudes associated with teaching and learning within institutions and even faculties and departments.

A national research project entitled 'The Interplay of Structure, Culture and Agency: Contextual influences on the professional development of academics as lecturers in higher education in South Africa' was undertaken between 2011 and 2013. This study, funded by the National Research Foundation (NRF) in the country involved 18 researchers from eight different South African universities. The point of departure of this national study was that institutional contexts influence the participation of lecturers in professional learning opportunities. The project investigated the influence of structure, culture and agency (Archer, 2000) on the uptake of opportunities for professional learning of academics in their teaching roles. This investigation was given further impetus by a call for the enhancement of both the effectiveness of student learning as measured by throughput and the quality of graduates (Scott, Yeld & Hendry, 2007). The processes involved in the NRF project are discussed in greater detail in the chapter dealing with the research methodology for this study as this PhD study formed part of the NRF umbrella project.

A finding from the institutional audit done by the Higher Education Quality Committee (HEQC) at Stellenbosch University (SU), was that there has always been substantial provision of formal professional learning opportunities for academics to enhance their teaching role (HEQC, 2007). As professional learning practitioner, I have been involved in the professional learning of university lecturers for 21 years, the last 16 years of which at Stellenbosch University. During this time my colleagues and I have facilitated a wide range of events aimed at enhancing the quality of teaching and learning at SU. Despite adopting a critically reflective approach to our work (Van Schalkwyk, Cilliers, Adendorff, Cattell & Herman, 2013) and regularly receiving positive feedback from participants, we remain unsure of the impact of these interventions and their potential for effecting real change in lecturers' teaching practices (Cilliers & Herman, 2010).

Different approaches towards formal professional learning have been adopted by the Centre for Teaching and Learning (CTL) at Stellenbosch University and its predecessor, Uni-Ed (Centre for University Education) through the years. These approaches were implemented with varying levels of success in terms of uptake, but in most cases the uptake was low. An example of such low uptake

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is the participation in the official SU short course on 'Assessing student learning'. It was stated in the Stellenbosch University assessment policy (2005:6) that "[a]s from 2005, the University expects all newly appointed academic staff to take the official assessor's training programme presented by the Centre for Teaching and Learning as a condition for appointment in a fixed capacity". According to the CTL annual reports (Centre for Teaching and Learning, 2004, 2005, 2008, 2009), however, this expectation has not been enforced by the university and out of a possible 478 newly appointed academics, only 274 individuals attended certain components of the short course while a mere 31 received a certificate of attendance for participating in all four components of the short course. No lecturer has as yet received a certificate of competence for which an assessment portfolio is required.

This low uptake of formal professional learning opportunities and the uncertainty regarding the application of what was learned has been a concern for professional learning practitioners at the CTL for a number of years. Possible reasons for this were often discussed and solutions suggested. Unfortunately these solutions were not always based on research involving the academic voice (Crawford, 2010), but often were rather based on anecdotal evidence from discussions and consultations with individuals or groups of lecturers. As professional learning practitioners in the CTL at SU, my colleagues and I have to undertake research in our professional field in order to inform our practice. No learning takes place in a vacuum and therefore an understanding of the influence of context in the decision-making process of professional learning of academics for their teaching, as evident in a research intensive university in South Africa, is important for professional learning practitioners within such an institution. Facilitators of professional learning are urged by Knight, Tait and Yorke (2006:327) to reflect upon and study the reasons why lecturers choose to 'stay in touch', and which contexts would support lecturers in this regard.

Motivated by our care for the lecturers at the university, two limited research projects were previously undertaken. The one focused on the impact of formal professional learning for teaching (Cilliers & Herman, 2010) and the other on the factors enabling and hindering the application of what was learned during such formal professional learning opportunities (Cilliers & Herman, 2013). Both these projects involved newly appointed academics only and gave impetus to this PhD study, as they pointed to the need for conducting similar research in order to elicit the perceptions of the process of formal professional learning for the teaching function from permanently employed academic staff members at SU.

The daily reality of academics at a research-intensive university is a complex space influenced by various considerations which, in turn, influence their decisions about professional learning for teaching (Van Schalkwyk, Leibowitz, Herman & Farmer, 2015). It is important for professional

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learning practitioners to be aware of and take cognisance of such influences on lecturer decision making. In line with the suggestion by Buller (2015:11) such knowledge may help them to understand the daily reality of the academic staff and to pay attention to these aspects when planning, advertising and facilitating formal professional learning opportunities. Understanding these contexts and their influences may thus be beneficial to the developmental practices of professional learning practitioners. With this as background, the problem leading to this research is the focus of the next section.

1.3   Description of the problem

It is widely acknowledged that student success is a key quality indicator for institutions of higher education. Good teaching, in turn, is one of the myriad factors playing a role in student success (Manathunga, 2014), but academics often are offered little or no support to prepare them to teach well (Viskovic, 2009:15) in the changing higher education landscape. Participation in professional learning activities is therefore an important concern for academics within the complex higher education environment, but individual academics regularly need to take decisions about if and how they will allocate their available time and energy to this endeavour.

There are many competing considerations at play when members of the academic staff have to take decisions about whether or not to participate in professional learning opportunities for teaching. The interplay between these considerations creates a unique context for individual academics. The notion of 'context' has been defined in various ways and has been the focus of many previous studies. For the purpose of this study, context is defined as 'the daily reality of academics' as experienced by each individual academic (see Section 1.7.1 and Chapter 4). Literature in the field of professional learning seems to lack studies that link the concepts of 'professional learning', 'decision making' and 'context as daily reality'.

The problem that gave rise to this study is a complex one. The face of higher education in South Africa has changed and lecturers sometimes are inadequately prepared to take on the resulting challenges in their teaching. Professional learning practitioners are responsible for creating professional learning opportunities for lecturers in order to support them in the endeavour to ensure high quality student learning. Experience has shown that the uptake of such opportunities is not always satisfactory and sometimes what has been learned during these opportunities is not implemented. Understanding how academics' contexts influence their decision to participate in and implement what has been learned, would contribute to the body of knowledge on professional learning. It would also aid professional learning practitioners in understanding how to render more relevant professional learning services and opportunities to the SU academic community.

1.4   Aim of the study

The aim of this study was to determine the influence of context on the decision making of lecturers for participating in the process of professional learning for teaching at a research intensive university. In this case, Stellenbosch University was chosen as the institutional context to find out why academics participate or decline to participate in formal professional learning opportunities for their teaching role. The study also aimed to determine which considerations of an academics' individual context influence implementation of or failure to implement what they learned from participating in professional learning opportunities.

Findings from this study could potentially shed some light on why and how academics decide to participate in formal professional learning opportunities and thus possibly add to the body of knowledge on professional learning in the field of higher education in South Africa. It was also anticipated that the findings might highlight the current academic professional learning conditions at Stellenbosch University and would thus present the institution, as well as professional learning practitioners like myself, with pointers towards enhancing conditions for decision making of academics for participating in the process of professional learning for their teaching function.

The research question that evolved from the problem described above thus was:

How, if at all, do contextual factors influence the decision making of academics for becoming involved in the process of professional learning for teaching at a research-intensive university?

Two subsidiary questions arose from this research question:

1. *Which considerations may contribute to individual academics' decision making regarding participation in the process of professional learning for teaching at Stellenbosch University?*
2. *How can the decision making of academics regarding participation in the process of professional learning for teaching be better enabled at Stellenbosch University?*

1.5   Research approach

The study was conducted within the context of a research-intensive university. The decision making of lecturers to participate, or decline to participate, in the process of professional learning for the teaching function at a research-intensive university thus formed the unit of analysis for this study. The study followed a multidirectional and iterative approach, based within an interpretative knowledge paradigm to assist towards a better understanding of lecturers' decision making about participation in the process of professional learning. These results formed the basis for informing an

improved understanding of the decision making process concerned with professional learning opportunities.

1.6   Research design

A detailed discussion of the research methodology for this study is provided in Chapter 5. What follows below is a brief overview of the research design and methodology. In answering important questions pertaining to decision making about involvement in the process of professional learning for teaching at a research-intensive university, an exploratory case study design within higher education as a field of study and research was implemented (Stake, 1995:245). Such a design was considered most appropriate as the study focused on in-depth exploration of interactions, relationships and processes at one institution within a real-life and natural setting (Denscombe, 2007; Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011). As allowed for by case study designs, this research drew its evidence from multiple sources (Stake, 1995; Henning, Van Rensburg & Smit, 2004; Yin, 2009; Cohen *et al.*, 2011) in order to benefit from multiple perspectives related to the institutional case.

1.6.1   Methods of generating data

The research was executed in phases during which quantitative (numerical) and qualitative (narrative) data were generated. Phase one entailed an anonymous electronic questionnaire at SU to which 238 (25%) permanent academic staff members responded. The questionnaire generated both numerical and narrative data. During phase two, additional information-rich narrative data were generated via follow-up semi-structured interviews with a group of purposefully selected lecturers at the institution. The phases of generating data are explained in more detail in Chapter 5.

1.6.2   Data analysis

In Phase 1 of the study the quantitative data generated by the questionnaire administered to all permanently employed academic staff at SU were analysed by using descriptive statistics. All interviews conducted in Phase 2 of the study were electronically recorded and transcribed. Transcriptions were subjected to thematic content analysis (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Saldanha, 2013) according to emerging and pre-determined themes. The open comments and motivations which were given as responses to the items on the open questionnaire were thematically coded and categorised. Subsequently, a table of overarching themes was developed based on the analytic framework by Smith and Fletcher (2001:80-83). This framework considers how many respondents hold a view and the intensity of these views (the weight), how powerful the views are and to what degree all the information is pointing in the same direction of evidence.

1.7   Preliminary definition of terms

The title of this study points towards five key concepts, namely 'context', 'decision making', 'professional learning', 'academics as lecturers' and 'research-intensive university'. These concepts, and their meaning in this study, will be explored in depth in the chapters that follow and therefore only brief explanations and working definitions are given here. The normative framework of 'care' will also be touched upon in this chapter and then expanded on later.

1.7.1   Context

The concept of 'context' has been the focus of many research projects and is defined in different ways (Leibowitz, Bozalek, Van Schalkwyk & Winberg, 2014). According to Johns (2001:39), context 'is everything' and in order to understand the notion of context, it is essential to have an understanding of the interaction between individuals and their daily reality (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). According to Polanyi (1962), as quoted by Carlgren and Lindblad (1991), context is an "individual construct" which means its development is based on the presence and interaction of specific considerations (Tessmer & Richey, 1997). Context would therefore be "emerg[ing] as an individual encounters a situation, including others and artefacts, as it is the individual's interpretation of a situation that results in context" (Tessmer & Richey, 1997:128). This emerging context could either act as an enabler or as a constraint to the process of professional learning.

According to Tessmer and Richey (1997:85), context is a "pervasive and potent force in any learning event" and it is a complex "medley of factors that inhibit or facilitate to varying degrees" (p. 88). It is this 'medley of factors' and its influences on the decision making of academics that is the focus of this study. In drawing on the work of Alfred Schutz (1954) and Schutz and Thomas Luckmann (1973), the socio-cultural theoretical underpinnings as described by Augier, Shariq and Vendelo (2001) offer valuable insights about the concept of context or 'the life-world' (Augier *et al.*, 2001:129).

Applying the social existence lens suggested by Sztompka (2008:3) to the life-world, turns the focus to what really happens in this complex space "where the constraints of structures and the dynamics of actions produce the real, experienced and observable" daily reality. It is in this reality that the input of the individual agent and the situation emerge as one context. For the purposes of this study, context is defined as an individual phenomenon emerging within the daily reality of an individual as a result of the interpretation of a situation created by the interplay of considerations from the personal and professional spheres of the life-world of the individual. This concept is explored in greater depth in Chapter 4.

1.7.2   Decision making

Essentially all humans are decision makers. All our actions "consciously and unconsciously" are the results of a decision (Saaty, 2008:83). Decision making only becomes relevant when there are choices to be made and the best alternative has to be selected (Saaty, 2008). Such weighing of alternatives is done by comparing and evaluating the possibilities according to specific criteria to arrive at the most suitable option. Such a process is a complex one, consisting of deliberation on various considerations that usually implies trade-offs (Gati & Asher, 2001).

Decision making as a concept in this study is paralleled with the decision-making process of individuals for their career choices. Earlier it was suggested by Hodkinson and Sparkes (1997:30) that research in this field could shed light on issues of structure, agency and choice which, in turn, are aspects of importance to this study. Any decision involving a choice between two or more options has an opportunity cost or outcome expectation. At a research-intensive institution where research is inherently valued more than teaching, the decision to become involved in the process of professional learning for teaching will therefore have a significant opportunity cost for research and the possible regard and reward following from that.

The individual's choice and ultimate decision about participating in the process of professional learning for teaching will be influenced by the daily reality (context) as described above. The concept of decision making as it becomes relevant in this study is explored in more depth in Chapter 4.

1.7.3   Professional learning (PL)

Professional learning is defined as "the need for professionals to continue learning as they practice and advance in their careers" (Johnston, 1998:1). The notion of 'professional learning' resonates with my own understanding of "the numerous activities which have to do with the professional learning of academics in post-compulsory, tertiary or higher education" (Brew, 2004:5). For the purpose of this study I thus chose to use the term professional learning when referring to opportunities for academic/educational/faculty/staff/professional development.

The ultimate aim of professional learning is to bring about change in the teaching practices and behaviour of academics for the improvement of the quality of student learning. The focus of professional learning therefore mainly lies with the development of teaching and assessment practices of higher education lecturers for quality student learning to take place (Badley, 1998; Elvidge, Fraser, Land, Mason & Matthew, 2004; Cilliers & Herman, 2010). The work of professional learning practitioners is to facilitate academic staff in their 'becoming' (Leibowitz,

Van der Merwe, Van Schalkwyk, Herman & Young, 2009) 'good' university lecturers and their development of effective educational practice in order to enhance student learning. This 'becoming' does not take place in a single event, but rather is the end point of a complex system of choices, influences, environments and factors (Opfer & Pedder, 2011:378).

For the purposes of this study, professional learning is seen as a complex process consisting of three phases which Grossman and Salas (2011) call the 'before, during and after' phases. Each of these phases encompasses various considerations and situations influencing the decision making of lecturers. When referring to the process of professional learning in this study, it would comprise all three phases of the process. These phases in the process of professional learning, and what is at play during each phase, are discussed in Chapter 4.

1.7.4   Academics as lecturers

The academic staff members employed at universities are appointed with the responsibility to fulfil a research, teaching and service role (Toews & Yazedjian, 2007). Academics in higher education institutions are further expected to act out these three roles in a scholarly manner through "staying abreast of the latest developments in the field, maintaining the standards of integrity and being assessed through peers" (Frick & Kapp, 2009:257-258). Achieving this level of scholarship in all three roles is more or less impossible for any individual academic. Teaching has historically been a private enterprise but with a public interest and it therefore often carries the brunt of the public responsibility for any higher education institution (Fairweather, 2002; Marincovich, 2006). Furthermore, teaching is an emotional endeavour (Hargreaves, 1998a) and lecturers as human beings also have their own feelings and emotions (Trigwell, 2012). Support for academics in fulfilling their teaching role, particularly with a view to enhancing the quality of such teaching, thus is crucial.

As professionals, academics have to function both within their specific discipline and within an educational context (Frick & Kapp, 2009). According to Crawford (2010:192), professionalism in academia is positioned somewhere between "skill and standards" and "autonomy and critical social engagement". Beijaard, Verloop and Vermunt (2000:750) interpret professionalism of academics as being derived from "combinations of the ways they see themselves as subject matter experts, pedagogical experts, and didactical experts" and these perceptions of their own professional identities "effect their efficacy and professional development as well as their ability and willingness to cope with educational change and to implement innovations in their own teaching practice" (p. 753).

The terminology used in the literature when referring to lecturers in higher education could be confusing and may include any of the following: faculty, academics, lecturers, teachers, scholars or educators. Often, the main task of these individuals also is a reason for confusion as it is referred to as lecturing, teaching, educating, facilitating the learning of students or creating learning opportunities for students. For the purposes of this study, I prefer to use the term 'lecturer' when referring to an individual who facilitates undergraduate student learning in a higher education environment. The term 'academic', on the other hand, is a broader term and one that encompasses the teaching function as well as the professional status of these individuals, both of which are important aspects of the identity of being an academic. Chapter 2 of this study elaborates on these concepts.

1.7.5   Research-intensive university

On the basis of their main foci, universities may often be labelled as research-intensive or teaching-intensive universities. The Group of Eight (2013:4) states that some universities are labelled as research-intensive universities because of the "proportion of their total resources … devote[d] to research and related activities". Measuring these research activities often leads to the construction of comparative league tables such as the Times Higher Education and QS Rankings. Such an emphasis on 'research as excellence' often reflects and strengthens the practice of prioritising the hiring of leading scholars and researchers.

The ambit of research-intensive universities is often related to conducting discovery research; applying innovative solutions to real-world challenges; and educating and training the next generation of researchers (The Research Universities Consortium, 2012). On their webpage, the League of European Research Universities (LERU) in Europe however define themselves according to their "values of high-quality teaching within an environment of internationally competitive research" (LERU, n.d.).

An important aspect for this study is highlighted by The Group of Eight (2013:6) in their statement that a research-intensive university should be a centre for learning as "[l]earning requires research, discovery and critical inquiry". Furthermore, research-intensive universities should motivate their students through the provision of stimulating environments through exposure to "zealous and motivated educators in a setting permeated by the creation of new knowledge and the application of rigorous debate", as these activities will add to the creation of a stimulating learning environment (*ibid*.:8).

Reference to a research-intensive university in this study implies an institution of higher education where the allocation of resources for and the stature of undergraduate teaching are in general lower

than for that of research. The research-intensive university as one of the concepts in this study is discussed in greater detail in Chapter 2.

1.7.6   An ethic of care

The idea of 'care' might not always be related to the employment of academics at higher education institutions (Barnes, 2012; Costandius, 2012). According to Tronto (1993) and Buller (2015), it is important for managers to recognise the dominant and crucial role of care for human flourishing. All humans have feelings and emotions and academics therefore are not intellectuals or "cognitive" and "sociological constructs" only (Knight & Trowler, 2000:40). The way we feel often influences and determines the way we think and act. All human learning and decision making are therefore also linked to feelings, emotions and will to learn (Illeris, 2007).

If an institution therefore wants to ensure high quality student learning, various authors, including Murray and Macdonald (1997) and Rowland and Barton (1994), stress that the teaching and learning function, as well as professional learning of lecturers for their teaching, should be taken seriously through placing it at the core and committing the necessary and required resources.

We are reminded by Bozalek, McMillan, Marshall, November, Daniels and Sylvester (2014) about the importance of understanding and meeting the particular needs of lecturers through an understanding of their actual situations and lives. An ethos of care as guiding principle in this research is defined as 'taking the concerns and needs of others as the basis for action' (Tronto, 1993). This is in contrast to 'taking care' of issues without ensuring that care is really taking place. The notion of care is further explored in Chapter 4.

1.8   Positioning myself as researcher within this study

As indicated earlier in this chapter (see Section 1.3), I am a practitioner-researcher and am aware that the values and practices of educational research are shaped by the professional values, beliefs, practices and experiences of the individual educational researcher (Sikes & Goodson, 2003; Guillemin & Gillam, 2004; Henning *et al.*, 2004). This is particularly true when existing knowledge, insight and practical wisdom are used to explain what has been encountered in the data (Nixon, Walker & Clough, 2003:99; Sikes & Goodson, 2003:43; Henning *et al.*, 2004). The choice of research design, methodology and theoretical framework are also directed by the researcher's values and, in turn, help to shape them.

As insider researcher the "inescapable dependence on trustworthiness" of the researcher in drawing conclusions in as objective manner as possible and to conclude only those things that can be justified by the data while being open to criticism and scrutiny of peers, is of utmost importance

(Pring, 2003:56; Williams, 2009). Furthermore the trust that is built between the researcher and the researched on the basis of which information is given and intelligence gained, leads to a willingness to expose oneself. The advantages of being an insider researcher are underlined by Henning *et al*. (2004:6) who state that this background of the researcher enhances the probability that a "thick description" of the data can be given. Such a description comprises more than mere facts and empirical content, but also interprets the data, because meaning is not carried only by factual data.

In this research I have thus tried to be both objective and critical while analysing and reporting the data. This position is described by Mullings (1999:337) as simultaneously being an "insider or outsider, both [of these] or neither [of these]".

1.9   Ethical clearance

In line with the ethical requirements of Stellenbosch University, ethical clearance was obtained from the Research Ethics Committee for Human and Social Sciences and institutional permission was obtained from the Division for Institutional Research and Planning before the research commenced. All participation was voluntary and lecturers responding to the questionnaire had to indicate their consent for participation and for the data to be used for research purposes. All interviewees also signed an informed consent form before the start of interviews.

1.10   Structure of the study

This chapter has provided a brief orientation to the study. Chapter 2 describes the study context in terms of its international and national positioning in higher education, while Chapter 3 gives an overview of SU as research-intensive institution and the site of research. Chapter 4 explores the key concepts and joins theoretical perspectives together in a conceptual framework. Chapter 5 describes the research methodology, followed by Chapters 6 and 7 in which the data and findings of the research are reported and discussed. The findings of the study are discussed in Chapter 8. Finally, Chapter 9 draws on all the previous chapters by providing some conclusions and implications of the study.

Chapter 2
The higher education context

2.1   Introduction

The purpose of this study was to investigate how the specific individual contexts of academic staff members at a research-intensive university may influence the decisions they take about their participation in the process of professional learning for their teaching function. The study thus aimed at understanding the influence of their individual contexts on their decision to participate in formal professional learning opportunities, as well as their subsequent implementation of what was learned. Such an understanding could be valuable to inform the practices of professional learning practitioners at research-intensive universities and may be helpful towards improved understanding of how such contexts are perceived and what their influences may be.

As pointed out by D'Andrea and Gosling (2005), teaching and learning within an institution are also influenced by phenomena from outside the institution. The research setting for this study therefore includes the broader international and national higher education contexts together with the more immediate context of Stellenbosch University as a research-intensive institution. This 'contextual spiral' (see Figure 3.2) forms part of and simultaneously informs the specific notion of context enquired into in this study. This chapter therefore focuses on a description of both the international and national higher education contexts as it informs this study. I then turn to a discussion of research-intensive universities and an exploration of the concept of 'academics' or 'being an academic'.

2.2   Higher education internationally

During the nineties of the previous century, higher education throughout the world was but one of the societal sectors that went through considerable changes globally. All these global changes led to the 'super-complex' world referred to by Barnett (2000, 2009), and in which higher education had been operating and still has to operate. Increased complexity also points to an era of increased external pressures (Dill, 1999:127) in which the purposes of higher education have been debated and essentially still are unknown (Nixon, 1996; Brew, 2006; Le Grange, 2009; Giroux, 2013; McKenna, 2013). While the debate on the purposes of higher education as either a social institution or an industry, or perhaps both, is ongoing most public universities are expected to produce research and graduates with appropriate knowledge, skills and attitudes to take on broader social challenges and responsibilities (Hargreaves, 2000; Crawford, 2010). Higher education institutions are also expected to address national needs, as well as to contribute at the cutting edge of the rapidly

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changing and competitive global environment. Universities simultaneously have to deal with fewer resources; changing student demographics (Webster & Mosoetsa, 2001); demands and calls for increased accountability (Dill, 1999:128; Eddy & Garza Mitchell, 2011); and academic renewal (Frick & Kapp, 2009:257; Palmer, Zajonc & Scribner, 2010; Altbach, 2013; Chan, Brown & Ludlow, 2014). All of these are creating a 'neoliberal' *status quo* focusing on efficiency and effectiveness (Nixon, 1996). These expectations have resulted in an unfortunate situation where academics across the globe are describing their work situation using a discourse that points at excessive workloads, administrative burdens, low salaries and less autonomy (Webster & Mosoetsa, 2001; Delanty, 2008:127).

During the past few decades, the triangular relationship between higher education institutions, society and government has changed significantly and higher education institutions internationally have become more prone to performative and managerialist measures. They have also become increasingly performance- and market-driven in nature, which has changed the playing field for academics (Gumport, 2000; Cloete *et al.*, 2004; McDowell, 2004; Olssen & Peters, 2005; Reddy, Le Grange & Fataar, 2010; Giroux, 2013). These changes in the triangular relationship have resulted in academics sometimes feeling that they are 'being monitored', leading to feelings of insecurity as their places of work are not run by 'fellow academics' anymore and there is no longer a sense of community and trust within the university (Cloete *et al.*, 2004:145; Webster & Mosoetsa, 2001). This 'corporatisation' of higher education, together with its "attendant processes of accountability and quality surveillance"(Webster & Mosoetsa, 2001:13) have, in a sense, made the university and academic departments unknown and sometimes alienating places to many academics where collegiality and care for others in a sense became 'unvalued' (McDowell, 2004:146). As expressed by Barnett (2000:100), the 'university' has simply become a term for some and it is "no longer standing for anything of substance".

Furthermore, this new macro context within which academics have to function is one that is in constant flux and the university has become a 'liquid' organisation (Delanty, 2008:126) responding to outside pressures, compared to previously being a closed structure (Kraak, 2000). For some, these new structures, together with the discourses of efficiency and effectiveness, have served to undermine professional judgement and academic autonomy and to discourage the independent critique that universities used to believe was their *raison d'etre* (Badley, 2003a:482-483; Cloete *et al.*, 2004:8). Scholarship is often perceived as less valued than the attraction of funding, high student numbers and good undergraduate pass rates (Miller, 2008). This sometimes leads to higher education institutions, historically the birthplace of new knowledge and innovation, now caught in a paradoxal space of being resistant to change. Aggravating the situation is the experience of higher

education institutions as unfamiliar places for academics, because of the discourses of quality control, excellence (Barnett, 2000:99) and 'production' which became prevalent in higher education and which are pushing more towards the 'market agenda' rather than towards 'pedagogy' (Ball, 2003; Miller, 2008:111). Universities also seem to struggle with measuring the quality of teaching in this 'market driven' environment (Tronto, 2010) and student feedback as a form of 'customer satisfaction' becomes the norm.

2.2.1   The missions, purposes and aims of higher education institutions

According to the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD, 2008), higher education has at least four main missions: firstly, the advancement of human capital through teaching; secondly, the construction of knowledge through research; thirdly, the dissemination and use of knowledge through interaction; and fourthly, the maintenance of knowledge through inter-generational storage and transmission (Bitzer & Wilkinson, 2009:369).

On the purposes of universities as institutions, the network of vice-chancellors in Australia (Group of Eight, 2013:8) argues that:

> [t]he purpose and role of a university is not to produce students equipped to move into a particular job or type of job; it is to prepare students to live in a complex and unpredictable world in which they will need to respond to situations, challenges and opportunities which we cannot forecast, and take advantage of them; and produce graduates who are flexible, resilient and have the self-confidence necessary to take responsibility for their own actions.

They further state that a pre-requisite for this purpose and role to be enacted is the willingness to learn; to value specific ways of thought; and an open and humane attitude. In agreement with the Group of Eight, Badley (2003b) and Cloete *et al*. (2004) voice their concern that globalisation has serious implications for higher education, together with the demands from industry and governments to prepare students for the workplace. All of these are demanded, while higher education should in fact be "serv[ing] the knowledge economy by producing knowledge workers" who are invigorated with a desire to serve their communities, to bring healing and benefit to our planet and to re-establish a concern for human values (Badley, 2003b:487).

In the March 2013 edition of the South African Council on Higher Education (CHE) publication, *Kagisano*, Graham (2013:13) explains the three roles of higher education in stating that it is expected of universities to "combin[e] its intellectual research for its own sake [research], the supply and transfer of useful knowledge for the benefit of society as a whole [community interaction], and the provision of an undergraduate education that will enrich the lives of the

individuals who undergo it [teaching]". Earlier, Brew (2007:70) commented that higher education needs to be open to change in terms of "creative solutions". These solutions should lead to the "generation and acquisition of new kinds of knowledge" (*ibid.*) and to innovative thinking which should inform alternative ways of teaching and learning in support of the needs of students in the contemporary world. Such renewal should also be accompanied by innovative teaching spaces, new thinking about knowledge creation and novel ways of engaging students. Boud and Falchikov (2006) urge that higher education should equip students to continue with life-long learning after they have left the academy. The production of learning as a main function of higher education is also emphasised by Barr and Tagg (1995:13) and Elvidge *et al*. (2004:19). According to various authors, including Johnston (1998) and Hénard and Roseveare (2012:7), teaching has at its focus the learning of students while research has at its focus the professional learning of academics which, according to Brew and Boud (1995:261) and Nixon (2003), means that both teaching and research have a concern for learning. All these voices point towards the expectation of lecturers to be the purveyors of 'good' teaching which, in turn, points towards the importance of equipping lecturers through their engagement in professional learning for teaching.

There is an ever-present tension between the research and teaching functions, with research overshadowing teaching when determining the academic status of both an institution and an individual academic. Although teaching and research traditionally are the main functions of all universities (Barnett, 1997:146), the tension between the two functions is an international trend. Evident of this, according to Graham (2013:10), is the fact that academics first and foremost are hired by higher education institutions for their research history and their contribution to the undergraduate curriculum is only determined thereafter. Both Barnett (2000) and Brew (2001) are quoted by Badley (2003a:485) as arguing for the university to embrace wider criteria for research in order to move away from it being a "constrained servant" of the globalised economy and to move back to where the impact of globalisation can be "continuously critiqued".

Badley (2003b:484), however, perceives higher education as being in a crisis in both the research and teaching arenas. Research, according to Badley (2003b), has increasingly become commercially driven, leading to incredible competition. In continuing his critique, Badley (2003b:485) argues that, if higher education research is in a crisis, then the crisis for higher education teaching is even worse. The first of these crises facing teaching is the fact that teaching is often regarded by research intensive-universities as "a secondary or second-best activity" and a "lowly process" merely transmitting what has been discovered by research (*ibid*.). The second crisis in teaching that Badley (2003b:485-486) describes is the fact that "pedagogies which emphasize critical discussion", the so-called "fat pedagogies" involving lecturer-student engagement, are giving way to the so-called

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"lean pedagogies" presenting content to large groups of students in large lecture halls or online, which seek transmission of market-relevant content and leading to "anorexic" curricula.

The following quote from Parker (2005:151-152) juxtaposing the prevailing culture of performativity in higher education (Barnett, 1997) with that of a real stage performance, might in the first part serve as a summary of the current state of higher education; in the second part some might say it hints back to a nostalgic past, but it certainly also touches on the important purpose of institutions of higher education as being places where learning or meaning making, is the most important outcome:

> The university is currently a place governed by performance. As researchers, teachers and administrators, our performance is measured against indicators …. As teachers, we are judged by our students' performances and also by our own …. But what might our universities look like if the discourse were that of a different kind of performance, … [i]f 'performance' could be dissociated from its modern connotations … and acquire again the rich developmental possibilities inherent in a performance culture: … [where] character is formed, refined and challenged in all kinds of intellectual and other display? What might the university become if … [it] were to think of itself as an arena where all participants in their different ways join in deep meaning-making?

Taylor (2008:39) adds to this 'deep meaning making' by stating that "[l]earning is central to research, and to teaching, and to service." Coming from a South African perspective, Lategan (2009) states that an institution of higher education should concern itself with knowledge, training of professionals and educating people. If we as academics, administrators, researchers, professionals and students at higher education institutions could succeed in turning our focus back to learning, in the broad sense of its meaning, as one of the main purposes of higher education, it might just be possible to ensure that the 'university of the future' will fulfil its role in society. A final word on this issue comes from *The Millenium Declaration* (2001) as quoted by The Group of 8 (2013:5), stipulating that the university should stand for more than data and information or knowledge and standards – it should rather:

> re-affirm its existence on integrity [as] the requirement, excellence [as] the standard, rationality [as] the means, community [as] the context, civility [as] the attitude, openness [as] the relationship, and responsibility [as] the obligation.

Whether and how this ideal could possibly be operationalised in research-intensive higher education institutions is a question that might be answered in the next section when discussing the concept of research-intensive universities.

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2.3 The concept of research-intensive higher education institutions

Research-intensive, research-driven, research-led, research-oriented, the "scientific" university (Barnett, 2011:21), the "world-class" university (Altbach, 2004) or the "flagship" university (Douglass, 2014:7) are terms used in the literature when referring to prestigious institutions with high research outputs, a culture of excellence, good facilities and being listed on one or more world ranking systems (Douglass, 2014:1). We are further reminded by Barnett (2011:27) that a research university stands for certain interests "[w]hether it realizes it or not" and that the scientific or research university refers to an institution of higher education where the focus is mainly on the hard, physical sciences. According to Douglass (2014), "flagship universities" would be the better term to use as it implies a research-intensive institution but with wider recognised goals.

The Vice-Chancellors of eight Australian Universities, The Group of Eight (2013:4), on the other hand, makes the point that countries often refer to some universities as research-intensive universities because of the percentage of their resources allocated to research; they list three important characteristics of these research-intensive universities, namely that of the extent, volume and excellence of their research (p. 8). The Research Universities Futures Consortium, consisting of 25 research-intensive universities in the USA, relates the challenges of research-intensive universities to their "ability to conduct discovery research, to apply innovative solutions to today's and tomorrow's problems, and to educate and train the next generation of researchers" (The Research Universities Consortium, 2012:17).

In the United Kingdom (UK), the Russel Group comprises 24 leading UK universities, all committed to upholding their research track records as well as providing excellent teaching and learning experiences while sustaining links with business and the public sector (Russel Group, 2014). All Russel Group universities are seen as leaders in research and innovation. They attract a lot of money and grants while enriching education and creating opportunities for both undergraduates and postgraduates. These institutions are supported through the Russel Group organisation to ensure they have optimum conditions to make an impact and a difference through their world-leading research and teaching. Their first class facilities include well-equipped libraries and study spaces; state of the art laboratory equipment; upgraded lecture halls; innovative teaching; access to the latest software; and smaller classes.

The League of European Research Universities (LERU), an association of 21 leading research-intensive universities in Europe, define themselves according to "the values of high-quality teaching within an environment of internationally competitive research" (LERU, n.d.). It is argued by Elen,

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Lindblom-Ylänne and Clement (2007:125) that "[w]ithout a focus on research, research intensive universities become regular institutions for higher education". However, "without a concern for teaching, research intensive universities become mere research institutes". Barnett (2011:32) strengthens this view when stating that the research-intensive university is an institution creating "knowledge-for-itself" and "knowledge-in-itself", describing this type of institution as historically being an 'ivory tower', "producing pure knowledge, irrespective of its utility in the world", but then concludes that a shift towards 'the world' is currently taking place within these institutions.

The Group of Eight expands this view when saying that research-intensive universities should take the lead in higher education because of their global connectedness and extent of their research experience. This would go beyond their current excellence when looking ahead and creating opportunities for innovation in both the research and the teaching functions. Research can thus:

> drive improvements in curriculums and pedagogy; the demands of the problems facing the world can promote integration of knowledge across disciplines and other boundaries; the speed at which research makes disciplinary knowledge out of date can lead to a greater emphasis on learning to learn. (The Group of Eight, 2013:10)

This notion is also supported by Douglass (2014:1) in referring to 'flagship universities' which broaden their focus "beyond research to relevancy and responsibility". On the other hand, university research has always been seen as the most significant cradle of new knowledge and knowledge is seen as the most important form of capital (The Group of Eight, 2013:4).

2.3.1   Excellence in research-intensive universities

Modern universities quite often reach back to and include elements of the German or Humboldtian university model by pushing research activities and reputation in the construction of comparative league tables such as the *Times Higher Education* and *QS Rankings*. This emphasis reflects and strengthens the practice of employing leading scholars and researchers and only afterwards determining their involvement in undergraduate teaching. In doing so, measures of excellence in student teaching, knowledge transfer, or impact within the wider community become secondary, despite the lip service that is often paid to these aspects (Graham, 2013:10). If one looks more closely at the formula used to determine the top-ranked research-intensive universities by the *Times Higher Education* (Times Higher Education, n.d.), they make use of thirteen performance indicators which are grouped into the following five areas:

1. Teaching: the learning environment (worth 30 per cent of the overall ranking score);
2. Research: volume, income and reputation (worth 30 per cent of the overall ranking score);
3. Citations: research influence (worth 30 per cent of the overall ranking score);

4. Industry income: innovation (worth 2.5 per cent of the overall ranking score);

5. International outlook: staff, students and research (worth 7.5 per cent of the overall ranking score).

Three of the five areas (numbers 2, 3 and 4) are directly linked to the research function, another also has a research flavour to it (number 5) and the one that is left is concerned with teaching (number 1). These allocations give an indication of the perception of value with regard to research-intensive universities, with almost 65% allocated to research and just over 30% to teaching. The methodology of determining university rankings is subsequently criticised by Douglass (2014:2) as being "hopelessly inadequate, biased and overly influential".

An important aspect for this study is highlighted by The Group of Eight (2013:6) in their statement that "[a] research intensive university is a centre of learning because research permeates all of its operations and is the basis of its reputation and the foundation for its further development". They also identify:

> [a] good university [as] one that provides an exciting environment, one that stimulates the passion and motivation of its students by exposing them to zealous and motivated educators in a setting permeated by the creation of new knowledge and the application of rigorous debate [as these] also add to the creation of a stimulating teaching and learning environment. (The Group of Eight, 2013:8).

If these are the characteristics of a 'good' university, specifically the aspect of being 'a centre of learning' - what is of interest to this study is the question: what are the implications for the process of professional learning of academics for their teaching role at such an institution?

2.3.2   Research-teaching tension

Devoting time and energy to teaching in research-intensive higher education institutions can be a challenge due to a reward structure that preferences research and because research intensive universities are "much more ambiguous in their institutional messages about teaching expectations and norms than are other types of institutions" (Wright, Assar, Kain, Kramer, Howery, *et al.*, 2004:149). Dill (2005:179-180) has commented on the "research drift" observed in higher education in many countries where "scarce resources and energy in all types of academic institutions are increasingly committed to research at the expense of improvements in teaching and student learning". In the South African context, Lewin and Mawoyo (2014:33) refer to criticism on the funding framework, accusing it of being "biased towards rewarding research outputs at the expense of teaching". Research production has been encouraged at the expense of improving teaching because of the high value attached to it.

In contrast with research, and the activities of public scrutiny through peer evaluation and feedback, teaching is quite often a private enterprise and even "teaching accomplishments remain private and less important for promotion and tenure" (Seldin, 1990; Wright *et al.*, 2004:149) in research-intensive institutions. According to Dill (2005:180), studies conducted in the USA during the nineties (referring to Astin, 1996 and Frank-Fox, 1992) to explore the relationship between teaching and research, suggested that strong research orientations are negatively correlated with factors related to teaching, for example time spent on preparation, commitment to students and the use of active learning techniques. It has been found that the combination of strong research and an undergraduate student focus is found in creative, small and prestigious liberal-arts type colleges in North America, where attention is given to both research and the fostering of student questioning and critique. The research-teaching tension at research intensive universities, such as the site of this research, is a stark reality, however. One possible solution suggested by Shulman (1989) and Wright *et al*. (2004:154) is to "[legitimize] the demands of teaching" by giving faculty [who are interested in teaching] "professionally validated visibility and portable credentials" through defining teaching as a scholarly activity and opening it up for peer review. The significance of implementing a similar solution at the site of this research will be addressed later in the study.

This now brings to a close the aspects of importance in the broadest section of the contextual spiral in this study. The focus of the next contextual level in the study is higher education in South Africa.

2.4   Roles and responsibilities of academics

The academic staff members employed by institutions of higher education are appointed with the responsibility of fulfilling a role encompassing research, teaching and service (Toews & Yazedjian, 2007) in the higher education institution employing them; thus they are the main purveyors of these responsibilities (Frick & Kapp, 2009:256). As employees of a higher education institution, it is expected of all academics to act out these three roles in a creative (Bitzer, 2007) and scholarly manner through "staying abreast of the latest developments in the field, maintaining the standards of integrity and being assessed through peers" (Frick & Kapp, 2009:257-258). Achieving this level of scholarship in all three roles is more or less impossible for any individual academic (Viskovic, 2009). Although teaching is performed as a private activity, its results are of public interest and therefore it usually carries the highest burden of the responsibility (Fairweather, 2002; Marincovich, 2006) linked to the three roles. Supporting academics to fulfil this role, particularly with a view to improving the quality of such teaching, thus is crucial. In this regard, Buller (2015:217) suggests that people and processes need to be the focus of higher education institutions rather than metrics and outcomes.

Both Barnett (1997:145) and Giroux (2013) argue that universities are finding themselves "in the business of re-describing rather than understanding the world". Barnett (1997) continues that the boundaries between academics and the world, and academics and the students, have weakened as a result of the diminishing authority of the academic in a new world order. Adding to this situation are the agendas of performativity and efficiency (Ball, 2003); the growing influence of economic forces on higher education; and the fact that government has intervened in the higher education arena. Academics thus are expected to continue with their academic responsibilities as before, although the milieu within which they have to perform these duties has changed significantly.

2.4.1 The three roles of an academic

Whichever way one looks at the purpose and aims of higher education, the focus ultimately turns towards the multiple roles (Wright *et al.*, 2004; Toews & Yazedjian, 2007) that academic staff members employed at institutions of higher education are expected to fulfil - with excellence. It also highlights the fact of which most people are acutely aware, namely that striving towards excellence in all these areas "generates competing demands on time and resources" (Graham, 2013:13).

The teaching function is the one task that is open to public scrutiny due to the focus on student results and success. According to Hargreaves and Goodson in Sachs (2003), the teaching function is becoming more and more complex and doing it well requires high levels of professional practice. Although these authors originally wrote these words in reference to school teaching, it could be argued that the same holds true for teaching in the context of higher education. The authors continue their argument by stating that teaching is the core profession and the key agent of change in the present knowledge society. University lecturers are "the midwives of that knowledge society" and "without them, or their competence, the future will be malformed and stillborn" (Sachs, 2003). Confirmation for this statement comes from Badley (2003b:482) when calling academics "the new knowledge workers". It is to these 'midwives' of higher education that the discussion will now turn.

2.4.2 Academics as teaching professionals

Professionalism in academia, according to (Crawford, 2010:192), is positioned somewhere between "skill and standards" and "autonomy and critical social engagement". Beijaard *et al*. (2000:750) interpret professionalism of lecturers as being derived from "combinations of the ways they see themselves as subject matter experts, pedagogical experts, and didactical experts" and these perceptions of their own professional identities "effect their efficacy and professional development as well as their ability and willingness to cope with educational change and to implement innovations in their own teaching practice" (p. 753). As professionals, academics thus have a

'double professionalism' (Viskovic, 2009) as they have to function both within their discipline-specific and an educational context (Frick & Kapp, 2009).

For academics to be called teaching professionals implies the existence of university teaching as a profession or a career. The meaning of being professional, to show professionalism or to pursue professionalization is not universally understood or agreed upon, because what counts as professional knowledge and professional action in teaching can be interpreted in many ways (Sachs, 2003:6). Nixon (1999:218) states that professionalism has to be 'radically' re-defined and re-oriented. According to Barnett's (1997:133) definition, however, a professional is "somebody who professes", thus somebody who speaks out as an authority, not only in relation to clients (or then students in this case) but as an authority *tout court*. In continuing her line of thought as stated above, Sachs (2003:6) distinguishes between 'old' and 'new' professionalism and describes 'old professionalism' as being concerned with identifying attributes of a profession or an occupational group, for example law, medicine, engineering, et cetera" (Sachs, 2003:8), while 'new professionalism' is more about enhancing the quality of service rather than the increasing of status (see also Evans, 2008; Nixon, 1999).

According to Hargreaves (2000:152), 'being professional' lies in the quality of what is done [thus competence] and the conduct, demeanour and standards which guide it. Professionalism, according to Barnett (1997) is not about esoteric knowledge, but about the improvement of the quality and standards of practice through reflection and practical judgement. Professionality, on the other hand, is defined by Evans (2008:26) as "an ideologically, attitudinally, intellectually and epistemologically based stance on the part of an individual, in relation to the practice of the profession to which s/he belongs and which influences her/his professional practice". Barnett (1997:140) defines professionals as "practicing epistemologists" who should be able to "interpret the world through [unlimited] cognitive frameworks" and who should also be "adept at handling those frameworks in action" due to the global and rapidly changing nature of the world around us. In all situations, professionals should be drawing on relevant knowledge and act appropriately, albeit in creative and novel ways.

Three central features of professionalism are indicated by Eraut (1994:223), namely a specialist knowledge base, autonomy, and service. The implications of these features for teaching professionals in higher education are that the improvement of their teaching practices is non-negotiable if they think of themselves as professionals when fulfilling this role. Because most academics at higher education institutions do not have teacher training or a teaching-related background, they could be expected to pursue a certain level of professional learning for their teaching function. According to Evans (2008:30), professional learning may be described as an

enhancement to the status of the teaching profession as a whole, while simultaneously also being about improving knowledge, skills and practice, thus a "process whereby people's professionality and/or professionalism may be considered to be enhanced" (*ibid.*).

Elton (2005:115), on the other hand, argues that research and its accompanying activities are usually seen by academics as professional activities, while all other activities with which they engage as part of their university work are approached as if by amateurs. According to Ericsson (2002:49), amateurs carry out activities with the least amount of effort. These thoughts align with the assumption that teaching is more of a craft or an 'art' than a 'science' (Johnston, 1998). Through the scholarship of teaching, it is possible to approach the teaching function with the same professional stance as that of any other subject-related research. Such research would also offer a mechanism through which the profession of teaching itself advances (Hutchings & Shulman, 1999).

The term scholarly usually refers to a "particular sort of activity" exemplified by the use of applicable literature (Trigwell & Shale, 2004:525). Scholarly teaching will thus draw upon educational publications (Richlin, 2001). Scholarly lecturers will typically read and apply the teaching and learning literature; make use of classroom assessment techniques; discuss teaching and learning related issues with colleagues; and reflect on their teaching (McKinney, 2006:38). The reflective practice of scholarly lecturers – in a deepening engagement with their teaching development – thus moves beyond personal reflection to also include dialogue with colleagues about the innovation of teaching and learning in their disciplines. Being a reflective practitioner is an important characteristic of a 'good' lecturer (Kane, Sandretto & Heath, 2004; Leibowitz *et al.*, 2009; Van Schalkwyk, Cilliers, *et al.*, 2013), but such reflection only has value if it influences future behaviour. More and more scholarly lecturers, however, are becoming interested in sharing their reflection on, and knowledge about teaching and learning with colleagues and peers, which is regarded by Weston and McAlpine (2001:95) as crucial for pursuing the scholarship of teaching and becoming a teaching scholar. It is however important to keep in mind that not every higher education lecturer will, or needs to, become a scholar of teaching (Weston & McAlpine, 2001; McKinney, 2006; Van Schalkwyk, Cilliers, *et al.*, 2013), although scholarly teaching could be an expectation when improvement of student learning is an aim.

The term 'scholarship' is more difficult to clarify (Van Schalkwyk, Cilliers, *et al.*, 2013). According to McKinney (2006:39), "teaching scholarship" involves not only a systematic study of teaching and learning, but also "the public sharing and review of such work through live or virtual presentations, performances or publications". The aim of such engagement about teaching is the enhancement of the value of teaching at an institution and in the disciplines, as well as the growth of knowledge related to teaching in general or in a specific discipline (Weston & McAlpine, 2001).

According to Kreber (2003:94), the scholarship of teaching has two broad objectives. The first of these is to enhance the quality of teaching, as it would enable lecturers to "teach more knowledgeably" (Trigwell & Shale, 2004:524), and the second is to raise the stature of teaching by "mak[ing] teaching count" (Kreber, 2003:94). When teaching is defined as a scholarly activity and opened up for peer review it will "[legitimize] the demands of teaching" and it will "give faculty professionally validated visibility and portable credentials" (Shulman, 1989) which will put it on an equal footing with research. These aspects are of importance for this study focusing on the role of context in the decision making of lecturers about becoming involved in the process of professional learning for teaching.

2.4.3 Autonomy, responsibility and accountability of academics as teaching professionals

Autonomy at the level of the individual, according to Eraut (1994), implies being in control of one's own work. He however continues by cautioning that greater accountability and responsibility also flows from greater autonomy. Academics are urged by Dill (2005:178) to insist on the need for academic autonomy. Such autonomy should offer convincing evidence to all stakeholders – ranging from government to students about the fact "that our collegial processes for the maintenance of academic standards are vigorous and valid." The third leg of the autonomy-responsibility-accountability triangle, namely accountability – has often been presented to professionals as an external control mechanism rather than as a "strengthening of their [own] moral and professional obligations: and hence [it has become] … a threat to autonomy rather than a consequence of it" (Eraut, 1994:225).

Most professionals are employed by organisations that carry overall responsibility for the quality of the services they provide. The implications of this for the teaching function at a university need to be examined to determine the meaning of the organisation being morally accountable for its actions and what this implies for its professional workers (Eraut, 1994:228). An important motivation for the professional learning of academics for their teaching function comes from Eraut (1994:229), who says that "[f]or every incompetent professional, there are probably several who are competently doing the wrong thing". In an attempt to conquer this 'wrong competence' within any university, Blackmore and Blackwell (2003:23) stress the fact that, in higher education institutions, "[s]taff expertise is the most important and most expensive asset … [and] without it literally nothing can be achieved" (Frick & Kapp, 2009:257). The Group of Eight (2013:10) reminds us about the fact that, just like any good business, and in order to maintain their positions, research intensive universities are working "hard to attract the very best and most talented educators and

researchers" and it thus makes good sense to look well after this investment (The Eurydice, 2008:101). This statement strengthens Dill's argument (1999:131) that the success of any organisation is influenced by how it configures and manages its resources, especially its human resources, and that the professional learning opportunities in place for the deliberate growth of staff members provide one of the best places to start when examining the quality of organisational learning.

2.5   Higher education in South Africa

2.5.1   Background

The post-1994 higher education landscape in South Africa has changed radically (Hay & Monnapula-Mapesela, 2009). Transformation of higher education has taken place as part of the social, economic and political restructuring of the country. Although these changes have taken place due to a new political dispensation in South Africa, it mirrors what was happening in the international arena as similar changes coincidently took place in higher education worldwide due to globalisation and democratisation (Kraak, 2000; Webster & Mosoetsa, 2001; Altbach, Reisberg & Rumbley, 2009). Part of the re-structuring of higher education in South Africa included a number of mergers and incorporations. The result of these restructuring processes was that the country came to have 23 public institutions of higher education of which eleven were traditional universities, six were comprehensive universities and another six were universities of technology (HESA, 2011). Subsequently, two new higher education institutions were established in 2013, which has now brought the total number of public institutions of higher education to 25. Within the group of eleven traditional universities, some institutions are identified as research-intensive universities; Stellenbosch University is one of these.

As part of the transformation process, a number of other changes also took place in the South African higher education context. More students now have access to higher education and diversification of both the student body and staff complements have been visible (Hay & Monnapula-Mapesela, 2009). The pressure for accountability on universities and academics has increased (Waghid, 2010:62). The government has also become more 'interventionist' (Habib, 2013:65) in the higher education system, which has led to a situation in which higher education institutions have less autonomy than before and where managerialism and a culture of performativity have been introduced. As will become clear in the next section, higher education in South Africa is highly regulated and is governed through an act and various committee structures both on national and institutional levels.

2.5.2 Governance of higher education in South Africa

The way that higher education is governed plays a role in how it is conceptualised and which forces and cultures are at play. In addition, a sharper focus on quality and evaluation has an influence on the environment in which the professional learning of academics takes place (Clegg, 2003; Buller, 2015).

Since 2009, higher education in South Africa is governed by the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET). This department is responsible for all post-secondary education and training in the country. The Higher Education Act 101 of 1997, as amended in 1999, 2000 and again in 2001, is the official act governing the higher education sector in South Africa (Department of Education, 1997). The act established the Council on Higher Education (CHE) to advise the minister and to promote quality through its permanent committee – the Higher Education Quality Committee (HEQC). The HEQC has the functions of promoting quality assurance in higher education, auditing the quality assurance mechanisms of higher education institutions and accrediting academic programmes of higher education. Furthermore the HEQC is accredited by the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) as an Education and Training Quality Assurance (ETQA) body primarily responsible for higher education. During 2002, the HEQC announced an auditing cycle for all Higher Education Institutions in the country (HEQC, 2002). The first cycle kicked off in 2004 and Stellenbosch University was audited during 2005.

The 1997 act furthermore gives details about the institutional governance of higher education institutions. It is stipulated that institutions should be governed in a more co-operative (Kraak, 2000) and representative way and management structures should include a council; an institutional forum which advises council; a senate consisting of the professoriate; a rector as institutional leader; vice-rector(s); students' representative council; and other structures, offices and committees as may be determined by the institutional statute.

Since 2005, universities in South Africa are collectively represented through HESA[1] (Higher Education South Africa) which forms the leadership of higher education in the country and the Vice-Chancellors of the 23 higher education institutions are the board members. The main aim of the HESA leadership is "to grow higher education from the deep seated conviction that universities must be at the forefront of knowledge production, research development, innovation, teaching and learning to ultimately contribute to transformation, leadership and expertise in the sector" (HESA, 2011:2).

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[1] HESA was renamed Universities South Africa on 22 July 2015.

Although higher education in South Africa has undergone various changes since 1994, the 1997 *Education White Paper 3: A Programme for the Transformation of Higher Education* still serves as the guiding document for higher education in South Africa. This White Paper states the purposes of higher education in South Africa as follows: meeting the learning needs and aspirations of South African citizens through the development of their intellectual abilities and aptitudes; addressing the development needs of society and providing the labour market with what is needed for the growth and prosperity of a modern society; contributing to the socialisation of enlightened, responsible and constructively critical citizens; and contributing to the creation, sharing and evaluation of knowledge (Department of Education, 1997:3).

The National Development Plan (NDP) (National Planning Commission, 2011:262) outlines three main functions of universities. Firstly, universities should educate and provide graduates with high-level skills for the labour market. Secondly, universities are the key producers of new knowledge; responsible for the assessment of new applications for existing knowledge; and the validation of existing knowledge and values through curricula. Thirdly, universities should provide opportunities for social mobility and strengthen social justice and democracy, thus helping to overcome the inequities inherited from our apartheid past.

More recently it has become important to develop new, more relevant policies in order to address the changes in the South African higher education system in its relation to societal and economic needs. In November 2013, for instance, the South African cabinet approved the White Paper for post-school education and training (Department of Higher Education and Training, 2013b) which outlined the focus and priorities of the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) for the future of the broader higher education dispensation. The missions, purposes and aims of higher education institutions in South Africa obviously are influenced by the various legislative documents and are discussed next.

2.5.3 The missions, purposes and aims of higher education institutions in South Africa

In South Africa, as in most parts of the world, producing new knowledge is seen as an important function of higher education. In accordance with this, the White Paper (Department of Higher Education and Training, 2013b:34) confirms that research and innovation are integral functions of universities and indicates that knowledge production should be increased to reach the development goals of the country (*ibid*.). The research being done by higher education institutions is seen as crucial, not to the creation of new knowledge and the deepening of our understanding of our society

and our environment only, but also to the innovation of new products and processes with economic benefits for our country.

The Green Paper (2012:xi), which preceded the White Paper, stipulated that the DHET will work with the Department of Science and Technology (DST) in an effort to pursue a more stable funding model for educational institutions that conduct research and to negotiate better support for postgraduate students and for senior researchers. Research intensive universities in the country were identified as "doing cutting –edge research" and as clearly being a "valuable national asset" that should continually develop their capacities and contributions to the economy and to society (Department of Higher Education and Training, 2012:40). Furthermore, the Green Paper also realised the importance of both research and teaching and urged the higher education sector to balance this high-end research with "priorit[ising the] objective of ensuring that all universities have the means to meet the expectations for quality teaching and research" (p. 44). Teaching, as is stipulated in the Green Paper (Department of Higher Education and Training, 2012:24) "needs to be taken very seriously and a great deal of effort needs to go into improving its quality and supporting teachers at all levels of the post-school system". This expectation is further emphasised in the same document, stating that "[w]hatever else they do, all universities in South Africa must offer a high-quality undergraduate education" (p. 40) and "[i]mprovement of throughput rates must be the top strategic priority of university education" (p. 41).

Teaching, as the facilitation of student learning, and the subsequent student success rates are important factors in which the South African government is, and will be, interested. This interest from the side of government impacts on the missions and priorities of higher education institutions. From the macro policy environment as described above, it seems as if the focus in higher education has indeed started moving more towards the teaching function than was the case before. From the White Paper (Department of Higher Education and Training, 2013b:5) it could be concluded that this shift in focus is mainly born from a drive for greater social justice.

Both the Green Paper (Department of Higher Education and Training, 2012:41) and the White Paper (Department of Higher Education and Training, 2013b:36) clearly state that "[t]he calibre and workload of academic staff are … the most important factors influencing throughput", seemingly recognising that higher education in South Africa needs to give attention to the members of the academic staff. The White Paper (Department of Higher Education and Training, 2013b:35) further states that academic staff comprise a "crucial factor" in the "overall quality improvement and the development of the university sector". This statement refers to the focus of the second round of institutional audits which was due to start in 2013. During 2012, the HEQC announced that the second round of audits would focus mainly on teaching as the facilitation of student learning. In

March 2013, Prof. Diane Grayson, Director: Institutional Audits from the CHE, in a presentation informed higher education institutions about what is envisaged for this second round of HEQC audits (Grayson, 2013). During her presentation she used two quotes from the National Planning Commission (NPC) (National Planning Commission, 2011). The first quote hinted that the purposes of higher education are both that of a market force and of a social institution:

> the major driver of the information/knowledge system, linking it with economic development. However, higher education is much more than a simple instrument of economic development. Education is important for good citizenship and enriching and diversifying life.

The second quote from the NPC gave a glimpse of the troubled *status quo* of higher education in South Africa by stating that:

> [m]assive investments in the higher education system have not produced better outcomes in the level of academic performance or graduation rates. While enrolment and attainment gaps have narrowed across different race groups, the quality of education for the vast majority has remained poor at all levels. The higher education system therefore tends to be a low-participation, high-attrition system.

In her speech, Grayson (2013) continued by quoting the UK Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) for higher education, indicating that the second round of quality enhancement would be focusing on:

> the means through which an institution ensures and confirms that the conditions are in place for students to achieve the standards set by it or by another awarding body and on the process of taking deliberate steps at institutional level to improve the quality of learning opportunities.

She also referred to the Scottish QAA which "has defined enhancement as taking deliberate steps to bring about improvement in the effectiveness of the learning experiences of students".

As stated above, the provision of high quality teaching is one of the duties and expectations of higher education and, according to Marzano (2003) and Hattie (2009), the quality of teaching students receive plays the most important role in their achievement. Although not including South Africa in her research, Manathunga (2014:85) found the current discourse in higher education to be one where the 'blame' for student failure has moved from the student to the lecturer. This is nevertheless also true for this country. A word of caution at this stage warns to guard against seeing the role of the lecturer as 'a means to an end' with student throughput rates as the 'end' (Buller, 2015:221). The 'deliberate steps' referred to by Grayson (2013) can, however, refer to and be directly linked to the professional learning of academics for their teaching function, which is of importance for this study and which will be discussed later.

Within higher education institutions there are numerous positive aspects making it an environment where many individuals seek to be employed (Taylor, 2008:38) because they aspire to a career

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within academe. Such choice for a career in higher education is a deliberate choice; not the result of 'happenstance' (Hodkinson & Sparkes, 1997:32), as often occurred in past eras. The next section firstly looks at what it means to be an academic in the South African higher education system before focusing on academics as teaching professionals.

2.6 Being an academic in the South African higher education system

With all the preceding information, the question now is how these regulations and new directions touch on the conditions of academic life and what type of demands are placed on academic staff because of this. According to Habib (2013:70), higher education in South Africa has three major priorities, namely to produce highly qualified graduates who can play an important role in the development of the country; to assist in the development of the new generation of academics to sustain the higher education system; and to do high quality research to enhance the country's global competitiveness. The implications of these priorities for academics were recognised in the Green Paper (Department of Higher Education and Training, 2012:45) which states that "[a]cademics are both lecturers and researchers, and their sustained contribution to knowledge creation, innovation and skills development at both individual and country-wide levels is critical". The one result of these expectations was also made clear in the Green Paper, namely that of academic staff experiencing rising workload pressures due to increased teaching loads. This realisation led to the Green Paper stating that "[t]he revitalisation of the academic profession is an ongoing but very pressing problem" (p. 46).

Another part of this 'pressing problem', according to Habib (2013:65) and Waghid (2010:62-63), is that higher education institutions in South Africa are becoming more business-like, which brings along the management practices and accountability mechanisms from the corporate sector. This shift of focus in higher education institutions has created an environment where the power has shifted from typical university structures like Senate (led by academics) to more administrative structures, for example the Institutional Forum, Finance Division and Council (led by a majority of administrators and external stakeholders) (Cloete *et al.*, 2004; Habib, 2013:65). Habib (2013:65) warns that "[p]rofitability rather than sustainability seems to be the driving ethos of universities … and [t]he administrative workload on academics has increased significantly", leading to a greater push for third-stream income resulting in the burgeoning of qualitative performance indicators. All these changes in the higher education realm, together with lower salary prospects, have resulted in a situation where academia is no longer a very attractive career prospect and the brightest graduates prefer to move out of universities and into their trained professions. In addition, and in line with

international trends (Bexley *et al.*, 2011), academic and research staff cohorts are ageing (Webster & Mosoetsa, 2001; Habib, 2013).

In an attempt to address these and other challenges in academia, the Green Paper suggests that the academic profession should be renewed for the long-term sustainability of high-quality public higher education. For this to happen, the Green Paper (Department of Higher Education and Training, 2012:45-46) specifies a number of factors and/or initiatives to be considered and pursued. Among these factors the one that is of importance to this research states that plans should be developed to renew the academic profession through various initiatives. These include the increase of young academics, addressing staff shortages, upgrading the teaching qualifications of academics and improving the overall quality of academics. The White Paper (Department of Higher Education and Training, 2013b) strengthens this focus suggested by the Green Paper. Although each of these endeavours is well intended and positive in itself, the sum total of it all might enlarge the pressure on the individual academic.

2.6.1   Support for academics as lecturers in higher education in South Africa

Within institutions, forces are frequently pulling towards higher education as industry on the one side and higher education as social institution on the other side. This dichotomy often creates conflict and stress for the academic. Humans are not intellectuals only; all have feelings and emotions. We thus transform our experiences through cognitive thinking, but also through emotions and actions (Costandius, 2012:39; Trigwell, 2012). We are also reminded about this by Knight and Trowler (2000:40) when they state "the faculty member is not just a cognitive or sociological construct". Our affective reactions thus influence our rational thought processes (Lent, Brown & Hackett, 2002) or, as explained by Castells (2011) and quoted by Costandius (2012), the way we feel determines the way we think. We therefore cannot separate ourselves and our feelings and emotions from our learning.

This realisation has numerous implications for the professional learning of academics, for processes of change (Buller, 2015), as well as for academic careers (Knight & Trowler, 2000). Hutchings, Huber and Golde (2006) stress that the catch-all phrase of "work-life balance" should be given more attention when talking about academics' careers. A recent study by Zembylas, Bozalek and Shefer (2014:12) also reported on the fact that humans are vulnerable and relational beings and the act of caring consequently is central to human lives. How we perceive being cared for therefore matters to us (Nixon, Marks, Rowland & Walker, 2001) and could influence our intrinsic motivation. According to Adler, Adler and Fontana (1987:225), feelings and emotions are

influenced by structural and cultural factors. In an environment that is perceived as caring and conducive to decision making for professional learning there will thus be trust, clear values and clear communication (Tronto, 2010) rather than mixed or misaligned messages.

The role and function of professional learning practitioners as 'care givers' (Tronto, 2010) are also considered in this study because of their responsibility for creating and facilitating the professional learning of academics for teaching. Worldwide, the professional role and function of professional learning practitioners in higher education institutions has grown exponentially (Quinn & Vorster, 2014) but it is a relatively young focus area in South Africa. The first national conference on the topic took place in 1979. The South African Association for Research and Development (SAARDHE) was established in the same year. As with international trends, the main foci of all the work done within the units responsible for professional learning has been curriculum design, teaching and learning and assessment (Frick & Kapp, 2009:259).

An initiative that aimed at recognising the value and need of professional learning for academics was the 2004 CHE publication of a guide on this topic (Council for Higher Education, 2004). This guide suggests that professional learning in higher education institutions should focus on the following:

> training, education, or capacity building in teaching practice (including curriculum design and development, and assessment); higher education studies and research; academic management and leadership; organisational development (including quality assurance); and information technology (IT) upgrading (CHE, 2004:5).

The guide further suggests that professional learning should be integrated within higher education institutions and not be "an isolated, optional activity" and continues by confirming that "the development of academic staff should be at the centre of any attempt to respond to the challenges currently facing higher education professionals" (p. 6).

Another more recent development from the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) is the broadening of the Teaching Development Grants (TDGs) in 2011, to not only include institutions with very low student pass rates, but attempting to address the quality of student learning on the campuses of all higher education institutions in South Africa through a sustained focus on improving the quality and impact of university lecturers, teaching, and teaching resources (Department of Higher Education and Training, 2013a). The priorities of the new cycle of grants are stipulated by the DHET (2013a) as having a focus on lecturer development; establishing tutor and mentor programmes for the next generation of academics; a focus on programmes to enhance the status of teaching at universities; as well as a focus on research into teaching and learning.

The Higher Education Learning and Teaching Association of Southern Africa (HELTASA) was established in 2004 with the promotion of quality higher education practice through the professionalization of educational advisors in South Africa and the creation of a synergistic networks as its mission (HELTASA, n.d.). Previously, the South African Association for Academic Development (SAAAD) and the South African Academic Development Association (SAADA) existed, but their foci were on the academic development of 'previously disadvantaged' students, rather than on the professional learning of academics for their teaching.

According to its constitution (available at www.heltasa.org.za), HELTASA's main forum is an annual conference which also provides opportunities for engagement and collaboration through special interest groups. HELTASA further positioned itself as playing a valuable role in exploring and researching issues around teaching and learning in higher education and in so doing aligned itself with the CHE. Another initiative undertaken as a partnership between HELTASA and the CHE was the introduction of the National Teaching Excellence Awards in 2009 with the purpose of recognising teaching excellence in institutions of higher education South Africa. As pointed out by Barnett (2011), all these initiatives are pointing towards a shift taking place within higher education.

2.7   Summary

At the start of this chapter the purpose of this study was set out as being an endeavour to understand how the specific context of members of the academic staff at a research-intensive university may influence the choices they make about their participation in professional learning opportunities for the teaching function as well as their subsequent implementation of what was learned. This chapter therefore set out to describe the broad context of academics at a research-intensive university from an international and national perspective. Attention was also given to higher education in South Africa and included a discussion of what it means to be an academic within this system. As became evident in this chapter, the context within which academic staff has to function is indeed complex and layered.

The notion of 'being' an academic was discussed from the angles of professionalism and that of work-life balance. Despite the contradictions and pressures described in the chapter, indications of support for academic staff were also shared. In the next chapter, Stellenbosch University, the research setting and context of this study, will be discussed.

Chapter 3

Stellenbosch University as research setting and study context

3.1   Introduction

Stellenbosch University (SU) in South Africa was chosen as the research setting for this study as this university participated in the broader NRF investigation (see Section 5.4) and is one of a few research-intensive institutions in South Africa. In its Strategic Framework (Stellenbosch University, 2000:9), the SU mission is stated as follows:

> to create and sustain, in commitment to the universitarian ideal of excellent scholarly and scientific practice, an environment in which knowledge can be discovered; can be shared; and can be applied to the benefit of the community.

If it is the staff members of an institution who have the task and responsibility of realising the vision and mission of that institution, then the responsibility carried by SU staff members, especially academic staff, is considerable. Questions arise about support and professional learning opportunities available to academic staff at Stellenbosch and conditions that prevail to enable or disable academics' decision making about participating in such available opportunities – especially those focusing on supporting their role as lecturers.

The Higher Education Quality Committee (HEQC) audit report, based on the 2005 institutional audit (see Section 2.4.2), states that professional learning at SU "includes a range of activities and units which focus on different dimensions of teaching and learning" (HEQC, 2007:73). A series of opportunities thus exists for staff to enhance their teaching skills and most of these opportunities are presented by the Centre for Teaching and Learning (CTL). There is a caveat, however. Participation in these opportunities "is voluntary and staff members have no incentive to get involved in them" (p. 22). It was further reported that the promotion of academic staff does not give consideration to the improvement of teaching skills (HEQC, 2007).

In congruence with the HEQC report, it needs to be stated that the stature of undergraduate teaching at SU is not similar to that of research, which means that neither the status thereof nor the resources, the awards or any other incentives, are equal to that of research. This corresponds with international trends where research in general has a higher status than undergraduate teaching at research-intensive universities (Elen *et al.*, 2007).

This study was undertaken at Stellenbosch University from 2011 to 2013 and focused on the years 2007 to 2012. A number of changes have taken place at SU since the data for the study were

gathered and these changes are not accounted for in this research. The changes include the following: Vision 2030, formulated in conjunction with the Stellenbosch University Institutional Intent and Strategy 2013-2018; the restructuring of the Centre for Teaching and Learning (CTL) at the end of 2013; a renewed drive for the recognition of good teaching from the Vice-Rector (Learning and Teaching) culminating in a discussion document on the Promotion and Recognition of Good Teaching during 2014; acceptance of the SU Strategy for Teaching and Learning 2014-2018; revision of the SU Assessment policy and practices; and changes in SU senior management.

Furthermore, no formal strategy for the professional learning of academics was in place at Stellenbosch University at the time of the study. This perceived institutional silence about the professional learning of academics for their undergraduate teaching role provided further motivation for this study. The remainder of this chapter describes Stellenbosch University, as an understanding of the current *status quo* forms the backdrop to this explorative case study.

3.2 History of Stellenbosch University

In order to place this study within the context of Stellenbosch University as the site of this research, a brief summary of the history of the institution will be given before moving on to describing the present-day institution. According to the official website of Stellenbosch University available at http://www.sun.ac.za/english/about-us/historical-background, the institution was established in 1685 when regular school education was initiated in Stellenbosch. Higher education was established in 1859 with the opening of the Theological Seminary of the Dutch Reformed Church and the Stellenbosch Gymnasium became a reality in 1866. During 1874, the Arts Department was founded with 20 students and one professor in Mathematics and Natural Sciences and another one in Classical and English Literature. The Victoria College building was opened in 1887 to create more space.

Victoria College was renovated during 1897 to 1900 to include facilities such as a Physics laboratory, the Christian Marais library and buildings for Education and Science. More academics were appointed as research chairs in the departments of Zoology, Botany, History and Applied Mathematics. The first professor of Education was appointed in 1911. Victoria College became Stellenbosch University on 2 April 1918 after a donation of £100 000 by a sponsor and the adoption of the University Act in 1916. Since that time Stellenbosch University has expanded to include the current ten faculties – Agricultural Sciences, Economic and Management Sciences, Medical and Health Sciences, Engineering, Military Sciences, Arts and Social Sciences, Science, Education, Law and Theology – spread over various campuses. The distribution over various geographical

locations has an influence on the availability of resources and support for teaching and its related activities.

3.3   Stellenbosch University today

More recently Stellenbosch University was described as a medium-sized predominantly Afrikaans-medium, public university (HEQC, 2007:9). During the past decade Stellenbosch University has also positioned itself as a research-intensive institution (HEQC, 2007) within the South African context and is currently recognised as one of the four top research universities in South Africa with over 30 per cent of enrolled students at the postgraduate level and the second largest research output among universities in the country (*ibid*.:41). These performances in the research arena have recently been awarded with listings on the world university rankings by the Times Higher Education and QS (Quacquarelli Symonds) world rankings, as well as on the Leiden rankings. In 2012, SU was also named the leading African University by the Webometrics Ranking of World Universities which ranks universities according to their web presence (http://www.sun.ac.za/english/about-us/Why-SU).

Barnett (2000:101) argues that the way a university sees and describes itself is "constructed from without" by its "friends and foes". A question that arises is whether this has also happened at Stellenbosch University during the past decade and specifically since being awarded with a place on the world rankings? Another question that arises is whether earning a position on the world rankings has influenced "the institutional drive and values", as well as "the tacit criteria for judgement of activities and individuals"? This study does not focus on answering these questions directly, but some of it could implicitly be answered by its findings.

According to the 2012 Stellenbosch University Fact Book (Stellenbosch University, 2012a) the total number of registered students at SU in 2012 was 27 823, which is a decrease of 1.3% from the 2011 figure and the first decrease in 11 years. The same source indicates that the number of permanently appointed staff members in 2012 was 2 958, of which 939 were academic staff. The Stellenbosch University growth figures since 2002 show a 35.29% increase in student numbers (full-time equivalents) compared to a growth of 21% among academic staff (full-time equivalents). In this same period, the increase in support staff (full-time equivalents) was 55.5% (Stellenbosch University, 2012a). The average student-lecturer ratio in 2011 (the latest available data at the time) indicates a workload of approximately 23.6 students per lecturer. This ratio is much lower than some of the other universities in the country, but not as favourable as the ratios at some of the other South African research-intensive institutions. The perceived burden of teaching large classes with its accompanying consequences was identified as a major constraint on lecturers by various authors

(Prosser & Trigwell, 1997; Martin, 1999; Hockings, 2005). Larger undergraduate classes and the accompanying higher teaching workload might have a very real implication for, and influence on, the decision of academics to participate in the process of professional learning for their teaching, which is the focus of this study.

3.4 The mission, vision, purposes and aims of Stellenbosch University

As mentioned before, the mission of the institution is stated in its strategic framework (Stellenbosch University, 2000:9) as "to create and sustain, in commitment to the universitarian ideal of excellent scholarly and scientific practice, an environment in which knowledge can be discovered; can be shared; and can be applied to the benefit of the community". Although teaching and learning is not an explicit focus of the university's mission, it is interpreted as being included in the mission statement focusing on 'sharing' of knowledge (HEQC, 2007).

In its strategic framework document, the vision of Stellenbosch University (Stellenbosch University, 2000:9) is formulated in the three core areas of higher education business and it states that:

> [i]n a spirit of academic freedom and of the universal quest for truth and knowledge, the vision of the University as an academic institution sets itself the aim, through critical and rational thought, of firstly pursuing excellence and remaining at the forefront of its chosen focal areas; secondly of gaining national and international standing by means of its research outputs; and its production of graduates who are sought-after for their well-roundedness and for their creative, critical thinking; thirdly of being relevant to the needs of the community, taking into consideration the needs of South Africa in particular and of Africa and the world in general; and fourthly of being enterprising, innovative and self-renewing.

Again, in aspiring towards the realisation of this vision, the role of lecturers, and specifically the support of the institution for their professional learning for the teaching function, is not clear from the vision, but it is probably implied in the notions of 'being enterprising, innovative and self-renewing'.

This vision is taken forward and is driven by Vision 2012 (Stellenbosch University, 2003:1) which states that the university commits itself to an outward-oriented role within South Africa, in Africa, and globally and that it sees itself as an academic institution of excellence and a respected knowledge partner which contributes towards building the scientific, technological, and intellectual capacity of Africa, while being an active role-player in the development of the South African society. Vision 2012 furthermore states that the campus culture at Stellenbosch University

welcomes a diversity of people and ideas while simultaneously promoting Afrikaans as a language of teaching and science in a multilingual context.

The nine values underpinning all actions taking place at Stellenbosch University are Equity, Participation, Transparency, Readiness to Serve, Tolerance and Mutual Respect, Dedication, Scholarship, Responsibility and Academic Freedom (Stellenbosch University, 2000:10). The term 'scholarship' is not clearly defined, however, but given the fact that the scholarship of dissemination (teaching) was included in Ernest Boyer's (1990) description of scholarship, scholarship in this study would therefore include the scholarship of discovery (research), the scholarship of dissemination (teaching), and the scholarship of engagement (community interaction), as well as the scholarship of integration (interdisciplinarity). For the purpose of this study, the scholarship of teaching is included in the broader 'scholarship' value underpinning the actions of academics at Stellenbosch University. Kreber and Cranton (2000) describe the scholarship of teaching as conducting research about classroom practice; excellence in teaching; and the application of educational theory to teaching practice. They thus include the ongoing professional learning for teaching as undertaken by lecturers as adult learners in their definition of the scholarship of teaching. This is of specific importance to this study.

One of the strategic foci listed in the Stellenbosch University Institutional Plan 2012 – 2016 (Stellenbosch University, 2012b:8) is "[t]he knowledge base of the university's staff (particularly academic staff)". The plan explains this focus area as follows: "it is a fact that the main element of the university's lasting competitive advantage is based on the expertise of its staff – as producers, conveyers and appliers of knowledge". For this research, the interpretation of this statement would dwell on the 'conveyor' function, which is different from how it is unpacked in the rest of the official document –focusing more on the role of 'producers'. The only strategic management indicator in the document that is linked to the teaching function is one on student success which could be interpreted as being the only criterion for 'good' teaching at Stellenbosch University.

3.5   Stellenbosch University as research-intensive institution

As indicated above, Stellenbosch University has positioned itself as a research-intensive institution (HEQC, 2007:9) and is recognised as one of the four top research universities in South Africa with over 30 per cent of its enrolments at the postgraduate level and the second largest research output[2] amongst universities in the country (p. 41). The growth in post graduate enrolments is mentioned by the HEQC as one of the features of the profile of a research intensive university (HEQC, 2007:94).

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[2] The research output of an institution is calculated by dividing the number of accredited publications by the number of full time equivalent senior lecturers.

The HEQC report further indicates that the university defines itself in the Stellenbosch University Strategic Framework of 2000 as "a strongly research-oriented university, sought-after for the training of quality researchers, who are acknowledged as world leaders of research in selected niche areas" (HEQC, 2007:28).

A question emerging from this concerns the influence on the teaching function of undergraduate students in such institutions. At Stellenbosch University, "the prioritisation of research as an institutional focus has given teaching and learning a subordinate position in the institution" (HEQC, 2007:20). This sentiment was supported by the lecturers who were interviewed during the audit; the fact that the SU mission is "imprecise in relation to teaching" (p. 20); as well as the size of the institutional budgets (p. 20); and "the unclear position of the committee for learning and teaching (CLT) in the academic governance of the institution" (p. 21). (It should be noted that the CLT has become a permanent sub-committee of senate since this 2007 HEQC report). Many academics at Stellenbosch University, including in public forums such as the annual Stellenbosch University Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) Conference, have bemoaned the fact that lecturers who focus more on their teaching, either because of a natural affinity for teaching or a sense of duty, are less likely to be promoted than colleagues who are more focused on research outputs. Balancing and integrating the three roles became even more of a challenge during the past decade after the university positioned itself as a research-intensive institution. The research question asked by this study now becomes important: How, if at all, do contextual factors influence the decision making of academics for becoming involved in the process of professional learning for teaching at a research-intensive university?

In the next section the perceptions of members of senior management at SU is examined more closely.

3.6 The perceived context for undergraduate teaching at Stellenbosch University according to senior management

Interviews were conducted with selected members of senior management as part of the NRF umbrella project of which this study formed part (see Sections 1.3 and 5.4), as their views were deemed important in voicing the institutional and faculty contexts for undergraduate teaching at the institution. The NRF project members decided that the interviews would be conducted in a criss-cross manner and a colleague and NRF project member from the University of Cape Town therefore conducted the senior management interviews at SU. Five senior managers were interviewed including the Rector, Vice Rector (Teaching) and three Deans. The one dean was from a large faculty with high involvement in the process of professional learning by the academics,

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while the other was from a large faculty, but with low involvement in the process of professional learning by its academics. The third dean was from a large faculty with progressive thinking about teaching. The interview with the dean from the large faculty with high involvement in professional learning was conducted by the Director of the Centre for Teaching and Learning at the time, who was also the project leader for the NRF umbrella project. Some of these results have been published previously (Van Schalkwyk, Leibowitz, Herman & Farmer, 2013; Van Schalkwyk *et al.*, 2015). Permission was granted to include these findings as part of the institutional contextualisation of this study.

The findings from these senior management interviews are reported in the following section in an attempt to enhance understanding of the context for undergraduate teaching and the process of professional learning of lecturers for their teaching at Stellenbosch University. Quotes from the senior manager interviewees are included. These are identified with the letters 'SM' followed by a number, for example 'SM3', to indicate a particular interviewee.

3.6.1   Wellness of lecturers

As evident from the SU findings of the NRF umbrella project, it seems as if teaching, and indeed the process of professional learning for teaching, is important from the perspective of SU senior management. As could be expected from the responses of institutional managers, the broader end of the contextual spiral (institutional structures) (see Chapter 4) often seem to be a more influential driver to their actions and thinking than the narrow end of the contextual spiral (individual academic). One of the senior management interviewees did allude to the fact that he perceived a dilemma with the way the University treated individual lecturers:

> we send these kids in, these kids, the lecturers they are kids still, I mean they [are] in their twenties, we throw them in front of a class of three hundred and fifty, we make a hell of a lot of money out of them and we don't give them the proper tools to do the job. It's like a sin. (SM1)

As reported by Van Schalkwyk *et al*. (2015), most senior managers seemed to be caring about the wellbeing of staff. One interviewee, however, explained how he perceived the opposite. He thought the institution was not caring for lecturers, but being more focused on them just 'getting the job done':

> we chase them all over the campus. If there's a big hall that can take three hundred people anywhere, our lecturers will teach in that … the one lecture is in the Cilliers building and the next lecture is up here in [our building] … now say you want to hand out three sheets of paper for every student as part of your teaching today, a little example, how do you get it at the Cilliers building if it's like nine

hundred pages if you are a frail little twenty-six year old eh girl in high heels dragging the thousand pages down here. (SM1)

3.6.2   Creating spaces for lecturers to flourish

The importance and value of 'good' lecturers and 'good' teaching for securing the future of the university was emphasised from the side of the senior managers. One interviewee indicated:

> we cannot in our programme have people who only do research and don't teach and good, good universities are research led but teaching fed, so this is where the money comes from and we must do that well or else we're out of business (SM1)

Another senior manager indicated that "we have a responsibility to provide the best teaching and learning for them [undergraduate students]" (SM5). Being 'good' lecturers who practise 'good' teaching is not necessarily part of the background training of all academics. One senior manager commented that lecturers should be "looking at [their] own teaching practice and seeing how that can support students to be more successful" (SM5). According to another senior manager, lecturers are often enthusiastic about participating in the process of professional learning for their teaching because:

> [lecturers] like the idea of being supported in their teaching because let's face it, we're not trained in that. We are often [professionals in our disciplines] and people may be experts in those fields, but don't really have any training. So I think people are now much more aware that they need that. I mean, maybe ten years ago people … thought that if they were a [professional] of note they could just do it they can just do the teaching stuff. Now people realise, and I think are much more prepared to acknowledge their limitations in terms of the training around education. (SM4)

Referring to the importance of professional learning for teaching, another senior manager indicated that their faculty had applied for funding for professional learning of academics for their teaching and, "if the money comes through in the way that we applied for it, there's actually going to be money available for departments to do this kind of development" (SM3). The following comments from the senior management interviewees highlight the responsibility of the university towards lifting the stature of teaching and supporting its academic staff members in their growth even more:

> in order to do this we have to turn this around in order to lift the stature of teaching and learning itself - not just as a planning project or as a project for the development of students coming from a certain background, but to begin to look at how do we do with this regard to our own staff. (SM2)

> [w]e are supposed to create an environment in which people can perform. That is now students and staff, and they can reach their potential and … just like you owe it to the students, you owe it to the young lecturer to create an environment in which they can also excel. (SM1)

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This sentiment was echoed by another interviewee suggesting that an environment should be created "in which not only the students but the staff that work here feel valued ... [and] feel that they can learn and grow, and that they also feel that they can contribute" (SM4). According to another senior manager, a number of teaching and learning initiatives at SU were 'strongly supported' from "central institutional side" (SM5). Based on these comments from the senior managers, making a choice for becoming involved in the process of professional learning for teaching should be a relative 'easy' decision.

If this was indeed the case – the context being accommodating and supportive of the decision to become involved in the process of professional learning for teaching, this study would probably have been unnecessary. However, this is not always the case and such choice is usually enabled or constrained throughout the phases of the process of professional learning for teaching by the interplay of various considerations in the daily reality of the individual academic (see Chapter 4).

Drawing on his own experience, one senior manager cautioned "unless the environment is right, then people kind of, I think, disengage … I know what it's like to disengage because you don't feel comfortable" (SM4). The considerations highlighted by the senior management interviewees are discussed in the sections that follow.

3.6.3   More opportunities for dialogue about teaching and learning

One of the senior management interviewees indicated that the way in which a faculty could create an environment for people to reach their potential in their teaching role is "by number one, talking about it and number two, by in subtle ways trying to influence the, the way in which we teach" (SM1). From management side it seems as if more opportunities for dialogue about teaching and learning were opening up:

> [a]nd they have started saying let's talk about … it … in the pedagogical environment, in a teaching and learning environment in a curriculum environment. (SM2)

It is however not always possible to determine who the discussants were, or what the specific content of such conversations would have been; whether it was about the scholarship of teaching, the process of professional learning, pass rates of students, the stature of teaching, challenges or issues with teaching, et cetera:

> the discussion, the conversation about teaching and learning in our, in [the] faculty is happening much more than it did previously … [a]t least people are talking about teaching and learning, thinking about teaching and learning, and asking questions about their own practice much more than previously. (SM5).

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Another interesting development mentioned was how the composition of faculty meetings - usually reserved for the more experienced academics at the higher levels of appointment - started changing as they:

> started to bring the younger lecturers and senior lecturers to the meetings and then said look here, we want you to listen to these young people and tell you what we are doing as a faculty in teaching and learning and how we see that being aligned to the university's profile and its own plans. (SM2)

One of the 'plans' referred to in the quote above, was the university's intention to include the teaching function in the performance appraisal of lecturers.

3.6.4   Teaching included in the performance management system

Following a question to one of the senior management interviewees about whether the performance appraisal system used in their faculty supported teaching, the response was somewhat hesitant:

> Yes, it is. I think. It's got these three very clear sections. It starts with teaching and then you have to list how many modules you've taught, how many students there are in the class. You've even got spaces where you can write exactly what kind of assessment [you are doing]. (SM3)

The interviewee also mentioned the unhappiness created through the way that student feedback is used as measurement of teaching performance: "there is a lot of discontent, if you want to call it that, about the [student feedback] forms, for all sorts of quite obvious reasons" (SM3). Another senior management interviewee shared this feeling of discomfort with the use of student feedback within their environment, stating:

> [we] encourage people to do the assessments of their teaching [student feedback] with the students and that gets discussed and it's actually taken quite seriously at, sometimes too seriously, I get the feeling and I've still got this thing about this focussing on this percentage awarded. At times I think that focus is too strong that because it, it's not, it's not really a, for me a valid mark but it's an indication of a kind. And then, but we actually take that rather too seriously than not seriously enough, I would imagine. (SM1)

The '[in]valid mark' mentioned by the interviewee in the above quote is an impression mark given by students and is often the only criterion used to determine the award of institutional bonuses, which in itself is a very contested system because of the way it is structured:

> 20% performers in overall performance got performance bonuses at the end of the year. It's a very contested system because if 80% of the faculty get a 70% to 75% rating, then it actually means even very good people aren't getting that performance related bonus if you only take the top 20%. (SM3)

To the contrary, another senior manager thought the student feedback system was a good system with a lot of potential:

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> we have a very good institutional student feedback system, at the module level and they must give feedback on the content of the module as well as teaching of the lecturer … I think we've got a lot of information there that can also most probably be used better. It's used mainly at the faculty level, where deans will certainly look at that when they have their performance reviews with academic staff, but maybe there's more information there that we can mine better. (SM5)

Referring to the use of student feedback, one of the senior managers reported that additional ways of evaluating the teaching of lecturers have been proposed earlier, but it seems as if there was no buy-in:

> I think student feedback is one way of looking at how teaching is progressing, but it's not the only one. Unfortunately, we don't have very much else. We've suggested at times what about peer evaluation, so that you have a lecturer who knows the subject field sitting in with another lecturer. It's not been shot down completely and it's even possible that in some departments it works. (SM3)

The inclusion of teaching in the performance system of the institution can be seen as a positive development, but the use of student feedback as the only criterion and source of information for measuring teaching, and even as the basis for the performance appraisal of lecturers, has been a contentious issue at the institution for many years.

3.6.5   Regard and reward for teaching

One senior manager alluded to the fact that it became difficult to lift the stature of teaching after the university had become a research-intensive institution. One of the first actions taken in this regard was to get the financial value of the Rector's award for excellence in teaching to be similar to that of the research award. Since that time, much has apparently happened and the way in which the recipients are identified and nominated has also changed, as indicated by the interviewee quoted below:

> there have been a few changes in the system, but there used to for many years be a Vice Chancellor's best lecturer award, and there was one for every faculty. So there was that reward, and usually they were nominated by colleagues. So, it was a peer nomination, but then that included student feedback and a portfolio … but they've changed how they rewarded it … [and] there were all sorts of dissatisfactions about that … and then they tried to collapse the two, and there was more dissatisfaction. But that I think was at least one way of rewarding. (SM3)

According to one of the senior management interviewees, the private sector made an award available for the best lecturer in one of the faculties at the institution. At first it was contested by the faculty management, but in the end it was approved. This award is given annually to the 'best lecturer' based on student votes. The interviewee indicated that it was possible that this award

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would always be 'circulated' among a few lecturers because of the way award is structured, the question then arises about how the others "who got so close but were so far" could be kept motivated.

The conclusion about the current institutional regard and reward system, as given by one senior manager, is that the institution had been working at the "recognition and reward system, related to teaching and learning … [but] with mixed success". The interviewee continued by attributing the 'mixed success' to the fact that the institution did not succeed in "getting hard criteria in terms of teaching and learning or good teaching and learning into our promotion and appointments processes" (SM5). Previously, Adendorff (2011) reported similar findings about the regard and reward system for teaching at the institution.

Even though the recognition and reward systems for the process of professional learning were not always in place, the senior managers indicated that the institution did make resources available.

3.6.6 Availability of resources for the process of professional learning

According to senior managers who were interviewed, resources for teaching and learning and professional learning for teaching were made available in the form of funding and grants. These resources for example included the SU Fund for Innovation and Research into Learning and Teaching (FIRLT); teaching fellowships; and the Teaching Development Grants (TDGs); as well as funding made available by academic departments for participating in professional learning opportunities where costs are involved (these would normally be outside the institution). Securing money from the University for conducting research in teaching and learning was said to be an important milestone. According to one of the senior managers, the establishment of the institutional Centre for Teaching and Learning (CTL) was the most important aspect in "lift[ing] the stature of teaching and learning" (SM2). Furthermore, the staff members in the CTL were recognised as "very dedicated, very knowledgeable … SoTL [Scholarship of Teaching and Learning] practitioners in their own right. Who are people who publish, who are well-known" (SM5). This interviewee also stated, however, that the CTL:

> does their own research but it's not necessarily what we [academics] want. They don't know what our needs and challenges are - we want them to hear us better. To focus more on what we want to do, or what we need. (SM5)

Another interviewee made a similar comment, stating the feelings and views of faculty members:

> the people in faculties the deans and also some of the staff have started to look at the Centre for Teaching and Learning as bureaucracy. They did not see that it was actually what was needed to improve the environment and their work and the impact of that. They did not see that. (SM2)

Another consideration that senior management pinpointed as a challenge for 'good' undergraduate teaching was the physical classroom environment.

3.6.7 Teaching and learning facilities not facilitating optimal teaching and learning

Lecturers are employed to provide quality teaching for quality student learning. An expectation that the physical spaces where these learning opportunities are presented should be supportive of the activities and innovations that lecturers plan should thus not be unreasonable. Available infrastructure regarding conditions of lecture halls and the lack of campus-wide Wi-Fi as prerequisites for implementing certain teaching innovations, were implied as possible constraints to teaching:

> for me personally, one of our biggest challenges is our physical facilities in the sense that we have big challenges in, in utilising technology in teaching and learning because our facilities really don't allow it. And I think there's, there's lots of academic staff with lots of initiative in this regard, and they are hampered by the fact that we don't have Wi-Fi, our, many of our lecture rooms are overcrowded, no, a number of factors. (SM5)

Expecting of lecturers to deliver optimal teaching without the necessary infrastructure would indeed be disheartening to any individual.

3.6.8 The research–teaching tension

At SU, research is still valued most; to "measure the value of lecturers, and mostly it's the value of research that is easy to measure, and then the guys who are good teachers and not equally good at research come off fairly badly there" (SM3), and as stated by another interviewee, teaching is sometimes "regarded as the cash cow, for the research work" (SM2). The challenges of this uneven situation between these two core functions were described by another senior management interviewee as difficult:

> very difficult, that's very difficult because we, we need … we've got these students and we owe it to them to teach them well, I mean we owe it to them. So there's no way out of that, we … it's an obligation. But on the other hand we also know, to advance you've got to publish papers in good journals and hold yourself out to be an expert in your field and it's managing that combination that I find the biggest challenge in academic management. (SM1)

When referring to lecturers who would prefer "to teach well and do nothing else" (SM1), this interviewee indicated, however, that allowing this would be unfair towards such lecturers because of their future career prospects:

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> research gives you security … [maybe] [n]ot at Stellenbosch but, outside … you can go elsewhere, you've got a CV. (SM1)

When discussing the relationship between teaching and research at the institution, one senior manager thought the ideal would be to integrate the three roles of the academic. It was wished that "every academic [should] see teaching and learning as just as core to their role as academics as their research … and to start thinking in new ways for bridging the gap or integrating … the three roles actually of an academic" (SM5). The interviewee continued by stating:

> it is unnecessary for us to see these roles in little silos or compartments, and I think if we think cleverly we can certainly get a better dispensation for the three roles to inform one another … for synergy to, to exist between the three roles. (SM5)

Related to the research-teaching tension is the disregard of research on teaching. At SU as a research-intensive university, it is discipline-related research that counts. One of the senior managers alluded to this issue in the following way:

> [one of our biggest, biggest challenges is to] recognis[e] the scholarship of teaching and learning as work in its own right, that, that is credible, that will contribute to the objectives of the faculty and the goals of the institution and which deserves recognition in its own right ... there are still people, younger academic staff who really struggle to get that recognition. (SM5)

Related to the fact that research on teaching is not recognised as 'hard' research, is the low stature of teaching at the institution. It is to this consideration that the focus now shifts.

3.6.9   The stature of teaching at the institution

According to a senior management interviewee at SU, the university has a continuous focus "on student success rates, student retention, student performance", which management thought should "almost subconsciously … put across a message to academics that [their] teaching and learning is important" (SM5). This comment, however, rather sheds light on how 'good' teaching is defined and measured at the institution, as well as the aspects that the institution seems to value most.

This interviewee continued the specific train of thought indicating that an enabling factor for the process of professional learning of academics for their teaching at the institution is the fact that teaching is high on the management agenda because "student success is one of the four institutional priorities of this institution" (SM5). These comments seem to point to a view that perceives lecturers as resources or a means to an end – and the end is student success – rather than as individual human beings.

3.6.10 Attitude and support of middle management

Higher education institutions are structured through faculties and departments. Deans of faculties and heads of departments (HoDs) have a great deal of influence and power over teaching as well as lecturers. Depending on the focus of these leaders, teaching and its related professional learning activities can either be valued or not. One of the senior management interviewees alluded to this power of middle management as follows:

> the faculties have got a lot of autonomy here [at SU], and a lot of power … [a]nd … proposing new initiatives really requires a lot of consultation to get the buy-in from faculties, otherwise it simply won't work. And in some faculties one would get a dean who is quite passionate about teaching and learning, and in other faculties you will get somebody who is not as passionate and you know you've got to work within these different contexts. (SM5)

This point was further elaborated on by the same interviewee, saying that:

> there particular[ly is] younger staff who are very, very excited about [professional learning for teaching] … initiatives, who participate a lot. Who participate in SoTL et cetera and actually do very good work. What they say to us is that they don't find the support for this work from [their] head of department and [they] don't find it from [their] dean, so [they are] in a bit of a quandary if [they] really want to move up the ladder, [they] will have to do more disciplinary research, but [their] heart, [their] passion is really in teaching and learning. (SM5)

A statement by another one of the senior management interviewees indicated that the head of department is indeed a very influential individual in the life of a lecturer:

> I think the person that's got the most power in the universe over your life is the head of department … he or she can tell you to teach a useless course … they do the teaching schedule so they've got a lot of power in setting that teaching schedule which the dean hasn't got, so if you want to punish somebody without having a disciplinary hearing about it, you just give them the unpopular courses to teach. (SM1)

One senior manager bemoaned the fact that "in spite of clear messages from top management around the importance … of teaching and learning, we still do not find this at the departmental and faculty level" (SM5).

Academic leadership for teaching and learning is at the level of middle management. Such leadership is often not satisfactory and does not always communicate a message of 'care'. This was also one of the findings from earlier research at SU, as reported by Leibowitz, Van Schalkwyk, Ruiters, Farmer and Adendorff (2012).

3.6.11 Lack of time and high workload

Time, or rather lack of time, and an accompanying high workload were identified by four of the five senior manager interviewees as two of the biggest aspects preventing academics from becoming involved in the process of professional learning for their teaching:

> a lot of people would want to avail themselves of the support and training we have, but just don't have the time for it. (SM4)

Workload was defined in many different ways, however. This varied from involvement in 'too many activities with more immediate priority' to the sum total of all the different responsibilities of the academic, namely research; undergraduate and postgraduate teaching; assessment of student learning; community involvement; administration, which includes academic administration, management and committee work:

> I think there are lots of pressures on academic staff, particularly in terms of research output, administrative burdens, student support and all of that simply doesn't make much time available to think, to reflect about your teaching and learning, to read about it, to try out innovative teaching practices and even maybe to attend some of the capacity building initiatives that are offered. (SM5)

How this daily reality of high workload and lack of time was a constraint to lecturers becoming involved in the process of professional learning for teaching was described by one senior manager:

> it's incredible how the workload of [professionals] has increased, and so they really do struggle to find the time to engage in this. This is a luxury, this sort of training in … education. (SM4)

Senior managers thus seem to have an empathetic understanding of the time and workload dilemma of lecturers, which gives hints about a caring environment. However, even in the midst of such understanding, lecturers often experienced feelings of overload as a result of the lack of time and the accompanying high workload.

3.6.12 Unrealistic expectations and survival strategies

High workload was reported as a concern of senior management by Van Schalkwyk *et al.* (2015). What the institution expects from lectures within the high-workload-time-constraint-research-focused environment could sometimes be experienced as unrealistic. These expectations sometimes give rise to the implementation of survival strategies by lecturers. Such survival strategies are often to the detriment of quality student learning and could lead to a situation where the aims of the university are undermined.

The unrealistic expectations alluded to by senior managers include the implications of rising numbers of students; an increased pressure to produce research outputs; and being expected to be an expert in more than one field:

> focus on cost effectiveness, bigger competition for scarce resources, all of that simply means that the focus [is] more and more on research … even on contract research, on getting money for your department, your centre, your unit, whatever. (SM5)

As can be expected, the setting of unrealistic expectations results in the implementation of certain survival strategies and strategic choices. One senior manager indicated that however understandable this situation was, it was thought to undermine the very important aim set by the institution, namely that of 'good' teaching:

> [It] detract[s] from the core functions of being really a good teacher and a good researcher, and being able to exercise … academic freedom in terms of who and what you teach and research … [and] … in that sense we might be losing some ground in terms of teaching and learning. (SM5)

Another senior manager indicated that the pressure on lecturers might result in 'playing the game' and adjusting the pass rates of students:

> and that's a very difficult thing to manage because if you put too much pressure on the … lecturer they will just say come on, okay how many do you want me to pass, I'll pass them and then you can go so it's trying to encourage this, this increase in the pass rates and thinking of ways in which we can teach better, now we have managed that and I had it at one stage to brag about, about how we pushed it. (SM1)

These unrealistic expectations all relate to a lack, or even the absence, of care for the individual lecturer and the lecturer's needs. The focus on pass rates and excellent teaching strengthens the perceived culture of performativity which is excluding the human factor.

3.6.13 Culture of performativity and managerialism

The culture of performativity that is prevailing at the institution was alluded to in the words of one of the senior management interviewees when stating that, within their faculty, "what … we do well is that we manage to teach … and that would be our strength, that we've got a machine that can do that with its own challenges and its own way of doing" (SM1). The success of this 'machine' is then described as a way of doing:

> There's like a, well you could call it culture, there's a … this is important, we do it well. We always try to do it well, we try to do it properly and that sort of feeds in on itself and that, that is kind of … if I must say, teaching and learning in our faculty, what is it that we do well. (SM1)

In her research, Crawford (2010:193) also found "increasing managerialism, simultaneous reductions in collegiate governance and the push into market and market-like behaviours" to be significant hindrances in the process of the professional learning of academics for their teaching function at a research-intensive university.

Within the push to more 'market-like' behaviours, student numbers are constantly growing without the accompanying growth in the number of academic staff members – leading to lecturers being seen as 'machines', which could imply that the feelings and emotions of these individuals are negated. The implications of this for the context within which lecturers have to work and perform from day to day cannot be ignored.

3.6.14 Teaching responsibilities associated with large groups of students

Having to teach large groups of students was specifically mentioned as a constraint by senior management: "large class groups, that's our big constraint I would imagine" (SM1). The result of such large classes usually is a "high student-staff ratio … compared to other universities. So the teaching load as such is quite high on our staff which also means admin related to teaching and all of that stuff" (SM4). All the responsibilities that come with teaching "to teach, to see the students, to deliver the material, to do the assessment, to sort out the queries, to do everything well" (SM1) are just escalating when teaching large groups of students.

Another expectation was that lecturers should be walking the extra mile with struggling students and then, if such effort is not utilised and appreciated by students, it leads to "a little bit of disappointment that some students who really need the support … it's not being taken seriously"(SM3).

As indicated by the paragraph above, lecturers are expected to support struggling students. Such support needs time – time that lecturers might actually need to adhere to the expectation to improve their teaching and/or spend on their research.

3.6.15 Setting of expectations without relevant support structures

Linked to the unrealistic expectations is the setting of expectations without having support structures in place. Expectations from the side of the institution mentioned by the interviewees were that "we have a responsibility to provide the best teaching and learning for them [the students]" (SM5) and to get good results (SM1). Another interviewee also mentioned that classes with large numbers of students could not continue to be handled as before:

I … [became] convinced of [it] that our conventional method of a lecture where you have 200 people sitting in front of you and one person talking to the 200 is really becoming completely outdated, and I'm so sure that we're going to have to find alternatives. I'm not quite sure how, but I mean you probably can't ever do away with it completely, but I would almost say one big lecture a week and using the rest of the time for something more interactive. (SM3).

One of the senior managers indicated that the focus at Stellenbosch University as a research-intensive institution is on the scholarship of teaching and learning (SoTL), which should give credence to a push towards doing research about teaching:

[The focus] has always been very much on the scholarship of teaching and learning … which I think for Stellenbosch is the right approach because of the fact that we are a research intensive institution and that most of our academics, well, certainly all of our more senior academics are involved in their own disciplinary research. They can really relate to that kind of approach. And we feel that, that focussing on the scholarship of teaching and learning certainly makes this work more legitimate, more acceptable, you know to the broad base of academics who are researchers. So, that is I think why we, why we give a lot of support for research into teaching and learning, so I think that has certainly been a goal and a priority of the development of our academic staff. (SM5)

This view was also held by another interviewee who indicated that "around teaching is the orientation towards … having a thoughtful scholarly approach to teaching. So encouraging research and innovation in teaching I think is important" (SM4).

As described before, research on teaching did 'not count' as research, however, which causes a potential conundrum of mixed messages for the lecturer at SU.

Given the constraining nature of most of the contextual considerations mentioned in this section, the question can rightly be asked why some lecturers do indeed decide to participate in the process of professional learning for their teaching. A possible answer to this question is given by one of the senior management interviewees when referring to the intrinsic motivation of lecturers.

3.6.16 Intrinsic motivation of academics

The reason why some lecturers were more successful than others was explained by one of the senior management interviewees as due to intrinsic motivation:

you don't get good lecturers and bad lecturers you get prepared lecturers and unprepared lecturers. So they've got to put in the time and they must feel that they … but most people teach well. I can't work out why they teach well. If you work it out deep down they teach well because they want to teach well. Most good teachers are like that, they don't teach for anybody else but themselves. (SM1)

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Continuing to comment about the importance of intrinsic motivation, the same senior manager said:

> if you put these young, bright young lecturers onto the task and the task is to teach three hundred and fifty students well … then they, there's the idea that we tackle this task and we try to do it well and … I do think one of our strengths is our sort of positive let's do it and let's do it well attitude among the young, bright lecturers joining us. (SM1)

Within the context of the lecturer, it is thus important to nurture the intrinsic motivation in order to support lecturers in their decision making about participating in the process of professional learning for teaching. This important element of an enabling context is in line with findings from previous studies conducted at the institution (Leibowitz *et al.*, 2009, 2012).

3.7 'Good' teaching, 'good' lecturers and professional learning for teaching

3.7.1 Introduction

According to one senior management interviewee, what happens in the classrooms seems like the proverbial 'black box'. Within this environment teaching is seen as a private activity with "the lecturer and the class go[ing] into a secret room where they do this thing, and nobody knows what goes on there" (SM1). This manager continued to explain a situation when too small a percentage of students got predicates and were therefore not allowed to write the examination. The lecturer responsible for this module was requested to write a report about the situation, but because nobody wants to write such reports, it "will influence their behaviour or at least they will think about it or they will have good reasons and they have applied their minds" (SM1). A potential solution to this 'problem' was given by the same interviewee:

> send spies in or you can get information out but it's very difficult to know. It's not something, it's done kind of in secret you know, in a room … with the students and the staff and the only way that you can really influence this is, the person that you have influenced must believe what you, you say. So you can't tell them, this is what you must do because they just go yes I will do that and go and do something else. So it's all, you must have this like common project that we drive forward and in that sense it's more persuasion than orders. (SM1)

Defining the purpose of teaching as the facilitating of student learning is a mind shift that is necessary at the university. What is expected of the 'bright young lecturers' employed at the institution is to make the large classes "intellectual … [i]t must be about ideas, it's not just about facts that's pushed down people's throats, it's the ideas and exploring ideas and all of that with the

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students and breaking that open for them" (SM1). This expectation was further highlighted by senior management interviewees indicating:

> it's not just something they must learn it's something that [they] must understand and that is what teaching and learning is about, it's about the successful learning side not the successful teaching side and this teaching side find its success there. So I think most people are beginning to get that picture and to get it clearly. (SM2)

> [W]e really need to teach students to learn. You know, how to engage with material, and that's completely different from standing up there and giving them a wonderful argument on [a] theory or something like that. (SM3)

Senior management has realised the challenges of such a mind shift, however, especially where lecturers have to teach large classes, but it is nevertheless expected of lecturers to take on this challenge:

> it is a difficult thing to do and … especially when you have situations where you force people to work with a class of 600 students, they actually don't want to worry about that and you should actually understand that ... They have to find a way to make it smaller or they have to change the mode of that process. And it is not easy but it is going to be our big next challenge. (SM2)

A general principle of 'good' teaching is alluded to by a senior manager, indicating that lecturers should recognise and respect students although large classes might pose a challenge:

> must realize that there are human beings on the other side of this and you must treat them with respect and hopefully teach them how people, by your example get a … despite the three hundred and fifty in the class, you must get a respectful attitude towards students and I think they reciprocate and we must treat everybody with respect (SM1),

> lead to the students becoming numbers and people aren't realizing but listen, the person in front of you has a history and a parent and a sibling and a family and comes from somewhere and feels pain and you must treat him or her properly. (SM1)

3.7.2   Defining 'good teaching' at Stellenbosch University

3.7.2.1   The perspective on 'good' lecturers

To be a good lecturer does not only mean giving "a good show today or a good lecture, and they want to explain to people" (SM1). Good teaching involves much more and "people [might] find it very rewarding you know and, and you've got to cultivate that somehow" (SM1). Unfortunately this 'cultivation' often does not happen because the expectation to be involved with and responsible for, a whole variety of academically related functions might hamper it.

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According to another senior manager 'good' lecturers should also have good results as they "are also measured on student throughput, you know, the pass rate of the modules that [they] teach" (SM3). Being a reflective practitioner is an important characteristic of any good lecturer and this was emphasised by one of the senior management interviewees:

> it's only when we start thinking, we're reflecting about our own teaching and learning that we will start to change and we will become aware of, of student needs and, and how we might not actually, teach in a way that addresses those needs. (SM5)

According to one senior manager, however, 'good' lecturers are measured through student feedback and research:

> there are five or six [lecturers] in our faculty that the Dean has been worried about because they're not performing in terms of student feedback, nor in terms of their research. (SM3)

The existing tensions and 'mixed messages' about the subordinate importance of teaching at SU as illuminated by senior management was previously reported by Leibowitz *et al*. (2011) and Van Schalkwyk *et al*. (2013) and is in line with national (Lewin & Mawoyo, 2014) and international research findings and reported worldwide as a major constraint for academics in pursuing 'good' teaching and participation in the process of professional learning for teaching (Clegg, 2003). At Stellenbosch University, the way in which 'good' teaching is described is not officially reported in the institutional documentation. Various attempts at changing this were undertaken, for example through a task team looking at the indicators for good teaching and another drawing up a discussion document and suggesting the integration of the three roles of the academic to achieve excellence at the end of 2010. None of these initiatives was implemented, however. The implication of this silence and absence is that, up to this stage, no formal criteria or indicators exist for the measurement of 'good' teaching at the institution. Such a situation is not ideal (Knight & Wilcox, 1998). Teaching is included as an item in the annual performance appraisal of academics, however, and the results of student feedback and student pass rates currently are the main criteria used towards the appraisal of academics' teaching in most departments. Such a state of affairs is criticised by Waghid (2010:63) indicating that "it would not be unfair to claim that one reason for under-performance" in relation to student throughput at an institution of higher education, is due to "a lack of credible scholarship" in the field.

Even though no official indicators exist, the institution has a number of ways by which 'good' teaching is rewarded. One of these rewards is the annual Rector's award for excellence in teaching which consists of a certificate and a cash amount. Ten awards *per annum* were made previously on institutional level only, but the suggestion was put forward that a first level of awards should be made on faculty level and that a prestigious institutional award could follow. Another form of

recognition is given through the First Year Academy (FYA). The FYA organises an annual prestige dinner honouring the 30 best first-year students and the lecturers nominated by these students as having contributed to their success. These lecturers receive a certificate and a personal letter from the student(s) who nominated them. Some faculties and departments also have in-house awards for 'good' lecturers, for example the Faculty of Engineering. The Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences has a 'Best Lecturer Award' based on student voting and organised and sponsored by Media 24. The Golden Key Society, consisting of, and run solely by, students, also used to announce 'The Best Lecturer' annually.

3.7.2.2   Measuring 'good' teaching through student feedback

According to senior management, student feedback is the only way by which the quality of teaching is determined at present:

> I think student feedback is one way of looking at how teaching is progressing, but it's not the only one. Unfortunately, we don't have very much else. (SM3)

Respondents indicated that, because they are 'good' lecturers already, they do not see the need to participate in professional learning:

> The one is they're going to think well, you know, I've been teaching for so many years, who on earth can teach me anything anymore. (SM3)

The Fund for Innovation and Research in Learning and Teaching (FIRLT) was established in 2004 in an attempt to promote the scholarship of teaching and learning and to raise the stature of teaching at SU. This grant scheme awards small grants for innovation and research on teaching to lecturers. An annual, in-house Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) conference creates a platform for lecturers to showcase and share their teaching research and innovation with peers. Prizes are awarded in various categories with the main prize being a financial award to participate and present at an international teaching and learning conference. Teaching fellowships are also made available for lecturers interested in pursuing the scholarship of teaching and learning. By the end of 2012, six of these fellowships had already been awarded. It is noteworthy that, for a long time, most of these initiatives were implemented and supported by the CTL, rather than by the institution.

As mentioned above, the teaching function is but one of many roles academic staff in higher education institutions has to fulfil. Quite often teaching comprises a small percentage of their job descriptions, but it takes up huge amounts of their time. In many instances academic staff members are employed on the basis of skills and knowledge other than teaching, but are then given undergraduate teaching responsibilities. As indicated before, high quality teaching is one the most

important variables in the achievement of students (Marzano, 2003; Hattie, 2009) and the professional learning of academics is one of the initiatives a university could put in place to support university lecturers for this role (The Carnegie Foundation, 2008).

Becoming a professional in any field is usually not possible without being educated into the field. According to Viskovic (2009), excellent teaching is linked to the process of professional learning. Any attempt in making professional learning opportunities available for activities other than research, is often met with resistance. In contrast with this view and in support of professional learning for the teaching role, Crawford (2010:92) positions professionalism in academia somewhere between "skill and standards" and "autonomy and critical social engagement" (also see Sachs, 2003:9, 13) and "the status of being a 'professional' needs to be earned and includes responsibility" (Crawford, 2010:199). In this regard, the *status quo* at Stellenbosch University will be the focus of the discussion in the next section.

3.7.2.3   On becoming a 'good' lecturer

According to one senior manager, the CTL was originally established "to focus on the staff and developing the philosophy of teaching and learning around the university" (SM2). According to another senior manager, the CTL is not always seen as providing professional learning opportunities for all lecturers, however, but a place which could 'fix bad teaching':

> so we have encouraged people who find it difficult to teach to … come to your people [CTL] for assistance [and] [i]f they [are] really struggling then somebody must come say, but what are you doing? They haven't got a clue what they [are] doing wrong, what they could possibly be doing wrong … coming into their lectures, giving them advice … what's nice about getting CTL in here … and they have to tell me that unfortunately then, then we can live with it you know. So there's that little bit of distance that sometimes is necessary. (SM1)

Related to this question of 'becoming' a 'good' lecturer is the way in which professional learning for teaching is defined at the institution.

3.8   The professional learning of academics as lecturers at Stellenbosch University

The Stellenbosch University strategic framework (Stellenbosch University, 2000:12) articulates its vision for teaching and learning as being "a university characterised by quality teaching, by the constant renewal of teaching and learning programmes and by the creation of effective opportunities for learning/study". Teaching [what lecturers do in order to facilitate student learning]

and learning [what lecturers and students do in order to enhance their knowledge], however, are two sides of a coin with learning at its centre.

According to the university's strategic framework, lecturers should thus be doing quality teaching through the constant renewal of programmes and by creating effective opportunities for students to learn. When transferring this principle to the scenario of formal professional learning opportunities of academics, the professional learning practitioners can be seen as the 'lecturers' and the academic staff members as the 'students'. The same expectations spelled out in the strategic framework should then be valid in this situation as well. Professional learning practitioners at Stellenbosch University are thereby expected to provide quality 'teaching' [for SU academics] through the constant renewal of [professional learning] programmes and by creating effective opportunities for academics to learn.

On the issue of professional learning for teaching, one senior management interviewee indicated that "we must give everybody the chance to develop" (SM1). However, most of the other data indicated that such opportunities are seen as focused on young or struggling lecturers. One type of professional learning opportunity made available for younger lecturers within departments, as identified through the senior management interviews, is mentoring by senior colleagues:

> We've got informal mentoring in departments … young lecturers they would join us as young people. Teaching teams, teaching large groups of classes in the first and second year, that's where they start their teaching so there's quite a lot of mentoring inside those groups. (SM1)

Opportunities for peer evaluation and peer feedback were also mentioned as a valuable resource for professional learning within faculties, with the proviso of a trusting relationship:

> [sit] in with younger lecturers when they're teaching, but it's usually a little bit unnerving if you have an older lecturer sitting in. But we have done that. (SM3)

Participation in the annual Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) conference was also mentioned as an opportunity for younger and less experienced academics to grow and learn as individuals: "I think that, that is a good platform for younger or academics who are young in the scholarship of teaching and learning field, to actually present their results" (SM5).

3.8.1   Definition of professional learning for teaching

How the university defines 'good' teaching also influences the definition, view of, and actions towards the process of professional learning for teaching.

The different ways in which some faculty managers dealt with more experienced and younger academic staff members who were not doing well, either in their teaching or in their research

functions, were very different. According to one senior manager it was 'easier' to get rid of more experienced staff members who were not performing than their younger counterparts:

> gradually manage[d] … out … [because] you know, they will probably be out of the system soon in any case. It is more difficult when you get younger lecturers who aren't doing extremely well and you need to do some developmental work there. (SM3)

Another senior management interviewee indicated how such an enabling environment for professional learning could be created through "subtle ways trying to influence the, the way in which we teach … [and] the pass rates … slowly drifting up" (SM1).

Sometimes, however, academics might decide not to participate in opportunities for professional learning for their teaching because they have been teaching for many years and this, according to one senior manager, sometimes led to an attitude of "who on earth can teach me anything anymore?" (SM3).

One senior manager indicated that being a lecturer sometimes might not be the ideal career for certain individuals. Such an instance is described below and it is noteworthy that no mention is made of participating in professional learning opportunities for teaching in an attempt to support such individuals to reach the set requirement:

> you sometimes get people who don't take to the teaching thing and teaching for three hundred students is quite daunting for some people and, and it doesn't, and unfortunately that's our requirement. So I can imagine there could be people who don't take to that, then this is not the job for them. (SM1)

Professional learning of academics can thus be defined as the learning that lecturers as professionals do in order to enhance their abilities and their teaching. Such professional learning can have many faces (King, 2004) and can take place at a variety of places within the university, for example, at an institutional centre for teaching and learning; within the academic department; during conversations with colleagues; when reading academic articles or books; or when attending conferences.

One of these 'faces' where professional learning for academics as lecturers indeed takes place at Stellenbosch University, is at the Centre for Teaching and Learning (CTL). This unit has been responsible for the professional learning function of the university's academics in their teaching role since its establishment in 2003. The CTL was established when the Division for Academic Development Programmes (DADP) was amalgamated with the support and development aspects of the division of university teaching, Uni-Ed. This new centre, CTL, was located under Academic Support (AS), reporting via the Senior Director (AS) to the Vice-Rector (Teaching). Since inception, the vision of the CTL has always been to be a centre of excellence that facilitates quality

teaching and learning at Stellenbosch University. This was operationalised through the CTL mission of providing support to the institution, lecturers and students in order to enhance the climate in which teaching and learning takes place, and to maximise the potential for 'student success'.

Research done by the CTL about the impact of the Professional Educational Development of Academics (PREDAC) programme for newly appointed academics (Cilliers & Herman, 2010) indicated that the programme had a positive influence on participants' attitudes towards and perceptions of teaching, it advanced their knowledge of and skills in teaching and learning and it changed their teaching behaviour. Since its inception in 1999, an average of sixty newly appointed academics benefitted annually from participating in the PREDAC programme and these individuals reported benefit to other academics, their academic departments, the institution, as well as the students in their classes. These research results emphasise the role that well-designed professional learning opportunities can play in enhancing the quality of teaching and assessment practice at a research-intensive institution of higher education.

The HEQC report (HEQC, 2007) states that professional learning at Stellenbosch University "includes a range of activities and units which focus on different dimensions of teaching and learning" (p. 22). A series of opportunities exist for staff to enhance their teaching skills and most of these opportunities are presented by the CTL. As stated earlier, however, participation in these opportunities "is voluntary and staff members have no incentive to get involved in them" (p. 22). In addition, "the improvement of teaching skills is not a consideration for promotion of academic staff" (HEQC, 2007:22).

Nevertheless, the CTL has been carrying out its brief through aligning itself to the university's priorities, mostly in relation to the criterion of 'excellence', in that it attempts to provide excellent support for teaching and learning processes. The Centre attempts to provide a service which enhances the ability of the institution and individual lecturers to gear themselves towards teaching excellence, especially at the undergraduate level. Being reflective practitioners themselves, research was also undertaken by CTL staff (Van Schalkwyk, Cilliers, *et al.*, 2013) into the professional learning journeys of academics. Furthermore, the mission and vision of the CTL is aligned with the institutional policy on teaching and learning (Stellenbosch University, 2008), which emphasises the importance of 'student-centred teaching and learning'; the 'innovative use of technology'; the 'interaction between research and teaching'; and the 'scholarship of teaching'.

Following on the HEQC report (HEQC, 2007) it needs to be stated that, despite many attempts, the stature of undergraduate teaching at Stellenbosch University is not similar to that of research, which means that neither the status of teaching, nor the resources, awards or any other incentives for

teaching, are equal to that of research. This is not surprising, however, and is in line with international trends which reveal that research has a higher status than teaching at research-intensive universities (Elen *et al.*, 2007).

For the present, the *status quo* has not changed and no formal strategy for professional learning of academics is in place at SU. Formulating such a strategy would include an examination of the current situation and determining future directions and how to get there. The perceived institutional silence about the professional learning of academics for their teaching function provides some background but also adds to the motivation for this study.

3.9   Summary

This chapter described Stellenbosch University as the setting and context of this study. It commenced with the history of the institution followed by the mission, vision, purposes and aims of the university. It then aimed at giving the perceived context for both undergraduate teaching and lecturers of undergraduate students from the perspective of senior management at the institution.

These perspectives were given through the findings from interviews conducted with senior management as part of the NRF umbrella project. The perspectives were deemed representative of the institutional and faculty contexts within which lecturers found themselves and aimed to inform the reader about these aspects of the SU context. Through these findings, we became aware of some of the dominant discourses at the institution; we got a sense of the current rather low level of care at the institution and the inadequate conceptualisation of the teaching function became apparent. The lecturer perspectives on these issues are reported in subsequent chapters.

In the next chapter some theoretical perspectives are developed from a review of literature relevant to the topic under scrutiny.

Chapter 4
Theoretical perspectives

4.1   Introduction

The institutional setting and context of this study was outlined in the previous chapter. The research setting also forms part of the broader 'contextual spiral' influencing the decision making of academics about participating in the process of professional learning for their teaching function at a research-intensive higher education institution. The concepts of 'academics' and the 'research-intensive institution' were explored earlier. Three further core concepts related to this study still need to be discussed, namely 'professional learning', 'decision making' and 'context'. The ethos of an ethic of care will also be explored. Given that the field of higher education studies is an applied one which draws on disciplines such as sociology, psychology and philosophy (Macfarlane & Grant, 2012:621), this chapter mainly draws on perspectives from such disciplines to inform the understanding of these concepts. Perspectives from other related fields are also drawn on where appropriate to add to the understanding of these concepts and also highlight different aspects (Ashwin, 2012:128;132).

4.2   Professional learning as a concept in this study

Accounts of the history and practices of staff development, or professional learning, are diverse across the USA, Europe, Australia and South Africa. The South African history was given in Chapter 2 (see Section 2.4). Sorcinelli, Austin, Eddy and Beach (2006) describe the chronological shifts in professional learning through their "Five Ages of Faculty Development" spanning the last 60 years. The current era, connecting all the previous eras, is called the "Age of the Network" (Sorcinelli *et al.*, 2006:286). According to Groccia (2010), a drive for the improvement of instruction started stirring in certain higher education institutions in America during 1940 and in the UK during the 1960s (Manathunga, 2014). During the 1960s student demonstrations against the poor quality of education across Northern America and specifically in Canada promoted the establishment of teaching and learning units in universities (Saroyan & Frenay, 2010:xii). 'Staff development', as it was called at the time, was defined as "all actions, activities, procedures and policies that an institution puts in place to enhance the performance and productivity of their staff" (Harding, Kaewsonthi, Roe & Stevens, 1981). The main foci of all the work done within the units responsible for 'staff development' were curriculum design, teaching and learning and assessment (Frick & Kapp, 2009:259). For the purpose of this study, however, I prefer to use the term 'professional learning' as explained in Section 4.2.3 below.

Since theories of learning and adult learning inform the process of professional learning of university lecturers as adult learners in particular professional contexts, these are discussed next.

4.2.1   A general theory of learning

Learning has been the focus of much research over the years. Researchers from the disciplines of psychology, sociology, biology and education have studied this phenomenon and many social, constructivist and behavioural learning theories have originated from these fields. Amongst these theories are transformative learning (Mezirow, 2000), situated learning (Lave & Wenger, 1991), workplace learning (Billett, 2002), organisational learning (Senge, 1990), experiential learning (Kolb, 1984), self-directed learning (Brookfield, 1995), activity theory (Engestrom, 2000) and adult and life-long learning theories (Knowles, 1973, 1977, 1984; Knowles, Holton III & Swanson, 2005) to name but few. Most of these theories have focused on the process of individual learning which takes place through formal and informal learning opportunities (Ashton, 2004:43; Illeris, 2007, 2008).

Although this study does not focus solely on the psychological, sociological or biological aspects of human learning, the contemporary and comprehensive theory of learning formulated by Illeris (2007:22-29) is helpful in drawing attention to the specific lens through which the process of professional learning was approached in this study. In capturing the complexity of the learning process, Illeris (2007) described learning as consisting of two basic processes and three dimensions all taking place within a social environment (see Figure 4.1 below). The processes firstly involve an internal psychological process of acquisition and elaboration and, secondly, an external social interaction process that takes place between the individual academic and his/her environment (including the social, cultural or material environment consisting of the home discipline and department/physical venue/other individuals present in the same physical space, e.g. other participants and facilitators/professional learning practitioners). The three dimensions of learning identified by Illeris (2007) include the following aspects:

- content (what is learned in terms of knowledge, understanding and skills);
- incentives (why we learn in terms of motivation, emotion and volition, which supply the mental energy to learn); and
- interaction (how we learn in terms of action, communication and cooperation).

This theory of learning is diagrammatically represented in Figure 4.1 below. In the figure, the processes are indicated in *italic text* and the dimensions are indicated with underlined text.
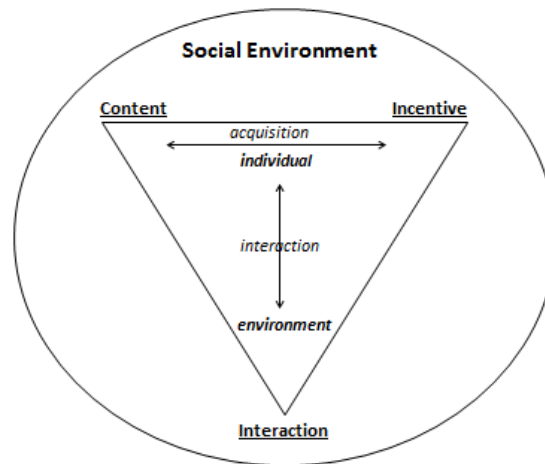
Figure 4.1: The processes and dimensions of learning according to Illeris (2007)

Illeris (2007:26) posits that the focus of most research about learning has been on the 'content' dimension of learning and this is usually the first thought that comes to the human mind when thinking about the term 'learning '. The focus of this study however leans more towards the 'incentives' dimension of the process of professional learning of academics for their teaching – including those considerations that influence the individual academic's motivation, emotion and will to learn. The explanation given by Illeris (2007:23) that learning is "regulated by two very different sets of conditions", namely the environmental and the personal (*ibid.*:24), is also of importance to this study and this will become evident later on in the chapter.

Because this study focused on academics as lecturers, the theory of adult learning is relevant. The next section thus looks at adult learning before the focus moves to the notion of professional learning.

4.2.2   Adult learning theory

Adult learning theory as described by various authors (Cross, 1981; Knowles *et al.*, 2005; Merriam & Leahy, 2005) has at its focus the learning of the individual adult. According to Knowles *et al.* (2005:44), all the elements required for a theory of adult learning had already emerged early in the twentieth century, but these remained isolated insights, concepts and principles as they had not yet been brought together into a unified framework. During the 1940s and 1950s many authors in the field of education tried to unify these elements through publications and other disciplines, including sociology and psychology, subsequently also started doing research in the field and added to the understanding of the phenomenon.

Although adult learning, as described by Knowles (1973, 1977, 1984), has enhanced the general understanding of adults as learners, it did not explain or add to the understanding of the process of learning (Pratt, 1993:21) and therefore rather is a model of assumptions about learning. This model identifies the following characteristics of adult learners: adult learners need to know why they have to learn something; they need to take responsibility for their own decisions and lives; they enter the activity of learning with their own varied experiences; they want to learn in order to apply this new knowledge to real life situations; they usually are task- and problem-centred in their orientation to learning; and they are intrinsically motivated to learn (Knowles *et al.*, 2005:72). In support of the last assumption, Zimmerman (1990:6) adds that learning and motivation are interlinked and the one cannot be understood without the other. One can only make a choice after you have seen the value, the worth and the use of something. Kwakman (2003:151) also reminds us that lecturers are responsible for the planning, executing and evaluating of their own learning activities and processes.

In the literature, though, a shift occurred between 1980 and 2000 with a decline in research focusing on the psychological aspects of the individual learner as a self-directed learner, and increased focus on the socio-political context of adult education (Merriam, 2001:10). As early as 1926, Lindeman (in Knowles *et al.* 2005:37) stated that adult learning should be approached "via the route of situations, not subjects" because every adult is immersed in specific and unique situations concerning work, recreation, family life, community life, and other such everyday issues, and therefore "the curriculum [should be] built around the student's needs and interests". Educators have been warned by Candy (1991:309) that a learner's need could indeed change from situation to situation. Pratt (1993:22) also predicted that the "tension between human agency and social structures [would be] the most potent influences on adult learning". All of these aspects were of importance for this study about the process of professional learning, because academics, as adult learners, should be motivated to make a choice to participate in and follow through with the process of professional learning, but it does not always happen. In this study I attempted to understand the possible influences on these decisions.

4.2.3   The notion of professional learning

The notion of 'professional learning' resonates with my own understanding and for this study I opted to use this term when referring to the "numerous activities which have to do with the professional learning of academics in post-compulsory, tertiary or higher education" (Brew, 2004:5), instead of the more generally used synonyms 'staff development', 'faculty development', 'educational development', 'growth opportunities', 'professional development', 'academic

development', 'academic professional development', 'lifelong learning' or 'continuous learning or development'.

The term 'development' is often understood as an umbrella term for learning and wisdom as a product of "biological maturation" (Illeris, 2007:5), which obviously is not the focus of this study. Furthermore, the term 'development' often has a negative connotation implying work of a remedial nature, or a deficit model (Elvidge *et al.*, 2004:31; McAlpine, 2006; Webster-Wright, 2009) suggesting that lecturers are not doing a good job and need to be 'developed' in order to improve (Van Schalkwyk *et al.*, 2015). Such a point of departure might also lead to lecturers feeling that neither the professional learning practitioners nor the institution are interested in them as individuals and they might therefore respond to 'development' opportunities as being bureaucratic (Badley, 1998; Manathunga, 2007; Gosling, 2009) instead of acting as "[engaged] professionals [and] agentic individuals capable of self-directed learning" (Webster-Wright, 2009:724). In this regard, Taylor and Rege Colet (2010:141) refer to the "powerful influence of institutional context on definitions."

The process of professional learning of academics for their teaching function is not an event, but a complex process (Harwell, 2003). According to Opfer and Pedder (2011:378), professional learning is a complex system which is often misunderstood and then wrongly focuses on the micro level (of individual academics or individual professional learning activities) without giving thought to the influences of the meso (departmental) and/or the macro (institutional) levels. Such a single focus is also criticised by Trowler (2005:15) calling it "restricted attention", as well as Hargreaves (2011:82) who states that such an "excessively individualistic" approach fails to take into account the influences of the various "social relations, material infrastructures and context". Other consequences of focusing only on the individual and the individual's learning are explained by Ashton (2004:44) indicating that "the wider institutional conditions and features which shape the work and learning" of these individuals have been moved into the background and their influence on the learning process has not received enough attention. Wieland (2007:13) maintains that an understanding of how institutional and societal values and expectations influence individuals is an important one.

These 'wider institutional conditions and features' create situations that are interpreted by the individual academics as part of their meaning-making process and thus form and inform the context that emerges for each individual. Lawler (2003:16) stresses the importance of having to understand the way that social and cultural contexts influences education. Illeris (2007:19) also emphasises that learning is an individual activity simultaneously also 'embedded' in a social context. According to

Webster-Wright (2009:712), the interrelationship between "the learner, context, and learning" should be researched rather than acknowledged as being related, but then studied separately.

Opfer and Pedder (2011:397) are in agreement with this view. They state that the term professional learning includes the notions of "context and situatedness", compared to the term 'professional development' which focuses on "individual programs, activities or … teachers". Such a move away from 'passive development' to 'active learning' of professionals also implies a move away from 'teaching' [by professional learning practitioners] to 'learning' [by academics](Webster-Wright, 2009:713). This approach is thus moving away from a transmission model because learning is at the core and lecturers are seen to practise the value of learning, both with their colleagues and with their students (Taylor & Rege Colet, 2010:148). When lecturers re-cast themselves as learners, learning, rather than teaching, becomes the core activity of professional learning activities (Sachs, 2003).

Professional learning for teaching has many faces. It can happen informally "through normal social interactions" (Knight & Trowler, 1999:188) or it can be formally organised through workshops and programmes (Leibowitz, 2014). Formal professional learning opportunities are structured occasions, for example workshops, lunch hour seminars, teaching conferences, short courses and qualifications. Informal professional learning, on the other hand, takes place through a diverse range of opportunities, for example through interaction with colleagues and peers in the department or outside of the workplace (Webster-Wright, 2009:705); reading of books and articles or browsing the Internet; attending conferences; and reflecting on teaching and learning experiences. This study is more concerned with participation in formal professional learning opportunities at SU as a research-intensive university.

The nature of professional learning is described by Trowler and Knight (2000:37) as "social, provisional, situated, contingent, constructed and cultural in nature" while also being situated within a context. Aligned with these authors is Webster-Wright (2009:703) who defines professional learning as "continuing … social and related to practice" with active engagement and reflection as important conditions for professional learning to take place while it is also "contextually mediated" (p. 720). According to Kwakman (2003:152), (although focusing on secondary school teachers) lecturers' learning is strongly connected to their own professional goals of enhancing their teaching practices and this type of learning should therefore rather be called 'professional learning'. Professional learning is defined by Johnston (1998:1) as "the need for professionals to continue learning as they practice and advance in their careers". Professional learning, according to Little (1993:141), is situated "where the tension between institutional imperatives and individual prerogatives exists", which would be somewhere between "the conditions necessary to attempt

systemic change and the conditions that engage individual teachers in their work". This definition by Little (1993) leans towards the purposes of professional learning which will be discussed next.

4.2.4   The purposes of professional learning

Professional learning for academics in their teaching role is an "essentially pragmatic enterprise prompted by perceptions that change is needed" (Boud & Brew, 2012:1). The aim of this complex process of professional learning is thus to bring about change (Barr & Tagg, 1995; Illeris, 2007:3). In higher education the aim of professional learning for teaching would be to bring about change in the teaching beliefs and teaching and assessment practices of lecturers for quality student learning to take place (Badley, 1998; Elvidge *et al.*, 2004; Cilliers & Herman, 2010; Opfer & Pedder, 2011; Boud & Brew, 2012). According to The Carnegie Report (2008:26) "the single most important [kind of institutional support to strengthen … teaching and learning] is effective professional [learning] for educators whose work is critical to student success". Joyce and Showers (2002) reported that professional learning should lead to the acquisition of new knowledge and skills which should be implemented in practice. If higher education aims to ensure high quality student learning, the challenge would be to start taking the teaching and learning function seriously and place it at the centre of the intellectual life of the university by committing the necessary and required resources (Rowland & Barton, 1994; Murray & Macdonald, 1997). As suggested by Van Schalkwyk *et al*. (2015), spaces should be created where teaching (and lecturers) can flourish at the institution – i.e. spaces where lecturers can 'receive care' (Tronto, 2010). Such an enabling environment would exist where teaching is valued, both by peers and by those in power (McKinney, 2006; Buller, 2015); where lecturers get the opportunity "to talk seriously about teaching and learning, to have one's ideas listened to and taken seriously, to slow down for a moment and reflect, and to be recognised by peers as contributing to an important larger enterprise" (Hutchings, 2000:65); and where the issue of workload is also attended to (Dunkin, 2001).

Knight and Wilcox (1998:98) suggest that professional learning for the enhancement of teaching in higher education is a "systematic pursuit". Although the ultimate aim of professional learning is the improvement of the quality of student learning, it is not directly involved with it. Instead, the focus of the work of professional learning practitioners is to facilitate academic staff in their "being" (Dall'Alba, 2005:362) and "becoming" (Dall'Alba, 2005; Leibowitz *et al.*, 2009) 'good' university lecturers and their development of effective educational practice in order to enhance student learning. In this process of ensuring student success, lecturers would be expected to care *about* their students, care *for* their students and *give* care to their students (Tronto, 2010:160) while being 'care receivers' themselves. According to Barnett (2009:435), the "process of coming to know, [in other

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words 'learning'](my addition) has person-forming properties" and therefore "knowing and being (and becoming) are linked" (p. 435). This notion of 'becoming' is also supported by Wenger (2000), who states that learning is an experience of identity as it transforms who we are and what we can do. In an attempt to understand human learning, Jarvis (2006:14) also addresses issues of being, becoming and learning throughout life. Learning is therefore "not just an accumulation of skills and information, but also a process of becoming – to become a certain person, or conversely, to avoid becoming a certain person" (Sachs, 2003).

The purpose of professional learning is described by Knight *et al.* (2006:321) as gaining "new understandings", becoming "able to do new things", or doing "old things better without being aware of it". Eraut (1994:116) suggests that there is always more to be learned – even for experts – and the support of a system of continuing professional learning is essential for sustaining and improving the quality of professional work. Professional learning for teaching should thus enhance academics' "ways of being university teachers" (Dall'Alba, 2005:364) through a focus on both transforming their 'being' and their knowledge and skills. Professional learning thus has a primary focus on the individual academic and a secondary focus on efficiency. The ultimate goal of professional learning, according to Guskey (2002), is to bring about change, however, – change in the teaching practice, attitudes and beliefs of academics that will lead to change in student learning. The implication of this is that professional learning is a process culminating in the application of what was learned. Through professional learning activities, academics as lecturers should thus be equipped to act as "change agents to the moral purposes of teaching", through a process of acquiring and developing the necessary knowledge, skills, planning and practice (Day, 1999:4).

The description of professional learning as a "holistic approach to learning, transformation and application … within professional practice" (Frick & Kapp, 2009:257) resonates with my view of professional learning for teaching as a three-staged process. This is the focus of the next section of this chapter.

4.2.5   The process of professional learning

Previous research has indicated that professionals often learn through practice or experience and "reflection has a valuable role in learning that requires change" (Webster-Wright, 2009:720). It is claimed by Elder-Vass (2012) that individual human beings are capable of reflection and choice. Reflection, according to Schön (1983) and Eraut (1995), is a way of understanding the world as well as a point of departure to make sense of and respond to experiences. This reflection, as part of the process of knowing, is ongoing and could happen before, during and after each teaching or learning episode. Eraut (1995) suggests that 'reflection-for-action' is anticipative in nature and it is

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where decisions about future actions are taken. 'Reflection-in-action' refers to context and 'reflection-on-action' refers to focus. This explanation of reflection happening at different times during the learning process also links to the three-stage process of professional learning as described in this study.

In their research, Grossman and Salas (2011) drew on previous research conducted in the field of transfer of training by Baldwin and Ford (1988); Blume, Ford, Baldwin and Huang (2010); Burke and Hutchins (2007) and Chiaburu and Lindsay (2008) to name but a few. Grossman and Salas (2011), however, focused on the deeper investigation of those considerations already positively identified by other authors as having a profound influence on, and a significant relationship to, the transfer of training. In other words, "the extent to which the learning that results from training" does in fact transfer "and lead to relevant changes in work performance" (Phase 3) (Grossman & Salas, 2011:104). The considerations listed by Grossman and Salas (2011:106) can be divided into three main categories, the first of these being characteristics of the individual academic including motivation, self-efficacy, cognitive ability and perceived utility of what was learned. The second category is the design of the professional learning opportunity and includes modelling of specific behaviour, error management and the creation of realistic training environments. The last category of considerations comes from the work environment and includes the level of support, opportunity to perform, context and follow-up. This summary by Grossman and Salas (2011) gives further motivation to define professional learning as a process happening in phases.

In their study about the considerations that influence the transfer, or as I prefer calling it, the application or implementation of what was learned, Grossman and Salas (2011:105) suggest that research should investigate which of the identified factors are "most important before, during or after [a professional learning opportunity]". This suggestion of phases or stages in the process of professional learning is aligned with Tessmer and Richey (1997:87) stating that professional learning takes place in a contextual range starting from the 'pre-learning ', through the 'learning' to the 'post-learning' phases.

In keeping with the three-phase process of professional learning, Opfer and Pedder (2011) give guidance about the fact that lecturers' willingness to learn (phase one) is influenced by the "powerful combination" of their experiences, beliefs and prior knowledge (Opfer & Pedder, 2011:387). The beliefs that lecturers bring to their work "are shaped by the kind of teaching they have experienced as students" and these beliefs consist of their attitudes, values, theories and images related to learning (*ibid.*). Opfer and Pedder (2011:388) further explain that, during phase two when lecturers are participating in a professional learning opportunity, the experience of "cognitive conflict" or an acceptable "dissonance between personal expectations and sense of

efficacy", could create an opportunity for learning. In the third phase of the process of professional learning, the perceptions and beliefs of lecturers are the most significant predictors of change (Opfer & Pedder, 2011:389). Trigwell (2012:618) found that lecturers' emotional experiences could explain the "limited success of … well designed programs and the reasons [why] new teaching strategies are often not adopted or even attempted".

The division between different phases during the process of professional learning is a useful one indeed for this study aiming to understand the role of context in the decision making of academics for their participation in, and follow through with, the process of professional learning for their teaching role at a research-intensive higher education institution. This framework with its tripartite division of the process of professional learning was therefore used in this study.

For the purpose of this study, professional learning was thus defined as a three-stage process. The process of professional learning starts with a decision to participate in a formal professional learning opportunity, followed by the actual attendance and decision to learn during such an opportunity and then following through with a decision to implement (or not), what has been learned. As will be explained later in this chapter, these phases all take place within the daily reality of the individual academic and are interlinked.

Becoming involved in each of the phases in the process of professional learning thus implies an act of volition which necessitates some understanding of how decisions are taken.

4.3   Some understandings of how decisions are taken

Saaty alerts us to the fact that everything we do – consciously and unconsciously – is the result of a decision (Saaty, 2008:83). All humans are thus individual decision makers (Klamut, 2012:163) and human decision making influences actions. Decision making is defined by Langley, Mintzberg, Pitcher, Posada and Saint-Macary (1995) as some commitment to action. Zeleny (1982:86) defines decision making as "a process of learning, understanding, information processing, assessing and defining [of] the problem and its circumstances".

Decision making only comes into play when we have options. In order to take a decision, alternatives must be weighed and the 'best' alternative has to be selected (Saaty, 2008). This is done by applying specific criteria to compare and evaluate available alternatives to arrive at the most suitable option. Such a process is a complex one and usually implies trade-offs (Gati & Asher, 2001) between issues such as importance-unimportance, prospective consequences, quantity and quality (positive and negative) of consequences, riskiness and cognitive and emotional involvement

(Klamut, 2012:161). Clark and Strauss (2007) argue that it is the interplay between these different elements and not their mere existence which influences decision making.

Decision making was prominently studied in the 1950s and 1960s in the field of Economics (Rohrbaugh & Shanteau, 1999). It is argued by Rohrbaugh and Shanteau (1999:2) that the integration of the contextual, cognitive, and personal considerations forms an integral part of decision making. According to Clark and Strauss (2007:10), the concept of 'context' shares elements with the notion of *habitus* as explained by Bourdieu (1977), as it forms the background for decision making. In a study of career decisions among college students, Mau (2000) found that the topic of the decision; the personal considerations of the decision maker; and the prevailing cultural considerations may result in rational decision-making being situational. According to Rohrbaugh and Shanteau (1999:7) the situated context has a strong influence on an individual's response. These authors further identify pre-existing response patterns, time pressure, saliency, affect, and perceived risk as factors which could impact on decision-making (*ibid.*).

According to Mau (2000) and Phillips, Friedlander, Pazienza and Kost (1985), the most widely recognised typology of decision-making styles comes from the work of Harren (1979). This typology indicates that decision making can either be rational (deliberate and logical decision making), intuitive (decision making influenced by emotions and feelings) or dependent (decision making based on opinions and expectations of others) (Harren, 1979). Some studies indicate that females are more likely to follow a dependent or intuitive decision-making style (Phillips *et al.*, 1985; Mau, 2000).

Hastie and Dawes (2001) compare decision making to information processing with the aim of choosing the most useful alternative. Decision making is a complex mental process distinguished by a sequence of three interlinked phases: pre-decision, decision and post-decision (Svenson, 1992; Hastie & Dawes, 2001). During the pre-decision phase alternatives are weighed according to importance, availability and consequences in order to obtain the correct information to make a decision. This is done through the evaluation of the expected outcomes, a subjective probability rating and a calculation of the potential risk involved (Kozielecki, 1969). According to the theory of reasoned action (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980), the results of this weighting and evaluation process determine the person's belief about the various alternatives which contribute towards their attitude towards these alternatives and leads to "the will to learn" (Van Eekelen, Vermunt & Boshuizen, 2006:410). This ultimately influences the person's decisions about their actions (Maxwell, 2012). The second phase is when the selected choice is actually undertaken. During this phase a person "approach[es] and actively deals with an experience" (Van Eekelen *et al.*, 2006:420). The last phase is an evaluation of the choice that was made, as well as the accompanying consequences (Svenson,

1992; Rohrbaugh & Shanteau, 1999; Hastie & Dawes, 2001; Klamut, 2012). This should then lead to a willingness to change behaviour. The three phases in the decision making process are interlinked and sequential as they represent "different decisions concerning the same issue at different points in time" (Langley *et al.*, 1995:271).

The notion of *Academics as teaching professionals* was discussed in Chapter 2 (see Section 2.4.2). The implication of university teaching being a 'profession' is that it could become a possible career path similar to other professions, such as law or medicine, for example. Decision making as a concept in this study could thus parallel the decision making process of individuals in terms of their career choices or for self-development (Klamut, 2012).

4.3.1   Decision making in career choices

Hodkinson and Sparkes (1997) deplore that individual decision making for career choices has not been given enough attention by researchers in the sociological field. They suggested (Hodkinson & Sparkes, 1997:30) that research in this field could shed light on issues of structure, agency and choice, which are aspects of importance to this study. Research results as reported by Klamut (2012:172) indicate that affective considerations played the most important role in decision making for self-development. Klamut (2012:172) further said that "individual factors [such] as subjective understanding and experiencing of reality (real world) are significant in decision making".

How decision making is defined in this study draws on the Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT) of Lent *et al.*(2002:275). SCCT mainly builds on Albert Bandura's general social cognitive theory (Lent *et al.*, 2002:258). This theory emphasises cognitive, self-regulatory and motivational processes while highlighting personal agency. It aims to trace the interplay between various considerations in the decision-making process for career development, specifically the transactions between persons and their environments (Lent *et al.*, 2002:259-260).

Decision making as part of career development is a cognitive and volitional action subject to barriers in the areas of choice, change and growth (Lent *et al.*, 2002:276). Career choices and outcomes are influenced and constructed by the individual academic's personal agency or self-direction and academics' beliefs about their professional life-world. The key personal building blocks incorporated by SCCT are self-efficacy, outcome expectations and personal goals. Drawing on the concept of self-efficacy as originally described by Bandura, it is defined as a set of self-beliefs including capabilities and affective states. Outcome expectations are defined as potential consequences of an action and play an important role in motivating behaviour. Goals can be defined as the willpower to participate in an activity and as "a critical mechanism through which people exercise personal agency or self- empowerment" (Lent *et al.*, 2002:263).

Merriam (1998:50) reminds us that no educational problem "exists in isolation from other areas of human behaviour". She further elaborates that one could always find "some research study, some theory, some thinking related to the problem" to review and apply in order to inform the study at hand. For this reason I turned to the discipline of Economics - also called 'the study of constrained choices' (Roberts, 2007) - for the theory of opportunity cost in an attempt to shed light on the outcome expectations influencing academics when they have to take a decision to participate in the process of professional learning.

4.3.2 Opportunity cost in decision making

One of the basic concepts of Economics is the scarcity of resources. NetMBA (n.d.) states that scarcity always impose a trade-off and a trade-off always results in an opportunity cost. Opportunity cost is defined by Leininger (1977:248 after Sameulsen 1967) as "foregone opportunities that have been sacrificed" where the "sacrifice of doing something else is called opportunity cost". Another definition is "the benefits you lose by choosing one alternative over another one" (Peavler, n.d.), which is useful when evaluating the cost and benefit of choices and is often expressed in non-monetary terms.

In contrast with the cost of goods or services which is often expressed in monetary terms, the opportunity cost of a decision is based on "what must be given up (the next best alternative) as a result of a decision" (NetMBA, n.d.), or a choice. Any decision involving a choice between available alternatives therefore implies an opportunity cost (NetMBA, n.d.). For an individual to make the choice about participating in a formal professional learning opportunity and following through with the process of professional learning, the perceived positive expectations of such choice should thus outweigh the perceived negative expectations. Coming from a different point of view are Clark and Strauss (2007:13) who claim that many individuals do not make choices or take decisions based on such a process of deliberation and weighing of the cost of different options. They maintain that people often respond to situations "according to relevant and accepted rules of thumb" without spending time and energy on deliberation. When contemplating the decision to participate in the process of professional learning for teaching it seems as if most lecturers do go through a process of deliberation.

Decisions in the real world often have to be made in real-time without knowing what the exact consequences could be (Bellman & Zadeh, 1970). In his book *Cost and Choice*, Buchanan (2010)[1969] describes opportunity cost as always based on predictions and anticipations and thus being forward-looking; as being subjective as "it exists in the mind of the decision-maker" (Buchanan, 2010:46); and the cost is therefore also entirely borne by the decision maker; as coming

into existence when the individual is faced with an act of choice – thus always being attached to a choice context and impossible to be calculated by an outside observer. Opportunity cost, according to Roberts (2007) and Buchanan ([1969] 2010:48) always has a "choice-influencing" or choice-inhibiting component, as well as a "choice-influenced" or choice-resulting component. Both of these components are of importance for this study as the 'choice-influencing' component comprises the 'obstacles' encountered by the individual academic when the choice has to be made to participate in the process of professional learning. The 'choice-influenced' component comes after the choice has been made and consists of the consequences the chooser or a third party faces as a result of the choice. Such consequences are often affect-laden and could become apparent in any of the three phases in the process of professional learning.

The concept of opportunity cost is illustrated by the following example from NetMBA.com (available at http://www.netmba.com/econ/micro/cost/opportunity/):

> if an individual only has time for taking one elective course, then taking a course in micro-economics might have the opportunity cost of a course in management. When expressing the cost of one option in terms of the foregone benefits of another, the marginal costs and marginal benefits of the options can be compared.

If this example is translated into the situation at hand in this research, namely the choice to participate in the process of professional learning for teaching, the example could read as follows:

> if one has time available to spend on only one of the three roles expected of an academic, then choosing to participate in the process of professional learning for teaching might have the opportunity cost of spending time on doing research.

In the context of a research-intensive university, where the rules of the game are clear about the value of research capital, the decision to participate in the process of professional learning for teaching could therefore be seen as 'professional suicide'.

According to Rohrbaugh and Shanteau (1999:3), context affects the perceptions of compatibility between options and strategies depending on the perceived utility of the potential outcomes. Hodkinson and Sparkes (1997:37) mentioned that a resource may be experienced as either positive, negative or neutral, depending on the context within which it is 'used'. Clark and Strauss (2007:18) describe the role of the institution (structure) in the decision making process of an individual as 'framing'. 'Framing' is defined by Rohrbaugh and Shanteau (1999) as "the editing phase of a choice process" while Tversky and Kahneman (1981) refer to framing as describing options where such descriptions influence the reference points from which options are judged. Such a frame exists where institutions provide a structured context for decision making by individuals. This is often done by utilising incentives and penalties through the penalising of certain behaviour and

encouraging other behaviour. This description aligns with outcomes expectations as described by Lent *et al.* (2002:262). Within the context of the research intensive-higher education institution where research capital is valued more than that of teaching, the opportunity cost when deciding to participate in the process of professional learning for teaching could potentially be very high for an individual academic (Leibowitz, 2014) and could probably be seen as 'negative' or experienced as a 'penalty'.

On a personal level, available time as a 'scarce resource' accompanied by a high workload are worldwide seen as influencing the choices academics make concerning the process of professional learning for teaching. The research-teaching tension within the research-intensive higher education institution is ever present and making a choice to spend available 'free' time on teaching-related professional learning might have a negative influence on an academic's career, which might in turn have a negative influence on his/her wellness, which could have a potential negative influence on their teaching task and relationship with their students (Knight & Trowler, 1999; Bland *et al.*, 2002).

According to Hodkinson and Sparkes (1997:32), decision making, takes place through interaction when the social and cultural considerations become "enmeshed" within the individual's personal experiences and identity. Such a process is described as a messy and untidy one (Clark & Strauss, 2007). Clark and Strauss (2007:11) also indicate that decision making practices reflect both "individual agency and structural relations of place, power and position". However, according to Leibowitz (2014:54), structure and culture are often so closely related and intertwined that it could be difficult to separate them. Individual academics approach a decision through their own internal mental processes which are influenced by memory and emotions that interact with the external environment and the problem's context (Rohrbaugh & Shanteau, 1999:9). According to Mouton (1996:8), our stocks of knowledge as humans help us to cope with daily reality. We would therefore draw on previous experiences and knowledge in support of solving problems, reaching consensus, gaining understanding and supporting decision making. The individual academic's choice and ultimate decision about participating in the process of professional learning for teaching is influenced by his/her daily reality and individual context. According to Kleinmuntz and Schkade (1993), improvements in decision making could be made by evaluating and changing the context of daily reality. Positive experiences and personal successes will therefore be important enablers for decision making as it raises self-efficacy (Lent *et al.*, 2002).

Before any professional learning or change can take place, however the individual academic has to take a decision and exercise choice within the complex space of their daily reality about their participation in the process of professional learning. According to Rohrbaugh and Shanteau

(1999:4), it is important to recognise the impact of context in the study of decision making. The relationship between decision making and context is confirmed by Clark and Strauss (2007:10) when arguing "that context is not only important to the study of decision making: it is profound".

4.4 'Context' as a core concept in this study

No learning takes place in a vacuum and neither are any decisions ever taken in a vacuum (Zeleny, 1982:92; Clark & Strauss, 2007). Thus the concept 'context' is "perhaps the single most important influence on reflection and learning" (Boud & Walker, 1998:196), although it is rarely examined in any depth in research (Webster-Wright, 2009:723). If context is such a powerful concept and phenomenon, the question that immediately arises is why it seems to be 'rarely examined'? One possible answer might be given by Boud and Walker (1998), namely that context is 'invisible' and 'taken for granted'. Defining and exploring this 'invisible' phenomenon is therefore the first important step in trying to understand what it is, what role it plays in the decision making of academics about participating in the process of professional learning for teaching; also how and why it plays that role.

4.4.1 Defining the concept of 'context'

The concept of 'context' has been the focus of many studies and therefore a multitude of meanings has been attached to it. Some of these are described by Leibowitz, Bozalek, Winberg and Van Schalkwyk (Leibowitz *et al.*, 2014) when referring to context in terms of one or more disciplines of knowledge, or context as time when used in phrases such as 'in current contexts' or when referring to unique domains such as 'in the political context'. The term 'context' is also used by Archer (1995:11) when implying an "environment in which the features of the system are either reproduced or transformed". This systemic connotation can refer to context at the level of the national, the institutional or the individual. Context is also a prominent term for Blackmore, Chambers, Huxley and Thackwray (2010) who call for "contextual intelligence". Closer to the focus of this study, Leibowitz *et al.* (2014) refer to higher education institutions as being 'contexts' for academic practices. These were discussed in Chapter 2 of this study.

Context is explained by Tessmer and Richney (1997:87) as a complex phenomenon which "surrounds its members as a continuous presence" and consists of the "simultaneous interaction of a number of mutually influential considerations". According to Webster-Wright (2009:723), context is not only the "obvious physical locations and structures" or "social interactions with communities of practice" but also includes "implicit workplace expectations hidden as discourses". Context is thus also created through language and communication (Gee, 2004). Augier *et al.* (2001:129), after

McDermott (1976), state that "people in interaction become environments [contexts] for each other" and they, in quoting Dilley (1999), indicate that "context is both constitutive of social action and itself the outcome of social action, it is both a generative principle and a resulting outcome".

This view of context emerging as a result of the interplay of various considerations is further elaborated by Augier *et al.* (2001:128). They refer to Polanyi's (1962) definition of context as an "individual construct" based on "what the individual experienced in prior times" and "emerg[ing] as an individual encounters a situation, including others and artefacts, as it is the individual's interpretation of a situation that results in context" (*ibid*.). Johns (2001) confirms that a person's behaviour and attitude stemming from encountering certain situations cannot be negated. The human element in the creation of context should therefore not be underestimated and it is the interaction of different considerations that creates such a context. Against this background, the definition of the term 'context', as used in this study, posits that context is an individual phenomenon emerging within the daily reality of an individual as a result of the interpretation of a situation created by the interplay of considerations from the personal and professional spheres of the life-world of the individual.

The explanations of context as given by Augier *et al.* (2001) can be interpreted against the background of the socio-cultural theoretical underpinnings taken from the seminal works of Alfred Schutz (Schutz, 1954), Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann (Berger & Luckmann, 1966) and Schutz and Luckmann (Schutz & Luckmann, 1973). These authors had a deep interest in the explanation of human action and their work thus offers valuable insights into the term 'individual context' (Augier *et al.*, 2001:129), also referred to as the 'life-world'.

4.4.2 Viewing 'context' as the 'life-world' of an individual

One way to view context is to see and describe it as 'the life-world' of an individual. Originally writing from a phenomenological viewpoint, Schutz and Luckmann (1973) defined the life-world as the world into which all humans are born. Gurwitsch (1966:120) indicated that a life-world is "the world in which we pursue our goals and objectives, the world as the scene of all human activities". The life-world of an individual is defined by Husserl (1970) as the world in which human beings live, experience and perceive. This life-world is inherited but it also assists in structuring our understanding of it. It includes our co-existence with others and, as such, is more than the action of our will; the life-world is the constantly changing situation of our thoughts and perceptions within our social environment (Merleau-Ponty, 1962). The life-world is a reality that can be changed through an individual's acts, but it can also change the acts of an individual (Schutz & Luckmann, 1973:5) or as explained by Lent *et al*. (2002:261), humans are both products and producers of their

environment. Our life-world thus influences our actions and, even more, influences the choices we make about how we act (Habermas, 1987:128; Adams, 2006; Gladwell, 2006; Maxwell, 2012:19).

Authors such as Mead (1934), Merleau-Ponty (1962), Husserl (1970), Schutz and Luckmann (1973) and Pozzuto, Dezendorf and Arnd-Caddigan (2006) indicated that humans are able to be simultaneously aware of themselves and their surroundings within their life-world. Within these spheres of their life-world, individuals are able to create distance – giving them the perspective for seeing themselves in the world. This process of distancing provides an individual with the opportunity for choice. He or she may choose to act in the same way as before or can choose to act differently. This choice would be based on a process of reflection (Mead, 1934; Blumer, 1969). The action of choice is always within the life-world and is part of the process of the continuing construction of the life-world. This implies that all thinking within the life-world is rooted in the past but is future-oriented (Schutz & Luckmann, 1973:19). Schutz and Luckmann (1973:18) also claim that the life-world is the area of practice and of action and therefore issues of action and choice should "have a central place in the analysis of the life-world". Together with Habermas (1971), Schutz and Luckmann (1973) describe the 'colonization of the life-world' when the influences of an external power infiltrate and destabilise the life-world of the individual.

We all find ourselves in a situation (Schutz & Luckmann, 1973:100) to which we all bring a "stock of knowledge based on past lived experiences" in every moment of conscious life (p. 66). Each situation is defined and interpreted with the help of the stock of knowledge and each situation is endlessly variable (*ibid.*). Previous experiences are vital elements of any individual's stock of knowledge. Every new situation or experience will be interpreted from the individual's lived experience and history (Schutz & Luckmann, 1973:59, 78). The life-worlds of all individuals are different from each other because the here and now of each individual is different (Schutz & Luckmann, 1973:59,78). A specific situation might therefore be interpreted differently by two individuals. The context that emerges for one individual within any given situation would therefore be different from that of another individual, as could be the choices they make. It is also important to note that no specific situation will ever be repeated again (*ibid.*:49, 78-79) as all situations are temporal.

In more recent times, Sztompka (2008:7) indicated that people have become intensely aware of their "rapidly changing" and "strikingly new", life-world. These new realisations call for a new way of looking at the life-world from a sociological point of view. He calls this new way the 'third sociology' which focuses on social existence. It comes after the "first sociology" which focused on social organisms and systems, and the "second sociology" which focused on behaviour and action (Sztompka, 2008:1). The message of the 'social existence' sociology is that the social world is "an

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interpersonal field, an inter-human space, filled with encounters, contacts, interactions, relationships, social bonds, ties and links" within the everyday experiences - the 'life-world' according to Schutz and Luckmann (1973). The life-world of the individual academic is thus a social space influenced by the interplay of various considerations.

Wieland (2007:13) warns about the "myth of separate spheres" within the life-world of an individual where the individual as person is seen to be primarily responsible for the choices they make and the broader influence of the professional role is not included. We are also reminded by Tripp (1994:71) and Trigwell (2012:609) that lecturers' practices are not determined by their personal values, beliefs and experiences only, but also by the social and material conditions of their professional existences, thus the transactions between the personal and the professional (Lent *et al.*, 2002:260). How the different spheres of the life-world shape and influence an individual's experiences and enactments could be studied through drawing connections between these levels (Wieland, 2011:165). Of importance to this study is the reminder from Hutchings, Huber and Golde (2006) about the importance of also thinking about the careers of academics, as the integration of the spheres of work (professional) and life (personal). These notions of integration and intersection of the spheres of the life-world are illustrated in Figure 4.4 below.

The 'context' in this study emerges from the interpretation of a situation created by the interplay of various considerations from the personal and professional spheres of the life world of the academic. The professional sphere is the culmination of a multi-levelled concept or a 'conceptual spiral' (see Figure 4.2 below). The broadest level of the spiral is the macro level and it includes the international and national higher education environments as well as universities, and research intensive-universities in particular (see Chapter 2). The next level of the spiral is the meso-level which includes Stellenbosch University as a research-intensive institution (see Chapter 3) and the academic department and discipline where the individual academic is academically and professionally active. All these levels feed into the professional sphere of the life-world of the academic which is placed on the micro-level of the contextual spiral. For the purpose of this study, the term 'professional life-world' will be used when referring to the narrow end of the contextual spiral where all the larger spirals meet.

Figure 4.2: The contextual spiral of the professional life-world of the academic

4.4.2.1   The professional sphere of the life-world

In this study, the professional sphere of the life-world of the academic subsumes the structures, roles and role players (See Figure 4.2 above) in higher education and at the institution discussed before. Furthermore, it also includes the physical infrastructure where academics have to execute their daily tasks and responsibilities; the students; as well as the prevailing discourses about issues of teaching and learning and professional learning for these functions at the employing institution. Each of these aspects with its associated considerations as evident in the professional sphere of the life-world of an individual academic could influence the decision of the academic to participate in, and follow through with, the process of professional learning for teaching. This is discussed in Section 4.5.2 below.

4.4.2.2   The personal sphere of the life-world

In Figure 4.3, the personal sphere of the life-world is illustrated as intersecting with the professional sphere of the life-world of the individual. This sphere encompasses the unique, personal considerations of the individual academic. Being an academic in the South African higher education system including the three roles of the academic, academics as lecturers in higher education and academics as teaching professionals as discussed in Chapter 2 also relates, as does the characteristics of adult learners (see Section 4.2.2). These more personal considerations could also

influence the decision making of the individual academic to become involved in the process of professional learning for teaching. This is discussed in Section 4.5.

4.4.2.3   Sphere of the daily reality

The sphere of the daily reality of the individual is created at the intersection of the professional and personal spheres of the life-world of the individual lecturer (see Figure 4.3) and is thus colonised by considerations from both spheres. The sphere of the daily reality encompasses what a person does, feels, and thinks every day. Applying the social existence lens suggested by Sztompka (2008:3) to the daily reality, it focuses on what really happens "at the level between structures and actions, where the constraints of structures and the dynamics of actions produce the real, experienced and observable" daily reality.
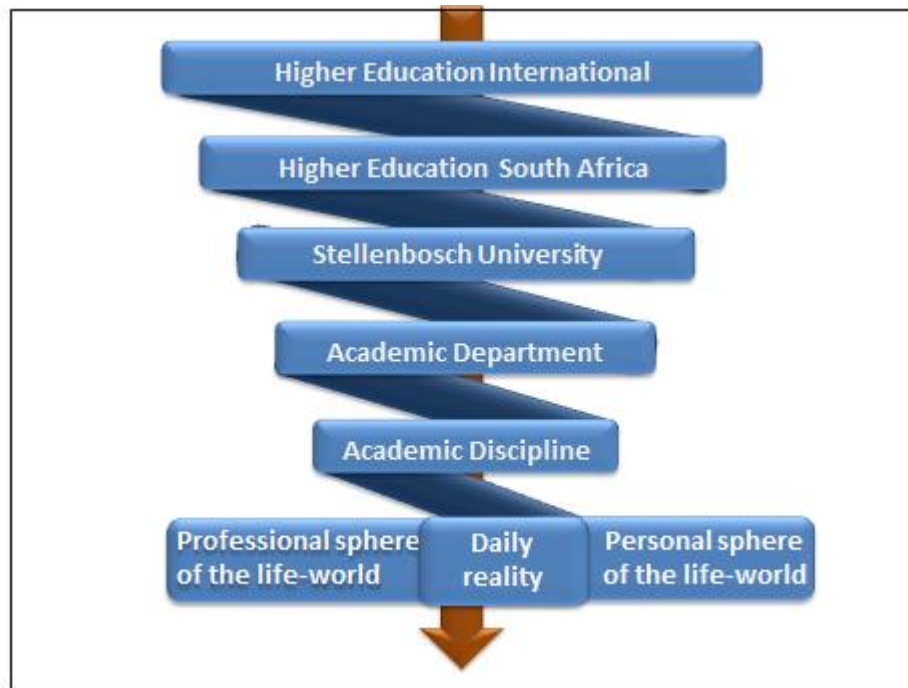
Figure 4.3: The sphere of the daily reality of the academic at the intersection of the personal sphere of the life-world and the narrow end of the contextual spiral of the professional sphere of the life-world

According to Kalekin-Fishman (2013:724), all attempts to understand the complexities of daily reality should look at how "time, space, and power interact to provide the infrastructure for lived experience in the everyday". The sociology of everyday life claims that the "embodiment and realisation" of experiences happen in the events of everyday life and, due to its visibility at this level, should be studied right there (Sztompka, 2008:13). Studying and understanding the everyday with a life-world orientation is seen by Counsell and Boody (2013:5) as an attempt to shift the focus

"from systemic control and domination toward understanding direct experiences, living contexts, life skills, and self-responsibility" of the individual. This view is also shared by Lent *et al.*(2002:255) stating that humans are not mere "beneficiaries (or victims) of situational forces", but are 'active agents and shapers' of their own learning.

We are reminded by Newman and O'Brien (2013) that we need to understand the interpersonal, historical, individual, cultural, organisational and global worlds people inhabit in order to explain why people are the way they are and do the things they do. To understand either the individual or the society, we need to understand both. This complexity originates from the ongoing, dynamic relationship between higher education institutions and the individual academic's personal environment because of their interactive, reciprocal and intertwined nature (Muthukrishna, 2010:135). This complex interplay is indicated in Figure 4.4 below.
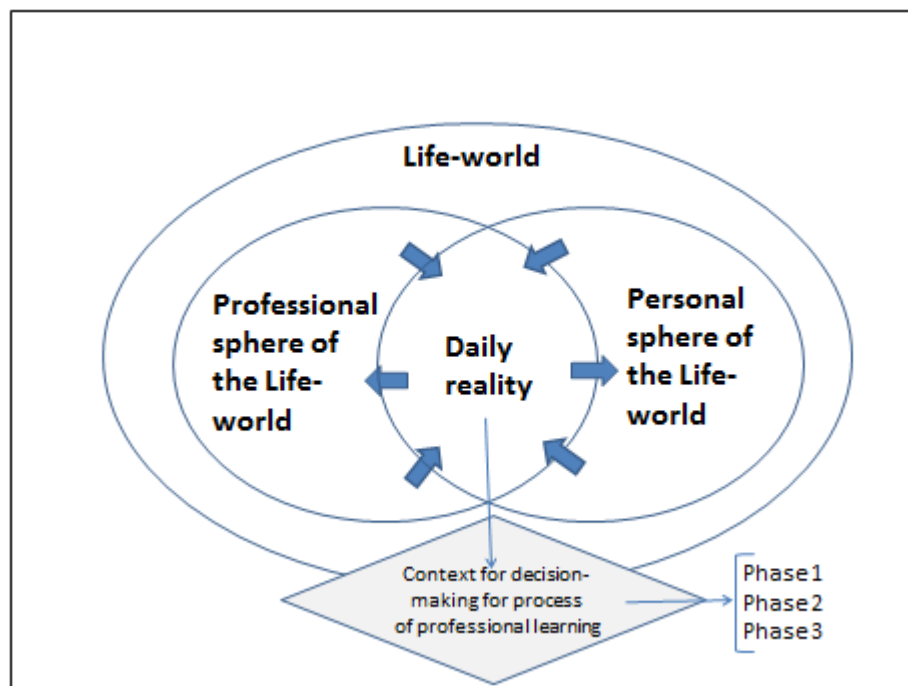
Figure 4.4: The influences on and from the sphere of the daily reality of the individual academic

4.4.3 Context as daily reality

The sphere of the daily reality is explained by Schutz and Luckmann (1973:3) as an individual human's primary or "paramount reality" driven by pragmatic motives. Due to its subjective nature, it consists of "multiple realities" in which individuals can engage themselves and can change themselves. According to the 'Thomas Theorem' (Thomas & Thomas, 1928), "if a person perceives

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a situation as real, it is real in its consequences", which implies that the subjective interpretation of a situation becomes the individual's daily reality which influences their behaviour and actions. Within the sphere of the daily reality, the interplay between considerations from the professional and personal spheres creates situations which the individual lecturer interprets and it then emerges as an individual context. Following on the work of Berger and Luckmann (1966), 'context' in this study is defined as an individual construct within the daily reality of an individual.

Within a social constructivist perspective, the construction of daily reality is an ongoing, dynamic process by individuals acting on their interpretations and knowledge of situations. This construction of daily reality has to be maintained and re-affirmed constantly and this process introduces the possibility of change.

The social construction of daily reality is influenced by individuals' interactions with structures and material objects as well as by their own life experiences. This reality is also shared with fellow individuals and we all influence each other within this social context. Even when individuals are alone, they have what Margaret Archer calls "internal conversations" (Archer, 2000:318) with virtually present others which influence their motivations and actions. The lived reality in different academic departments also differs from one another (Trowler & Knight, 2000:29). The way that each individual defines his/her everyday situations depends on their backgrounds and experiences and, because of this, the reality of each individual is different. An individual's interpretation of a situation could either be good or bad, enabling or hindering and this interpretation will influence how he/she will respond to or act upon it.

Influenced by the work of Alfred Schutz (Schutz, 1954), Berger and Luckmann (1966) argue that daily reality should be described as it is constructed in the minds of ordinary people. This reality is defined as "a quality appertaining to phenomena that we recognize as having a being independent of our own volition (we cannot 'wish them away')" (Berger & Luckmann, 1966:1). For the purpose of this study, the daily reality of an individual is therefore also equated to their individual context.

As explained by Sztompka (2008:9), daily reality comprises both public (professional) and private (personal) life. The sphere of the daily reality of an academic is thus constructed at the intersection between the professional sphere of the life-world (Kirby, 2000) of being employed as an academic at a research-intensive higher education institution (professional) and the personal sphere of the life-world of the individual (personal). Within this intersection certain conditions are constituted within which individual academics need to work (Taylor, 2008:27) and take decisions. The reality of the academic at a research-intensive university is that the individual is constantly pulled in different directions because of various and rising expectations (Delanty, 2008:129) and functions related to the job. The result of this is that individuals often experience success or frustration in their attempts

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to actualise their goals (Berger & Luckmann, 1966:35). Younger academics might struggle even more with balancing or juggling everything than more experienced and older academics (Delanty, 2008:129).

The individual context for the process of professional learning for teaching is seen as continuously emerging (Augier *et al.*, 2001) as and when individual academics experience and interpret various situations during the different phases of the process of professional learning (Elder-Vass, 2012). These situations are created within the sphere of their daily reality as a result of the interplay between considerations from the personal and professional spheres of their life-world. This interrelationship is diagrammatically represented in Figure 4.4 above. It is within this daily reality that individual academics have to take decisions as to their participation in opportunities for professional learning of teaching, to learn from such opportunities and to implement what has been learned.

Both the professional and personal spheres of the life-world of the individual academic contain numerous considerations – some often more intense than others. The complex interplay between these considerations from the personal and professional spheres create situations within the daily reality which the individual academics interpret as part of their decision making about the process of professional learning. This "medley of factors" (Tessmer & Richey, 1997:88) translates in an opportunity cost which can "inhibit or facilitate to varying degrees" (*ibid*.) and "is [thus] a pervasive and potent force in any learning event" (Tessmer & Richey, 1997:85). This notion is echoed by Wright *et al.* (2004:144) when quoting Mauksch and Howery (1986:73) who argue that the lecturer's "performance, behaviour and orientation" result from mainly from their context. Scribner (1999:242) stresses the importance of being mindful of the fact that context is "multidimensional and varied" and that different individual contexts might emerge for different individuals when exposed to similar influences, as certain considerations and variables might be more applicable to specific individuals or to all individuals, within a specific situation (Choi, 2003).

Learning, including professional learning as a process of knowledge creation (Paavola & Hakkarainen, 2005:535), often happens through "dynamic interactions" among individuals and/or between individuals and their environments (Nonaka, Toyama & Konno, 2000:30) – in this instance a research-intensive university. Knight, Tait and Yorke's (2006:320) notion of professional learning as "an interplay between individuals and their environments" conceptually strengthens an understanding of the role of context in the process of the professional learning of academics.

4.5   Professional learning as a decision

Within each of the three phases of the process of professional learning, the intricate relationship and interplay between different considerations from the personal and professional spheres of the life-world create specific situations for the individual academic that are interpreted by the individual and emerge as unique individual contexts (Augier *et al.*, 2001). These unique individual contexts in turn influence the individual academic's decision to participate in, and follow through with, the process of professional learning. People consider the implications of their actions, however, before they decide whether or not to perform a given behaviour. Thus what happens in phase one of the professional learning process already determines what will be happening in the application-of-learning phase (Phase 3) (Chiaburu & Marinova, 2005; Merriam & Leahy, 2005:5). In this regard we are reminded by Scribner (1999:242) that knowledge has to be used in some form in order to be acquired and become a part of the user. This notion is also supported by Burke and Hutchins (2007), as quoted by Grossman and Salas (2011:110) stating that the "pre-training motivation, motivation to learn and motivation to transfer have all exhibited important relationships with training outcomes." Ajzen and Fishbein (1980) refer to this as 'behavioural intention'.

As discussed above, the daily reality provides the big-C Context that influences an individual's decision making about becoming involved in the process of professional learning. In Figure 4.5 below, the phases in the decision-making process (on the right-hand side of the figure) show similarities with the phases in the process of professional learning (on the left-hand side of the figure). Both of these processes are influenced by the daily reality of the academic and one may thus conclude that becoming involved in the process of professional learning for teaching is a choice - one which is influenced by the academic's daily reality or individual context. For the purposes of this research, the individual context implies an accompanying opportunity cost.
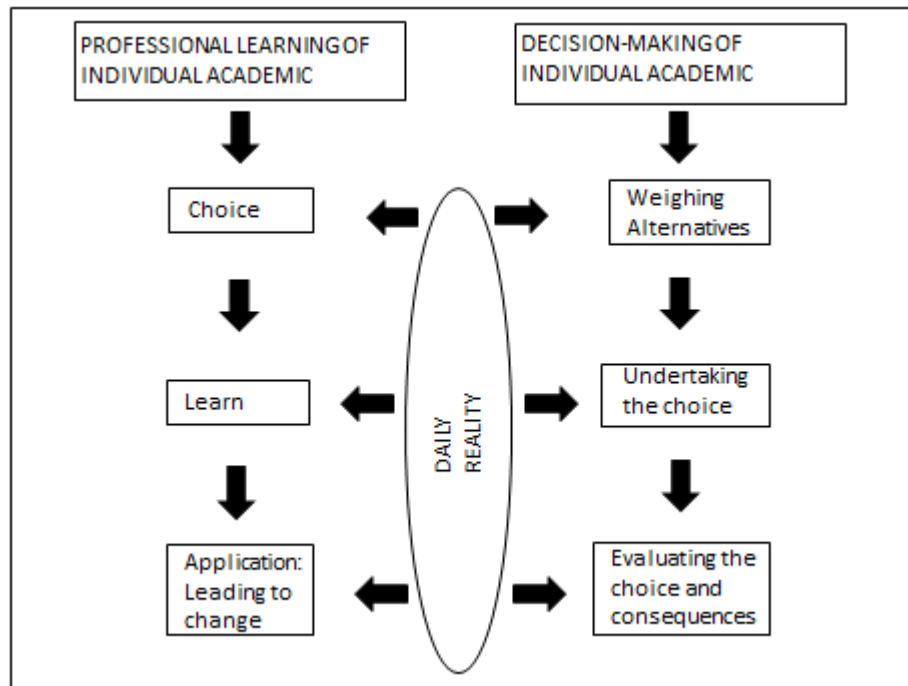
Figure 4.5: Mapping the influence of the daily reality on the various phases in both the processes of professional learning and of decision making

As alluded to before, the individual academic needs to take a decision to become involved in the process of professional learning for teaching. Van Schalkwyk *et al*., (2015) also referred to becoming involved in the process of professional learning as a personal choice, facilitated by an enabling environment or a nurturing space.

4.6   An ethic of care approach

Thinking about a professional working environment as an environment where nurturing and relationships of care are eminent might seem strange at first (Barnes, 2012:5; Costandius, 2012:39). Care, however, comprises a set of values offering ways of thinking about what is necessary for human wellbeing, flourishing and survival (Milligan & Wiles, 2010; Barnes, 2012:5). Caring, according to Popke (2006:506), "is not so much an activity as an attitude or orientation, a way of relating to others characterised by values of compassion." Noddings (2002) suggests that an ethic of care approach focuses on the establishment of supportive conditions and relations while Buller (2015:217) argues that academic leaders should focus their energy "toward people and processes rather than outcomes and metrics". According to Milligan and Wiles (2010:737 after Wenger, 1987), it is useful to define care in terms of "interdependency, reciprocity and multidirectionality". Gastmans (2006:137) stated that care is "more than simply good intentions, it is deep and thoughtful knowledge" of situations in combination with activities and attitudes.

If the pervasive and central role of care in human life is not recognised, especially by those in power, warns Tronto (1993:111), the activities of care can easily be ignored and degraded or become marginalised (Milligan & Wiles, 2010). Milligan and Wiles (2010:738), continue by explaining that the notion of 'care' endorses identity and self-worth and presupposes encouragement, personal attention and communication. Linking an ethic of care to the life-world of the academic inclusive of the broader levels of the contextual spiral will undoubtedly add to an approach where individual academics will experience a reality that is more supporting, appreciative and even nurturing, of them as individuals as well as their efforts. Such a focus on care has transformative power in teaching and learning at all levels (Noddings, 1992). Furthermore, the act of teaching is an emotional endeavour (Hargreaves, 1998b) and the way the sociological, political and institutional influences "shape and reshape the emotional landscapes of teaching for good or ill" is also emphasised by Hargreaves in a follow-up publication (1998a). According to Barbalet (2001:81) emotions are our driving forces and very often give rise to our actions. Decision making as an act of volition therefore also involves emotions. Zembylas (2005) suggested an ethic of care approach could be useful to examine affect in teaching and learning.

The need for care is within all human individuals and the responsibility of those in power is to realise that giving such care is not only to the benefit of the individual but also to that of the institution (Bitzer, 2007) and society as a whole. The capacity of 'care givers' to do care well is influenced by "the extent to which care is valued and supported socially and practically" (Barnes, 2012:39) within the institution. The question one has to ask concerns what caring for colleagues and employees might look like. The aspect of emotions is included *inter alia* in such levels of services and support towards the care of individuals (Milligan & Wiles, 2010:738). Popke (2006:506) argues that an ethics of care would build on our "connectedness to others"; be "based on mutual obligations and relations of trust"; focus on "co-operation rather than competition"; and favour "interdependence over individuation".

Although an ethic of care is a universal phenomenon, specific contexts require specific applications (Barnes, 2012:17). Milligan and Wiles (2010:738) frame an ethic of care as multi-layered 'landscapes of care' encompassing the macro, meso and micro levels of individual support and services and being shaped by "issues of responsibility, ethics and morals, and by the social, emotional, symbolic, physical and material aspects of caring". Care emphasises relationality and contextuality and is to be understood in its practical, political and moral sense (Tronto, 2010). This understanding should be rooted in the life-world of daily reality and cannot be understood only on an abstract level. Attention should thus be given to the context "in which those needs are produced and experienced" (Barnes, 2012:31).

Care is described by Tronto (1993) as taking the concerns and needs of others as the basis for action; according to Barnes (2012:118) and Buller (2015:220), care is not possible without positive recognition and respect. Barnes (2012:78) further states that care is not a one-sided activity and requires dialogue between the receiver of care and the giver of care. Such a dialogue would supply the much needed contextual information on which to base decisions. Milligan and Wiles (2010:743) emphasise that an ethics of care should serve as a framework for understanding how care as approach could "enlighten our entire way of collective and individual being", instead of informing us about the who, what and where of care. Within this realm, the individual is seen as an autonomous agent having a choice as to how and when their needs should be met. Gladwell (2006:165), however, cautions that an individual's "convictions … and … thoughts are [sometimes] less important" in guiding their actions and behaviour than their immediate context.

An ethic of care lens attempts to focus our attention on the social construction of reality, but also towards the construction of "new forms of relationships, institutions and action that enhance mutuality and well-being" (Lawson, 2007:8). According to Milligan and Wiles (2010), an ethic of care is concerned with responsibility and relationships and such an approach might enlighten our way of being – individually and collectively. Buller (2015:219-220) also refers to the importance of "employee welfare, at both work and home" and having a concern for people together with a relationship of trust as important concerns for managers. An ethic of care is not necessarily included in the vocabulary of managers, however, (Smith & McKie, 2009, in Barnes, 2012:145) and there is not much evidence that the values of an ethic of care underlie the way in which workplaces are organised (*ibid.*:144). In this regard, Habermas (1984, 1987, in Barnes, 2012:154) warns against the colonisation of the individual human life-world by institutions because formal systems often operate at levels differing from the life-world of its employees. According to Buller (2015:221) employees will be able to focus more on doing their job well when the workplace "stops feeling like a battlefield … for their own survival". Tronto (1993) further cautions that issues may in some instances be 'taken care of' at a superficial level in large institutional bureaucracies without care actually taking place. We therefore need to recognise the presence as well as the absence of care through the perceived level of value, clear communication and trust (Tronto, 2010; Noddings, 2012).

The issue of trust as 'the oil in the cogs' of care has been mentioned by Sevenhuijsen (2003) as a prerequisite for care. The importance of trust was also mentioned by McDowell (2004), Buller (2015) and elaborated by Tronto (2010:5) in stating that "[t]rust builds as people realize that they can rely upon others to participate in their care and care activities". In other words, good care involves more than good intentions. According to Tronto (1993:136), "[i]t requires a deep and

thoughtful knowledge of the situation and of all the actors' situations, needs and competencies". Integrity of care also requires knowledge of the context.

Despite stating the flourishing of academics as lecturers as an aim, the discourse of care often remains a marginalised one (Lawson, 2007) in the practices and theories of institutions as well as professional learning practitioners. One of our aims as professional learning practitioners is the flourishing of academics in their teaching role and the creation of spaces to flourish therefore undoubtedly implies an ethics of care. Popke (2006:507) positions the ethics of care as a central component of our 'being-human' instead of moving it to the more apparent places of care (such as institutions or hospices). Given the fact that academics often feel overwhelmed, under-valued and a 'means to an end' in the reality of their life-world, the question of care becomes a vital concern.

According to Barnes (2012), care is simultaneously a practice, a disposition and a moral. Milligan and Wiles (2010:741) differentiate between caring *for* and caring *about* while Tronto (2010:160) also adds the dimensions of *giving* and *receiving* care. Caring *for* entails the act of care giving, while caring *about* refers to the emotional aspects of care. Building on the work of Noddings, it is explained by Shields (2003:77) that care means acting out of "compassion rather than out of a concern of efficiency", which means entering into a relationship with the other. 'Landscapes of care', as described by Milligan and Wiles (2010), incorporate mutually constitutive public and private spaces as constructed at the intersection of the professional and personal spheres of the life-world within this study. Approaching the task of providing professional learning opportunities for the teaching function informed by an understanding of the context of the individual academic is crucial for the professional learning practitioner as care *giver*.

As a group of researchers from the Teaching and Learning Directorate at the University of the Western Cape in South Africa, Bozalek, McMillan, Marshall, November, Daniels and Sylvester (2014) applied an ethic of care as a normative framework to evaluate a model of professional learning for teaching and learning. The conclusion of their research was that care is a "holistic and … broad, public and political activity" (Bozalek *et al.*, 2014:3) which is beneficial to the higher education context". Within this perspective, "the actual lives of lecturers and their situations are important for understanding and meeting their particular learning needs" (*ibid.*:4). Although referring to school teachers, Donaldson (2006:172) calls for 'active caring'. Such caring could address the issue of willingness to accept the "challenges and … current working conditions and relationships and, despite the odds, to act on them".

4.7   Synthesis and conceptual framework

Up to this point I have explored the main concepts that relate to this study. My conceptual understanding of the potential influences on the decision making of lecturers was influenced by several theories discussed earlier. These include Schutz and Luckmann's (1973) theory of the life-world, Berger and Luckmann's (1966) theory of daily reality, Illeris' (2007) model of learning, the theory of opportunity cost (Roberts, 2007; Buchanan, 2010), Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT) (Lent *et al.*, 2002:275), transfer of training theory (Grossman & Salas, 2011) and the theory of an ethics of care (Tronto, 1993, 2010; Milligan & Wiles, 2010; Barnes, 2012). These theoretical perspectives, together with my experience as professional learning practitioner at SU, informed the conceptual framework that I arrived at.

The next step would be to demonstrate the connections between the literature and the researcher's knowledge (Silverman, 2001:1; Ravitch & Riggan, 2012) through the development of a conceptual framework aiming to give coherence to the research (Trafford & Leshem, 2010:85) and to be used to analyse, interpret and discuss the empirical data generated for this study.

The title of this research implies a potential influence of context on the decision making of lecturers about participating in the process of professional learning for teaching. To determine the possible influence of individualised contexts on the decision making of academics regarding participation in the three-stage process of professional learning for teaching seems to be a challenge, and this study aimed to address this. The purpose of discussing my understanding or conceptual framework here is to offer some explanation of how the various concepts of my study are linked and hang together to form a unity.

As depicted in Figure 4.6 below, my understanding is that the individual context or daily reality of academics may have direct bearing on their decisions to participate in and benefit from professional learning opportunities. Earlier in this chapter, I suggested a 'contextual spiral' (see Figure 4.2 above). The contextual spiral starts at the broader context of higher education internationally and research-intensive institutions of higher education and then spirals down to higher education in a national context (South Africa, in the case of this study) and could be called big-C-Context based on its stature, structure and reach. The spiralling consequently focuses on the particular institution (Stellenbosch University). A specific academic department, as well as the academic discipline, also form part of the professional sphere of the life-world of the academic. The narrow part at the bottom of the spiral could be called 'small-c-context' because it relates to the individual academic. For the purposes of this study, the small-c-context in the spiral, at the intersection between the professional and personal spheres of the life-world of the academic actually becomes the big-C-Context for

individual academics as this constitutes their individual context or daily reality (Schutz & Luckmann, 1973). It is within this daily reality that an individual academic needs to make a choice – either to become involved in the process of professional learning for teaching, or not. The interplay of various considerations from the different provinces of the academics' life-world obviously influences their decision making. This 'little-c-becoming-Big-C-Context' influences the decision making of academics in all three phases of the process of professional learning (see Figure 4.5 above) and is encompassed in the daily reality as depicted in the light grey block (C) in the conceptual framework (see Figure 4.6) below.

The considerations from the personal sphere of the individual academic are applicable in all three phases of the process of professional learning (Grossman & Salas, 2011:106). The considerations from the professional sphere of the individual academic coming into play during the three phases differ, however. The personal considerations will therefore be discussed in the following section, while the professional considerations will be discussed in the specific phase(s) where they are deemed to be applicable.

4.7.1   Personal considerations

When lecturers are faced with a choice about their involvement in the process of professional learning for their teaching, their willingness to learn and to make the decision to become involved is often influenced by the 'powerful combination' of their experiences, beliefs and prior knowledge (Opfer & Pedder, 2011:387). The beliefs that lecturers bring to their work are guided by their experiences as students and these beliefs consist of their attitudes, values, theories and images concerning learning (*ibid*.). Various authors have referred to the determination and the ability of individual academics to navigate their context and work out what to do to 'make things better', as 'personal mastery' (Senge, 1992; Martin, 1999; Hockings, 2005), implying a state of personal internal stability and independence from others for their survival. The strongest force in the individual's decision towards participation or not in a forthcoming professional learning opportunity is intrinsic motivation (Fullan, 2006; Frick & Kapp, 2009:261; Leibowitz *et al.*, 2012) and this motivation is influenced by a multitude of considerations (Scribner, 1999:259). The role of intrinsic motivation in decision making is related to expectancy theory (Grant & Shin, 2011) and includes the belief that something is worthwhile. In this regard Crawford (2010:198) says: "[t]he ways in which academics used their own personal powers to mediate structural influence and make decisions on intent and future actions … signifies the importance of being ever mindful of the significance of agency in influencing decisions about engagement".

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It was mentioned by Simon (1959), as referred to by Augier *et al.* (2001:126), that "choice depends not only on the 'object' conditions, but also on the 'internal nature' of the decision makers". Crawford (2010:198) further adds that "a range of very personal, less tangible, value-based concerns" also influences the academic's choice. According to Clark and Strauss (2007:12), decision making is not only related to an individual's agency, but also to his/her identity.

The individual considerations which might create an enabling or constraining context for the decision to participate, or not to, in the process of professional learning for teaching, could include the following: envisaged career path (Lent *et al.*, 2002), existing/previous knowledge and qualifications (Smith, 2001; Donald *et al.*, 2005; Viskovic, 2009; Cilliers & Herman, 2010); wellness of individuals (Bozalek *et al.*, 2014); availability of time (Wright *et al.*, 2004:146; Giroux, 2013); commitment to teaching; perceived teaching competence (Allan, 1996:viii); interest in topic; job satisfaction (Knight & Trowler, 1999; Bland *et al.*, 2002); morale; workload and having to "do more with less" (Johnston, 1998:1; Hargreaves, 2000; Frick & Kapp, 2009); individual practices and beliefs (Crawford, 2010:198; Opfer & Pedder, 2011:389); life-long learning; conceptions of teaching and learning (Kalin & Zuljan, 2007; Opfer & Pedder, 2011:389).

According to Merriam and Leahy (2005:5), what happens in the 'deciding-to-participate' phase of the process already determines what will be happening in the 'implementation-of-learning' phase. Burke and Hutchins (2007, quoted in Grossman & Salas, 2011:110) also indicated that the "pre-training motivation, motivation to learn and motivation to transfer have all exhibited important relationships with training outcomes".

As discussed earlier, decision making generally reflect "individual agency and structural relations of place, power and position" (Clark & Strauss, 2007:10). Furthermore, academics have the scholarly community of which they are a part as their primary loyalty (Becher & Trowler, 2001:75), rather than the specific institution in which they work (Cloete *et al.*, 2004:15; Delanty, 2008:124). They might therefore question what the institution can do for them rather than what the institution requires them to do. If a point of departure could be that human beings are thinking, feeling acting beings (Jarvis, 2006:14), however, and that the individual academic as a person is at the heart of our understanding of learning, passion and reason might become one strong positive force in the decision making of lecturers.

Personal characteristics of a lecturer also play a powerful role in the subsequent implementation of what was learned or what Grossman and Salas (2011) call the 'transfer of training' (Phase 3). According to Burke and Hutchins (2007), the strongest traits of such implementation or transfer would be cognitive ability, self-efficacy, motivation and perceived utility. Although referring to school teachers, Eraut (1994:112) indicated that, when teachers have to change their teaching

practice it "involves both modifying their classroom persona and embarking on a learning task of enormous magnitude". The change of routines also involves a great deal of unlearning before the construction of new routines can begin and therefore this process could be equated to 'going back to being a novice again' (Guhn, 2009). Such an experience of disorientation and alienation could be profound and lecturers might revert to old, familiar practices unless they receive psychological and practical support. Altering of teaching practices would also demand certain traits from the academics: a certain level of confidence (Eraut, 1994:47; Dall'Alba, 2005:369) in their knowledge about the new practice, and in their abilities, which could possibly be determined by their level of self-esteem (Ryan & Deci, 2000); a high level of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1993); and an appropriate level of change in their perceptions and beliefs (Opfer & Pedder, 2011:389) during their participation in a professional learning opportunity. This confidence also links to the individual's agency (Beijaard *et al.*, 2000:750) and could be influenced by the level of appointment within the institution and the level of support received from the academic leader (Scaduto, Lindsay & Chiaburu, 2008).

Benveniste and McEwan (2000) suggest that application of changes such as the implementation of new pedagogies might be accounted for by lecturers' willingness, including their motivation and commitment, to change. The perceived usefulness of the new knowledge also plays a role as well as the individual's commitment to teaching and student learning. The level and quality of continued reflection could also influence the implementation of any new practice or belief (Dall'Alba, 2005:371). This notion is supported by Guskey (2003) asserting that lecturers will not change their beliefs and attitudes until they have changed their practices and gained evidence of changes in student outcomes.

4.7.2   Professional considerations

In referring to Bourdieu, Ashwin (2012:113) states that the particular structure of an institution and the position of the agents within it, will mediate and guide the choices that the agents make. In this regard Ashwin (*ibid.*) describes the funnelling of an institutional structure involving faculties, departments and programmes. This is also applicable to Stellenbosch University as a research intensive institution. The contextual spiral suggested in this study draws on a similar idea of funnelling (see Figure 4.2). For the purposes of this study it is assumed that the requirements of the broader contexts in the contextual spiral have been absorbed and internalised by the employing institution and are evident in the vision, mission, aims, policies and management of the institution. The professional considerations discussed below will therefore only focus on those from the employing institution and the academic department and discipline.

4.7.2.1   The influence of the employing institution on decision making about participating in phase one of the process of professional learning

As mentioned in Chapter 1, public universities are expected to deliver research results; graduates with the knowledge, skills and attitudes to take on social challenges and responsibilities (Hargreaves, 2000; Crawford, 2010; Giroux, 2013); address national needs; as well as being at the forefront of the rapidly changing and competitive global environment while having to deal with fewer resources; changing student demographics; demands and calls for increased accountability (Eddy & Garza Mitchell, 2011); and academic renewal (Frick & Kapp, 2009:257). The university as institution is part of the professional sphere of the life-world of the academic and, as explained by Schutz and Luckmann above (1973:5), the life-world is a reality that can be changed through our acts, but it can also change the acts of the individual. This view is supported by Delanty (2008:126) when stating that, through their interpretative activity, "actors are not just shaped or determined by the institutions but shape those institutions"

According to Frick and Kapp (2009:261) and Leibowitz *et al*. (2012), looking from a South African perspective, the role of the institutional context in the process of professional learning of academics is becoming increasingly important. Organisations are reminded by Knowles, Holton III, and Swanson (2005:122) about the importance of conveying the message about the value of human beings as their most valuable asset and their development as its most productive investment. Buller (2015) refers to the significant role academic leaders play in letting employees know that the institution "had their best interests in mind". Earlier, Bozalek *et al*. (2014), Tronto (2010) and Barnes (2012) were quoted pointing to the significance of care in creating an enabling context. As also indicated earlier, institutions provide a structured context for individual decision making, often through utilising incentives and penalties (Clark & Strauss, 2007:18). According to Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner and Cain (1998:52), context is a 'figured world' defined as "a socially and culturally constructed realm of interpretation … [where] particular outcomes are valued over others". The prevailing discourses within an institution thus are important considerations influencing the decision making of individual academics.

Institutions of higher education are urged by Dill (1999) and Garvin (1993) to create spaces for learning if they want to improve the core business of teaching and learning. D'Andrea and Gosling (2005:4) also state that improvement, after all, is a function of learning and the improvement of teaching requires that faculty should be learning. For academics to pursue this avenue, professional learning should "cease to be an afterthought" (Scribner, 1999:240) in institutions of higher education. How the teaching function, including professional learning for teaching is structured,

organised and led will have an influence on the commitment, motivation and emotions of lecturers (Hargreaves, 1998b). One possible solution for integrating and managing the challenges mentioned above is the creation of institutionally supported professional learning opportunities for academic staff members (Johnston, 1998; Quinn, 2003; D'Andrea & Gosling, 2005; The Carnegie Foundation, 2008; Budge & Clarke, 2012). The process of professional learning in the area of teaching should thus become part of the professional life of lecturers (Johnston, 1998; King, 2004) and "an integral part of the way educators do their work, every day" (Hutchings, n.d.).

In a research-intensive higher education institution such as Stellenbosch University, which is the research setting and context of this study, the teaching-research tension is one of the most prominent conditions constantly surrounding its academic staff members in their working environments. It is stated by Frick and Kapp (2009:262) that "a higher value [is placed] on scientific knowledge and research skills than on other forms of scholarship" within an academic environment, which implies that research is "the strongest academic currency in higher education" (Henkel, 2005:164; Fanghanel, 2007). Referring to Bourdieu's idea of 'capital', and linking to the notion of opportunity cost as discussed earlier, Knight (2006:32) says that "[academics] often have problems in deciding whether to accumulate capital valued in teaching systems or capital valued in administrative or research systems." Knight (*ibid.*:29) further suggested that teaching has to be valued higher if enhancement of teaching quality is a goal.

Other institutional considerations that might influence the daily reality of the individual are the following: regard and reward (or promotion and remuneration) for teaching (Grant & Shin, 2011); the stature of teaching; institutional policies (Nixon *et al.*, 2003:94); the institutional view and definition of good teaching (Trigwell, 2001; Fanghanel, 2007); professional status of lecturers; perceived institutional silences about teaching; integration of technology platforms; diversity of the student body; the three roles of academics (Toews & Yazedjian, 2007); accountability and autonomy of academics; support from management (Chiaburu & Marinova, 2005); and the level of care that is experienced from the employing institution (Tronto, 2010; Buller, 2015). All these structural considerations form part of the outcome expectations influencing the decision making of the individual academic (Lent *et al.*, 2002).

4.7.2.2 The influence of the department or workgroup on decision making about participating in phase one of the process of professional learning

People usually are members of several activity systems (Trowler & Knight, 2000:30). For academics in higher education, the department usually is their main structure of affiliation. This

statement is supported by Wright *et al.* (2004:150) when stating that "many of the demands on faculty originate with their departments or are implemented by the departments". They further state that the department and its culture is important as a 'decision making unit', as it is at this level that the "institutional policies and practices are filtered through and interpreted by colleagues". Earlier, Knight (1998:251) indicated that the most salient system of the working life of most academics is their department or, as it is also called, the workgroup. This influence is often seen as even stronger than that of the institution. In a later publication, Knight (2006:35) confirmed that the "[m]otivation for professional learning is also deeply related to workplace environments" and he continued by asking the question about "what kinds of working environments … have rich affordances for satisfaction through work, and in which professional learning is endemic?" According to Scribner (1999:239) a "work-learn nexus" could develop for the individual academic.

Departmental conversations about pedagogical issues; collaboration between colleagues; structured planning meetings with departmental chairs; opportunities for team teaching; mentoring by senior staff members; and peer observations "have been shown to play a powerful role in constructing a culture of teaching" within a department (Wright *et al.*, 2004:153). According to Clark and Strauss (2007:15), individuals quite often 'piggy-back' their decisions on the judgment of others deemed to be "more in tune with the issues, more confident, or more dominant in a relationship". Within a department, such 'piggy-backing' could be based on the seniority, fear of perceived expertise, success or self-confidence of the one who is imitated. The value and importance of positive role-modelling and mentorship in the creation of a context conducive to positive decision making could thus come into play here, but it is not the focus of this study. The crucial role of middle management in creating spaces for academics to flourish was highlighted by Hockings (2005:323), Crawford (2010), and Van Schalkwyk (2015).

The considerations within the academic department that might influence the daily reality of individual academics, which, in turn, influences the decisions they make about whether or not to participate in the process of professional learning for teaching, could include the following: regard and reward for teaching; professional status of lecturers; the discipline (Becher & Trowler, 2001); the existence and strength of the communities of practice within the department; trust between colleagues (Wright *et al.*, 2004:151); the view of teaching as being a private and personal endeavour (*ibid.*); and the role of student feedback in performance appraisal. Although workload and available time were discussed as personal considerations as well, it also forms part of the departmental considerations. The considerations at play within a department are often inherited as it pre-dates the current staff members. Individual academics can therefore seldom change their

circumstances. They do however have the ability to interpret the situations they encounter which could result in an individual context that could either facilitate or constrain their decision making.

The environment (department) to which the individual returns after participating in a professional learning opportunity should preferably be accepting of, and conducive to the changes that professional learning is designed to bring about (Trowler & Knight, 2000:31). Trowler and Knight (*ibid*.) concluded that behaviour is shaped by structure as well as social action. A changed environment thus needs to be created for change to happen because putting changed individuals back into the same environment will not bring about change. This view is echoed by Eraut (1994:237) saying "[i]t is difficult for professionals to sustain their accountability to [students] or to the continuing development of their knowledge base unless their employing organisation has some genuine commitment to quality". In a comparative study conducted by Vosburg (2000) it was found that the support of management is crucial to the successful transfer of professional learning. The attitude of middle management, according to Hockings (2005:323), will also have an effect on lecturers' approaches to and enthusiasm for teaching. Implementing what was learned is dependent on sustained support, however, as well as on a facilitating environment (Darnton, 2008:40-41).This is supported by Kalin and Valenčič Zuljan (2007) who reported that the level of success of all pedagogical change can be significantly linked to academics' perceptions of teaching and learning; to how well informed and qualified they are; and to the level of support they get.

The departmental considerations that might influence whether an academic applies/implements what was learned during the professional learning opportunity include the following: trust among colleagues; departmental conceptions of teaching and learning; level of available support (Vosburg, 2000); sources of available support (Eraut, 2004:2); and issues of time and workload.

4.7.2.3 The influence of the actual professional learning opportunity on decision making about participating in phase two of the process of professional learning

As both the research and the teaching function are concerned with learning (Brew & Boud, 1995), learning might be the common denominator linking these two academic activities in a manner that can be adopted by professional learning practitioners. If research is the root of lecturers' learning, the implications for the professional learning of academics are far-reaching (Brew & Boud, 1995; Elen *et al.*, 2007). Such a focus would put learning back into the centre of academic work and academics would acknowledge the importance of understanding student learning and of undertaking their own learning (Taylor, 2008:39). The professional learning practitioner as 'critical friend' (Handal, 2008:55) to the academic, could be seen as the crucial link in this process.

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Although referring to the professional learning of school teachers, Borko's statement (Borko, 2004:13) that the roles of 'student' and 'teacher' are somewhat different in a professional learning situation from that in a classroom situation, applies to the higher education environment as well because the principles of learning are still applicable, even though the 'students' are university lecturers, the 'teachers' the professional learning practitioners and the 'curriculum' is the professional learning content. All learning is dependent on interaction between the learner, the context and what is learned (Webster-Wright, 2009:174). According to Opfer and Pedder (2011:379) professional learning is, amongst other, dependent on the uniqueness of the context and the person. The design and delivery of any professional learning opportunity will therefore significantly impact the quality of the learning that will take place.

The learning that takes place during a professional learning opportunity should take lecturers forward from only focusing on the skills of teaching to becoming critically reflective lecturers and scholars of teaching who approach teaching as a scholarly activity (Smith, 2001; Webster-Wright, 2009:720; Van Schalkwyk, Cilliers, *et al.*, 2013). According to Fullan (2006:10) the importance of reflection goes back to Dewey (1906), who suggested "that it is not that we learn by doing, but that we learn by *thinking* about what we are doing. It is thus the purposeful thinking part that counts, not the mere doing".

In this regard, D'Andrea and Gosling (2005), as well as Elen *et al.* (2007) suggest that, for professional learning practitioners to support academics in their teaching function, it is important to first "understand teachers' thinking, their beliefs and knowledge regarding teaching, learning, and research" (Elen *et al.*, 2007:124). It is also argued by Elen *et al.* (2007) that professional learning practitioners should seriously consider the link between teaching and research held by the academics at an institution and that this is especially important for professional learning at a research-intensive institution such as the site for this study. If the principles of research are taken as the point of departure for lecturers' learning, the implications for the professional learning of academics are far-reaching (Brew & Boud, 1995; Elen *et al.*, 2007). Light (2003), as referred to by Elen *et al.* (2007:153), calls this new way of working taking research as its point of departure, a 'professional paradigm'. This approach to professional learning has the problems and challenges that academics experience as starting point and supports them on the journey of solving these by making use of the research principle of enquiry, which might be a new playing field for both the professional learning practitioner and the participants in professional learning.

Within this newly created playing field, Lee (2008:74) suggests that professional learning practitioners should "be players in games of the contemporary academy, and imagine productive and knowing futures that create direction and leadership", while McAlpine (2006) advises

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professional learning practitioners to move away from the deficit or remedial model by shifting their focus to the glass half full rather than on the glass half empty, and from disabling to enabling conditions (p. 124). During this process, the professional learning practitioner also has to make his/her own theories explicit, scrutinise these and reflect on them on the basis of experience and educational research findings. The criteria for scholarly practice as formulated by Glassick, Huber and Maeroff (1997) are applicable and should be adhered to by the professional learning practitioner in the execution of his or her task. These criteria include stating of clear goals, doing adequate preparation, using appropriate methods, showing significant results, implementing effective presentation and reflective critique.

From the suggestions above, it could thus be recommended that professional learning practitioners should concentrate more on using the principles of research when designing and implementing professional learning opportunities as well as focus more on the similarities between teaching and research activities, rather than on the differences and tensions between them. Elen *et al.* (2007) suggest that professional learning should perhaps have more of a research perspective, and according to Brew and Boud (1995), professional learning should become more collaborative, problem-centred and self- and peer-directed. Some authors indicate that professional learning should be a partnership between professional learning practitioners and academics (Badley, 1998; Land, 2008). According to Knight, Tait and Yorke (2006:321) successful professional learning involves attention to the individual academic and to the tools, rules and beliefs of the department including the division of labour and power. It is also concerned with the personal understandings and capabilities of individual academics and with addressing systems' understandings and capabilities.

Some of the considerations identified by Boud and Walker (1998:196) include "co-learners, teachers, learning materials, the physical environment and everything which was to be found therein" while the discourses used during the professional learning opportunity and the selected learning facilitation method(s) could also be added.

According to Eraut (1994:25), one of the main purposes of professional learning is to bring lecturers into contact with new knowledge and ideas. Through modelling a range of ways of best practice teaching, the academics' repertoire of "teaching strategies and learning activities" can be broadened and a rationale for change and exposure to new ideas could be provided through careful selection of literature and discussions (Dall'Alba, 2005:370), leading to a renewed capacity to effect change (*ibid.*:368). Fullan (2006:10), Dall'Alba (2005:366) and Opfer and Pedder (2011:384) maintain that lecturer learning takes place through "doing, reflection, inquiry, evidence, more doing and so on", and when lecturers have "time to develop, absorb, discuss and practice new knowledge". Lecturers,

as adult learners, thus learn more effectively when they are actively engaged in professional learning and collaborative professional learning activities. Research results have shown that professional learning that is intensive and extends over substantial contact hours is usually more effective (Opfer & Pedder, 2011:384). The considerations that will influence the learning that happens during these contact hours also include the physical environment within which such professional learning opportunities are presented.

The results of actively engaging lecturers in their own learning should be changes in lecturer practices, attitudes and beliefs and should lead to student achievement, which is in contrast with professional learning that occurs "via presentation and the memorization of new knowledge" (Opfer & Pedder, 2011:384). In their research, Elen *et al.* (2007) also found that academics enjoy asking questions and being challenged and that the publications, grants and social networks that accompany research, are highly valued. These authors further concluded that "[t]he ultimate educational outcome for academics in research intensive universities seems to be the development of a specific epistemological belief system" (p. 135).

The context emerging while a professional learning opportunity is being facilitated will influence the learning and change in beliefs that could take place. We are reminded by Opfer and Pedder (2011:389) that the lecturer's conceptions about teaching and learning has a particularly strong influence on the how and the what of their learning (Opfer & Pedder, 2011:389). Rogers (2003) as quoted by Maxwell (2012:ix) adds to this view when stating "for people to adopt an innovation, they must see it as helping them to meet a perceived need of theirs, and must also see it as compatible with their other important beliefs and practices". When designing and facilitating professional learning opportunities, it is important for professional learning practitioners to take the principles of learning as applicable to the activity of research into account. Tips and tricks (Light, Cox & Calkins, 2009) and a single recipe will then never be the focus of these opportunities, but it would rather be characterised by inquiry, exploration, evidence, reflection, making sense and personal growth (Brew, 1988, quoted in Brew & Boud, 1995) where lecturers play a participatory role in creating knowledge (Palinscar, 1999).

The perceived generic or discipline-specific nature of the content and discourse used during a professional learning opportunity has a profound influence on the learning of participating academics as application of these newly acquired knowledge has to happen within a discipline (Elton, 2005:115). These discourses could include what is said and how it is said, as well as what is not said – the so-called silences about certain aspects during the professional learning opportunity. Other individual considerations which might influence the level of learning and change that takes place in the individual academic as participant during the professional learning opportunity are the

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following: perceived usability of content (Burke & Hutchins, 2007); generic or specific nature of content (Elton, 2005:115); time for reflection during the learning opportunity (Dall'Alba, 2005:366); level of care (Noddings, 1992) and networks within the group of participants (Trowler & Knight, 2000:31).

As indicated earlier, the ultimate purpose of learning is change and the process of professional learning of academics for their teaching function is thus a change initiative (Trowler *et al.*, 2005; Bamber, 2008). The pinnacle of the process of professional learning of academics for their teaching function should therefore be the facilitation of changed teaching beliefs and habits. According to Trowler (2005:29), theories of change "have considerable potential to improve practice in the enhancement of teaching and learning in higher education". A word of caution comes from Guskey (2002:389), though, indicating that the process of lecturer change as result of the process of professional learning "is complex, it is not haphazard" and therefore it is important to keep in mind that all real changes involve loss, anxiety and struggle (Fullan, 1994; Webster-Wright, 2009:717). This notion is re-iterated by Guhn (2009), who indicated that resistance to change is often experienced, as change usually requires new competencies which might lead to a situation in which the academic has to expose his/her lack of competence and experience the feeling of being a novice again. The professional learning practitioner should thus give careful attention to the facilitation of change-making – mainly in a change in attitude and conduct (Darnton, 2008:40) – as well as to the endurance of change, to ensure more effective and powerful professional learning opportunities.

A change in teaching practices is often the precursor to changed beliefs (Fullan, 2006), which is something the individual academic him/herself is responsible for. In taking a different viewpoint on this issue, Opfer and Pedder (2011:386) argue that change in one area might not necessarily lead to change in another area. According to them, learning in one area should "affect and be enacted and supported" in another area. In referring to the term "reflective action" as used by Jack Mezirow (Mezirow, 2000), Webster-Wright (2009:722) highlighted how "reflection in learning can be a purposeful and active process leading to change". Noddings (1992) adds the prerequisite of a caring environment for meaningful reflection to take place. It is further stated by Opfer and Pedder (2011:390) that academics will usually look for learning activities that are aligned with their conceptions of learning. If their engagements in professional learning opportunities lead to changes in their knowledge, practice or belief, however, their orientation towards learning should change as well. Such a situation might then lead to lecturers seeking different types of learning activities. These authors stress that all these changes are nested within the structures of the institution. According to organisational learning theory (Senge, 1990), it is the individuals within an organisation who do the learning but, even so, institutional change is usually difficult and the

introduction and use of new knowledge by individuals is complex in any such context (Eraut, 1994:31). In quoting other authors, "a compromise position" is suggested by Opfer and Pedder (2011:391) where organisational learning is defined as a social process influenced by contextual considerations, for example organisational structure "which in turn affect the way individuals learn".

Trowler (2005:28) and Darnton (2008:41) state that both successful learning and successful change are processes and no single events. This means that "the true meaning and character of an initiative will develop" only when implemented. In this regard, professional learning practitioners are cautioned by Webster-Wright (2009:727) that the act of professional learning "cannot be controlled", but academics "can be supported to continue to learn in their own authentic way while taking into account the expectations of their working contexts". Guskey (2002:383-384) proposes that it "is not the professional development *per se*, but the experience of successful implementation" visible through improved student learning that change the attitudes and beliefs of lecturers. What is found to be useful will then be retained and repeated, while that which does not work or does not yield results will be abandoned. These statements are also aligned with that of Lent *et al*. (2002:262) when they indicate that "personal attainments are typically seen as the most potent or compelling source of self-efficacy".

It is clear that participation in a professional learning opportunity is not the end of the process of professional learning. According to Eraut (1994:71), the way in which knowledge is introduced and linked to the ongoing professional concerns of academics affects the implementation thereof, as well as the ability and willingness of people to use it, which is mainly determined by the individual academics themselves as well as their work contexts (Ginns *et al.*, 2010:236). The notion of implementing what was learned during the professional learning opportunity is the link to the section below discussing the influence of the students in the decision-making of academics to implement what was learned.

4.7.2.4 The influence of the students and infrastructure on decision making about participating in phase three of the process of professional learning

The notion of professional learning as a complex process with "various dynamics at work" (Opfer & Pedder, 2011:378) culminating in an action, is supported by Eraut (1994:30) stating that "[t]here is a strong expectation that new knowledge will be acquired by all members of the institution – staff as well as students – that knowledge acquisition is a continuing lifelong process, and that new knowledge will be put to good use". He continues by emphasising the fact that lecturers should be

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learners and complete the learning process by implementing their newly acquired knowledge. The implementation of what was learned during professional learning opportunities is however "left to chance" too often according to Merriam and Leahy (2005:2). They list different variables that influence the transfer and implementation of what was learned (Merriam & Leahy, 2005:4) and these include learner characteristics, program design and work environment as the most influential. As indicated earlier, this phase of the process of professional learning takes place after a professional learning opportunity, when the individual academics are back in their departments and/or standing in front of the class.

The context within which the changed thoughts about teaching should be implemented is crucial for the completion of the process of professional learning. The direct site for this application or implementation is usually the classroom. Contexts supportive of the process of professional learning for teaching should also be conducive to the changes that the professional learning opportunities are designed to bring about (Harwell, 2003:3). In this regard we are reminded by Scribner (1999:242) that knowledge has to be used in some form in order to be acquired and become a part of the user.

According to Guskey (2002:384) lecturers will only change their teaching practices when they have seen a new approach working in their classrooms. This is in line with Bolster (1983:298) who indicated that lecturers only believe new ideas and principles about teaching to be useful once they have been successfully implemented. Certain considerations within the classroom environment will however act as enabling or constraining by the specific individual academic. These considerations include the following: the number of students in a specific class; the diversity of the student body; the prospect of student feedback and its influence on performance appraisals; the physical facilities and infrastructure available (also see Ginns *et al*., 2010:236).

Exploring the implementation or application of what was learned during a professional learning opportunity could be done through the transfer of training theory published by Grossman and Salas (2011). Transfer of training is described by them as the extent to which the professional learning resulting from the professional learning opportunity "transfers to the job and leads to relevant changes" (Grossman & Salas, 2011:105). Another definition comes from Merriam and Leahy (2005:3), who state that transfer is the "effective and continuing application" of the knowledge and skills gained during learning activities to the performance of a job. Transfer is therefore seen as part of the "meaning-making process" because the meaning of this new knowledge could be changed again during the application and implementation of what was learned (*ibid*.:4).

4.8   The conceptual framework for this study

As a professional learning practitioner and researcher in this field, I see the ultimate purpose of professional learning for teaching as the promotion of quality student learning (see A in the framework below). The quality of student learning is influenced by a myriad of factors, however. Two of the factors that play an imperative role in the quality student learning are of importance for this study, namely 'good' teaching (see 1 in Fig 4.6) and a 'good' lecturer (see 2 in Fig 4.6), as both of these could potentially be addressed through the process of professional learning for teaching.
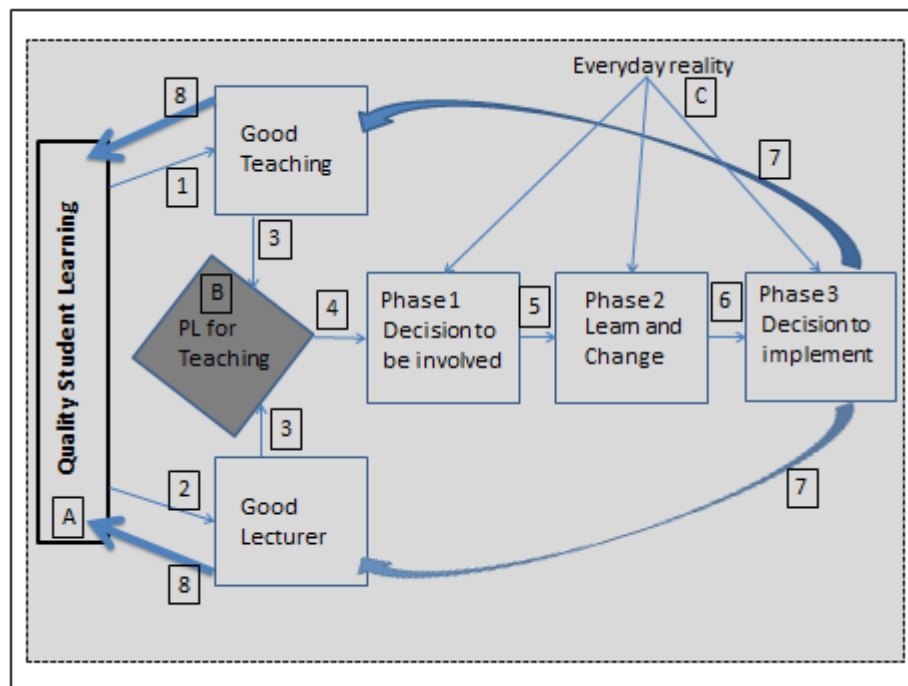
Figure 4.6: Conceptual framework for the study

Context as the daily reality of lecturers (see light grey block C in Fig. 4.6) influences the choices academics make concerning their participation in each of the three phases in the process of professional learning. This Big-C, individual context or daily reality of the individual lecturer emerges when the individual is confronted with a situation during which the considerations from the personal and professional spheres of the life-world are interpreted. This individual context translates into an opportunity cost which can be enabling or constraining to decision making about participating in the process of professional learning. An example of such a situation would be when the individual receives or sees an advertisement for a professional learning opportunity. This situation will differ from lecturer to lecturer because the here and now of every person are different (Schutz & Luckmann, 1973). Within each situation the interplay between the considerations from the personal and professional spheres of the life-world of the academic will create a unique context

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which could either be enabling or constraining to the decision to accept the invitation, or not. High workload and lack of time, feelings of not being valued or cared for, mixed messages and absence of regard and reward for teaching are but some of the most important considerations translating into an opportunity cost which could be constraining to such choices.

As indicated earlier, many professional learning opportunities are available at SU, but the uptake is often disheartening and when lecturers do participate, they sometimes do not follow through and implement what they had learned. Learning, including professional learning, however, is defined as a process of change ending with the implementation, or application, of the newly acquired knowledge or skills (Scribner, 1999). In this research, professional learning for teaching (see small dark grey block B in Figure 4.6) is thus defined as a process which is aligned with that of decision making as described in Section 4.4 above. Decision making for participation in the process of professional learning for teaching starts (see Figure 4.6, number 4) when the individual lecturer has to take a decision (pre-decision) about becoming involved in the three-phase process of professional learning. This choice is influenced by the daily reality of the individual as he/she weighs the available alternatives, evaluates the expected outcomes and calculates the potential risk in terms of the perceived payoffs (Ginns *et al.*, 2010:242).

This is followed by undertaking another choice when the lecturer is actually participating in the professional learning opportunity where learning and change will be facilitated (see Figure 4.6, number 5). For the creation of an enabling context during this phase, it is important for professional learning practitioners as facilitators of lecturer learning, to bear the principles of adult learning in mind (Knowles, 1973, 1977, 1984) in order to enable decisions to learn. Designing and facilitating of the learning opportunities should thus follow from the kind of activities 'that lecturers do'. Professional learning activities therefore have to be informed by the principles of research, make use of active learning principles, and be useful to lecturers. As described before, the process of professional learning for teaching will only be completed when the lecturer subsequently takes a decision to implement what was learned. This decision would only be taken when the learning opportunity has led to a change in the lecturer's own knowledge and beliefs (see Figure 4.6, number 7).

The last phase in the process is the post-decision phase during which the choice and accompanying consequences are evaluated and the lecturer is confronted with the decision to implement what was learned during the learning opportunity (see Figure 4.6, number 6). Following from here would be a change in teaching practices and behaviour, which should lead to an improvement in student learning (see Figure 4.6, number 8).

The act of decision making thus consists of three interlinked and sequential phases. At three different points during the process of professional learning, different decisions concerning the same issue have to be taken. Each of these decisions is influenced by the unique context emerging from the interplay between the considerations from the spheres of the personal and professional life-world of the individual lecturer. When the individual academic experiences the process of professional learning as positive and leading to the intended changes, chances are that the lecturer will be repeating his/her participation in the process of professional learning for teaching in future.

4.9   Summary

This research is responding to a call for research on the interrelationship between the individual academic as learner, context and learning instead of only acknowledging their relationship but studying them separately (Webster-Wright, 2009:712). Another relevant call was for an investigation of the factors influencing the implementation of what was learned, 'before, during and after' a learning opportunity (Grossman & Salas, 2011).

The purpose of the theoretical perspectives reported in this chapter was to clarify the three remaining main concepts of the study, namely context, professional learning and decision making. This was done by drawing on understandings of relevant literature and reigning theories in the fields of professional development, learning and decision making. This also includes the significance of an underpinning ethos of care which emerged as an important part of a conceptual framework which forms the basis for the empirical part of the study.

In the next chapter I discuss the research methodology that was followed in the empirical part of my research.

Chapter 5
Research methodology

5.1   Introduction

A fact often emphasised in literature is that educational research should be 'useful' and 'relevant' to those working in educational settings (Sikes & Nixon, 2003:1). Furthermore such research should have an "educational purpose" rather than only being "research about education" (*ibid*.:4). The focus of this study is thus on the production of knowledge within the broader field of educational practice in which its contribution lies. This notion of educational research being useful, relevant and applicable to practice resonates with who I am as person and as researcher and was therefore also the purpose of this project. Such explorative research investigates the social and contextual meanings of interactions for the individual (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005) and emphasises the qualities individuals ascribe to events, experiences, processes and structures (Miles & Huberman, 1994:10). According to Maxwell (2012:114), this type of research interrogates real-world situations as well as perceptions of reality ensuing from the interactions between individuals, groups, events and environments.

Miles and Huberman (1994) reason that social research making use of qualitative or narrative data, provides the best route for discovery and exploration. Such research uses evidence from narrative data as well as from literature in the pursuit of gaining a better understanding of phenomena (Henning *et al.*, 2004:3). Researchers exploring social phenomena often make use of non-numerical data to better understand and address research problems. Generating appropriate data for research making use of qualitative data asks for a number of essential characteristics (Merriam, 1998:6; Bogdan & Biklen, 2006; Van Schalkwyk, 2008:114). These include characteristics that:

- Assume that reality is constructed by individuals in interaction with their social worlds;
- Agree that meaning is rooted in people's experiences and this meaning is mediated through the researcher's own perceptions;
- Have the researcher as the primary instrument for data collection and analysis and place her within the world being observed;
- Involve fieldwork because it seeks to study phenomena within their natural setting;
- Employ either an inductive or deductive research strategy, or, as is the case in this research, a multidirectional and iterative strategy;
- Are predominantly interpretive;
- Are naturalistic and not experimental;

- Are context-specific;
- Seek to understand and describe rather than to explain;
- Use a range of different methods to generate appropriate data;
- Produce, for the most part, data that are verbal and which provide in-depth ('thick'), rich descriptions of the situations, places, people or events being investigated.

A number of authors including Merriam (1998:44), Henning et al. (2004:142) and Yin (2009:26) state that all empirical research needs a research design – a blueprint or management plan guiding the research activities in the areas of which questions to study, which data would be relevant, which data to collect and how to analyse these. For this research, the 'initial plan' (Yin, 2009) was adapted along the way. According to Maxwell (2012:76), the view of a research design "as an ongoing, interactive process" is indeed a good fit for research that mainly uses qualitative data. In the remainder of this chapter I discuss the research design for this study by describing the process that guided the empirical work; providing a motivation for the research decisions taken; and discussing the process of data analysis.

5.2   Purpose and aims of this study

This study was designed with the purpose of exploring and describing the possible influence of context on the decision making of academics regarding becoming involved in the process of professional learning for their teaching role at Stellenbosch University. The study also aimed at informing professional learning practitioners such as myself and my colleagues about the influence of context on the decision making of academics at a research-intensive institution.

The research question that evolved from the problem described above was formulated as:

How, if at all, do contextual factors influence the decision making of academics for becoming involved in the process of professional learning for teaching at a research-intensive university?

Two subsidiary questions arose from this research question:

1. *Which considerations may contribute to individual academics' decision making regarding participation in the process of professional learning for teaching at Stellenbosch University?*
2. *How can the decision making of academics regarding participation in the process of professional learning for teaching be better enabled at Stellenbosch University?*

Figure 5.1 below illustrates how the posed subsidiary research questions were linked to the different data sources. This corresponds with Miles and Huberman's (1994:20) suggestion regarding the

usefulness of a "researcher's map of the territory being investigated". The thickness and solidity of the lines indicate the comparative relevance of the various data sources in the empirical part of the study.
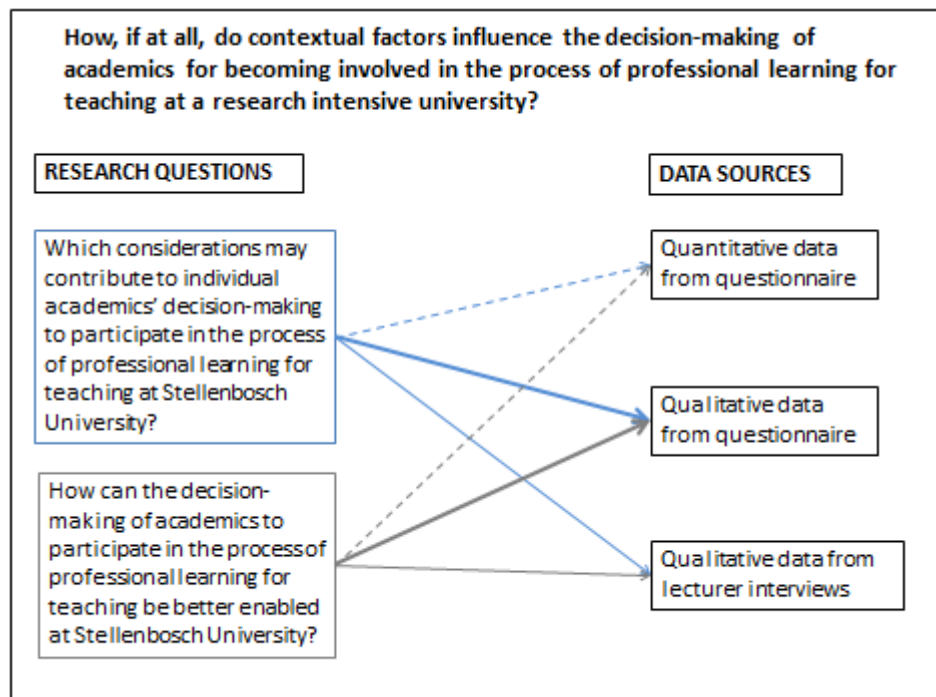
Figure 5.1: Framework relating research questions to different data sets and results

The study was multidirectional and iterative in nature. In this I was guided by relevant theoretical perspectives when analysing and interpreting the data and then responding to new understandings in a dialogical way in order to expand on the theory and to build constructs that could frame the data. In the final instance a theoretical perspective was taken that would make sense of reality as observed and interpreted. Furthermore, this study was mainly positioned within an interpretive paradigm as it viewed "the situation through the eyes of participants" (Cohen *et al.*, 2011:293) and focused on the experiences of individuals and how specific situations influence their decision making in different ways. These "subjective experiences of the external world" by individual academics allow the researcher to adopt such an interpretive approach (Terre Blanche, Durrheim & Painter, 2006:7).

5.3   Research design

As a professional learning practitioner I am interested in the professional learning of academics for their teaching function at Stellenbosch University, a research-intensive higher education institution. The research question was intended to produce "useful knowledge" (Feilzer, 2010:6). This way of working is aligned with the statement by Miles and Huberman (1994:5) that individual studies will

apply and use the methodology in a unique way to generate original knowledge contributions. This fluidity complicates the situation for the researcher and places a responsibility on him/her to make the choices explicit in the research report (Denscombe, 2007). The choices and research decisions made to direct this study are described in the sections that follow.

Methodology is "more than just methods" (Morgan, 2007:68), it concerns the means [including methods] the researcher uses to understand the world better (Henning *et al.*, 2004:15), in other words, the ways in which we try to get answers to our research questions. Researchers are urged to choose the most appropriate research methods (Feilzer, 2010:13) in order to provide the best understanding of the stated research problem and are driven by the research questions (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2005:385; Creswell, 2009:11; Cohen *et al.*, 2011:23).

This study focused on gaining an understanding of a phenomenon through accessing the local knowledge from those who found themselves within the very conditions and could voice their lived experiences (Barnes, 2012). Such local knowledge is situated and contextual, which means that proposed solutions are particular and embedded in understandings of "how things work in [a] specific context and [are] based on practical reasoning" (Barnes, 2012:156). Given the research focus on context, this study relied mostly on participants' perceptions generated as qualitative data from lecturers' open comments to an anonymous electronic questionnaire, as well as from individual interviews. Some quantitative data from the anonymous electronic questionnaire were used in support of the narrative data. Using multiple data sources within the explorative case created a space for multiple perceptions and ways of knowing.

This study thus generated qualitative (non-numerical/narrative) as well as quantitative (numerical) data within the context of an institutional case. According to van Schalkwyk (2008:115), the purpose of a study making use mostly of qualitative or narrative data is to interpret so as to obtain an understanding of a particular phenomenon. The focus thus is on the qualities of the phenomenon when the *what, how* and *why* of the case or phenomenon are determined (Henning *et al.*, 2004:3). The research questions that guided this study illustrated this focus. The richly descriptive nature of non-numerical data (Merriam, 1998:8) promoting a thorough understanding is the most distinctive characteristic of research that makes use of qualitative data (Stake, 1995). This understanding is established through "thick" (*ibid*.:39) or deep description and the uniqueness of each case and context is deemed important. "Thick descriptions" or "rich data", as Maxwell (2012:43) prefers to call it, is described as "data that are detailed and varied enough that they provide a fuller and more revealing picture of what is going on, and of the processes involved".

Selecting a research design concerns finding the appropriate fit, based on the nature of the investigation and the purpose of the research (Denscombe, 2007) as evident from the research

problem and stated research question(s). An explorative, single case, institutional case study design was employed for this research using the data generated from an anonymous electronic questionnaire and semi-structured interviews with selected lecturers. Supporting the notion of finding solutions, a case study design proves to be useful (Stake, 1995:245) because it allows the researcher to answer specific questions (Yin, 2009:4), while also giving attention to influences from the context (Baxter & Jack, 2008:556). Furthermore, a case, when being studied, has a "unique life" (Stake, 1995) and is a "bounded system" (Creswell, 2009:12).

5.3.1　Case study research

In his seminal work on case study research, Yin (2009:2) draws the attention of the social sciences researcher to the fact that the case study is one of many ways for undertaking social science research. He also cautions the researcher that case study research is one of the "most challenging" of all such endeavours (*ibid*.:3). David (2006:xxvii) adds that case study research can address complex interactions which cannot be reduced easily, or simplified or examined by statistical tests. The value of case study research, according to Simons (2006:226), lies in its ability "to challenge orthodox thinking … to reveal in-depth understanding and, most importantly, to take a quantum leap in how we come to understand complex educational situations" and to reveal "what it is like" to be in a specific situation (Cohen *et al.*, 2011:290). One of the reasons why such complex relationships and specific situations can be investigated when using a case study design, is the use of multiple methods for generating both qualitative and quantitative data, as these contribute to a more complete picture of the case.

Case studies are the ideal method when 'how' or 'why' (or 'cause' and 'effect') questions are asked (Cohen *et al.*, 2011:289), when the researcher has little control over the events as it is investigated within the 'natural setting' and when the focus is on a contemporary phenomenon (Yin, 2009:2). According to Yin (2009:4), the case study as a research design is used to contribute to knowledge in various situations and offering representative knowledge (Thomas, 2011). Merriam (1998:19) states that case studies are used to gain in-depth understanding and that the process is more important than the outcomes; the interest is more in the context than in a variable and discovery is valued more than confirmation. The definition of a case study given by Denscombe (2007:31), namely that it is an intensive investigation of a single unit involving the examination of multiple factors and using a variety of methods, resonated with this study.

Having been involved in the professional learning of academics for their teaching for many years, and doing smaller research projects, I suspected there was more to be "unravelled" (Henning *et al.*, 2004:32) and "illuminated" (Merriam, 1998:65). The aim of describing the case was thus to get a

holistic understanding of patterns and relationships (Denscombe, 2007:32) in an endeavour to gain answers to the stated research questions and to understand the influences on lecturer decision making about participating in the process of professional learning for teaching. These characteristics of case studies prompted my decision to use a case study design to investigate the problem of lecturer decision making and uptake of professional learning opportunities for teaching in this study.

Making use of an explorative case study design allowed the use of multiple methods for generating quantitative data from electronic questionnaires, as well as richer sets of qualitative data (Stake, 1995:142) from written motivations and explanations in the electronic questionnaire and follow-up interviews in order to provide for a 'full' case and a full picture of the phenomenon (Henning *et al.*, 2004:33; Morgan, 2007:48). The affordance of case studies to combine numerical and narrative data is described by Cohen *et al.* (2011:289) as "a prototypical instance of mixed methods research". A prerequisite for this type of research is to generate complementary data (Yin, 2009:63; Cohen *et al.*, 2011:23) through the different methods, though, by answering the same research questions. This then allows investigators to "address more complicated research questions and collect [a] richer and stronger array of evidence" (Yin, 2009:63).

Some confusion often creeps in between the data collection sources and the unit of analysis in case study research (Yin, 2009:88). For this study focusing on Stellenbosch University as an institution and making use of an institutional case study design, the data collection sources were individual academics, while the unit of analysis – the bounded system, or the case – was the decision making of academics about becoming involved in the process of professional learning for their teaching function. The decision making of academics for participating in the process of professional learning for their teaching function was described and analysed according to the perceived contextual factors influencing academics' choices to become involved in this process of professional learning. This was also done in order to explore the characteristics of an environment conducive to such decision making by academics at a research-intensive university. This study does not assume that institutions should be able to respond to every academic's individual needs, but rather strives to offer awareness with respect to how individuals perceive their contexts and how contexts influence their decision making when participation in the process of professional learning for their teaching is concerned. Analysing the Stellenbosch case also adds to professional learning practitioners' knowledge for future facilitation of the process of professional learning.

As explained above, a case study design was selected because it was seen as the most appropriate way to answer the formulated research questions and was considered the most appropriate vehicle for in-depth educational research. However, case study designs also have limitations and

disadvantages which should be noted. Merriam (1998:42), Denscombe (2007:40) and Babbie and Mouton (2001:283) caution the case study researcher about the following limitations:

- Case studies are limited by the sensitivity and integrity of the researcher as primary instrument of data collection and analysis – the so-called 'insider';
- The issue of ethics whereby an unethical case writer could select anything he/she wished to illustrate from the available data;
- The amount of data generated could be too large an undertaking to finalise;
- Case studies might oversimplify or exaggerate a situation;
- Similar to most small-scale research projects, readers might think that case studies are accounts of the whole while it is in fact only 'a slice of life'.

Although the strengths of the case study as research design outweighed its limitations, I was aware of the stated limitations during the research process. The ways in which the relevant limitations were addressed are discussed at appropriate points in this chapter.

5.4   The study as part of a national project

At this point it is also important to position this study methodologically as part of an umbrella project funded by the South African National Research Foundation (NRF). The researcher, as a PhD candidate, participated in a national research project entitled *The Interplay of Structure, Culture and Agency: Contextual influences on the professional development of academics as teachers in higher education in South Africa* (Reference: ESA201007290000013945, Grant No: 74003). This national study was undertaken between 2010 and 2013 by 18 researchers from eight different South African universities. The umbrella project investigated the influence of structure, culture and agency (Archer, 2000) on the uptake of opportunities for professional development of academics in their teaching roles. It was initiated by a call for the enhancement of both the effectiveness of student learning as measured by throughput and the quality of graduates (Scott *et al.*, 2007).

The purpose of the umbrella research project of the NRF was to gain clarity about the provision of opportunities for the professional development of academics in their teaching role in South Africa, with a view to inform future policy on academic professional development. The NRF project investigated four main research questions. Firstly, it aimed to determine what could be learnt about the interplay of structure, culture and agency with regard to the professional development of academics as lecturers, from a series of case studies in South African higher education settings. As a second aim it looked at the conditions which enabled and constrained the professional development of academics in their role as lecturers in these settings with regard to their uptake and application of

afforded opportunities. The third research question sought to determine to what extent these conditions were context-specific. Lastly, the project aimed to find out whether one could develop profiles of the kinds of academics that take advantage of these opportunities and whether these profiles were context specific?

The investigation for the national project took place on three levels, namely the national (macro), the institutional (meso), and the individual (micro) levels. At the macro level, the national policy environment was analysed with regard to the enhancement of teaching and learning and the professional development of academics. At the meso level the unique context of each participating institution was analysed, including the policies on teaching; the professional development of academics; the opportunities for professional development offered, and the "regimes of teaching" at the level of faculty, department or "workgroup" (Becher & Trowler, 2001). Finally at the micro level, the study explored how and why individual academics took advantage, or not, of opportunities to develop professionally.

The lead institution of the project was Stellenbosch University. Four project members (including the primary investigator) were from Stellenbosch. The University of Cape Town (UCT) and Rhodes University (RU) each had three project members while the University of the Western Cape (UWC), the Cape Peninsula University of Technology (CPUT) and the University of Venda (UV) had two project members each. The Durban University of Technology and University of Fort Hare each had one project member.

All group members participated in the design and development of the instruments for the project as well as the analysis of data for project outputs. Both the quantitative and qualitative instruments used to generate data for the larger NRF umbrella project were also used to generate the data for my PhD study. As project member I thus participated in both processes and I was also the convenor for the design, development and administration of the electronic questionnaire. These processes are described in detail later in this chapter.

Given the fact that the purposes of the NRF project and this PhD study overlapped, it was decided to use the same instruments and data sets for the two studies. These will be described in more detail below. Because of this study's particular understanding of context and the focus on decision making, however, different theoretical frameworks were used as lenses to analyse, interpret and understand the data.

5.5 Research participants at Stellenbosch University

The participants in my research were drawn from the 1083 permanently employed academics at Stellenbosch University as the link to the electronic questionnaire was sent to all. The demographic details of the respondents to the questionnaire are given as part of the research results in Chapter 6. The participants in the qualitative part of the data generation process were purposefully selected academic faculty members at Stellenbosch University. The final question contained in the anonymous electronic questionnaire asked respondents to indicate their availability for being interviewed. Eighty respondents indicated their availability for an interview and provided their email addresses to this avail. These 80 potential interviewees were categorised according to their responses to question 17 in the questionnaire where they had to indicate how often they participated in professional learning opportunities for their teaching. Respondents had four options to choose from, namely once a term or more, once a semester, once a year or less, and never. Four participants from each of the four response groupings were purposively selected in an attempt to ensure a representative sample of the Stellenbosch University academic staff complement within the group of fifteen interviewees. A matrix table indicating more detailed information on these interviewees is attached as Addendum A.

5.6 Data collection

Data for this research were collected from academic staff members at Stellenbosch University through an electronic questionnaire sent to all permanently appointed academics and through semi-structured interviews with purposefully selected individuals.

5.6.1 Ethical considerations

As part of the NRF umbrella project, ethical clearance for this investigation was obtained by the primary investigator from the Stellenbosch University Research Ethics Committee for Social Sciences (REC) before the research commenced at the institution (Reference number 582/2011) (see Addendum F). Institutional permission was also obtained from the division for Institutional Research and Planning before the research commenced (see Addendum G).

All participation was voluntary and lecturers responding to the questionnaire had to select between agreeing or declining to participate before the first question was displayed. The option of agreeing to participate included their consent for the data to be used for research purposes and that their responses would be treated confidentially and reported anonymously. The last question in the survey asked whether respondents would avail themselves for an interview and they were requested to supply their email addresses. In an attempt to ensure anonymity, the responses and email

addresses were disaggregated by the institutional survey administrator before it was made available to the researchers.

Potential interviewees were contacted by the interviewers. Upon agreement to being interviewed, an appointment was arranged and the interview questions were mailed to the potential interviewees. Each interviewee was requested to sign a consent form prior to the start of the interview and all the completed consent forms were forwarded to the primary investigator. A copy of the consent form is included as Addendum B. After the interviews were transcribed, all interviewees were allotted pseudonyms to protect their identity. All transcripts were emailed to interviewees for member checking.

5.6.2　Development of instruments

As indicated earlier, both quantitative and qualitative data were collected for the NRF project as well as for this study. This was done through a multi-methods approach and, for this study, with an explorative case study. During a NRF project member meeting in November 2011 it was decided that the anonymous electronic questionnaire would comprise the first round of data collection for the broader NRF project. The data from the questionnaire would then be used to inform semi-structured interviews with the lecturers. I was involved in the development of the instrumentation and was responsible in particular for the design, development and administering of the anonymous electronic questionnaire for the umbrella project.

Given the fact that the purposes of the NRF umbrella project and this PhD study overlapped, it was decided to use the same instruments and data sets for the two studies. These will be described in more detail below. In an attempt to ensure an original contribution from this PhD study however, different theoretical frameworks were used as lenses to analyse, interpret and understand the data.

5.7　Generating quantitative and qualitative data through an electronic questionnaire survey

5.7.1　Background

The questionnaire survey had three aims: the first was to locate patterns of belief about the needs for professional learning for teaching; the second to explore what the uptake of professional learning for teaching has been; and the third to ascertain perceptions of enabling and constraining factors within each institutional environment influencing the uptake of professional learning opportunities for teaching.

A sub-group consisting of five NRF project members was formed to design and develop the questionnaire and to ensure that it was administered according to the agreed timelines. As a member of this sub-group, I agreed to be the convenor of this phase. A questionnaire, originally designed by Slowey and Kozina (2013) from the Dublin City University, was used as source document. Permission for the use of the questionnaire was granted by Professor Slowey via email. An NRF project member subsequently did a comparative analysis between the original questionnaire from Dublin City University and the newly created NRF questionnaire and identified that there was a less than fifty percent similarity.

The newly created NRF questionnaire (Addendum C) consisted of four sections. The first section contained biographical questions about gender, age, race, highest qualification, teaching qualifications, nature of position, level of position and disciplinary field. Section two focused on the teaching experience of the participants and included questions about the number of years they had been teaching in higher education, the number of years they had been teaching at their current higher education institution and their main area(s) of teaching involvement. Following these questions, the participants were asked to rate themselves as teachers and indicate how they felt about their role as teacher. The third section looked at participants' professional learning and asked questions about the areas in which professional learning opportunities had been attended, how often they participated in professional learning for teaching, where they went for help about their teaching and in which areas of their teaching they asked for help. The last section focused on the factors enabling and constraining their participation in professional learning opportunities and asked whether their institution provided formal recognition for professional learning in teaching and resources for engagement. Another question explored whether their workload hindered their participation; whether professional learning themes were relevant; and how easily they could access information about professional learning for teaching at their institutions. Each of the options in this last section of the questionnaire had to be substantiated. The last question of the questionnaire asked participants to supply their contact details if they were willing to be interviewed by the project members.

5.7.2   Design and development

Social science researchers are advised by Yin (2009:3) to demonstrate methodological rigour. From the start of designing the electronic questionnaire, the process followed a rigorous feedback and rework cycle. The guidelines offered by Dillman (2009) for questionnaire design were helpful in this process. He suggests that potential respondents could be motivated to participate when the perceived rewards for responding were high; when the perceived costs of responding were low; and

when people believed the rewards would outweigh the costs of responding. The first draft of the questionnaire was discussed with a statistician who indicated that it adhered to all questionnaire criteria; that any statistician would be able to do statistical analysis; that it correlated with the stated outcomes of the research; and that it was short and to the point. This draft document was distributed amongst the 18 project members for feedback. Members were asked to look at it from their own institutions' point of view to ensure that it covered the uniqueness of their contexts. Feedback on this version was received from five members from four of the participating institutions. The comments from these members were included and a second version of the questionnaire was uploaded on the SU electronic survey system, SUnSurveys. The link to this first electronic version was subsequently sent to the two SU colleagues who formed part of the small group responsible for designing and administering the questionnaire. The two colleagues completed it electronically and gave their feedback on the contents of the questionnaire, as well as on the use of the electronic system. Their feedback was included in order to refine the electronic questionnaire before the next round of testing.

The second electronic version of the questionnaire was sent to several experts, including my PhD supervisor, co-supervisor and NRF project leader, a colleague who is an NRF project member as well as to three colleagues within the Centre for Teaching and Learning (CTL). They were requested to 'test and stretch' the electronic system and to comment on the formulation of the questions, as well as on content, usefulness, clarity, or other necessary aspects. Feedback was received from four of these sources and this was used to refine the questionnaire before the electronic link to a third electronic version of the questionnaire was sent to 16 of the 18 NRF project members (excluding the two members who gave feedback on the second electronic version), asking them to do the same as above and to look at it through their own institutional lenses. On this request, the questionnaire was completed by six members from five different institutions and they also gave their feedback, which was used to streamline the questionnaire before piloting it.

One of the most important steps in designing and developing a questionnaire is pre-testing it (Cohen *et al.*, 2011:402). Getting formative feedback on the questionnaire from NRF team members as well as CTL colleagues was thus important in order to increase the reliability and validity, as well as to ensure absolute clarity of the wording of the questions and optional answers. The next phase of pre-testing was to pilot the questionnaire with a limited number of experts and respondents. Twenty-two academics, newly appointed to SU, but with prior teaching experience, were asked to complete the questionnaire and provide feedback. The 22 academics selected to participate in the pilot phase, participated in the PREDAC programme at SU at the beginning of 2012. They were not included in the electronic questionnaire survey at the institution, because they would have been employed at the

institution for less than a year and would not have been appointed in permanent positions yet at the time of administering the questionnaire. As part of their acceptance for participating in the PREDAC programme they had to complete a questionnaire indicating, amongst other things, their prior experience in teaching in higher education. The organisers of the PREDAC programme supplied me with the names and contact details of the 22 PREDAC participants who indicated that they had previous teaching experience. They were contacted and requested to print the questionnaire and to complete it in hard copy. The request to them was to look at issues of content, formulation, flow, et cetera as this pilot process "[did] not focus on data, but on matters of coverage and format" (Cohen *et al.*, 2011:402). Feedback was received from 11 of the pilot participants (50%). Their feedback was positive and minor changes – mainly improvements - were made to the questionnaire. During the first week of May 2012 the questionnaire went live and the link was sent out to the permanently employed academics at the eight participating institutions. The questionnaire was available during the period 8 to 28 May 2012.

5.7.3   Administering of the questionnaire

In tandem with the design and development of the questionnaire, NRF members had to apply for ethical clearance at their respective institutions and obtain the email addresses of the permanently employed academics at their institutions in order to send the link to the electronic questionnaire to each of these academics. Ethical clearance had been obtained at Stellenbosch University earlier already, but a list with email addresses of all permanently employed academics was needed. Such a list was requested from the Information Technology (IT) Division. This process was more cumbersome than expected, however, as permission first had to be obtained from the Human Resources (HR) Division before a *communique* could be sent to all the identified staff members. After obtaining permission from the HR Division, the list of email addresses was made available by the IT Division. Email addresses for staff members in the Faculty of Military Science had to be requested from another individual, however, as they were not officially employed by SU, but by the South African National Defence Force. Email addresses from staff members at the Faculty of Health Sciences who held joint appointments in SU and the Provincial Administration of the Western Cape (PAWK) also had to be requested separately. In the end, the final list comprised 1083 email addresses which were uploaded to the SUnSUrvey system. In line with Dillman's suggestions (2009:33), a lot of effort went into the drafting of the accompanying email message. The reminder messages that went out on three subsequent Mondays also adhered to Dillman's suggestion that it "is important to change the look, feel and content of later contacts rather than repeat the same requests over and over". The actual messages are included as Addendum D.

Four SU staff members from a total of 1083 possible respondents to the questionnaire declined to participate in the research by choosing this option right at the start. The overall response rate to the electronic questionnaire thus was 238 from a potential of 943 (1083 original addresses of potential respondents less 140 from whom out of office or non-deliverable messages were received = 943) which indicates a response rate of 25.23%. This relatively high response rate could probably be attributed to the fact that tailored and newly formulated reminder messages were regularly sent to possible respondents.

The responses were captured on the SUnSurvey system and downloaded in Excel format after the closing date. The independent system administrator de-linked all information and responses in an attempt to insure complete anonymity of all respondents. As indicated above, respondents were asked to indicate their willingness to be interviewed and 80 possible interviewees were identified. The process that was followed to identify 16 interviewees is described above. The process of designing and developing the interview instrument and subsequent data generation is discussed in the next section.

5.8 Generation of data through semi-structured interviews

5.8.1 Background

The interview is one of the most important sources of data when doing case study research (Yin, 2009:106). Unfortunately it can never be completely neutral (Fontana & Frey, 2005:696) and is often susceptible to subjectivity and bias (Cohen *et al.*, 2011:41) because the interviewer who leads and controls the process is often also the researcher. The main purpose of any interview is to bring the thoughts, actions and feelings of individual interviewees to the surface in order to have them talking about it (Henning *et al.*, 2004:53). The golden rule for any interviewer is therefore one of guiding the conversation without interfering (*ibid*.). Interviews should be conducted in an trustworthy and accountable atmosphere where the interviewee is seen as a research partner and not merely a source of information (Henning *et al.*, 2004:68) and where the respondent does most of the talking. For this, the researcher needs an overall plan, although it should be flexible (Babbie & Mouton, 2001:289).

For the NRF umbrella project, the project members decided that semi-structured interviews would be conducted with purposefully selected individuals (see criteria later on); thus interview protocols containing the important questions and some probes (Merriam, 1998:82) were needed. It was also decided to digitally record all interviews because all interviews would be transcribed and coded. Although Denscombe (2007:131-132) cautions about two specific disadvantages of using

transcriptions of interviews as the raw data for analysis, firstly because the transcriber may sometimes experience difficulty in hearing everything that is said and, secondly, because it is possible that the data could be "stripped of some of their meaning", the NRF project team decided for pragmatic reasons that all interviews would be transcribed by professionals outside the project. These transcribed interviews would allow the researcher to code, categorise and interpret the data in an attempt to go beyond the 'content' and in the process see what is revealed.

5.8.2   Interviewing the lecturers

A smaller group of NRF project members under leadership of a colleague from the University of the Western Cape had the responsibility of drawing up and refining the interview schedule for interviewing the lecturers. This document is attached as Addendum E. The NRF project members decided that each institution needed to interview at least 15 lecturers for the umbrella project.

As indicated earlier, the last question in the electronic questionnaire asked responding academics to supply their contact details if they were willing to participate in a follow-up interview. Eighty of the 238 participants who completed the questionnaire at Stellenbosch University indicated that they were willing to be interviewed by the project members and supplied their email addresses. The four SU members of the NRF research team originally decided to conduct 16 lecturer-level interviews. Each member of the team was thus going to conduct four interviews. Due to unforeseen circumstances, only 15 interviews were conducted. As one of the SU project members, I therefore conducted four interviews with lecturers at SU. Most of the interviews were conducted in English, but some interviewees requested for it to be conducted in Afrikaans.

Stake (1995:56) warns against leaving the selection of data sources to chance. He further suggests that the researcher should have a "connoisseur's appetite" for the best persons where 'best' would mean those from whom the most can be learned (Merriam, 1998:6) and who will best help to understand the phenomenon being researched. Interviewees should therefore be identified according to their ability to join the journey towards finding enough knowledge about the phenomenon (Henning *et al.*, 2004:71). In line with Yin's (2009:92) suggestion that quantitative data about the entire available pool should first be gathered and criteria be drawn up afterwards in order to stratify or reduce the number of candidates, a matrix was drawn up and interviewees were purposely selected to be interviewed in order to get a representative sample of the SU academic staff complement.

As suggested by Henning *et al*. (2004:71), the identification and selection of interviewees were guided by the main research question and the unit of analysis and it was decided to use the responses to the question about *Frequency of participation in professional learning* as main

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criterion for the selection of interviewees. Following the advice from Merriam (1998:61), the other criteria that were used in the matrix were also determined first; these included gender, race, faculty, highest qualification, whether respondents had a teaching qualification, their level of appointment and number of years' teaching experience in higher education. The matrix of interviewee information is attached as Addendum A.

It was further decided to match the four SU project members who would be conducting the interviews with the selected interviewees, making use of a "symmetrical position" (Henning *et al.*, 2004:68) based on common ground and/or shared attributes, as described by Maxwell (2012:101). Putting interviewer and interviewee on equal footing was an attempt to ensure that the interviewees were not seen as "vessel[s] of information" but rather as a research partners. This 'symmetrical positioning' was done on the bases of rank, geographical location, background and race, with the purpose of creating a safe, trustworthy and accountable atmosphere (Henning *et al.*, 2004:54).

The selected interviewees were contacted by the interviewers and were mostly cooperative and pleased to help someone doing their research (Stake, 1995). Two of the interviewees originally identified according to the matrix of criteria had to be replaced because they were not available when the interviews were conducted. They were replaced by interviewees who had the closest resemblance to their characteristics. All interviews were scheduled to be conducted during October 2012.

5.9   Positioning myself as researcher within this study

As practitioner-researcher, I agree with Sikes and Goodson (2003:33), Henning *et al.* (2004:9) and Guillemin and Gillam (2004) that the values and practices of educational research are shaped by the professional values, beliefs, practices and experiences of the individual educational researcher when existing knowledge, insight (*phronesis* knowledge, according to the Greek philosophers) and practical wisdom are used to explain what has been encountered in the data (Henning *et al*., 2004:9; Sikes & Goodson, 2003:43). The choice of research design, methodology and theoretical framework are also directed by the researcher's values and, in turn, help to shape them. According to Sikes and Goodson (2003:43), research practice cannot be disembodied and the person of the researcher is always there because it is impossible to take the researcher out of any type of research at any stage of the research process. This aligns with the views of Maxwell (2012:98) and Henning *et al*. (2004:6) that the researcher is the analytical or main instrument (Merriam, 1998:20) in the research and how the data will be interpreted is determined by the researcher's knowledge, understanding and expertise.

Trowler (2011) argues that being an insider-researcher has the advantage of being able to produce 'emic' accounts of the data based on "cultural literacy". The advantages of being an insider researcher are also underlined by Henning *et al*. (2004:6) in stating that the background of the researcher ensures that the "thick description" of the data that can be given is more than mere facts and empirical content, but interprets the data, because meaning is not carried by the data only. A reason for the insider-researcher's ability to give a 'thick description' of lived realities is given by Maxwell (2012:87) in "experiential knowledge is often more credible than that drawn from prior research, because it is grounded in direct acquaintance with the settings, people or phenomena" being studied. The experiences of the insider-researcher also add valuable insights and critical knowledge to understanding the experiences of the participants (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Merriam & Leahy, 2005).

Having been a professional learning practitioner for 20 years and knowing my own personal attributes and preferences, I chose to locate this research within an interpretive paradigm from where I also used my own prior experience and expert knowledge (Yin, 2009:161) in analysing the data. This positioning of myself as the researcher also pointed towards an ethical awareness as alluded to by Pring (2003:52). According to Pring (2003) researchers are becoming more aware of the ethical dimensions of conducting educational research and because of this, it is important to keep in mind the research principle that "conclusions are supported by evidence and that the relation of conclusion to evidence, and the evidence on which those conclusions are drawn, should be open to scrutiny – and might be considered acceptable only if they have withstood public criticism" (*ibid*.:55). In order to establish the credibility of the conclusions, it is thus necessary to address all significant validity threats which could exist.

As insider-researcher one might lose the ability to produce decent, culturally neutral, 'etic' accounts of the data (Trowler, 2011). As mentioned earlier, it is therefore of utmost importance to ensure the "inescapable dependence on the trustworthiness" of the researcher in exercising judgment as objectively as possible; to conclude only those things that can be justified in the light of the data; and to be open to feedback and comment of peers (Pring, 2003:56). Furthermore, the level of trust between the researcher and the researched, on the basis of which information is shared, is a matter of implicitly being trusted with confidential information and making oneself vulnerable.

As researcher, I am also in agreement with Sikes and Goodson (2003:48) that "research practice is immoral if researchers do not own their involvement in the process" and if their "research practice is mechanistic and applied in a technical manner without regard for the specific conditions and circumstances of each particular research context". Thus I have tried to be both objective and

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critical while looking at and reporting on the data, while concurrently being an insider, outsider, both and neither (Mullings, 1999:337).

5.10 Quality of the data

It is of paramount importance for any study to ensure the integrity and quality of the data. According to Maxwell (2012:128), researchers using qualitative data have been advocating the use of concepts like 'trustworthy' and 'authentic' instead of 'reliable' and 'valid' as these terms are more representative of the standards employed by qualitative researchers. Earlier, Babbie and Mouton (2001:276-278) also indicated that good non-numerical research is trustworthy, which includes the notions of being credible, transferable, dependable and confirmable. They further advised that triangulation should be implemented to enhance validity and reliability (*ibid*.:275). Although case study research used to be considered 'soft' research (Yin, 2009:2), the research can be made 'hard' by implementing multiple research methods or "multiple sources of data" (Yin, 2009:42) in collecting the data within a single case study, as is the case in this study.

Another influence on the trustworthiness of research is the position of the researcher herself. I as researcher was acutely aware of the fact that my own values and beliefs, stemming from the experiences and influences I have been exposed to, as also pointed out by Sikes (Sikes & Goodson, 2003:43), informed my conclusions and interpretations as researcher. Objectivity could thus be jeopardised. In accordance with Stake (1995), the need for triangulating the data was important in the search for accuracy, reliability and validity or trustworthiness, and also because of my subjective influence, with me being the researcher. While a subjective interest presents potential risks for research, the inclusion of subjective experiences as a basis from which to conduct research should be embraced as a relevant part of the study, rather than being avoided (Maxwell, 2012:96-97). In this respect, the researcher's own experiences could add valuable insights and critical knowledge to understanding the experiences of the participants (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Merriam & Leahy, 2005).

In line with Babbie and Mouton (2001), Maxwell (2012:133), however, argues that validity, or then trustworthiness, rather refers to the conclusions and interpretations than to the data and he further argues (p. 66) that combining qualitative and quantitative methods can "serve both as a form of methodological triangulation … and also as a way of generating divergent perspectives, deepening rather than simply confirming our understanding". He cautions, though, that validity cannot be purchased with techniques (Maxwell, 2012:129). In an attempt to ensure trustworthiness, the following steps were taken in this research:

- Triangulation of methods through the use of multiple research methods (See sections 5.7 and 5.8 above);

- Triangulation of theory through the use of various theories in an attempt to better understand the phenomenon being investigated (see Chapter 4);

- Member checks of interview transcripts by the interviewees as well as the interviewers;

- Reflexivity through self-awareness and critical self-reflection to identify possible bias;

- Peer feedback by presenting preliminary findings at various national and international conferences (Herman, Leibowitz & Van Schalkwyk, 2012; Herman, Leibowitz, Van Schalkwyk & Jawitz, 2012; Herman, Bitzer & Leibowitz, 2013, 2014);

- Audit trails of the process of design, development and administering of the electronic questionnaire (see Section 5.7).

5.11   Analysis of the data

5.11.1   Background

Narrative (qualitative) and numerical (quantitative) data were generated for this study. The numerical data were generated via an anonymous electronic questionnaire administered to all permanently employed academic staff at SU. The questionnaire also generated 120 pages of written responses to the last five open-ended questions. The numerical data were captured and exported to Microsoft Excel. From there an external consultant cleaned the data and undertook a descriptive analysis in Microsoft Excel.

The main body of data was recorded from written and oral formats (open comments and recordings of interviews) and analysed by following a number of steps through different analytical levels adapted from the work of Miles and Huberman (1994:92) as depicted in Figure 5.2 below. Narrative content analysis processes are described by Merriam (1998:178) as complex and "moving back and forth between concrete bits of data and abstract concepts, between inductive and deductive reasoning, between description and interpretation with the purpose of making sense out of the data". Finally, the meanings, understandings or insights gained from the narrative analyses comprised the bulk of the findings of my study while following the dialogical, iterative and multi-directional movement between the data sources and the theory. The numerical data were mainly included for biographical purposes and to strengthen and substantiate some of the narrative findings.
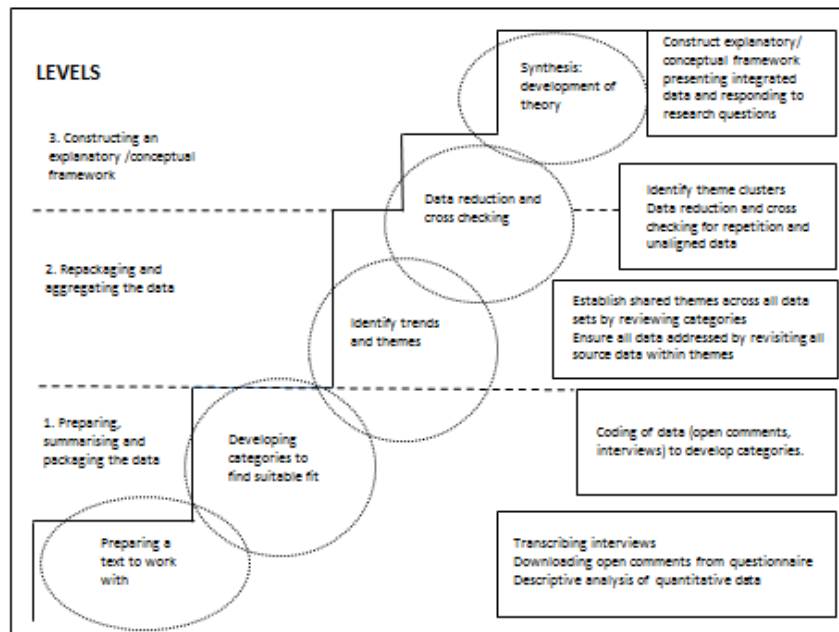
Figure 5.2: The analytical ladder as adapted from Miles and Huberman (1994:92)

5.11.2 Level one analysis: Preparing, summarising and packaging the narrative data

This first level of involvement with the data in order to organise it was to get a picture of what emerged from different sources (Babbie & Mouton, 2001:238). During this first phase of the analysis, the data from the different sources were therefore reviewed to get a larger, overall picture. The aim was not to identify relationships or links between the different sources of data at this stage, but some obvious and useful links and relationships could be indicated at this level.

The first step of analysis for this research was to prepare the qualitative data in text format. This included downloading the open comments from the electronic SUnSurvey system and transcribing the oral interviews. Transcriptions were done by an independent consultant. The process of coding then took place to organize and sort the data that had been generated. Codes were also used to label the data by summarising and synthesising what was seen in the data. Based on the fact that the act of coding is the link between data collection and interpretation, coding is also called analysis. Merriam and Leahy (2005) remind us that coding forms a golden thread between the different major strands of data in order to answer the research questions. An important aspect to bear in mind is that the codes should fit the data, rather than trying to make the data fit the codes.

I chose to code by hand as first having to learn to use computer software would take up valuable time and I felt more comfortable and closer to the data with a more hands-on approach. I further worked in a multidirectional way by developing the codes while coding the data and also applying

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some *a priori* codes which were derived from the literature, the research questions, the coding for the institutional case study report (as part of the NRF umbrella project) and my experience in the field of professional learning.

A first step of attribute coding for the purpose of data management was done throughout the process of data gathering for all the interview data by completing a biographical table for each of the interviewees by a specific interviewer. These included aspects such as gender, level of appointment, home school/faculty, discipline and teaching qualifications. The second analytical step was structural coding. Its purpose was to do a 'grand tour' (Saldanha, 2013:64) of all the data in order to identify broad themes or conceptual phrases relating to a specific research question within each of the different data sources. Saldanha (2013:84) proposes using structural coding when data are gathered from multiple participants for exploratory investigations and he also recommends using this type of coding when coding open-ended survey responses.

Structural coding of the open comments from *the questionnaire* included descriptive coding by allocating single word summaries as codes and determining the frequency of appearance of these within the data. The approach of using 'quasi-statistics' or "simple counts of things to support claims that are implicitly quantitative" is advocated by Maxwell (2012:137) and endorsed by Saldanha (2013:86) who suggests that 'frequency reports' can give an indication of which codes are more frequent and which occur seldom. According to Merriam (1998:164) coding occurs at two levels, namely: "identifying information about the data and interpretative constructs related to analysis". In-vivo coding was therefore done simultaneously and a selection of these quotes, as given by respondents, was included within the same tables.

The structural coding of the *lecturer interviews* for this research related specifically to the secondary research questions of this study. Each individual interview was coded and categorised through a process of open coding during which codes were selected on the basis of what the data represented or meant to the researcher. In-vivo coding of interviewees' words was also done throughout the coding process.

Eclectic coding was performed as a second cycle of coding to refine the first-cycle coding through re-organising and re-analysing the data. This was done in order to develop a smaller and more selective list of broader concepts, categories or themes. The different coding strategies combined in this cycle were:

(a) Values coding: identifying underlying values, attitudes and beliefs by looking for phrases like "I love", "I need", "I think", "It is important that", and so forth;

(b) Versus coding: identifying conflicts, dichotomies or competing goals revealed between participants;

(c) Emotion coding: identifying the feelings, emotional states or reactions (anger, mad, embarrassment, anxiety, shame) respondents could have revealed, by looking, for instance, for the phrase "I feel";

(d) Pattern coding: identifying rules, causes and explanations by making use of words like "if", "and then", "because", and so forth.

These identified codes, categories and quotes are reported in Chapter 6, in the discussion of the narrative findings of the study.

5.11.3 Level two analysis: Repackaging and aggregating the data

According to Miles and Huberman (1994:55), data analysis is an inevitable selection process and level two of the data analysis in this study thus comprised the repackaging and aggregating of the data by identifying themes and trends across all data sources. In the second level of analysis I attempted to identify cross-cutting themes from the different data sources to identify relationships and links between them. This was done by first looking at the coding categories to allow for subsequent identification of themes. Guba and Lincoln (1981) suggest four guidelines for developing categories that are both comprehensive and illuminating: firstly, the number of respondents who mention something or the frequency with which something arises in the data indicates an important dimension; secondly, the audience may determine what is important – meaning that some categories will appear more or less credible to certain audiences; thirdly, some categories will stand out because of their uniqueness and should be retained; and fourthly, certain categories may reveal areas of inquiry not otherwise recognised and possibly provide a unique view on a common problem.

During the process of analysis, the original categories were synthesised into themes. The themes were clustered into groups to facilitate the presentation of the data in relation to the research questions. According to Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2000:296), this method integrates the different items through "transcend[ing] the rather artificial boundaries". It was at this stage of the analysis that the theoretical background that framed the inquiry also featured in the analytic process (Henning *et al.*, 2004:105).

5.12 Summary

Documenting the manner in which any research is executed is an important aspect of its validity and reliability. This chapter has provided an account of the purpose and aims of the research as well as a

description of the research design, how data were generated and how analysed. The rationale and explanation for data management were also put forward. The instruments used to generate the data as well as the background information of the participants who were involved in the research are included as addenda (see Addenda A and C). To ensure the integrity of the research, the data and the findings, my position as researcher and the implications thereof were declared, together with an explanation of steps that were put in place during the research process to ensure such integrity. As part of this chapter, the larger NRF umbrella project of which this research formed part, was also described.

The true test of any research is in the analysis of the data leading to the findings (Henning *et al*., 2004:101). The next two chapters report the data and the findings of the empirical part of this study.

Chapter 6
Findings from the narrative data

6.1   Introduction

The previous chapter outlined the research process and research decisions for the study. This chapter reports on the findings from the narrative data. Questions 21 to 25 of the electronic questionnaire requested lecturer motivations and explanations for choices made and these open comments were analysed as part of the narrative data of this research. The responses of the 238 Stellenbosch lecturers to the open questions in the questionnaire (see Addendum C for questionnaire) were used as the main source of narrative data, while the interviews conducted with 15 purposely selected lecturers served to enrich, elaborate, refute or confirm the earlier findings (see Addendum E for interview questions). Because of its supporting role towards the findings of the narrative data, the findings from the numerical data are reported in the next chapter.

This analysis supported the exploration of the unit of analysis of this research and also assisted in answering the stated research questions. Level one of the data analysis was described in Chapter 5. The next section describes level two of the analysis.

6.2   Level two data analysis: Repackaging and aggregating the data

In the sections that follow, the narrative findings, grounded in sufficient supporting detail to ensure credibility and trustworthiness, are reported (Merriam, 1998:152). To this avail, quotes[3] from the different data sources are included to explain or substantiate the findings. Most of the times only one or two quotes are included as representing a specific finding, however, in some instances more than two quotes are included where it is deemed important for the case. Direct quotes from the open comments in the questionnaire are italicised and indicated with a (Q), while those from the lecturer interviews are italicised and coded with the letter "L" followed by a number for example "L2" at the end of the quote indicating a specific interviewee. This pattern is followed throughout the chapter.

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[3] Some of the quotes were translated from Afrikaans. These are identified with the word ['Translated']. Great care was taken to translate these as accurately as possible.

6.3   Professional learning for teaching as a choice

The focus of this study was to examine how context may potentially influence the decision making of lecturers about participating in the (formal) process of professional learning for teaching. As illustrated next it became clear that involvement in the process of professional learning for teaching was expressed as an individual choice influenced by individual and professional contexts. As indicated in the following section, these choices often were trade-offs on various levels. A selection of comments containing language suggesting the notion of choice, are given in this regard:

Lecturers at Stellenbosch University seem to see their decisions for participating in professional learning opportunities for teaching as:

(a) a choice between various available professional learning opportunities for teaching:

We have a lot of resources available - it is our **choice** to use them. (Q)

Regular invitations are received via email. The **choice** is wide and I can select relevant courses. (Q)

(b) a choice tempered by the accompanying opportunity cost:

There is always a balance to be found between different calls on one's time as an academic. The reality is that there is always more that can be learnt, researched and done but one has to **choose**. In my case the **choice** to participate in more professional learning for teaching is tempered by the reward that it will bring and thus how my time should be prioritised. (Q)

(c) a choice between spending time on other responsibilities and expectations:

I would have to **choose** between teaching (myself, actively, rather than passing lecture duties etc. on to junior people) and learning about teaching - I prefer the former as it gives me valuable (informal) feedback and keeps me in touch with the students and their needs, and I sometimes wonder about the disconnect between the teaching as a science and what happens in the real world. (Q)

(d) a choice between the expected roles of the academic:

It needs to be a specific **choice** to make time for professional learning for teaching. It certainly comes after service and research. (Q)

(e) a deliberate choice to focus on teaching:

I make learning about teaching a priority, but that is MY **choice**, not that of my faculty or department [capitals in original]. (Q)

(f) a choice based on the need to learn:

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I teach quite a few modules and **need to** continually develop in this field to ensure that my students get the necessary learning opportunities to realise their potential. (Q)

(g) a choice solely emerging from intrinsic motivation:

I find that the environment here, for me personally, it is up to the individual to **take advantage** of opportunities when and as they arise … so I went and did an HED at UCT - the opportunity was there. (L1)

From the above it can be established that professional learning opportunities from which lecturers can select are available at the institution, but their decisions are influenced by the attached opportunity cost in terms of their duties and expected roles. Making a decision to participate in the process of professional learning therefore seems to be considered as a personal choice based on the unique context and intrinsic motivation of the individual lecturer. Decision making thus is a complex endeavour and differs from one individual to the next.

6.4 Decision making about participating in the phases of the process of professional learning

Decision making has been defined as the weighing up of alternatives to determine the best option (see Chapter 4). One of the respondents in this research also referred to decision making for participating in the process of professional learning for teaching as such an act of deliberation:

Academics nowadays are under enormous pressure to improve their research, teaching and community development. This pressure has increased tremendously over the past 10-15 years. As a result, one constantly has to **weigh matters up** against one another and then teaching becomes one of these activities. (Q)

As indicated in Chapter 4, the process of professional learning for teaching consists of three phases involving three consecutive and interlinked decisions (see Section 4.6). The first of these is the decision to participate in a professional learning opportunity, followed by the decision to learn during the actual opportunity and, lastly, the decision to implement what was learned. The responses from the lecturers in this research alluded to these three phases.

Lecturers referred to making a choice to participate in the process of professional learning (phase 1) if they were interested; if they wanted to learn new things and grow as professionals; or when an opportunity seemed useful. The quotes below serve as examples of these:

and we were interested … and it was a new thing for us so we went for that reason. But I like to go there on a regular basis for the networking and also for general ... .and sometimes I ... I'm getting to the stage now where I repeat some of the things. (L4)

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but I took those courses to really, to see what the trends are in higher education. (L15)

And there's a definite growing need from many of us, that we do want to understand what are the best teaching methods. (L11)

it means that you yourself keep learning. And the only way in which I think you can be a good teacher is if you are a learner yourself. (L8)

I enjoy teaching and therefore try to make time in my schedule to attend events that will lead to an improvement in my methods/style, etc. (Q)

One interviewee indicated that lecturers might sometimes have to be encouraged and motivated to make a decision to participate in a professional learning opportunity:

people might not volunteer themselves to go but if you are encouraged to go by your line manager it might increase the chances of people developing. (L3)

Another respondent mentioned that a professional learning opportunity could be experienced as a 'waste' if it was not deemed relevant:

If you have any question as to the direct relevance of a particular option for learning, you just do not use it because the waste, should it not be useful, is just not justifiable. (Q)

The previous quote stresses the importance of the actual professional learning opportunity (phase 2) to be focused on the needs of lecturers as adult learners. This issue was also communicated by respondents indicating that this was not always perceived to be the case:

Besides, we have so much coursework to cover, that we cannot spare the time to engage in many of these activities … E.g., we don't have group discussions in class or let our students write essays. (Q)

I attended one some time ago and my impression was that the techniques proposed might not work in a large class. (Q)

The proposition that the process of professional learning is only completed when a decision is taken to implement what was learned during such sessions is alluded to in the quote above and was also mentioned by a number of other respondents:

it is expected that as a result of engagement your outputs will increase and improve in quality and these outputs are formally recognised. This is as it should be. Learning must lead to outputs. (Q)

the assessment methods used in my course are from professional learning opportunities. (Q)

So no, I have actually, I've realised I have implemented some of what I've learnt from those workshops. (L9)

I have implemented a thought that I brought from the CTL. (L11) [Translated]

Another respondent summarised the process of professional learning for teaching indicating the decision to participate had been taken 'because I value it highly' and then hinted about implementing what was learned because it would 'lead to an improvement in my methods/style, etc.' The process was also explained by one of the interviewees firstly pointing towards a desire to improve, then actually improving skills and, lastly, implementing what was learned:

> I see teaching as something to be taken seriously enough so that one constantly tries to improve your skills in that area, as we do in our professional lives as [state profession] or whatever. So it's a discipline on its own, and it needs a bit of effort if you were to improve your skills and do it well. (L12)

Respondents indicated that, if lecturers had previously experienced the process of professional learning for teaching as positive, they would be more inclined to participate in the future:

> Having been involved in some activities you then become attuned to others. (Q)

> But when you go to them, then you realize that you actually do need it. And uhm I think that's what then led me to, to sign up for other workshops after that. (L14)

The influence of context on decision making is inevitable. The decision to become involved in the process of professional learning is therefore no exception. The next two sections aim to set out the considerations reported as potential influences in decision making.

6.5 Perceived enabling considerations for the decision to participate in the process of professional learning for teaching

To perceive oneself as enabled when having to take a decision, an individual should have adequate power, means and opportunity or authority to do so. In the sections below, considerations from the professional and personal spheres of the life-world perceived by academics themselves as potentially enabling to their decision making for participating in the process of professional learning for teaching at SU are reported. Narrative findings from the data that are interspersed with some comments which lay the foundation for the discussion that follows in Chapter 8 follow the tabulated summaries in the next subsection.

6.5.1 Considerations from the professional sphere of the life-world of the individual

Table 6.1 below presents a summary of the considerations from the *professional* sphere of the life-world that could potentially have an *enabling* influence on the decision making of the individual

academic about becoming involved in the process of professional learning. These considerations are described and substantiated from the data afterwards.

Table 6.1: Summary of enabling considerations from the professional sphere of the life-world

Considerations from the professional sphere of the life-world that could potentially be enabling for making the decision to become involved in the process of professional learning for teaching		
	Themes	**Considerations**
1	Resources	Availability of resources for the process of PL for teaching including: • PL opportunities • Good class room facilities • Well-equipped library • Free Internet
		Support and guidance by the institutional Centre for Teaching and Learning (CTL)
		Information about available opportunities for professional learning for teaching easily accessible
2	Approaches to PL	PL opportunities available (but mainly seen as beneficial for young and struggling lecturers
		Mentoring
		Peer feedback opportunities
3	Institutional influences	Support from middle management
		Factoring time for PL into work agreement
		Synergy between teaching and research

Each of the themes that potentially pertain to the decision making of lecturers as summarised in Table 6.1 above, is discussed below.

6.5.1.1   Resources

6.5.1.1.1 Availability of resources for the process of professional learning for teaching

Considerations from the professional sphere of the life-world that were identified by lecturers as enabling mainly focused on the availability of professional learning opportunities at Stellenbosch University. In the open comments, the availability of 'enough' professional learning opportunities for teaching at the institution was mentioned as a resource in and of itself and included references to

courses, sessions, opportunities, workshops, internal conferences and lunch hour sessions. One interviewee, for instance, remarked:

> I think at Stellenbosch there are a lot of opportunities that you can take up, and then you must of course try to take it up. (L4)

Lecturers further referred to the availability of funding and grants, for example the SU Fund for Innovation and Research into Learning and Teaching (FIRLT) and the Teaching Development Grants (TDGs), as well as funding made available by academic departments for participating in opportunities where cost was involved (these would normally be outside the institution). Lecturers also mentioned the availability of free Internet services, a well-resourced library, and classroom facilities as resources. As indicated by one interviewee:

> There's very good resources at this university. Library-wise, teaching venues, they have what you need to be able to do a presentation. Whether you're using PowerPoint or you're just doing a normal old fashioned lecture. (L13)

It was also mentioned that "the university strongly encourages interaction with teaching specialists" and almost all respondents mentioned the Centre for Teaching and Learning (CTL) as an important and valuable resource for the professional learning of academics for their teaching function. The following quote is an example of such a response:

> Central unit which coordinates university teaching arranges workshops, conferences, etc., which provide a range of opportunities for such engagement and are done at the university's expense. (Q)

The importance of structural resources, including infrastructure and opportunities for decision making during the first phase of the process of professional learning for teaching, are indeed non-negotiable if we aim to deliver quality student learning. How the availability of such opportunities is communicated plays an important role in its success.

6.5.1.1.2 Easily accessible information about opportunities for professional learning for teaching

From the open comments it was clear that information about professional learning opportunities for teaching was easily accessible at the institution. As an example of such comments, one respondent indicated:

> Such opportunities are generally well advertised and given good institutional coverage. (Q)

According to the respondents, the information about upcoming opportunities were available from email communications, regular newsletters, a supervisor, the University homepage, the Daily Bulletin (now the Boschtelegram), personal connections, the vice-dean Teaching and the Faculty

Committee for Teaching and Learning. Information is also available from the Centre for Teaching and Learning website, but this was not always seen as a user-friendly source, as seen from the following quote:

> I think that the CTL website could be more functional, but between regular communications to members of staff and numerous portals for finding information, I think that we have access to this kind of information. (Q)

Another respondent suggested a need for a hard-copy brochure from the CTL. This would be immediately available and also useful to give to colleagues as a handy source of information:

> I generally belief that information on professional learning is accessible, but if it is just internet-based and static, people seldom make the time to look for it. It could be very helpful to receive a hard copy (as a kind of annual report) on what the centre does, who are the staff members and what is envisaged for the year or next two years through research programmes. There was indeed a similar document that the Stellenbosch CTL distributed, and I could immediately also share this with new staff members. (Q)

6.5.1.2   Beliefs about professional learning for teaching within faculties

6.5.1.2.1 Professional learning opportunities mainly seen as focusing on new and/or struggling lecturers

The respondents and interviewees alluded to various definitions and purposes for professional learning, mostly focusing on newly appointed and struggling lecturers. Most responses indicated that professional learning opportunities were mainly seen as supportive of new and struggling lecturers. The quote below serves as an example:

> I have gone to them [professional learning opportunities] selectively, but on the other hand I think maybe for young new teachers it could very well be very valuable. (L5)

In this regard, the existence of a mentoring system for struggling lecturers was also mentioned by respondents. One example of such comment given by a lecturer stated:

> but we have a mentor within our departments who assist us when we need assistance and give us support. (L15)

Opportunities for peer evaluation and feedback were also mentioned as a valuable resource within faculties with the proviso of a trusting relationship:

> What we have done here for instance in the department, but that you can once again only do if you really trust one another. We sit in on one another's classes. (L4)

These findings support the point identified in the numerical data analysis (see Section 7.2.1.3 and Chart 7.10) of respondents indicating their first port of call when they need help as their colleagues.

6.5.1.3 Institutional influences

6.5.1.3.1 Support from middle management

The attitude and support of middle management towards the process of professional learning for teaching has an enormous influence on the motivation of academics to actually participate in the process. Encouragement from deans and heads of departments seems to be playing a hugely enabling role in motivating academic staff and was referred to by a number of participants:

> But I think the main thing is that the HOD must drive that thing. He or she must come in on that and say, but you know, it is important to go there and learn those things. (L4)

> They [management] advised me to make use of my resources to enhance the teaching experience for both myself and the students. Making use of the PREDAC course for instance (for new lecturers). They are also encouraging me to do an extra course outside of the university to make my department competitive on an international level. (Q)

Some of the interviewees also indicated the importance of managers seeing them [the academics] as persons. When a new manager was appointed, one interviewee indicated a difference in management style:

> I think he is more interested in the people and he sees what you are doing. (L11) [Translated]

The influence that middle management has on the context within which lecturers have to make choices about their participation in professional learning for teaching is vital and was also mentioned by the senior managers (see Section 3.6.10). Transformational leadership at this level should create the environment that enables and encourages academic staff to prioritise professional learning for teaching.

6.5.1.3.2 Factoring time for PL into work agreement

The lecturers requested that time for participation in the process of professional learning for teaching should be factored into the work agreements of academics as this would create space for lecturers to flourish in their teaching function:

> The opportunities might be there but the faculty focuses on research and therefore does not necessarily create space in terms of time and workload. (Q)

6.5.1.3.3 Synergy between teaching and research

Teaching and research are often perceived as opposites, but 'good' lecturers regularly indicate that their subject research informs their teaching and vice versa. Striving towards the creation of a synergy between the teaching and research functions was mentioned by interviewees as something that university lecturers should be pushing towards as part of their own learning:

> it means that you yourself keep learning. And the only way in which I think you can be a good teacher is if you are a learner yourself and if you keep your own material fresh in other words you start teaching by rote if you don't do research. (L8)

Framing both professional learning for teaching and the research function as 'learning' activities could be useful in this regard. Rather than pulling in opposite directions, these activities should then feed from each other, which could potentially create an enabling environment.

6.5.2 Considerations from the personal sphere of the life-world of the individual

Table 6.2 summarises the considerations from the *personal* sphere of the life-world that could potentially have an *enabling* influence on the decision making of the individual academic for becoming involved in the process of professional learning. These will be described and substantiated from the data afterwards.

Table 6.2: Summary of enabling considerations from the personal sphere of the life-world

Considerations from the personal sphere of the life-world perceived as potentially enabling for decision making to participate in the process of professional learning for teaching		
	Theme	**Consideration**
1	Intrinsic motivation	Being intrinsically motivated
		The value of personal contact and interest
		Having a positive attitude towards teaching and learning
		Love for teaching
		Having a teaching qualification

Each of the themes that potentially pertain to the decision making of lecturers as summarised in Table 6.2 above, is discussed below.

6.5.2.1   Intrinsic motivation

The analysis of responses from participants suggested that the considerations summarised under the theme of intrinsic motivation as presented in Table 6.2 and discussed below had potential to enable the participation of academic staff in opportunities for professional learning towards the enhancement of their teaching.

6.5.2.1.1   Being intrinsically motivated

Lectures themselves explained the role of intrinsic motivation and personal agency as being instrumental in making the choice to become involved in the process of professional learning for teaching. Quite a number of respondents referred to the importance of intrinsic motivation; the following quotes are examples of this:

> If I think something may be useful, I make a huge effort to attend, even if it means that I must catch up with other work at another time. This does sometimes make me feel overloaded but I still would attend sessions that I find useful. (Q)

> The enthusiasm is the thing that causes you to go and prepare yourself well … and also, that will let you go out and try and find new ways to teach. (L4)

> I have been actively engaged in my Department in numerous initiatives to enhance learning in our undergrads particularly … I am actually one of the few people in our environment who is interested in undergrad learning … I have never been acknowledged or rewarded in any way for the work I do in developing teaching and learning. It has to be its own reward, or you don't do it. (Q)

> for me personally, it is up to the individual to take advantage of opportunities when and as they arise. (L1)

The enabling power of intrinsic motivation was also referred to in the numerical data (see Section 7.2.1.3 and Chart 7.9).

6.5.2.1.2   Value of personal communication and relationships

Another interesting finding was the call for personal communication and relationships between the academics and the CTL staff as the facilitators of professional learning. This finding relates to the need for, and criteria of a 'care-ful' environment. The following quote serves as an example:

> But I really would value that somebody come and sit and that I don't just have to go to a formal training session, but that it can be personal (L9).

A large number of lecturers indicated that they always felt welcome at CTL. Questionnaire respondents indicated that they valued the fact that "[o]ur CTL is there for us" with "fantastic

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support". Respondents also appreciated the fact that they could contact CTL staff members about anything at any time, via any channel (email, telephone, or other means) and knew it would be "answered swiftly". The quote below is another example of this appreciation:

> The centre for teaching and learning is always willing to assist and research any questions directed at them from academic staff. (Q)

6.5.2.1.3 Positive attitude towards learning

Some participants indicated that professional learning opportunities usually "stimulated and developed" their teaching and that the choice to participate was not necessarily about relevance but rather about attitude and having an open and creative mind:

> Obviously topics are not always directly applicable, and some people will moan about this, but really it depends on attitude - whether you are willing to be innovative. (Q)

To this avail, it was commented by another respondent that:

> I do research in WATER. It is always applicable - regardless of one's discipline. (Q)

6.5.2.1.4 Love for and a calling to teaching

Some lecturers were very vocal about their love and passion for teaching and students and how they enjoyed it. Upon the question whether they liked teaching, one interviewee's response was "I do, I do" (L12) and another interviewee said:

> but I actually really enjoy teaching. It's an activity that I enjoy.(L8)

For one interviewee, teaching is the ability to "inculcate a certain approach or value system in [students]" (L1) while another interviewee indicated teaching was her calling:

> And then I believe it is my calling in life to make a difference in the lives of students because I can make a difference in their lives. (L11)[Translated].

6.5.2.1.5 Having a teaching qualification

Having a teaching qualification was seen as an advantage because it gave lecturers something they could use, or fall back on, during their teaching:

> I'm the only one with an education qualification of some kind. Not that it's a massive one, but I could implement, I could use a lot of what I knew and uh, it was a very positive journey as well for myself. (L3)

> I've got mixed feelings on that [PGDip] on the one hand it was worthwhile, because I fall back on some of the things. (L7)

6.6 Perceived constraining considerations in decisions to participate in professional learning for teaching

When a consideration is defined as a constraint, such a definition is based on the fact that it prevents, restricts, negatively regulates or dictates the decision making of the individual academic about becoming involved in the process of professional learning for teaching. In the sections below, the considerations from the professional and personal spheres of the life-world that are perceived by academics themselves as potentially constraining to their decision about participating in the process of professional learning for teaching at SU are reported. The tabulated summaries presented below are followed by the narrative findings from the data interspersed with some comments. These lay the foundation for the discussion that follows in Chapter 8.

6.6.1 Considerations arising from the professional sphere of the life-world of the individual

A summary of the considerations from the *professiona*l sphere of the life-world that could potentially have a *constraining* influence on decisions by individual academics about becoming involved in the process of professional learning is presented in Table 6.3, below. These are described afterwards and substantiated from the data.

Table 6.3: Summary of constraining considerations arising from the professional sphere of the life-world

Considerations from the professional sphere of the life-world perceived as potential constraints to making decisions about becoming involved involved in the process of professional learning for teaching		
	Themes	**Considerations**
1	Teaching (and PL for teaching) not perceived as valued	Good teaching not valued
		PL for teaching not valued but included in performance appraisal
		SoTL not recognised as research
		No career prospects in teaching
		High opportunity cost
		No regard and reward for teaching
2	Misalignment of priorities	Time spend on teaching and teaching related activities a moral dilemma

	Themes	Considerations
Considerations from the professional sphere of the life-world perceived as potential constraints to making decisions about becoming involved involved in the process of professional learning for teaching		
		Research-teaching tension
		The use of student feedback
3	Perceived lack of support	Role of middle management
		No encouragement from colleagues
		Lack of administrative and support staff
		Unrealistic expectations
		Setting of expectations without having relevant support structures in place
4	Practical considerations	Teaching of large classes
		Physical spaces for teaching
		Timing of PL opportunities
		Topics of PL opportunities not relevant
		Lack of time and high workload
5	Perceived teaching competence and confidence	No need for PL
		Feeling 'ill-equipped'

Each of the themes pertaining to the decision making of lecturers as summarised in Table 6.3 above is discussed below.

6.6.1.1 Teaching and professional learning for teaching not perceived as being valued

6.6.1.1.1 Good teaching not perceived as being valued

The absence of recognition for professional learning of teaching was something that lecturers felt could be linked to the prevailing definitions and measurement of 'good' teaching at the institution along with the low stature of teaching. It was commented by various participants that 'good' teaching is only measured according to student feedback, and that the institution was "ambivalent" about the role of teaching while the importance of teaching is only "lip service" and it has no incentives. The quotes below represent these comments:

I'm getting full marks for my teaching but it doesn't help me if I don't have so many papers and so many post graduate students, so I feel very strongly about that. I really feel they should make it possible for people like myself and there are others also, give us more lectures but then evaluate us on that as teachers and not so much on research. (L5)

6.6.1.1.2 Professional learning for teaching not valued but included in performance appraisal

A large proportion of respondents were unsure if any recognition for participation in professional learning for teaching was provided while other respondents indicated that no recognition was provided, but such engagement was sometimes included as an item in their official annual performance appraisal:

I can attend as many courses as I wish to but it never reflects in my performance appraisal. (Q)

Although it may be officially part of the performance assessment of staff, the actual value and contribution to teaching is not highly regarded. (Q)

Those respondents indicating that there is no recognition for professional learning for teaching felt very strongly about the matter and indicated that they have never been encouraged to attend any professional learning opportunities in this regard, but have rather been discouraged from attending. One respondent commented that "not a single supervisor has ever shown any interest in my teaching activities" (Q), while another said that lecturers are encouraged to participate but their participation is not recognised:

encouraged to develop [their] teaching methods but there is never any formal recognition. There is tacit recognition and friendly noises are made, but there is no formal recognition for such activity. (There are institutional awards for teaching but I would say these do not consider 'engagement in professional learning' only popularity and success as a teacher.) (Q)

It was further reported that some Vice Deans (Teaching) as well as some Deans were supportive of these professional learning for teaching activities, while other comments indicated that the recognition (or absence thereof) was solely dependent on the Head of Department. Respondents further indicated that engagement in professional learning for teaching was a personal, intrinsically motivated endeavour, one that is 'done in your own capacity' and respondents did not expect any recognition in this regard. One respondent indicated:

I am arguably the only member of staff in my department who most regularly attends these opportunities, and I don't anticipate any recognition for taking this initiative. (Q)

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6.6.1.1.3 Scholarship of teaching and learning not counting as research

It was highlighted by the lecturers that it was research and research output that count at SU as a research-intensive university. According to some respondents, research about teaching did not fall within the same category, however:

> Teaching doesn't really count - only research ... and not research about teaching. (Q)

> Institutionally recognition is supposedly given, but when it comes to career advancement, only research is really taken into account. (And definitely not educational research). (Q)

This finding contradicted what has been said by senior management (Section 3.6.8). When lecturers had to make choices about investing their time, the issue of career advancement was sometimes foregrounded.

6.6.1.1.4 No career prospects when involved in teaching

The data highlighted the decisions lecturers had to take concerning the advancement of their careers when contemplating their participation in the process of professional learning for teaching. The following quotes are instances of such comments:

> My faculty is very supportive in terms of my teaching endeavours, but when asking about a promotion from a lecturer to senior lecturer, the first comment is not about teaching, but the number of publications ... very, very mixed signals, making me very unsure. (Q)

> In the current system where research outputs receive the most acknowledgment, is it more important that I use time not spent on admin, community interaction or immediate teaching duties (lectures, marking, supervision) on working on my publications. (Q)

> Again, in that teaching is not rewarded to the same extent as research means that investment in teaching comes at the cost of movement through the ranks. (Q)

6.6.1.1.5 Opportunity cost of spending time on teaching and professional learning for teaching

At SU as research-intensive university, research is what counts and what would advance academics' careers. Because time is limited and the workload is high, individuals have to prioritise and make choices – sometimes difficult choices – about spending their 'free time' on their research or on professional learning for their teaching. One respondent to questionnaire explained this situation as follows:

> The payoffs for specialising in teaching are comparatively low. Moreover, personally I am an academic because I love research and my profession, and this is what I want to focus on. I do enjoy

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teaching, but have very little time available to invest in professional learning for teaching -- the opportunity cost in terms of research and management time is just too high. (Q)

6.6.1.1.6   Absence of regard and reward for teaching

One interviewee felt that the university actually encourages a 'disinvestment' in the teaching function through the lack of regard and reward for teaching:

> I think there's perhaps one thing that I can say is perhaps that in a way one is encouraged implicitly by the institution to disinvest in teaching and invest more in research, because there are more rewards that are attached to research, obvious rewards; more recognition; more status and more money, promotion that teaching per se doesn't come with rewards except its own rewards. In that sense I would say there are disincentives to invest in teaching, institutional disincentives. (L8).

6.6.1.2   Misalignment of priorities

According to respondents and interviewees, making decisions in terms of their involvement in the process of professional learning for teaching posed a challenge. This was because of the perceived misalignment and sometimes almost competing nature of their priorities, descriptions and expectations and those from the side of the institution. The quotes below serve as examples of such misalignment:

> [Neither teaching nor professional learning for teaching is] taken into account when evaluated for performance, only the number (not even quality) of publications. Even though Head of Department says teaching and community interaction are important, I know only publications count. University equally ambivalent about role of teaching - when it comes to promotion, teaching and community interaction does not count, even though the importance of the latter two are pontificated about endlessly. Dire situation! (Q)

> Papers at professional learning conference are rewarded with higher assessment points, supposedly enhancing chances for promotion but research output is the overriding qualifying criterion. (Q)

> We are officially encouraged to better [our] teaching, [but] the reality is that you will never receive promotion above the senior lecturer level based only on being a good teacher/lecturer, whereas people get promotion as good researchers even if they are really bad lecturers. (Q)

6.6.1.2.1   Decision to spend time on teaching and professional learning for teaching a moral dilemma

From some of the comments it seemed as if lecturers sometimes experienced a moral dilemma when they had to make choices about where to spend their time. An example of such comments is given below:

> We have to do research and write articles although the students are our clients. (Q)

Spending time on 'learning about teaching' becomes a tough decision as it is not always recognised or valued – neither by the institution, nor by middle management or by colleagues.

6.6.1.2.2 Research-teaching tension

Stellenbosch University is a research-intensive institution. This has certain implications, as mentioned by one of the respondents:

> Being at a research institution where number of publications count more than good teaching, you will spend much more time on research than teaching. (Q)

Other respondents mentioned that the institution expects lecturers to perform in both teaching and research, but in the end research is the important capital for regard and reward or promotion:

> Even though teaching and learning is concerned as important at our university, in real life all that matters, is professional research outcomes such as publications and delivered postgraduate students. (Q)

> There is very little recognition for teaching. The focus is on research output in terms of promotion, rating, etc. (Q)

How student feedback is used at the institution was reported by lecturers in this research as another misaligned priority.

6.6.1.2.3 Role of student feedback

According to respondents to the questionnaire, results from student feedback are used to measure teaching performance during the annual performance appraisal and not as a potential tool to guide professional learning for teaching. Senior management confirmed this, as presented in Section 3.7.2.1. Professional learning for teaching is therefore only deemed useful if it will support the improvement of such results:

> Does not help my performance evaluation, only if it improves my student feedback. (Q)

> Student feedback, number of lectures taught and post-graduate supervision are all taken into account during our annual performance evaluation, and we are awarded when this is good. (Q)

6.6.1.3 Perceived lack of support

6.6.1.3.1 Attitude and support of middle management

The university is structured through faculties and departments. Together with the Dean of a faculty, the heads of departments therefore have a lot of influence and power regarding the stature and

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organisation of teaching and learning within an environment (also see Section 3.6.10 for senior management view). Depending on the focus of such individuals in leadership positions, teaching and its related professional learning activities can either be valued or not. The next two quotes give an indication of lecturers' responses:

> Lack of support or understanding of the passion for professional learning for teaching often leads to demands and deadlines been placed on me that make attendance of learning for teaching events/workshops impossible. (Q)

> So everything, it's like really the middle management, the middle structures, are quite problematic in the sense of uhm, do they really understand what the the goals of top management is? What the goals of transformation are? How do they see it, uh impacting on their daily practice as academics, and do they even regard themselves as academics who are making that difference in their community? (L15)

6.6.1.3.2 No encouragement from colleagues

Respondents to the questionnaire reinforced the notion that teaching and its related activities were not supported at the institution – not even by colleagues:

> I have never been encouraged to attend any professional learning for teaching on the contrary colleagues have sometimes discouraged me to attend. (Q)

6.6.1.3.3 Lack of support staff and administrative staff

Respondents indicated that the lack of administrative and support staff within faculties sometimes made it difficult for them to complete what is expected of them every day:

> Lack of properly trained support personnel and labour make it difficult if not impossible to get through a day at work never mind doing the extra mile - the extra mile is part of everyday anyway. (Q)

6.6.1.3.4 Unrealistic expectations and survival strategies

As indicated before, the daily reality of the lecturers is a *high-workload-time-constraint-research-focused* environment. What is expected from lectures within this environment could therefore sometimes be experienced as unrealistic. These unrealistic expectations often result in the implementation of certain survival strategies as coping mechanisms. Such 'subverting' of the system (Ramsden, 1998) more often than not is to the detriment of quality student learning and could lead to a situation in which the university is actually undermining itself. Both of these findings are reported below.

The unrealistic expectations that the respondents alluded to, which include the implications of rising numbers of students; increased pressure to produce research outputs; and being expected to be an expert in more than one field is highlighted by the following exemplary quotes:

> Our undergraduate class numbers have exploded in [identify faculty] over the past years, with increased pressure to produce research outputs. We are expected to simply up the pace and make time (learning for teaching is then far down the list of priorities). (Q)

> Trying to be a specialist in two fields is difficult. There are many aspects that overlap in my own field and teaching and learning, but to keep updated in both is problematic! (Q)

As can be expected, the setting of unrealistic expectations could result in the implementation of survival strategies and strategic choices varying from the use of multiple choice questions for all student assessments in a module to 'side-lining' of teaching. Direct quotes from some respondents in this regard are given below:

> research output is still considered to be the only measure when one applies for promotion, which is why so many academics continue to side-line teaching (even buying in substitute lecturers) to focus on their research. (Q)

> Ja, and I've, I have chosen to manage it by multiple choice questions. I just can't anymore. I can't do the grading of three hundred and fifty papers for a test. You know and then it's the exam and maybe some of them don't make it. They get to the second exam and it, it adds up. So I, I decided last year or this year, one of the two, I started with multiple choice only at the first year level for all the tests and for the exam. (L13)

> Ja, I would say even for me to be quite honest I would say, I would say that I use my research money more often to buy in replacement teachers to free me to do research than, I would if there was more benefits attached to teaching for me. So what I do is I take myself who has that PhD and who's senior and has experience sometimes out of a course and put in someone much less experienced and much less highly qualified so that I can do research, but on the other hand maybe it's just rationalizing stuff. (L8)

6.6.1.3.5 Setting of expectations without having relevant support structures in place

Linked to the previous point on setting unrealistic expectations is the setting of expectations without putting the necessary support structures in place. Many respondents mentioned this predicament and the next quote is an example of a lecturer implementing a teaching strategy that would ensure a high throughput rate rather than facilitate learning:

> I don't think it's the best approach for adult learners, but on the other hand I've got the pressures to deliver a good throughput.(L7)

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The issue of language was quite contested at Stellenbosch University at the time of this research. The constraints and 'barriers' imposed on lecturers by the language policy of the university – on both their time during preparation and their intellectual effort during the actual class teaching – were touched on by a few interviewees:

> It's … it's, it requires of me to add a little bit of time to my, more time to my preparation than I normally need because I have to think myself into Afrikaans words and Afrikaans explanations and so forth … (L13)

> the language issue really is something that I struggle with … and I think it's very debilitating sometimes to converse with the students on a deeper level because you've stated the theory now in Afrikaans, now you have to do it in English … but the language thing, to me, it's a barrier … I don't mind which language I'm asked to be teaching in, as long as it's just one language. Because the moment you have to think in both languages ... I don't have a problem with switching languages ... but you think on a different level, and you can't then really get into the deeper issues. So that is restraining me, if I can put it that way. (L10)

> I am bilingual, but it does take quite a bit out of me to have to jump from English to Afrikaans all the time. (L13)

6.6.1.4   Practical considerations

As illustrated in Table 6.1, practical considerations that were mentioned as constraints by respondents focused on the challenges accompanying teaching large groups of students; facilities that are not conducive to optimal teaching and learning; the timing and topics of teaching and learning opportunities; lack of time; and a heavy workload.

6.6.1.4.1 Teaching responsibilities associated with large groups of students

Having to teach large groups of students was specifically mentioned as a constraint by a number of lecturers. Teaching such big class groups sometimes almost forced lecturers to go in 'survival mode' as seen from the example quote below:

> High student to lecturer ratio means that during teaching periods there is little time to reflect on what can be done better ... During semester breaks research takes precedence so again there is not much time to look at teaching innovations. (Q)

6.6.1.4.2 Teaching and learning facilities not conducive to facilitating optimal teaching and learning

At the institution, the lecturers are employed to provide high quality teaching so that high quality student learning may take place. The spaces within which these learning opportunities are presented

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to students could therefore be expected to be supportive of the activities that lecturers plan in order to facilitate such learning. Physical resources like lecture halls and the lack of campus-wide Wi-Fi as prerequisites for implementing teaching innovations, were mentioned by various lecturers as constraining their teaching endeavours. Lecturers specifically mentioned the following infrastructural constraints:

> The only thing that I'd really like is that the technology gets upgraded. (L2)

> I mean, we didn't have enough space to ... we didn't have a big enough lecture room. (L9)

6.6.1.4.3 Timing of professional learning opportunities

An interesting finding that is directly related to this research, but was not anticipated, is the comments on the timing (time of year) and the length (hours) of the professional learning for teaching opportunities which poses a constraint to some academics. Contradictory responses were also evident as some respondents, for example, suggested that professional learning opportunities should be scheduled during the time when undergraduate students are busy with examinations, while other respondents indicated that this would be a bad time as they would be busy with postgraduate lecturing. These responses point towards potential considerations that could create a more enabling environment for lecturer decision making about involvement in the process of professional learning for teaching:

> Workshops are often held during term time, or over whole days (one hardly ever has a whole day free!). I also have so many other things to do that spending time being trained in teaching has (sadly) moved further down my priority list. (Q)

> Just don't have full open days for workshops. Workshops and conferences [are] often scheduled when undergraduates write exams. The postgraduates then still continue. (Q)

> Workshops mostly require 100% participation and academics seldom have 100% of the day "free". (Q)

It was mentioned, however, that academic staff have been able to participate in an opportunity which was of interest to them, because some professional learning activities were repeated annually in subsequent years. A suggestion that these repetitions should be scheduled at different times of the year was made, though, by one interviewee:

> Having undergraduate classes every semester makes it difficult to fit training in at the times that it [is] offered – maybe different topics could come up every year but at different times. (L3)

6.6.1.4.4 Topics of professional learning opportunities

Some respondents indicated that they have to "cherry-pick" from numerous available opportunities and sometimes topics that might have seemed less applicable to their discipline were "usually thought-provoking enough", so lecturers mostly indicated their participation was beneficial in the end, as seen in the following quote:

> Although I'm not always sure whether a topic is directly applicable, I would often like to attend to decide after having listened. Experience has taught me, that topics that sound seemingly un-applicable to my teaching, taught me something in the end, even it if just sparked an idea. (Q)

The debate about the more generic versus the specifically tailored nature of professional learning opportunities also surfaced. The generic nature of some professional learning opportunities was not an issue for some respondents as it was indicated that the 'principles of teaching are relatively universal', that 'teaching is teaching' and that 'learning for teaching seems to be independent of discipline' especially if a 'trans-disciplinary approach' was taken. Another comment was made about the learning opportunities 'being universally applicable, even if not directed specifically at my own discipline'. For a number of respondents the generic nature of some professional learning opportunities seemed to be an obstacle, though:

> My subject field is different from traditional health and engineering and languages, and most teaching opportunities focus on those subjects and the problems they experience. (Q)

The open responses to the questionnaire made the uniqueness of teaching in each discipline very clear and respondents from various faculties and disciplines made a point of indicating the uniqueness of their discipline. The following quote is an example of these responses:

> The various things I have seen are not applicable to teaching Mathematics. Most of the techniques seem to be relevant more for soft topics, where students are encouraged to discuss their views and opinions on matters. This may be nice in philosophy or political science, but is less useful in Mathematics. (Q)

It was interesting to note the contradicting comments from the respondents in the Faculty of Arts and those in the Faculty of Sciences. It seemed as if respondents from the Arts thought professional learning practitioners did not understand 'teaching' in their environment, while respondents from outside the Humanities commented that professional learning opportunities most often focused on issues important within the Humanities.

6.6.1.4.5   Lack of time and high workload

Although considerations concerning lack of time and high workload straddle both the personal and professional spheres of the life-world, it will be discussed under the personal considerations in Section 6.6.2.1.1 below.

6.6.1.5   Perceived teaching competence and confidence

Respondents reported varying perceptions of their own teaching skills. These ranged between feeling that they were 'good enough' and feeling ill-equipped.

6.6.1.5.1   No need for professional learning

A few respondents indicated that because they are 'good' lecturers already, they do not see the need to participate in professional learning:

> It is true that we are naturally better at teaching than research. So we spend more time to develop research while teaching is sufficient. Once you are "good enough", there is not much motivation to be much better. (Q)

How this 'good enough' is determined or measured is however not clear, but it could perhaps be linked to constantly getting 'good' student feedback as indicated by one respondent:

> I think my teaching is good and the student feedback confirms this. If I get 90% for teaching, why should I go on courses for teaching? (Q)

In Chapter 7 where the numerical data are discussed, Section 7.2.1.2 and specifically Chart 7.6 indicate that more than sixty percent of respondents rated themselves as 'good' lecturers. The criteria used for such a rating are unknown. The lack of a description of 'good' teaching and a 'good' lecturer at the university is of concern here.

6.6.1.5.2   Feeling ill-equipped for teaching

Contrary to the previous finding, a strong message came through from lecturers feeling they were 'ill-equipped' for their teaching function. The quotes presented below are examples from lecturers about the support they felt they needed to settle in. One interviewee commented about not knowing how to develop a course and also not feeling equipped to teach writing skills because of insecurity about her own writing competency. Such feelings of being 'ill-equipped' often lead to lower levels of confidence which could potentially influence the daily reality of lecturers and, ultimately, their actions and decisions:

> I found it incredible that I was teaching students how to write. You know, I don't even know if I can write myself or if I can write properly, especially when you sit with something for publication! But

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ja, I felt very ill-equipped, and I still feel so. You know, how do you develop a new course? How do you teach students to write? So that has been ... we were literally experimenting and seeing what has worked elsewhere, but that's been a very limited ... we've had limited resources there. But I felt incredibly ill-equipped to be performing that task of how do you teach. (L10).

In workshops we talk about the practical. How to do teaching. But eh, just how to navigate this space is something you learn and I don't know if, if the university is going to be able to help people settle into the university or … I know those PREDAC, the PREDAC workshops help uhm. (L14)

Not having a teaching qualification was also mentioned as a potential stumbling block:

I mean we don't get trained in that [teaching methods] ... but something that I thought way back, I thought would have been important and good to have done [a teaching qualification]. (L5)

Besides the constraining considerations from the professional sphere of the life-world as reported above, lecturers also alluded to potential constraining considerations from the personal sphere of the life-world.

6.6.2 Considerations from the personal sphere of the life-world of the individual academic

Table 6.4 below provides a summary of the considerations from the *personal* sphere of the life-world that could potentially have a *constraining* influence on the decision making of the individual academic for becoming involved in the process of professional learning. These will be described and substantiated from the data afterwards.

Table 6.4: Summary of constraining considerations from the personal sphere of the life-world

Considerations from the personal sphere of the life-world perceived as potentially constraining for decision making about becoming involved in the process of professional learning for teaching		
	Theme	**Consideration**
1	Work-life balance	Lack of time
		High workload
		Own PhD studies
		Family commitments
2	Personal wellness	Feelings of disillusionment
		Feelings of being overburdened

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Considerations from the personal sphere of the life-world perceived as potentially constraining for decision making about becoming involved in the process of professional learning for teaching		
Theme	**Consideration**	
		Absence of intrinsic motivation

Each of the themes pertaining to the decision making of lecturers as summarised in Table 6.4 above is discussed below.

6.6.2.1   Work-life balance

Aspects of work-life balance that have been shown as constraining decision making were identified as having too little time and being overloaded with work, to some extent also because of being involved with further studies and family commitments.

6.6.2.1.1 Workload and time

The first two considerations are inextricably interwoven and are therefore jointly reported. These considerations are evident in both the personal and professional spheres of the life-world, but will be discussed as part of the personal considerations as indicated above (see Section 6.6.1.4.5). Time, or rather lack of time, and an accompanying high workload were identified in all the data sources as two of the biggest aspects constraining academics' decision to become involved in the process of professional learning for their teaching. Senior management also acknowledged this situation (see Section 3.6.11). The notion of not having time was mentioned by 84.64% of the respondents in the questionnaires as constraining their participation in the process of professional learning for teaching (refer Chart 7.14). The quotes that follow are presented as examples of comments from lecturers in this regard:

> Research takes precedence, though teaching admin takes the time, thus when it is quiet it's not ideal to go on a teaching course. (Q)

> I barely get finished with actual teaching, there is not much time left for research, so learning for teaching is unfortunately last on the list. (Q)

> I am juggling … I can therefore make very little time to attend professional learning for teaching activities. (Q)

> Difficult at times to take whole day out of one's programme to attend workshops and totally impossible to do teaching degree due to time constraints. (Q)

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> Whenever there's an opportunity for development and I find a value I would normally try to do it but time is getting a bigger and bigger issue like with everyone so I'm hesitant to do anything more than one day.(L3)

The definition of workload was not uniform amongst respondents. Workload was sometimes seen as involvement in too many activities with more immediate priority, or as the sum total of all the different responsibilities of the academic, namely research; undergraduate and postgraduate teaching; assessment of student learning; community involvement; administration, which includes academic administration; management; and committee work:

> I am busy! I publish on average 2 to 3 articles per year, I teach undergraduate, honours courses, run a sub-department, sit on University committees, serve on a number of subject-specific organisations, participate in conferences, and supervise 4 masters and 3 doctoral students at any given time! (Q)

> In the earlier years it was possible to more regularly engage [in professional learning for teaching] … the main reason for less involvement, is due to the [management] position, and secondly to research and teaching load. (Q)

However, sometimes workload was defined as a high teaching load – thus teaching responsibilities hindering the participation in opportunities for professional learning for teaching. These teaching loads became evident where lecturers had too many teaching responsibilities, as well as the duties associated with the teaching of large undergraduate classes:

> I have too many M and D students and teach at all the possible levels. (Q)

> And the teaching doesn't stop in the lecture room - you know, it follows up from e-mails that I send to you; from appointments when students come and sit in front of you, and they are still being taught when they sit in front of you. And I don't think that, that appreciation is always very clear or evident from my colleagues. (L9)

> I teach two very large undergraduate modules and student numbers have steadily risen since I started at the university without a corresponding increase in staff. I have markers and tutors, but these also take up considerable time as they need to be guided and managed. I also have to have a strong focus on publication and I am completing my doctorate. (Q)

> Larger classes require more time, especially as I try to mark assessments myself to get feedback on my teaching. (Q)

6.6.2.1.2   Pursuing of own PhD studies

A significant number of lecturers are busy with their own PhD studies. The pursuit of such own advanced studies was included as a factor that 'increases workload significantly' and used up some of the little available time to potentially spend on professional learning for teaching:

I don't search for opportunities because I'm busy with my PhD and once I do that then I will see. (L15)

Before I started with it [my own PhD] I really put in some effort to develop as a lecturer. I am looking forward to giving it more attention again when I have finished my PhD [Translated]. (Q)

6.6.2.1.3 Family commitments

Comments and responses from the lecturers also pointed towards the challenge of achieving a work-life balance. These included aspects of private life as well as how too much work impeded on family and private time. Examples of these are the following:

Time is an issue, you only have certain amount of hours in the day and then you have to go home to your family. (L6)

Uhm, the other thing you know that you feel, uhm, that makes me feel a bit like, like trapped is that there's always more work than the time available ... there's, there's always marking that you, you just don't find the time to do in the office and you always hauling work home. You getting up early in the morning or working at night you know, just trying to get things done. (L13)

6.6.2.2 Personal wellness

Constraints to becoming involved with professional learning under the theme of personal wellness include feelings of disillusionment and being overburdened and uncared for, together with loss of motivation.

6.6.2.2.1 Feelings of disillusionment

Lecturers mentioned feelings of disillusionment when they started working at the university as they thought they were left on their own because they would be able to teach without giving attention to their classroom practice. These feelings could stem from certain expectations, assumptions and perhaps a so-called nostalgic or romanticised view of academia:

It is assumed that we can do this [teaching] without paying attention to our classroom practice. (Q)

New appointments (of young lecturers with little or no teaching experience) are done on research merits. Starting salaries of such lecturers are often (relatively speaking) higher than lecturers taking teaching seriously. (Q)

when I came to this university as an academic, I think I was in love with the idea of the freedom you would have to, to be able to do your research and I think I was, I got a bit of a nasty surprise when I started entering the academia and I realized that here there is heavy structure. (L13).

This interviewee continued by describing her disillusionment as feeling 'trapped' within the structures of the university:

> It's like you're trapped, your creativity is dead, [be]cause you're in this space all the time and you just see this space and it is assumed that in this space will come your best ideas and that [as]sumption is completely off the mark. (L13).

6.6.2.2.2   Feelings of being overburdened and not cared for

Linked to feelings of being trapped and the issue of family commitments and lack of time, are the issues of personal wellness and lecturers feeling overburdened. All these feelings and emotions indicate a context where care is not perceived to be eminent:

> I don't have the energy to read for my own education when I am done teaching and supervising master's students. (Q)

> Three's duplication but you teach six classes a week and you're like a zombie when you['re] done there. (L13)

> I struggle to find a balance between research and teaching commitments and sometimes feel if I could at least just prepare for class, it has to be sufficient. (Q)

> You can have only so many balls in the air, and then you start dropping them. (L2)

6.6.2.2.3   Absence of intrinsic motivation

In the same way that intrinsic motivation can be enabling, the absence of intrinsic motivation and personal agency can be a constraint to an individual's involvement in the process of professional learning. The quote below indicates that lecturers also have a responsibility towards their own professional learning:

> that the opportunities are there and ... it's you as a lecturer should take the initiative I think. (L6)

Individuals indicated they under some circumstances might need 'compulsory' participation:

> So I don't know if it will work better, but I think the opportunities are there, we're just not making use of it. And I mean, I'm a prime example, I want to do ... you know, have somebody come and assess me, and I haven't done it. But at the same time, you can't force somebody to do this either. I think I have had enough support. But I have to say, if somebody will force me just once, just to complete a formal course in teaching, aside from the PRONTAK ... because it's been a couple of years now, and because you walk in there and you've got no experience. Now that you've had experience, I think such a session would be very valuable. I will go there, begrudgingly probably, because it's something that's forced, but I know when I walk out of there I will see the value in it. So I think maybe make it compulsory just once, at least. (L10)

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In some instances this absence of intrinsic motivation might also point towards the individual's definition of the process of professional learning for teaching – specifically phase 2 – the actual professional learning opportunity:

> I only want to teach to the students ... not necessary wants to be bored by the in depth research and methodologies. Interested in practical application. (Q)

The considerations from the spheres of the personal and professional life-world of the individual lecturer as evident from this research are reported in Sections 6.5 and 6.6 above. When an individual lecturer is confronted with a situation within which a decision needs to be made, the interplay between these considerations emerges as an individual context which enables or constrains such a decision. The vast number of considerations and the infinite number of individual contexts that could potentially emerge pose a challenge to the research question posed by this research about enabling the decision making of lecturers as to their participation in the process of professional learning.

At this stage of the analysis it is possible to note that many of the considerations discussed in Sections 6.5 and 6.6 do indeed point to a need for creating a caring environment to prevent lecturers from becoming despondent:

> it doesn't impact negatively on the teaching but it impacts negatively on my feelings towards the job [at] SU. (L13)

6.7   A caring environment

It was mentioned in Chapter 5 (see Section 5.11.2) that emotion coding was undertaken while analysing the data. The purpose of this coding was to identify the feelings, emotional states or reactions (anger, mad, embarrassment, anxiety, shame) of respondents (Saldanha, 2013) through their words. According to Costandius (2012), emotional reactions of humans usually reveal characteristics of their environments. Both the questions about workload and recognition of teaching in the open section of the electronic questionnaire stirred up some emotional reaction as well as feelings of guilt and inner conflict. The significant number of comments referring to this potentially constraining consideration in both the professional and personal spheres of the life-world emphasises the significance of the influence of emotions on decision making. Some of the responses indicated a positive feeling towards professional learning at the institution:

> I **feel** that in recent years there are more and more opportunities made available to attend workshops, internal conferences, lunch sessions dealing with aspects of teaching. (Q)

> It is a question of priority - I make the time available for this because I value it highly (and **feel** it is primary to all my other roles/responsibilities in the academic environment). (Q)

Other respondents indicated that the low stature of teaching a high workload and the research-teaching tension constrained the decision to prioritise teaching:

> There are many calls on my time and with all the competing requirements (research, teaching and service) it becomes difficult to take time for an activity that does not seem to be highly rated as a positive attribute in an academic. I **get the feeling** that excellence in teaching is a nice add-on but not essential to success in academia. (Q)

> I struggle to find a balance between research and teaching commitments and sometimes **feel** if I could at least just prepare for class, it has to be sufficient. (Q)

> Teaching does not increase my research outputs, which is the main measure of my performance. I **feel** that the time spent on professional learning for teaching could be better spent on research. (Q)

> I **feel** I can develop my teaching skills and techniques better, and my students will benefit, but I would rather spend the time on publications as I feel this will benefit my career and professional reputation as a researcher. (Q)

> It sometimes **feel** that research is the only area that is important. (Q)

As mentioned above, feelings of guilt and inner conflict were also identified during the analysis:

> Again, there is so much pressure to publish that you **feel** guilty to invest any time in teaching. (Q)

> I do my best for the students and do enjoy teaching, I **just do not have** the time to attend courses for teaching. (Q)

> I **would have preferred** to spend more time on teaching and the improvement of my teaching abilities, but expectations regarding research output put a restraint on this. (Q)

The notion of pressure and feeling pressurised through institutional expectations were mentioned by some other respondents as well:

> **I would have liked** to take up offers of further training, **but** the time pressures of teaching, supervision, admin and research has not yet allowed me to pursue this particular interest. (Q)

> There is huge **pressure** to produce peer-reviewed scientific papers if you want to advance, or receive a good staff evaluation. **I would probably** concentrate even more on teaching if that **pressure** was not there. (Q)

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6.7.1 Discourse used when discussing teaching and professional learning for teaching

The language used by lecturers when referring to the notion of professional learning for teaching in the open questions in the questionnaire as well as the interview questions, was sometimes 'de-valuating' by using words like "waste" and "an unaffordable luxury". Respondents also mentioned their line managers using similar discourses when referring to teaching and professional learning for teaching. The view of teaching and its related issues being 'difficult' was also quite a common theme. Example quotes of such instances are given below:

> They [the institution] pretend that they give recognition for teaching excellence, but in fact they only want more research publications, i.e. they put good researchers on a pedestal while investment in good teaching is considered a **waste** of research time. (Q)

The term "luxury" was used in different ways - always negatively inclined - when lecturers spoke about participating in professional learning for teaching. When referring to research as being more important than teaching, one respondent indicated that lecturers "do not have the **luxury** to not concern ourselves with research and research related publications". Another respondent indicated that "participation in professional learning [is] an **impossible luxury** at the moment" while somebody else commented about his/her excessive workload and therefore not having "the **luxury** to participate [in professional learning for teaching]". In the interviews, one lecturer also included the term 'luxury':

> But I don't think I have the **luxury** of the resources of time in order to follow through with that and to make a serious commitment, but it would be very interesting, ja. (L1)

In this regard, one interviewee mentioned that her Head of Department told her it was "unacceptable" for her to spend so much time on her teaching and that she was not "cost-effective to the department" (L11).

The notion of **difficulty,** as experienced by lecturers in relation to teaching and professional learning for teaching also surfaced quite often. These comments however touched upon a variety of issues related to the teaching function:

(a) When referring to the research-teaching tension:

> It seems as if the only important thing is research and publications, however the teaching load is incredibly high making those goals **difficult** to achieve with little recognition for the efforts that have gone into teaching. (Q)
>
> **Difficult** to balance teaching with research! (Q)

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So I would really, I would really prefer to teach the maximum that I can and not expect to turn out publications which up to now I have actually succeeded in doing. But uh it's becoming more and more **difficult**. (L5).

(b) When referring to participation in professional learning for teaching:

We do not have the luxury to not concern ourselves with research and research related publications, together with a fairly heavy lecturing load (which I got, because I'm the one interested in teaching) makes it really **difficult** to attend anything. (Q)

(c) When referring to lack of time:

Difficult at times to take whole day out of one's programme to attend workshops and totally impossible to do teaching degree due to time constraints. (Q)

(d) When referring to high teaching load:

Our lecturing and admin load is so heavy that it is **difficult** to fit in the time. (Q)

When you have many classes to attend to that makes it **difficult** to attend to other important matters. (Q)

(e) When referring to workload and lack of administrative and technical support:

Lack of properly trained support personnel and labour make it **difficult** if not impossible to get through a day at work never mind doing the extra mile – the extra mile is part of every day anyway. (Q)

So, and I have now sort of asked to sit in on her first year, on one of her first year modules on … So we do that, but there's maybe not enough of that, but it's **difficult** to you know, to make time for it really. I can't think of any other way that one really learns, I really don't know. (L8).

(f) When referring to structures:

There are a few elements of structural elements that make teaching quite **difficult**. (L13).

(g) When referring to being a lecturer:

It's a **difficult** thing to do. And we also need training on those things: how to set papers, how to set MCQs and what is the importance of setting papers. (L9).

We not, we not having enough discussion between faculty about how we can be better teachers and what **difficulties** we experience because people think it will be career limiting to tell someone that I don't teach well. (L3).

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One of the things we normally discuss is the teaching and learning thing, and if you've got problems with a **difficult** class, what do you do and how do you handle that - those kinds of things. (L4).

(h) When referring to mixed messages:

But I find it very **difficult** to know what the standard is these days or what we should aspire to. (L10).

Something is usually referred to as 'difficult' when it is not perceived as 'easy' thus requiring a lot of work or skill to accomplish. Some of these 'difficulties' alluded to by lecturers could possibly be associated with the views and values on being and becoming 'good' lecturers as well as 'good' teaching at the university and might be pointing towards an environment in which they feel that they do not experience care, where they sometimes feel discouraged, insecure and unsure and where they might even be struggling.

6.8   Creating an enabling environment for decision making about professional learning

A few guiding principles regarding the creation of an enabling environment for decision making about professional learning for teaching can be derived from the responses of lecturers reported above. These principles include the establishment of a description of 'good' lecturers, 'good' teaching and professional learning for teaching. Respondents provided the following criteria for 'good' lecturers and 'good' teaching which could be informative in establishing such institutional descriptions:

6.8.1   Describing 'good' lecturers

A lecturer should ideally not just be someone who stands and delivers a lecture. A lecturer is also a researcher … I do think one can't separate our teaching from research … but I do think the two go hand in hand. (L8)

'Good' lecturers should realise that they are role models and should have in-depth knowledge, passion and enthusiasm for their subjects, as well as passion for their students and for teaching. Having passion was formulated by one interviewee as energising:

I love it I really love it, yeah! I do. I find it energizing (L4)

Furthermore, in quoting Mintzberg (2005) one interviewee indicated 'good' lecturers have an obligation to challenge their students:

"to stimulate thinking, and a good way to do that is to offer alternate theories, multiple explanations of the same phenomena. Our students and readers should leave our classrooms and publications, pondering, wondering, thinking, not knowing" (L1).

According to another interviewee, 'good' lecturers create learning opportunities to reach various outcomes. These would include the following:

subject knowledge, but lots of other things as well, life skills, ethics and things like that. (L4)

It is also the responsibility of the lecturer to guide the students and to open the world of knowledge through good explanations (L11) [Translated].

6.8.2 Describing 'good' teaching

'Good' teaching is seen as resulting in student learning. Lecturers indicated 'a teacher hasn't taught anything until a student has learnt something' (L5) and for some it is about facilitating the learning process (L1). Other respondents indicated that teaching and learning should be innovative, interactive, it should have an element of fun and it should always relate theory and practice through the use of relevant examples. 'Good' university teaching should also foster a reciprocal relationship between the lecturer and the student(s) (L12, L4) and in the process also add value through the "cultivation of a personhood" (L8) for students. Such teaching should also be motivating students for their own learning (L7). The lecturers however indicated that the university might have a different view on 'good' teaching:

They just want the best results that they can you know, and that I think is important for the department. (L5)

6.8.3 Professional learning for teaching

The 'good' lecturer clearly is somebody who is reflective and also an 'eternal student' (L6) and life-long learner; most of the lecturers indicated that there is always something one can enhance or learn. The process of professional learning for teaching comes into play here. According to interviewees they value the spaces created by participating in professional learning for teaching:

there's really no space to stop and think about … why am I struggling with assessment? Why am I struggling with teaching? Because we [are] constantly on the move. I mean those workshops do provide the space to just take a step back and reflect on one's own practices. (L14)

[teaching] is a discipline on its own and it's not something that just comes naturally. Because you like it, it doesn't mean that you're good at it, and people don't quite realise there's a difference. Because you do a lot of it, it doesn't mean that you're doing it well. (L12)

For others, however, professional learning for teaching was more focused on skills:

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but there are some of those aspects where you think, goodness, but can somebody show me how to do this differently? Or, how can I improve on this? (L10)

This 'becoming' or professional learning for teaching could happen in various ways and places. Some learned from formal instances and others preferred informal professional learning opportunities. Professional learning for another interviewee happened in an informal way through various ways:

integrat[ing] the knowledge that I've collected over years and by reading and workshop notes and resources from workshops and so on, and that's been my, my guidance. (L13)

Another interviewee preferred to learn through experience rather than by participating in formal opportunities:

[it] comes … from experience and I would really have to be persuaded [professional learning for teaching] was something that I needed to do with my time (L5)

6.9   Summary

The level-two analysis as reported in this chapter resulted from the repackaging and aggregating of the narrative data across both data sources. The first cluster of quotes discussed emphasised the processes of decision making and professional learning. Secondly, the considerations from both the personal and professional spheres of the life-world of the individual lecturers were reported. When lecturers are confronted with a situation in which they have to take a decision about participating or not participating in the process of professional learning for teaching, the interplay of these considerations creates a unique context which may influence such decisions. This unique individual context seems to have either an enabling or a constraining influence on the decision making of lecturers regarding such participation in the process of professional learning for their teaching function. The last section of the chapter concentrated on creating a caring environment for the potential enabling of the decision in favour of lecturers' involvement in the process of professional learning for teaching.

Chapter 7 reports the numerical data generated for the study and is followed by Chapter 8 with a comprehensive discussion of all the findings.

Chapter 7

Findings from the numerical data

7.1   Introduction

The previous chapter reported on a systematic analysis of the narrative data. This chapter reports the numerical data in visual displays (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Trafford & Leshem, 2010:128) via a number of tables and charts with supportive text where applicable. The questionnaire is attached as Addendum C.

7.2   Summary of numerical data

As explained in the chapter dealing with the methodology for the research, the link to the anonymous electronic questionnaire was sent to the email addresses of all permanently employed academic staff members at SU (n = 1083), including the Faculties of Health Sciences and Military Sciences although the full lecturer complement at these two faculties are not recorded in the statistical data of the university. This is because some lecturers at these faculties have dual appointments. Only those lecturers who are on the payroll of Stellenbosch University are reflected in the official Stellenbosch University statistics published in the 2012 Fact Book (Stellenbosch University, 2012a). Due to various technical issues only 943 of these electronic invitations to participate were delivered successfully. Completed responses were subsequently received from 238 staff members (a 25% response rate).

It is important to note that the survey was completed by a range of academics and not only by staff who frequently participate in formal professional learning activities for their teaching. A significant number of respondents even indicated that they had never attended such an event. It may thus be accepted that the survey gave voice to a wide selection of academic staff at the university. It should be noted, though, that those lecturers who responded in the survey and those who availed themselves to be interviewed most probably had an interest in teaching. Based on the biographical information of the respondents (see Tables and Charts below), the respondents were largely representative of the academic staff across disciplines and departments at Stellenbosch University.

What follows in this chapter is a summary of the closed-ended responses to relevant questions from the questionnaire, together with some descriptive notes and explanations.

7.2.1   Biographical profile of the respondents

The first section of the questionnaire focused on the biographical information of the respondents. Chart 7.1 below indicates the gender distribution of the respondents.
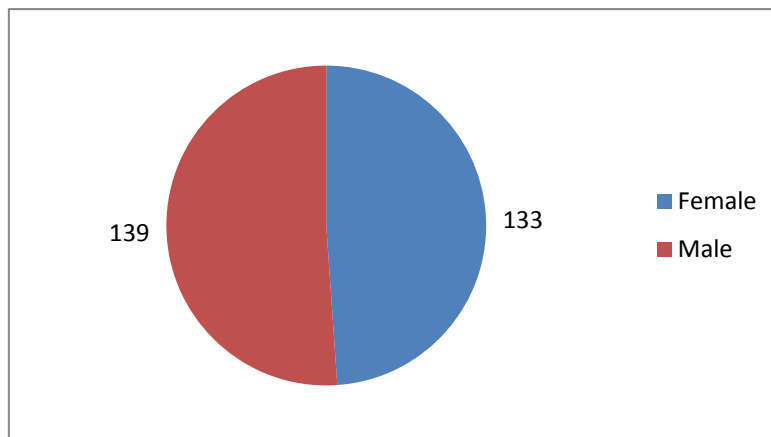
Chart 7.1: Distribution of respondents according to gender

Slightly more males than females completed the questionnaire. This gender distribution at SU, as reported in the 2012 Fact book (Stellenbosch University, 2012a) indicates the percentage of males in permanent academic posts as 58.47% and the percentage of females as 41.53%. These figures indicate that more male than female academics are permanently employed at SU, which means that the female voice is slightly overrepresented in the number of respondents to the questionnaire.

The next question asked about the respondents' age. This was the only question in the questionnaire that was not compulsory. Reporting of age is sometimes a sensitive issue and it was decided that potential respondents should not be disqualified based on their completion, or not, of this question. Chart 7.2 presents the age distribution of respondents.
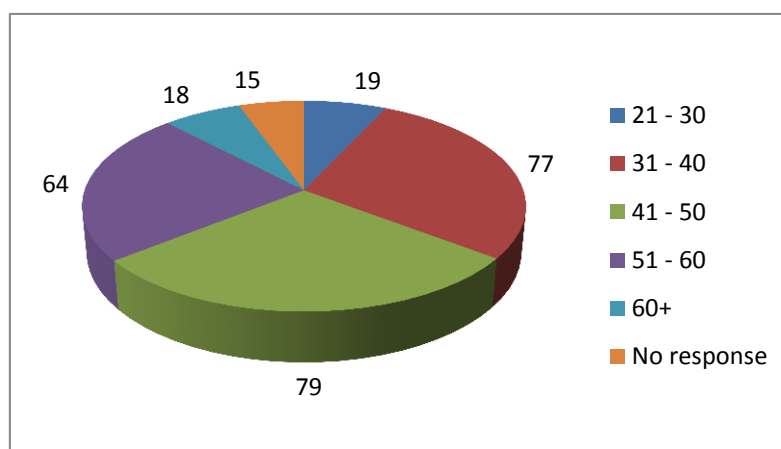
Chart 7.2: Distribution of respondents with regard to age

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Most of the respondents who responded to this question were between 30 and 50 years of age with another quarter being over 50 years of age. This distribution is in line with that of the institution as reported in the 2012 Fact book indicating the median age of permanently appointed C1 staff at SU as 45 years (Stellenbosch University, 2012a).

Chart 7.3 below presents the ethnic distribution of respondents. This information was used amongst other things in drawing up the matrix of potential interviewees to ensure representation across the pre-determined criteria.
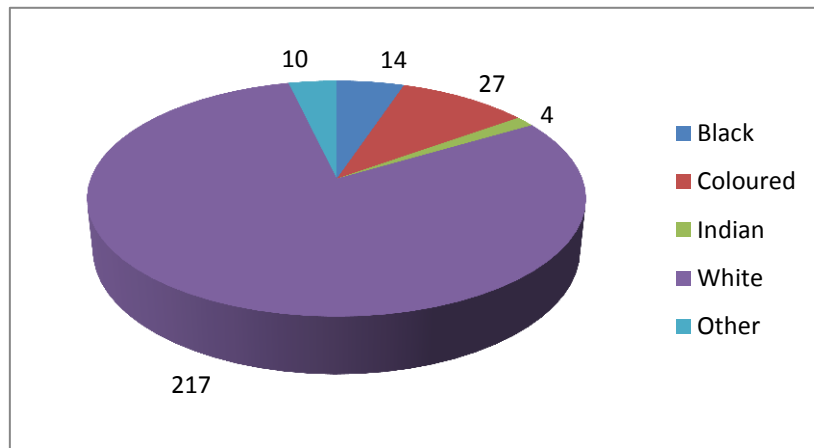
Chart 7.3: Distribution of respondents according to ethnicity

The distribution of the respondents' race was in line with that of the permanently appointed academics at SU in 2012, although the Indian race group was slightly under-represented and the black race group seemed slightly over-represented. According to the 2012 Fact book (Stellenbosch University, 2012a) the percentage of C1 academic staff (excluding the Faculties of Health and Military Sciences) was as follows: White 81.04%, Coloured 12.25%, Indian 5.01% and Black 1.70%. The higher percentage of Black respondents to the questionnaire could be attributed to the responses from the Faculty of Military Sciences where the Black staff complement is in the majority. As indicated earlier, these staff members are mostly appointed by the SANDF and their information is not included in the annual SU Fact books.

The next two questions focused on the respondents' qualifications. The highest qualifications obtained by respondents are listed below in Table 7.1 while respondents' teaching qualifications are given in Table 7.2.

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Table 7.1: Distribution of responses concerning "highest qualification" by respondents

	SU	
	N	%
Doctorate	166	61.03%
Master's	88	32.35%
Honours	10	3.68%
Bachelors	5	1.84%
BTech	0	0.00%
PGDip	0	0.00%
National Diploma	0	0.00%
Other	3	1.10%
Total Respondents	272	100.00%

Table 7.2: Distribution of responses to "teaching qualifications" by respondents[4]

	SU	
	N	%
HED	21	7.72%
ACE	0	0.00%
PGCE	8	2.94%
PGDip	3	1.10%
BEd	6	2.21%
MEd	5	1.84%
MPhil HE	3	1.10%
DEd/PhD	31	11.40%
Currently Studying	0	0.00%
None	194	71.32%
Other	18	6.62%
Total Responses	289	-
Total Respondents	272	-

Most of the respondents indicated that they have a doctoral degree or at least a master's degree. This tendency is to be expected at a research-intensive institution. Some of the outliers could

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[4] HED, ACE, PGCE, PGDip, BEd, MEd, MPhil HE, and DEd are teaching-related postgraduate qualifications in South Africa.

possibly come from the Faculty of Military Science as a number of lecturers employed at this faculty do not have more advanced qualifications.

When doing research on the teaching function of academics, having an indication of their qualifications in the field is necessary and relevant. For this question, respondents could select more than one option. As expected, and in line with international trends, the majority (71.32%) of the respondents indicated that they did not have any teaching qualification. That 11.40% of the respondents indicated a DEd or PhD degree could be misleading as some respondents might have selected this option on the basis of having a PhD degree in their subject field. Whether such an indication could also be given by mistake or on the basis of "any PhD can teach" was not clear. That 16.91% indicated of the respondents that they were in possession of a teaching qualification is in line with an Australian study (Bexley *et al.*, 2011) indicating that about 15% of Australian higher education academics held a teaching qualification.

Having knowledge about the levels of appointment of the respondents was thought to be important to inform the practice of professional learning practitioners at the institution. Respondents could select more than one option in response to this question. Table 7.3 gives a summary of this information.

Table 7.3: Distribution of responses to "level of current position" by respondents

	SU	
	N	%
Junior lecturer	12	4.41%
Lecturer	81	29.78%
Senior Lecturer	75	27.57%
Associate Professor	55	20.22%
Professor	34	12.50%
Deputy Dean	4	1.47%
Dean	0	0.00%
Director	2	0.74%
Senior Director	0	0.00%
Researcher	14	5.15%
Other	2	0.74%
Total Responses	279	-
Total Respondents	272	-

Almost two thirds of the respondents (60%) indicated they were appointed at senior levels – senior lecturer, associate professor and professor. Such a distribution should be expected at a research-

intensive institution and is in line with the SU statistics as reported in the 2012 Fact book (Stellenbosch University, 2012a) which indicates the following percentages of staff on each level: 22.44% on the level of Professor, 14.21% on the level of Associate Professor, 27.24% on the level of Senior Lecturer, 31.41% on the Lecturer level, 4.17% on Junior Lecturer level and 0.53% on other levels. Looking at these levels separately, the levels of professor and associate professor were slightly under-represented in the responses to the questionnaire.

The same instrument was used across all eight institutions participating in the umbrella NRF research project and therefore the disciplines from which respondents could select had to cover all possibilities within these institutions. The NRF disciplines were therefore used, but for the purposes of this research, the responses were merged to align with the ten SU faculties. Chart 7.4 below gives a summary of the academic disciplines of the respondents.
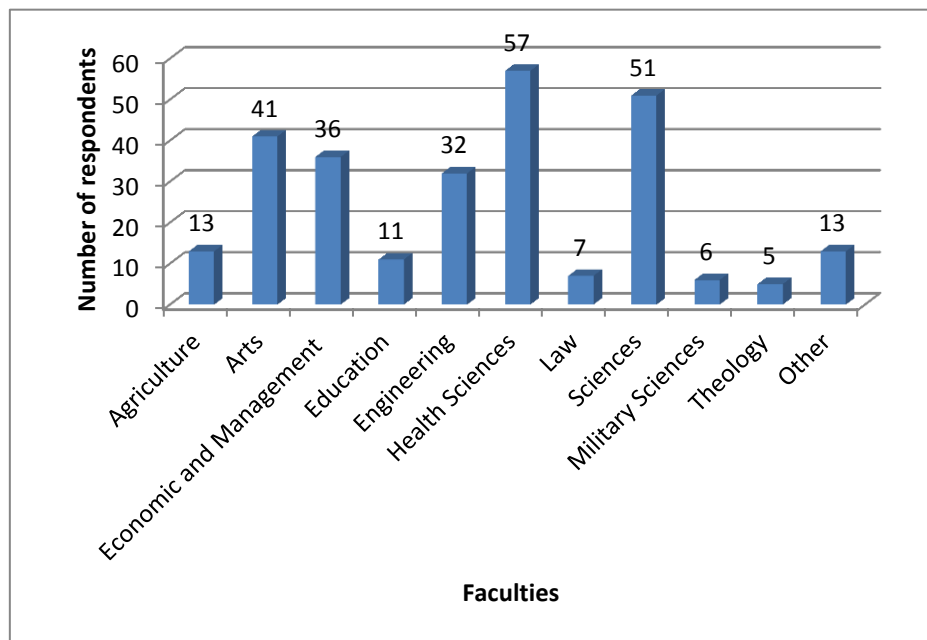
Chart 7.4: Distribution of respondents across SU faculties

The SU respondents covered all ten faculties at the institution although the two largest faculties, Arts and Social Sciences (16%) and Economic and Management Sciences (13%), were slightly under-represented based on university data (Stellenbosch University, 2012a), as was the Faculty of Agri Sciences (5%). The Faculty of Health Sciences (21%) was slightly over-represented, as was the Science (19%) and Engineering (12%) Faculties, but these respondents provided good representation of the STEM[5] environment. The other faculties were represented as follows: Education (4%), Law (2.5%), Theology (2%) and Military Sciences (2%).

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[5] STEM: Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics

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The high number of respondents from the Faculty of Health Sciences could possibly be attributed to the fact that the questionnaire went out to all permanently employed staff members on the SU payroll and thereafter also to permanently employed staff members with joint appointments between SU and the Provincial Authority of the Western Cape (PAWC), which e=resulted in a unique situation.

From the biographical details of the respondents as reported in this section, it would be fair to say that the respondents were largely representative of the SU academic staff complement and that the responses correlate with international trends at research-intensive universities.

7.2.2 Teaching experience of the respondents

The next section of the questionnaire asked the respondents about their experience as lecturers. The tables and graphs that follow below provide a summary of these responses. The first question in this section asked respondents about the length of their employment as lecturers at SU. The responses to this question are presented in Chart 7.5.
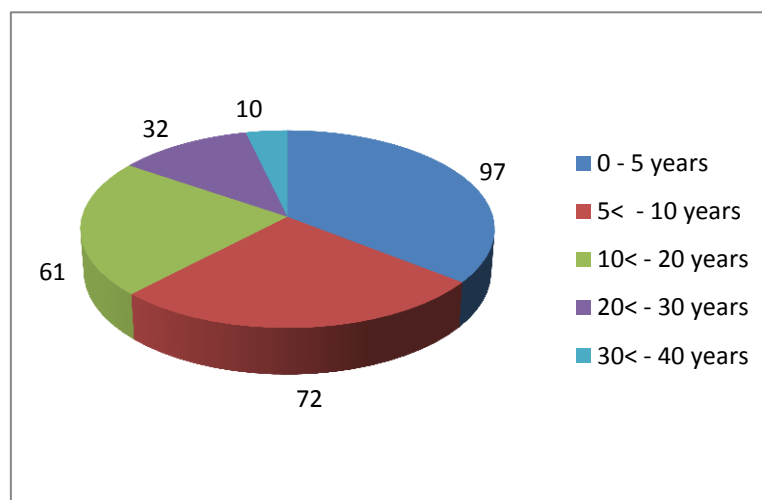
Chart 7.5: Distribution of responses to "years teaching at current institution" by respondents

The distribution of the years of teaching at SU gives an indication of the spread of the working years of respondents at SU. It was encouraging that staff members working at SU for longer as well as shorter periods of time, completed the questionnaire.

The next two questions requested respondents to rate themselves. The first of these asked respondents to rate themselves as teachers, while the second asked them to rate their interest in teaching (see Chart 7.6 and Chart 7.7).

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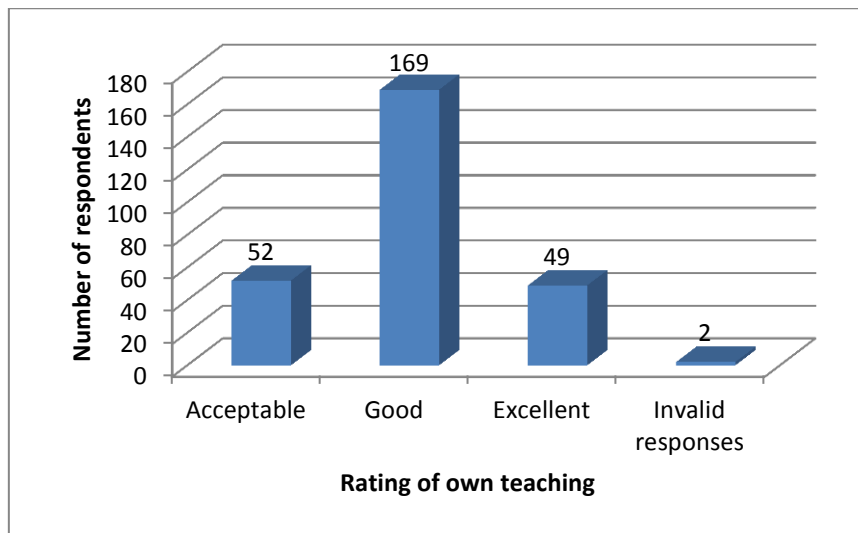
Chart 7.6: Distribution of responses to "rate yourself as a teacher" by respondents
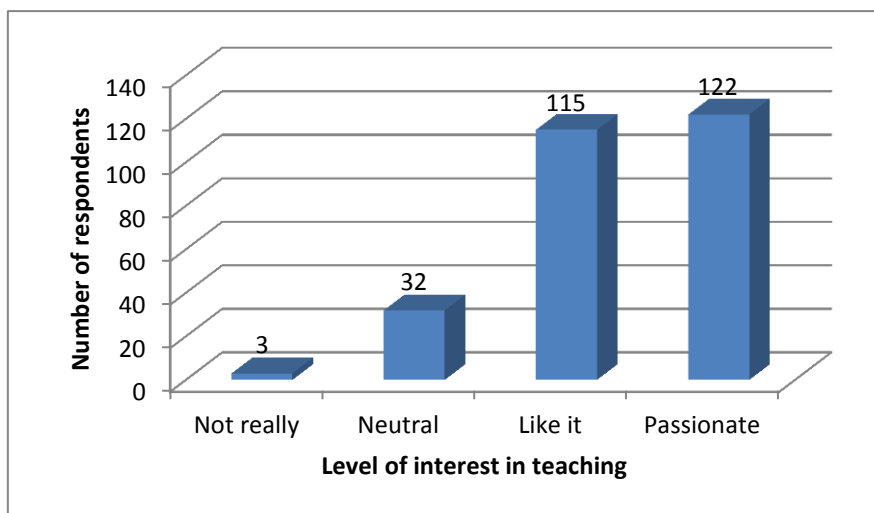
Chart 7.7: Distribution of responses to "rate your interest in teaching" by respondents

As indicated in Chart 7.6, more than two thirds of the respondents rated themselves as good lecturers, while almost 20% thought they were acceptable and 18% indicated that they were excellent. The fact that most respondents indicated some level of participation in professional learning (see frequency of participation Chart 7.8 below) even though they rated themselves quite highly as lecturers is interesting and note-worthy.

According to Chart 7.7, and as could be expected from a self-selected group of respondents, 87% of the respondents indicated a high interest in teaching.

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7.2.3 Respondents' participation in professional learning opportunities

The third section of the questionnaire focused on the respondents' participation in professional learning opportunities for their teaching. The following description of professional learning was included in the preamble to the first question in this section: Professional learning can be defined as the numerous activities which have to do with the "academic/educational/faculty/staff development of academics in post-compulsory, tertiary or higher education" (Brew, 2004:5). Johnston (1998:1) adds that professional learning is "the need for professionals to continue learning as they practice and advance in their careers".

Respondents were asked to indicate how often they participated in activities of professional learning for teaching and could make a choice from a continuum ranging from once a term or more, once a semester, once a year or less, or never (see Chart 7.8).
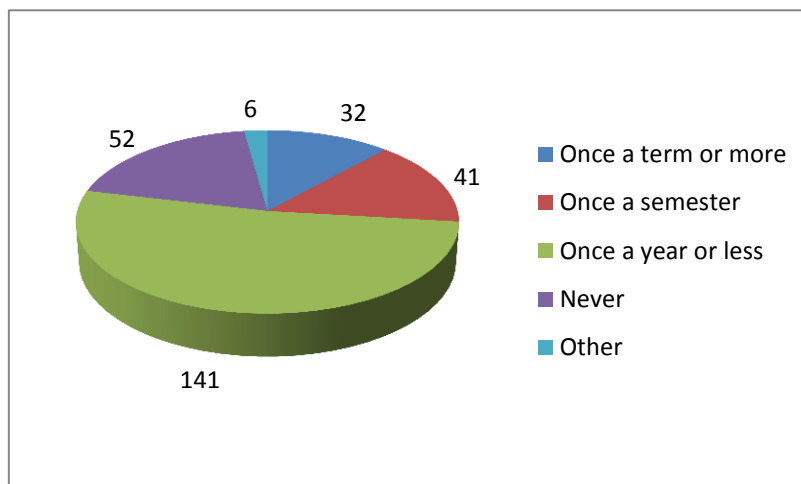
Chart 7.8: Distribution of "how often do you participate in professional learning opportunities for your teaching?" of respondents

Fifty-two percent (n = 141) of the respondents indicated that they had participated in an opportunity for professional learning at least once during their time at Stellenbosch University. A higher frequency of participation of at least once a semester was indicated by 15% (n = 41), while 12% (n = 32) indicated participation in professional learning once a term or more. Almost 20% (n = 52) of the self-selected respondents who completed the questionnaire indicated that they had never participated in any such activities. It would be important from the perspective of a professional learning practitioner to answer the question asked by this research in order to propose ways of enabling the decision making of a bigger complement of lecturers for involvement in the process of professional learning for teaching.

The responses to the 'frequency of participation' question were used as main criterion for purposefully selecting the lecturer-level interviewees for the semi-structured interviews (see Addendum A for Interviewee Matrix).

Following on this question, the researchers were interested in the factors that facilitated respondents' participation in professional learning opportunities for teaching. Respondents could select more than one option in response (see Chart 7.9).
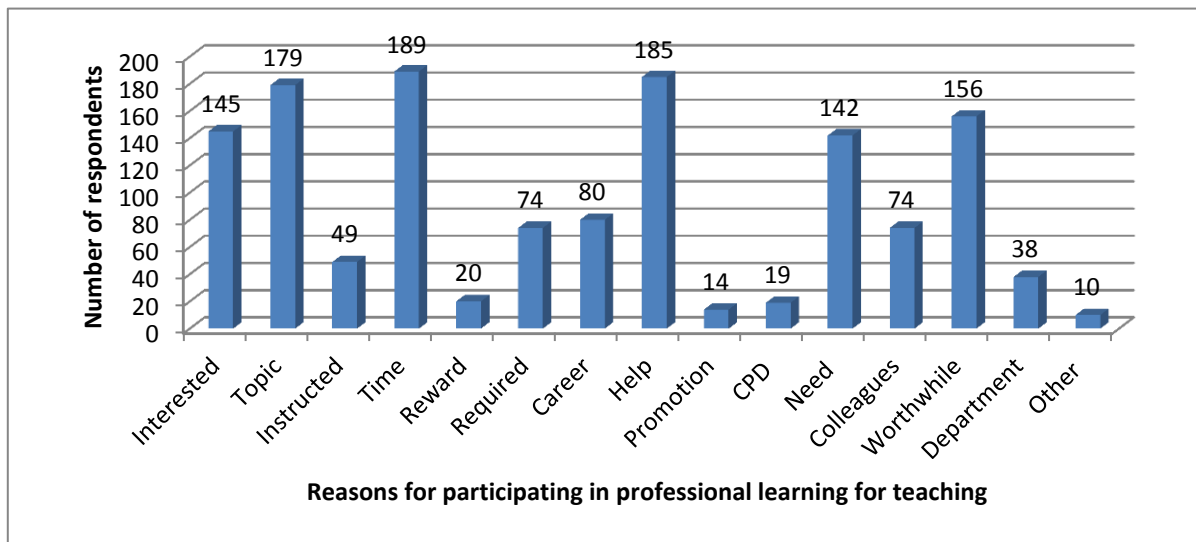
Chart 7.9: Distribution of responses to "what may prompt your attendance of professional learning opportunities for your teaching?" by respondents

Based on the number of responses to each option, the options were ranked from one to fourteen (two of the options received an even number of responses, hence the rankings only go up to number 13). The top ten facilitating factors, starting from the highest number, were as follows: when they had time (70%); if they thought it could help them with their teaching (68%); when the topic seemed relevant to their teaching (66%); when they thought it would be worthwhile (57%); when they were interested (53%); when they had a need (52%); when they thought it could advance their careers (29%); if it was required by the institution and if colleagues suggested it would be worthwhile (both 27%); when instructed to do so by a Supervisor or the Head of Department (18%); the existence of a positive attitude towards professional learning for teaching in the Department (14%).

The bottom three of the prompters for participation in professional learning for teaching at SU were, in the last place, wanting to apply for promotion (5%); second from last, needing CPD[6] points (7%); and, third from last, when there was an incentive/reward (7%).

It is of interest and importance to this research to mention that the top seven facilitating factors were related to the individual lecturers and their intrinsic motivation.

The next question asked about where academics would go when they needed help with their teaching. More than one option could be selected (see Chart 7.10).
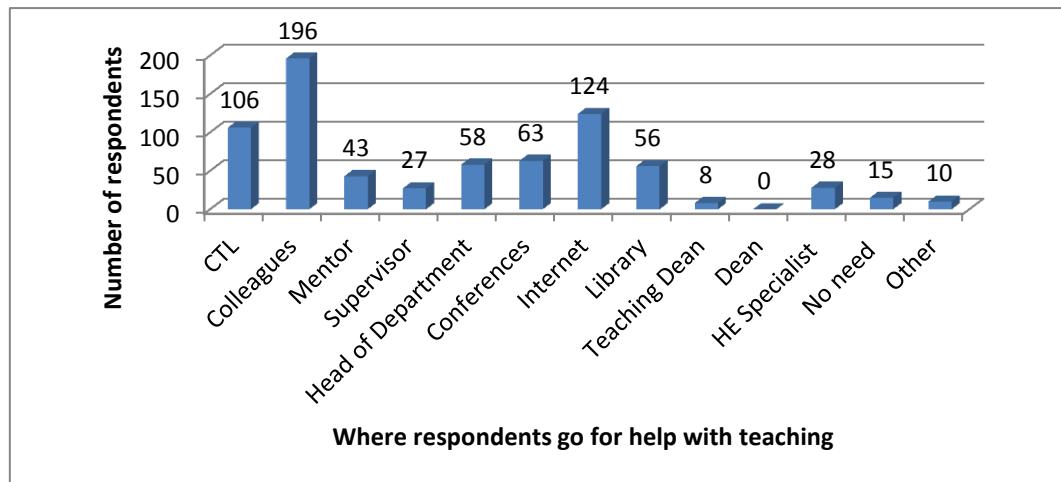
Chart 7.10: Distribution of responses to the question: "Where do you go to for help with your teaching?"

Based on the number of responses, the items were ranked from one to ten. Respondents indicated they would firstly approach a colleague for assistance (72%) and, secondly, would surf the Internet (46%). Both of these options concern more informal types of professional learning and are within easy reach. Making use of these would therefore take less of an academic's time. Approaching a colleague might also be preferable because colleagues have some understanding of the reality of the academic's situation. As a third option, 39% of the respondents indicated that they would consult the Centre for Teaching and Learning (CTL). Teaching deans would be approached by 3%, a supervisor by 10% and a higher education specialist by just more than 10%. None of the respondents indicated they would ask a Dean for help and 6% indicated they do not need help.

The last question in this section of the questionnaire requested respondents to indicate in which areas of their teaching they usually asked for help (see Chart 7.11). Respondents could select more than one option.

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[6] CPD points = Continuing Professional Development points needed by certain professionals to retain their registration with a professional body
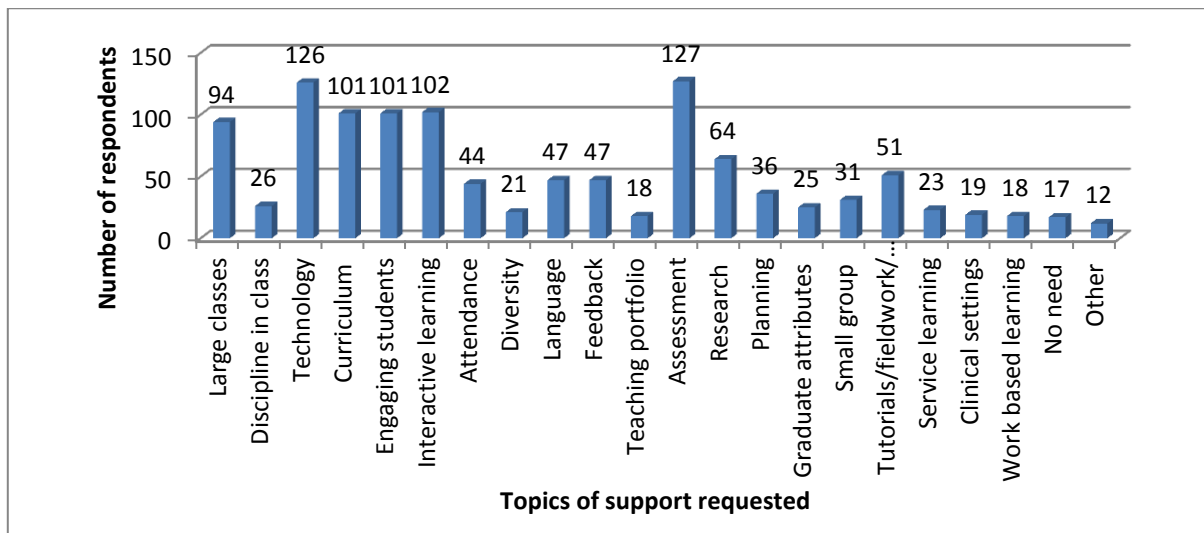
Chart 7.11: Distribution of responses to the question: "If you do ask for help, in which areas of your teaching do you ask for this?"

Based on the number of responses, the items were ranked from one to twenty. (Three of the items emerged with even numbers of responses, hence the ranking only went to number 17. The options 'no need' and 'other' were not included in the ranking). According to these responses, assessment of students (47%) and the use and integration of technology in learning and teaching (46%) seem to be the two areas of professional learning for teaching where help is asked most often. Interactive learning and teaching is indicated as number three, at 38%. Questions about curriculum design and how to engage students were both indicated as the fourth most important area requiring help, with 37%, while questions about dealing with large classes made up the fifth area for potential assistance (35%). The bottom five areas in which lecturers indicated they would ask for help were service learning, diversity, clinical settings, work based learning and teaching portfolios.

7.2.4   Enabling and constraining factors around participating in the process of professional learning

The last section of the questionnaire focused on the enabling and constraining factors affecting participation in the process of professional learning for teaching as perceived by the responding academics. For the questions in this section – namely questions 21 – 25, respondents first had to select an option on a Likert scale and then explain their choices. The open comments to these questions have been reported via narrative data in Chapter 6.

The first of the questions in this last section of the questionnaire asked academics to indicate the extent to which the institution provided formal recognition for engagement in professional learning for teaching. Chart 7.12 provides a summary of these responses, which is followed by a discussion of the responses.
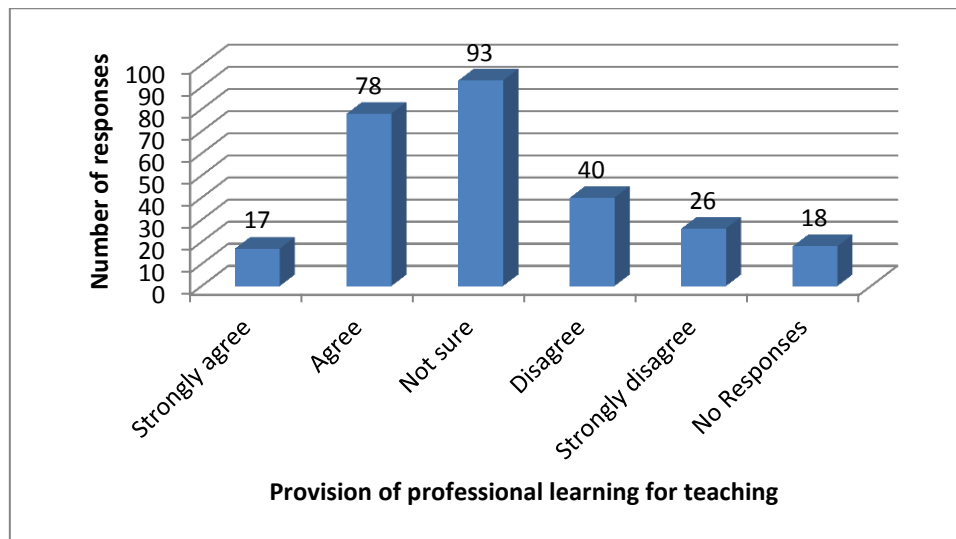
Chart 7.12: Responses to the statement: "My institution provides formal recognition for engagement in professional learning for teaching."

A total of 95 respondents (37%) agreed that recognition for engagement in professional learning for teaching is provided at the institution, while 66 (26%) indicated that no recognition is provided. The remaining 37% of the respondents were not sure whether recognition was provided or not. The absence of recognition might potentially influence decision making about involvement in the process of professional learning.

The transcripts of the open-ended comments revealed that limited or no recognition for engagement in professional learning for teaching was reported. This discrepancy alludes to the possibility of respondents misinterpreting this question. Respondents might have missed the words 'professional learning' in the question and instead focused on the teaching function when answering the question.[7]

What the next question in this section about enablers and constraints in the process of professional learning for teaching wanted to establish, was whether the institution provided resources for engagement in the process of professional learning for teaching. The responses to this question are represented in Chart 7.13 below. This is followed by a discussion of the responses.

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[7] Upon engagement with the comments to the open-ended questions it became clear that a large number of respondents did not answer this question in relation to 'engagement in professional learning of teaching' but in relation to teaching *per se*. Although these comments then, strictly speaking, were not answering the question directly, it can be argued that these responses are still valuable as it gives an indication of the stature of teaching and the definition of good teaching at the institution, which one could further argue would have a direct link to the formal recognition of professional learning for teaching. If the perception is that recognition for teaching is given, it could be concluded that recognition for engagement in professional learning for teaching will be given also, and if the opposite is perceived – that no recognition is given for teaching – no recognition would be given for the process of professional learning for teaching either. The recognition for teaching that respondents mainly referred to was the institutional Rector's Award for Excellence in teaching.
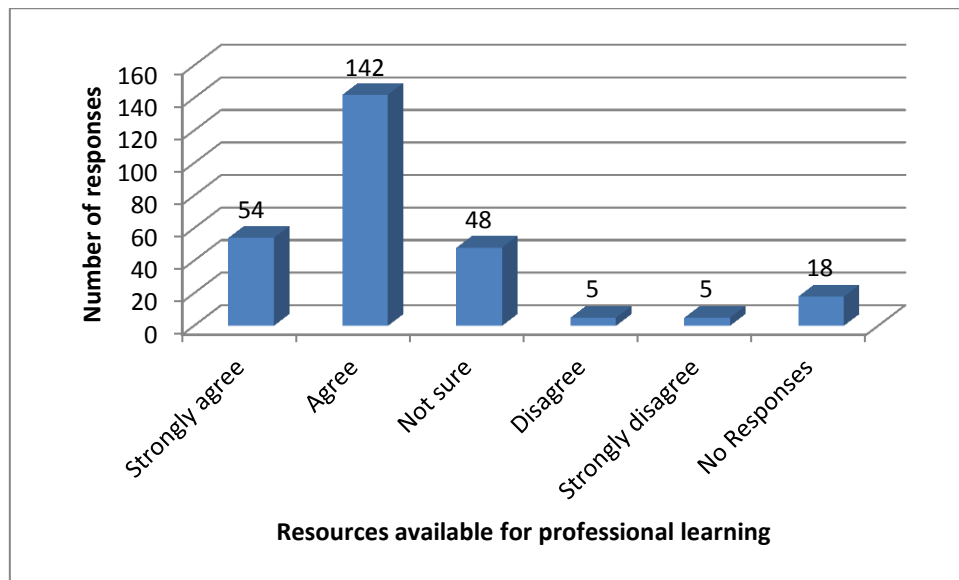
Chart 7.13: Distribution of responses to the statement: "My institution provides resources for engagement in professional learning for teaching."

A total of 77% of respondents agreed that resources are provided for professional learning for teaching, while 4% indicated that resources were not provided and 19% were not sure whether resources were provided.

Following on from here, Question 23 asked participants whether their workload often hindered their ability to participate in professional learning for their teaching (see Chart 7.14).
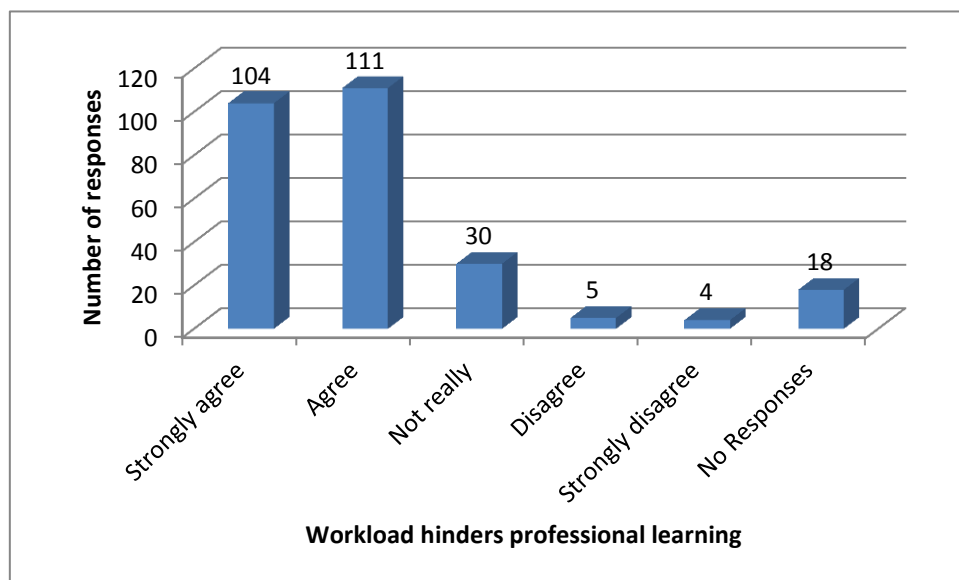
Chart 7.14: Distribution of responses to the statement: "My workload often hinders my ability to participate in professional learning for teaching."

From the responses to this question it seems clear that a perceived high workload may be one of the main factors hindering the decision of academics to participate in and follow through with the

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process of professional learning for teaching. A total of 215 staff members who answered this question (84.64%) agreed with this statement, while only nine (3.5%) disagreed. The other 30 respondents (12%) were indifferent about the issue of workload that may hinder participation in professional learning for teaching.

The reality of workload as a hindrance to professional learning for teaching also received overwhelming confirmation in the open comments and generated the most open comments of all the open-ended questions in the questionnaire. Workload was also evident as an issue in the interviews with the lecturers. Even senior management alluded to it (Chapter 3).

Question 24 of the questionnaire asked respondents about the relevance to their discipline of the topics of the professional learning opportunities. This question was asked in the negative, which could have influenced the respondents' understanding and subsequent answers. The responses to this question are given in Chart 7.15 below and this is followed by a discussion of these responses.
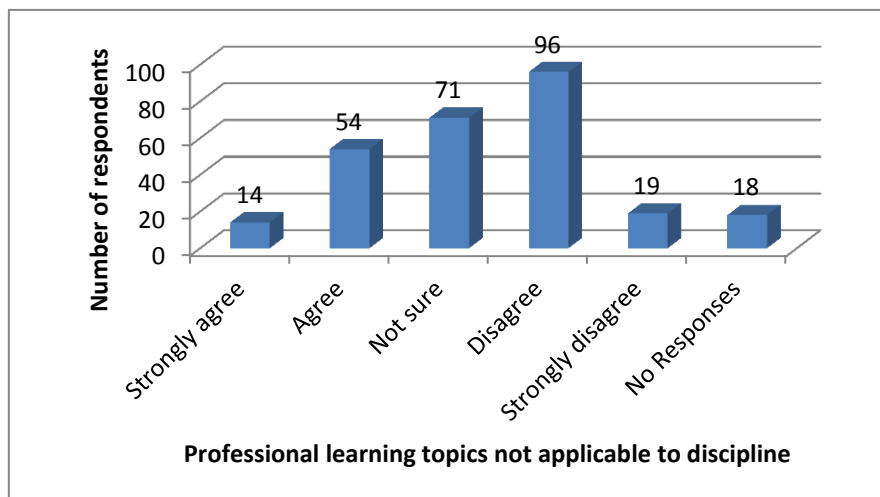
Chart 7.15: Distribution of responses to the statement: "The topics of the professional learning opportunities for teaching are not applicable in my own discipline."

From the total of 254 respondents to this question, 115 (42%) were of the opinion that the professional learning topics available at the institution were mostly applicable to their disciplines while 68 (25%) felt the topics were not applicable. Twenty-eight percent of the respondents were not sure whether the topics were applicable to their own teaching.

The last question in this section of the questionnaire was intended to determine whether respondents could access the information about professional learning opportunities available at the institution easily (see Chart 7.16). These responses will be discussed briefly.
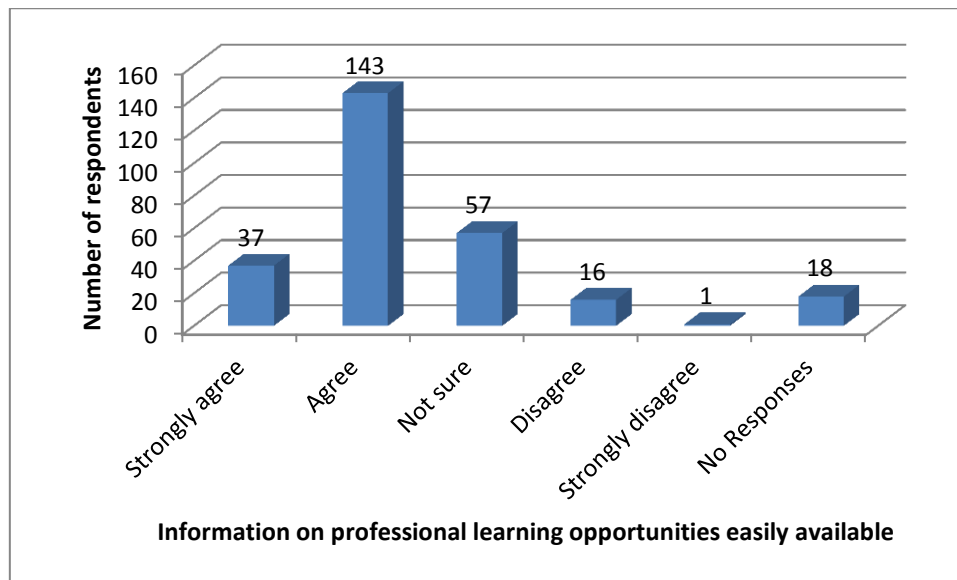
Chart 7.16: Distribution of responses to the statement: "I can easily access information on professional learning opportunities for teaching in my institution."

To the question whether it was easy to find information about the available professional learning opportunities for teaching at Stellenbosch University, 180 (71%) of the respondents indicated that they could indeed find such information easily, while seventeen (7%) indicated that it was not easy to find such information. The remainder of the respondents (22%) were not sure about the availability of this information.

From the numerical responses to the questions in this section, it seems as if SU provides sufficient and relevant opportunities for professional learning for teaching.

7.3   Summary

The purpose of an explorative case study is to better understand a particular phenomenon studied within its 'natural' context. In this case the aim was to better understand and interpret the context (professional, personal and daily spheres of the life-world) of SU lecturers, rather than to try to find relationships between the factors that may influence their decision making. The biographical data in this case indicated that the respondents, who were generally representative of the overall academic staff complement of Stellenbosch University, were also representative in terms of gender, ethnicity, level of appointment and faculty. Responses to the questionnaire items also provided lecturer views and experiences of the institutional context as relating to their teaching function and professional learning for teaching in a research-intensive university. It was noted that responses that were rendered were not from lecturers who usually participated in the process of professional learning for their teaching at the institution only, but being a self-selected group, it might nevertheless be possible that most of the respondents had a positive feeling towards their teaching function.

The importance of intrinsic motivation when choosing to participate in professional learning for teaching emerged strongly from the quantitative questionnaire results and corresponds with the findings from the narrative data. The data derived from the numerical questionnaire thus pointed more towards substantiating and strengthening the narrative data rather than contradicting or refuting it. In the next chapter, I provide a synthesis of the findings, drawing from and building on the process of interpretation that was commenced in Chapters 6 and 7. The findings will also be linked to relevant theoretical concerns.

Chapter 8
Discussion of the findings

8.1 Introduction

Chapters 6 and 7 reported the findings of the empirical part of this study. In Chapters 3 and 4 various theoretical lenses were used to arrive at a conceptual framework (see Chapter 4, Section 4.7) that was used to guide the conceptualisation and planning of the empirical research and the interpretation and discussion of the findings in particular. This chapter focuses on the interpretation of the empirical in terms of the theoretical perspectives relevant to this study. Specific findings and quotes from Chapter 6 are used and highlighted here for the purposes of substantiating, explaining and discussion.

The narrative data generated by the open comments derived from the questionnaire served as the main source of data for the empirical research. The numerical data from the questionnaire and the narrative data generated via interviews with 15 purposely selected lecturers enriched, confirmed and elaborated on the findings from the open questionnaire questions. It became clear from the findings that the potentially constraining considerations exceeded the number of potentially enabling considerations. In the discussion, therefore, the focus will be leaning more towards these constraining considerations as they are the ones that need more reflection and would be key in any attempt to understand their origins. When addressed, this may hopefully create a more enabling context for lecturer decision-making about professional learning for teaching – especially at Stellenbosch University as a research-intensive institution.

It may seem as if some points overlap in the discussion, but this should rather be seen as confirmation of the complexity of the phenomenon under investigation. The discussion starts with the process of decision making, followed by the perceived enabling considerations of such decisions. The importance of an environment conducive to decision making will then be explained before the focus turns to a discussion of the perceived constraining considerations which should be interpreted as indicators for creating a more enabling and caring environment.

8.2 Decision making about participating in the process of professional learning for teaching

Professional learning is defined in Chapter 4 as the continuous learning of professionals as they practise and advance in their careers. The aim of the complex process of professional learning in an academic context such as a university is to bring about change in the beliefs governing teaching and

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learning and assessment practices of lecturers for the facilitation of quality student learning (Badley, 1998; Elvidge *et al.*, 2004; Cilliers & Herman, 2010; Opfer & Pedder, 2011; Boud & Brew, 2012). This professional learning was also defined as a three-staged process involving three interlinked and sequential decisions. The notion of lecturer involvement in professional learning as a choice was reported in the findings (see Section 6.3).

As indicated by SU lecturers, various professional learning opportunities for teaching from which lecturers can select are available at SU: "The choice is wide and I can select relevant courses" (Q). When a lecturer thus sees or receives an invitation to participate in such a professional learning opportunity, the process of decision making is set in motion, starting with phase one, the pre-decision phase. I have pointed out in Chapter 4 that this contemplation is influenced by the unique context (daily reality) emerging from the individual's interpretation of the situation. This, in turn, is created by interplay between considerations from the personal and professional spheres of the lecturer's life-world and could potentially enable or constrain their decision making.

Within this unique individual context, phase 1 of the decision-making process is characterised by the lecturer weighing up alternatives as an act of prioritising. The available alternatives (i.e. spending time on teaching, or the professional learning for teaching, or research, or service, or something else) are weighed by calculating the potential opportunity cost(s) and evaluating the expected outcomes, as evident from the words of one of the respondents: "If I think something may be useful, I make a huge effort to attend, even if it means that I must catch up with other work at another time. This does sometimes make me feel overloaded but I still would attend sessions that I find useful" (Q). As pointed out by Merriam and Leahy (2005), Grossman and Salas (2011) and Ajzen and Fishbein (1980), this first phase is most vital in the process of decision making, as it usually determines what will or will not happen during the subsequent phases (see Section 4.3.5).

The second phase occurs when the actual decision is made and a professional learning opportunity is attended. The decision to become immersed in the learning activities again is influenced by the individual context emerging from the interplay of the considerations from the personal and professional spheres of the life-world. Such professional learning opportunities usually address issues of teaching and learning through 'meaningful dialogue' (Handal, 2008). This 'engagement with one another' is facilitated by professional learning practitioners during formal professional learning opportunities specifically designed for the deliberate growth of academic staff members and in support of quality learning and teaching. Such opportunities need to be designed according to the principles of learning – including research in and professional learning for teaching as well as subject-related research (see Miller, 2008:105 and Section 4.3.3) – in order to "recapture the heart of academia" and let academia thrive again. One interviewee captured this idea well: "it means that

you yourself keep learning. And the only way in which I think you can be a good teacher is if you are a learner yourself and if you keep your own material fresh, in other words you start teaching by rote if you don't do research" (L8).

During the last or post-decision phase, the choice and accompanying consequence(s) are evaluated and should be 'put to good use' (Eraut, 1994:30).This notion of implementation was also alluded to by respondents: "it is expected that as a result of engagement your outputs will increase and improve in quality and these outputs are formally recognised. This is as it should be. Learning must lead to outputs" (Q). Again, the interplay between the considerations from the personal and professional spheres of the life-world as evident in the daily reality could either be enabling or constraining to decisions to implement what was learned. To this avail, one respondent commented that implementation was sometimes not possible due to disciplinary differences: "The various things I have seen are not applicable to teaching Mathematics. Most of the techniques seem to be relevant more for soft topics, where students are encouraged to discuss their views and opinions on matters. This may be nice in philosophy or political science, but is less useful in Mathematics" (Q).

If lecturers experience the process of professional learning as useful and positive, however – thus leading to the expected changes – chances are that they will decide to participate again in future. This was confirmed by one interviewee as follows: "But when you go to them [professional learning opportunities], then you realise that you actually do need it. And uhm, I think that's what then led me to, to sign up for other workshops after that" (L14). According to Schutz and Luckmann (1973), this means that decision making is future-oriented while rooted in the past. The considerations perceived by lecturers as enabling to the decision to become involved in professional learning for teaching thus are important and are discussed next.

8.3 Considerations perceived as enabling of decision making

Considerations that enable a positive response to opportunities for learning to teach were found to include the availability of resources and support, intrinsic motivation and a caring environment, as explained below.

8.3.1 Availability of resources and support

From the professional sphere of their daily reality, the lecturers who participated in this study in the first instance perceived resources necessary for such engagement as being available and useful (see for example Sections 6.5.1.1.1 and 6.5.1.1.2). These resources include the availability of professional learning opportunities, mentoring, peer feedback and the services of the SU Centre for Teaching and Learning. Wright *et al.* (2004:153) also confirm that departmental conversations

about pedagogical issues, collaboration between colleagues, structured planning meetings with departmental chairs, opportunities for team teaching, mentoring by senior staff members and peer observations seem to play a powerful role in constructing a culture of teaching within a department. The notion of peer observations emerged from questionnaire responses in ways such as illustrated by the following quote: "So, and I have now sort of asked to sit in on her first year, on one of her first year modules on … so we do that, but there's maybe not enough of that, but it's difficult to you know, to make time for it really. I can't think of any other way that one really learns, I really don't know" (L8). Peer support shows a strong, direct relationship with transfer of learning into action (Chiaburu & Marinova, 2005) and the importance of trust in peer relations was highlighted by quotes such as: "What we have done here for instance in the department, but that you can once again only do if you really trust one another. We sit in on one another's classes" (L4).

The role that the professional learning practitioners from an institutional Centre for Teaching and Learning play as 'path clearers', 'fore-runners' or 'task forces' (Hockings, 2005:324) and as 'critical friends' (Handal, 2008:55) was highlighted in the lecturer responses. The role of such professionals to initiate and sustain dialogue between lecturers and management for facilitating real change to take place should also not be underestimated. Respondents pointed to this as being the case at SU in quotes such as: "The centre for teaching and learning is always willing to assist and research any questions directed at them from academic staff" (Q). It was interesting to note from lecturer feedback that most of the resources seen as supporting the teaching function were related to the institutional Centre for Teaching and Learning (including the SoTL conference, FINLO grants, teaching fellowships, and others).

Opportunities for co-teaching, adequate classroom facilities, a well-resourced library, free Internet and the value of personal relationships were also identified as enabling and supporting the decision to become involved with the process of professional learning at the institution. To illustrate with one quote: "There's very good resources at this university. Library-wise, teaching venues, they have what you need to be able to do a presentation. Whether you're using PowerPoint or you're just doing a normal old-fashioned lecture" (L13). Other lecturers referred to experiencing support from middle management for teaching as a career and attendance of professional learning opportunities, as well as to the availability of other resources: "They [management] advised me to make use of my resources to enhance the teaching experience for both myself and the students ... they are also encouraging me to do an extra course outside of the university to make my department competitive on an international level" (Q).

From the evidence it thus seems as if sufficient opportunities for professional learning for teaching are available at SU and information about these is usually easy to access. Lecturers have indicated

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their appreciation of the importance of professional learning for teaching and are willing and keen to participate, even it would imply some additional work. Respondents agreed that implementing what was learned was an important part of the process of professional learning indeed. If lecturers thus perceive professional learning as something they associate with and want to do, the question as to why it does not happen regularly becomes important.

Many lecturer responses pointed to the fact that intrinsic motivation is an important consideration for decision making about participating in professional learning for teaching. One lecturer, for instance, said: "The enthusiasm is the thing that causes you to go and prepare yourself well … and also, that will let you go out and try and find new ways to teach."(L4). It is to this notion of being intrinsically motivated that the discussion now turns.

8.3.2 Intrinsic motivation

It was pointed out earlier that intrinsic motivation appears to be the strongest influence on decision making (Lent *et al.*, 2002; Frick & Kapp, 2009; Leibowitz *et al.*, 2009, 2012; Viskovic, 2009; Bexley *et al.*, 2011). Such motivation is influenced by several considerations (Scribner, 1999:259) while we, at the same time, know that learning and motivation are intertwined and the one cannot be anticipated without the other (Zimmerman, 1990:6). It is this powerful combination of the lecturer's beliefs, experiences and prior knowledge which emerges as an individual context influencing professional learning decisions (Opfer & Pedder, 2011).

Form the lecturer feedback, intrinsic motivation emerged as the most important consideration potentially enabling their choices to become involved in the process of professional learning for teaching. To illustrate with a quote from one lecturer: "for me personally, it is up to the individual to take advantage of opportunities when and as they arise" (L1). Senior managers at SU also saw intrinsic motivation as an enabler for 'teaching well' (see Section 3.6.16). In addition, when respondents had to rank factors which facilitated their participation in professional learning opportunities for teaching, those ranked under the first seven were all intrinsic factors related to the individual academic (see Chart 7.9).

Levels of intrinsic motivation seem to be influenced by an individual's perception of the level of care she or he receives (Nixon *et al.*, 2001). A caring environment is characterised by trust, matters of being valued and by clear communication rather than by mixed signals and misaligned messages (Tronto, 2010). Such environments are conducive to the decision for professional learning for teaching as there seems to be a profound relationship between decision making and context (Clark & Strauss, 2007:10).

Despite the above enabling considerations, the empirical findings also point to constraining factors from the personal and professional spheres of the life-world. The relatively large number of constraining factors could be interpreted as evident of an environment which is not conducive to decision making for teaching and professional learning. The findings also indicate that these constraints could be attributed to the perceived low level of care experienced at the institution. This, in turn, seems to influence the intrinsic motivation of individual lecturers. Within such an environment, their level of intrinsic motivation may have to be raised for lecturers to be persuaded to make a choice in favour of professional learning for teaching. This was stated as follows by one lecturer interviewee: "I would really have to be persuaded that it [professional learning for teaching] was something that I needed to do with my time" (L5).

8.3.3   A caring environment

What an individual experiences, feels and thinks influence their choices and approaches to teaching and professional learning for teaching (Crawford, 2010:198). Any individual's willingness to cope with change and implement innovations is also influenced by their professional identity (Beijaard *et al.*, 2000:750). Confidence and credibility are two important prerequisites for professionals to act, as individuals needs to believe in themselves (Eraut, 1994:47). This was confirmed, for example, by one interviewee who indicated that she was not highly confident about her own capabilities: "I found it incredible that I was teaching students how to write. You know, I don't even know if I can write myself or if I can write properly, especially when you sit with something for publication" (L10). Such doubts about one's own competence, in this instance academic writing skills, might be even more hampering in an environment where prestige is not earned through what students learn, but through the research reputation of academics that becomes evident through writing and publishing (Dill, 2005:180).

The motivation for professional learning is inextricably related to workplace environments (Knight, 2006:35; Buller, 2015). Pursuing a career in an environment that is perceived as non-appreciative towards your efforts and not 'care-ful' (Milligan & Wiles, 2010:737) about your career aspirations would be demotivating to most humans (Tronto, 1993). If the environment further expects of you to excel in what you do without valuing or supporting your efforts, an individual certainly needs high levels of intrinsic motivation to continue, as mentioned by a respondent in this research:

 "I have been actively engaged in my Department in numerous initiatives to enhance learning in our undergrads particularly … I am actually one of the few people in our environment who is interested in undergrad learning … I have never been acknowledged or rewarded in any way for the work I do in developing teaching and learning. It has to be its own reward, or you don't do it" (Q). In the daily

reality of humans, the emotional side of their daily life is an important part of their being and becoming (Adler *et al.*, 1987:225). The call by Hargreaves (1998b) to treat the role of emotions in academic work in higher education with increased importance also became evident in this research (see Section 6.7). According to Trigwell (2012:609) the emotions evoked by the context and not emotional dispositions are of importance. For lecturers to feel valued as individuals it is suggested that an enabling environment inclusive of care for their wellbeing should be created (Barnes, 2012).

As needs are produced and experienced in specific contexts, care should manifest appropriately to such contexts (Barnes, 2012:17,31). In this study, context is defined as an individual construct and care should therefore be focused at the level of the individual. Relationships are important for care to be evident because people will then act out of compassion rather than out of a concern of efficiency (Shields, 2003:77). Respondents in this research also alluded to the value of personal relationships: "But I really would value that somebody come and sit and that I don't just have to go to a formal training session, but that it can be personal" (L9). The need for care is present in all humans and those in management should realise that giving such care will be to the benefit of the individual, the institution and society as a whole (Bitzer, 2007).

Lecturers' decision making for professional learning could be enabled by assessing and addressing issues in their daily reality (Kleinmuntz & Schkade, 1993). When approaching the notion of context as proposed in this study (see Section 4.4), and addressing those constraining considerations identified by the study (see Section 6.6), it should be possible to enhance the intrinsic motivation of lecturers in support of their decision making for participating in the process of professional learning for teaching. The question therefore is to determine in what kinds of working environments professional learning would be prevalent and which affordances should be in place. Earlier it was suggested that, within such an enabling environment, lecturers and teaching will be valued both by peers and by management (McKinney, 2006; Bozalek *et al.*, 2014; Buller, 2015); lecturers will have the chance to talk about and listen to issues around teaching and learning (Hutchings, n.d.); time for reflection will be available (Leibowitz *et al.*, 2012); and the contribution to 'an important larger enterprise' will be valued (Hutchings, 2000:65), while attention will also be given to the issue of workload (Dunkin, 2001).

Cultivating such 'care-ful' environments could be a potentially productive approach to enhance the intrinsic motivation of academics in support of their decision making about participating in the process of professional learning for teaching.

8.4 The importance of an environment conducive to decision making

Achieving changes in student success is only possible with high quality professional [learning] or 'formal study' of lecturers (Joyce & Showers, 2002:3; Fullan, 2006; The Carnegie Foundation, 2008). Such 'formal study' does not mean the earning of a teaching qualification only, but also participating in formal professional learning opportunities. As indicated by one of the interviewees: "[teaching] is a discipline on its own and it's not something that just comes naturally. Because you like it, it doesn't mean that you're good at it, and people don't quite realise there's a difference. Because you do a lot of it, it doesn't mean that you're doing it well" (L12). Professional learning of academics is thus of significant importance in achieving the aims of higher education (Crawford, 2010:189).

Professional learning of academics for their teaching will be more successful in enabling or supportive contexts (Harwell, 2003:2; Crawford, 2010). Unfortunately not enough is known about the environments that will enable professional learning for teaching (Knight, 2006:35). Lecturers in this study alluded to some of the difficulties in this regard when mentioning the institutional focus on and reward of research and having a high workload: "We do not have the luxury to not concern ourselves with research and research related publications, together with a fairly heavy lecturing load (which I got, because I'm the one interested in teaching) [it] makes it really difficult to attend anything" (Q).

As indicated earlier, the aim of all teaching and its related activities is improvement in the quality of student learning. All initiatives implemented to this end should however start with the recognition of the importance of the lecturers in this regard (Harwell, 2003:1; Buller, 2015). Institutions of higher education, including, and especially, research-intensive universities, usually work very hard to attract top academics (The Group of Eight, 2013:10). Looking well after these important and expensive assets makes good sense (Blackmore & Blackwell, 2003:23; Frick & Kapp, 2009:257). The Stellenbosch University Institutional Plan 2012 – 2016 (Stellenbosch University, 2012b) also lists the expertise of its staff members as 'producers, conveyers and appliers of knowledge' as the main element of its lasting competitive advantage.

The tension that occurs between the mismatch of the institutional values and the perceived daily reality of the individual academic is a stark reality (Taylor & Rege Colet, 2010:160), as is the perceived gaps between investments in professional learning on the structural level and the experience of the individual academic. One interviewee, for example, uttered a cry for help in terms of support for assessing student learning: "It's a difficult thing to do. And we also need training on

those things: how to set papers, how to set MCQs and what is the importance of setting papers" (L9). In support of lecturers' decision making for involvement in the process of professional learning for teaching, the institution therefore has the responsibility to at least create space in terms of time and workload and available opportunities for lecturers to participate in professional learning for teaching (Ginns *et al.*, 2010).

Formulating an institutional view on 'good' lecturers, 'good' teaching and professional learning for teaching would go a long way in supporting the decision making of lecturers for participating in the process of professional learning for teaching. One respondent to the questionnaire rightly commented that: "Once you are 'good enough', there is not much motivation to be much better" (Q). How this 'good enough' is determined or measured is not clear. Another respondent mentioned that he could not see the need for professional learning based on the fact that he consistently received good student feedback: "I think my teaching is good and the student feedback confirms this. If I get 90% for teaching, why should I go on courses for teaching?" (Q). Yet another made a similar comment pointing towards a conviction of being 'naturally good' at teaching: "It is true that we are naturally better at teaching than research. So we spend more time to develop research while teaching is sufficient" (Q). One of the interviewees requested the institution to clarify the boundaries, however, and to make the criteria for 'good' teaching more explicit: "But I find it very difficult to know what the standard is these days or what we should aspire to" (L10).

The way a workplace, including a university, sets its values and priorities has a bearing on the daily reality of its employees (Buller, 2015); in this case the academics and specifically in relation to the teaching function (Crawford, 2010:198). Institutional culture plays a powerful role in supporting or hindering the professional learning of lecturers (Webster-Wright, 2009:719). In order to address this issue, professional learning for teaching should form part of the process of quality improvement of an institution (Harwell, 2003:10), inclusive of aspects of recognition, regard and reward. This is not always the case, as managers often approach the notion of the professional learning of academics for their teaching function without 'intellectual rigor'; treating it instead as an afterthought (Sparks, in Harwell, 2003:v). If the workplace expects of you to excel in what you do without valuing or supporting your efforts, intrinsic motivation might not always be enough to overcome the perceived opportunity cost and enable individual decision making. In order to create an environment that enables the decision making of lecturers, the constraints as reported below should not be seen as negative, but rather as indicators of what could be addressed to lower the opportunity cost and make the environment more 'care-ful' and enabling to lecturer decision making.

8.5 Considerations perceived as constraints to decision making that should be addressed when attempting to create a more conducive environment

We were reminded previously about the reality of academics at a research-intensive university that is constantly pulling in different directions because of various and rising expectations (Delanty, 2008:129) and functions related to the job. This usually leads to a situation in which individuals either experience success or frustration when attempting to actualise their goals (Berger & Luckmann, 1966:35). Within the sphere of the daily reality of the individual, the subjective reality of each individual becomes their daily reality. When something thus is perceived as 'real' in this reality, the consequences are also perceived as real (Thomas & Thomas, 1928) and this reality influences the individual's decision making. When lecturers experience their environment as constraining and not 'care-ful', this will be their reality and it will influence the interpretation of the various considerations at play during each phase of decision making.

As mentioned above, the perceived constraining considerations will be discussed with the purpose of highlighting these as areas to be addressed in an attempt to make the environment more enabling. This discussion will be done according to the prerequisites for caring institutions as given by Tronto (2010) namely value, clear communication and trust.

8.5.1 Value

8.5.1.1 Teaching function not perceived to be valued

The aim of all teaching is quality student learning and this is no different at SU (see Chapters 2 and 3). It could therefore be expected that the teaching function – including 'good' lecturers and 'good' teaching, should be highly valued within the institution (see Conceptual framework Figure 4.6). The lecturers who participated in this research offered a different picture concerning how the institution is not always perceived as valuing the teaching function; neither recognising 'good' teaching nor supporting professional learning for teaching: "I'm getting full marks for my teaching but it doesn't help me if I don't have so many papers and so many post graduate students, so I feel very strongly about that. I really feel they should make it possible for people like myself and there are others also, give us more lectures but then evaluate us on that as teachers and not so much on research" (L5). This is in line with the report from the external evaluation of SU conducted earlier (HEQC, 2007), as well as institutional research by Leibowitz *et al*. (2009) and research from elsewhere (for example Bexley *et al*., 2011).

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The findings of this research point to various ways that 'good' teaching is currently described at the institution. According to respondents and interviewees, definitions range from being passionate about students and their learning; being a reflective practitioner; being innovative; participating in, and learning from professional learning events; being involved in the scholarship of teaching; and learning to constantly receiving 'good' student feedback (see Section 6.8.2). One interviewee alluded to the fact that being a good researcher would imply being a 'good' lecturer: "A lecturer should ideally not just be someone who stands and delivers a lecture. A lecturer is also a researcher … I do think one can't separate our teaching from research … but I do think the two go hand in hand." (L8). The respondents also indicated that senior management might have a different view on this: "They just want the best results that they can [get] you know, and that I think is important for the department." (L5). As a result of this variation in the institutional demarcation of 'good' teaching, teaching is often not perceived as a professional activity and less so as scholarship. It is therefore often approached by lecturers as amateurs (Elton, 2005) or as "do-it-yourselfers" (Bexley *et al.*, 2011:18) for whom professional learning does not seem important. The absence of a set of parameters for 'good' teaching is thus a potentially strong constraining consideration for lecturers' decision to become involved in the process of professional learning for teaching.

Due to the current absence of a description of 'good' teaching, student feedback often is the only measurement that is used for quality teaching.

8.5.1.2   Student feedback used for evaluation of teaching

The degree to which the teaching function was perceived to be valued at SU as an institution, and how such value was determined, was identified as a constraint indeed. One indication of the 'value' as reported by respondents is in the use of student feedback as a measure to appraise the performance of lecturers. Sometimes student feedback has even been used to determine regard and reward for teaching. The findings also highlighted the fact that the quality of teaching often was only measured though student feedback and student success: "Student feedback, number of lectures taught and post-graduate supervision are all taken into account during our annual performance evaluation, and we are awarded when this is good" (Q). What is often forgotten is that the implementation of teaching innovations and change require time and effort to become successful. Usually the curve might first go down before it goes up again. This is often not taken into account when measuring teaching quality through the system of student feedback, which is not sufficient to capture the intricacies of innovation and change. Such institutional practices have the potential to strengthen the idea of teaching as an amateur endeavour. The criteria used to judge teaching must be aligned with those used to develop teaching (for example rooted in scholarship, learning-centred

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teaching, planning and curriculum development, reflective practice, participation in professional learning opportunities, innovative teaching) (Trigwell, 2001). The constraining potential of these mixed messages on the decision-making of lecturers is apparent.

8.5.1.3   Scholarship of Teaching and Learning not valued

One way of raising the stature of teaching is for it to become a scholarly activity through opening it up for peer review (Wright *et al.*, 2004:154). Such opening up would expose the demands of teaching and would give lecturers peer-reviewed credibility and professional standing equal to that of research. Currently, teaching is mostly treated as a private activity (Shulman, 1993) which lecturers conduct as a solitary activity by symbolically closing the classroom door (Dill, 2005:186). One of the SU senior managers interviewed for the umbrella NRF research project related teaching to the proverbial 'black box' (see Chapter 3). This research found that neither the institution nor individual academic departments included research on teaching (the scholarship of teaching and learning) as scholarly output (see Section 6.6.1.1.3), which is in line with research conducted elsewhere (Richlin, 2001). Respondents reported that research on teaching was perceived to be even less valued than the teaching function *per se*: "Teaching doesn't really count - only research ... and not research about teaching" (Q). This finding contradicts the findings from a previous study conducted at SU (Adendorff, 2011), which reported SU management's view that respectable and trustworthy research on teaching is of critical importance and that such research would be acceptable as an alternative field of research.

I have mentioned that structures for professional learning for teaching were put in place with the establishment of the Centre for Teaching and Learning (CTL), instating the Committee for Learning and Teaching (CLT) as a Senate Committee; appointing Vice Deans Teaching in some faculties; and introducing various policies, professional learning opportunities and awards related to the teaching function. It thus seems that the teaching function is sufficiently structured and regulated at SU, but not sufficiently valued (Van Schalkwyk *et al.*, 2015). Interviewees and respondents in this research indeed indicated that, despite the existing structures, the teaching function is still experienced as subordinate to that of research and that research is more highly valued than teaching. One respondent summarised the situation as follows: "Even though teaching and learning is concerned as important at our university, in real life all that matters, is professional research outcomes such as publications and delivered postgraduate students" (Q).

8.5.1.4   Lecturers interested in teaching not feeling valued

The findings of this study showed that a large number of SU lecturers indicated an interest in the teaching function (87% of the questionnaire respondents [see Chart 7.11] and all 15 lecturer interviewees). These individuals indicated that they are at the university because they have a passion for university teaching and for students. The words of one interviewee capture this sentiment: "I love it I really love it, yeah! I do. I find it energizing" (L4). Unfortunately, their passion could not ensure them a career at the institution. They often felt they were penalised for wanting to excel in their teaching function and that 'good' teaching was not valued: "I'm getting full marks for my teaching but it doesn't help me if I don't have so many papers and so many post graduate students, so I feel very strongly about that. I really feel they should make it possible for people like myself and there are others also, give us more lectures but then evaluate us on that as teachers and not so much on research"(L5). In this regard it was claimed by Knorr-Cetina (1982:112) that academics often use the term 'value' in terms of "the scientists themselves". In this regard one respondent indicated that even salaries were used to discriminate against those taking teaching seriously: "New appointments (of young lecturers with little or no teaching experience) are done on research merits. Starting salaries of such lecturers are often (relatively speaking) higher than lecturers taking teaching seriously" (Q).

Academics wanting to focus on the teaching function thus felt that they themselves were not valued by the institution, as was cynically commented by a respondent: "I am arguably the only member of staff in my department who most regularly attends these opportunities, and I don't anticipate any recognition for taking this initiative" (Q). An interviewee commented that her Head of Department accused her of not being 'cost-effective' to the department and that it was 'unacceptable' for her to spend so much time on her teaching (L11) [Translated].

8.5.1.5   Professional learning for teaching not perceived as valued

It is widely acknowledged that student success is a significant quality indicator for higher education institutions. Teaching is one of the numerous factors that play a role in such student success. In the South African context, both the Green Paper (Department of Higher Education and Training, 2012:41) and the White Paper (Department of Higher Education and Training, 2013b:36) are unambiguous about the challenges that the workload and quality (or not) of lecturers play in the success of students. However, academics often have no or little preparation or support for teaching (Viskovic, 2009:15; Cilliers & Herman, 2010). One interviewee argued that teaching is a discipline that should be studied: "[teaching] is a discipline on its own and it's not something that just comes naturally. Because you like it, it doesn't mean that you're good at it, and people don't quite realise

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there's a difference. Because you do a lot of it, it doesn't mean that you're doing it well" (L12). Another interviewee in this research also highlighted this aspect of studying teaching as a discipline by commenting about feelings of being ill-equipped for teaching: "But I felt incredibly ill-equipped to be performing that task of how do you teach" (L10).

Being a lecturer in higher education nowadays requires a different and more extensive set of abilities and skills (Hutchings *et al.*, 2006). Facilitating the learning of more diverse groups of students also necessitates a deeper knowledge of pedagogy as the quality of teaching was found to be the most important variable in the achievement of students (Marzano, 2003; Hattie, 2009). It has been mentioned in this research that lecturers felt they did not get enough support in this regard: "It is assumed that we can do this [teaching] without paying attention to our classroom practice" (Q). Teaching is becoming a more and more complex endeavour and doing it well involves professional practice (Hargreaves & Goodson in Sachs, 2003). The need for professional learning of academics for their teaching function therefore seems evident (Brew, 2004:5). Respondents in this research echoed this need: "I teach quite a few modules and need to continually develop in this field to ensure that my students get the necessary learning opportunities to realise their potential" (Q).

Based on changes, expectations and challenges in higher education (see Chapters 1 and 2), the creation of continuous professional learning opportunities for academics for their teaching should be seen as one way of supporting the realisation of the national and institutional ideals for teaching while also addressing the needs of lecturers (Department of Higher Education and Training, 2012:24), but, as indicated by one respondent, this does not seem to be the case: "I can attend as many courses as I wish to but it never reflects in my performance appraisal" (Q). Participation in professional learning opportunities usually aims to ease some of the stress on academics through empowering them with the knowledge and skills needed to tackle the teaching challenges at a research-intensive institution like Stellenbosch University. One respondent voiced this issue as follows: "I feel I can develop my teaching skills and techniques better, and my students will benefit, but I would rather spend the time on publications as I feel this will benefit my career and professional reputation as a researcher" (Q).

The facilitation of professional learning opportunities for teaching is within the ambit of the Centre for Teaching and Learning (CTL) at SU. Respondents in this research indicated that they were encouraged to interact with the CTL and mentioned some of the activities presented at the Centre: "Central unit which coordinates university teaching, arranges workshops, conferences, etc. which provide a range of opportunities for such engagement and are done at the university's expense" (Q). Participating in these activities has been voluntary, however, and the decision making of individual

lecturers regarding their involvement (or not) is of importance for this research. The conclusion was that professional learning is a choice (see Section 6.3).

8.5.1.6 Middle management not experienced as being supportive of teaching or of professional learning

The structures in a higher education environment can be accommodating or hostile towards certain teaching and learning practices with regard to the lecturer's level of motivation for enhancing teaching practices and for deciding to take advantage of professional learning opportunities (Leibowitz *et al.*, 2009). One such structure is middle management. The crucial role that middle management plays, or should play, in supporting the teaching role at the institution was also revealed by this research, and this is in line with findings by Crawford (2010), Bexley *et al*. (2011), Ginns *et al*. (2010) and others. In this research, the attitude of middle management at the institution was experienced as constraining as explained by the following interviewee: "So everything, it's like really the middle management, the middle structures, are quite problematic in the sense of uhm, do they really understand what the goals of top management is? What the goals of transformation are? How do they see it, uh impacting on their daily practice as academics, and do they even regard themselves as academics who are making that difference in their community?" (L15).

One respondent bemoaned the lack of support from middle management in not understanding, and not being appreciative of a passionate teacher: "Lack of support or understanding of the passion for professional learning for teaching often leads to demands and deadlines being placed on me that make attendance of learning for teaching events/workshops impossible" (Q). In Chapter 3, one senior manager is quoted alluding to the power of middle management and indicating: "I think the person that's got the most power in the universe over your life is the head of department … he or she can tell you to teach a useless course … they do the teaching schedule so they've got a lot of power in setting that teaching schedule which the dean hasn't got, so if you want to punish somebody without having a disciplinary hearing about it, you just give them the unpopular courses to teach" (SM1). The significance of the supportive role expected of middle management through recognition, encouragement and rewards, has also been mentioned by Grossman and Salas (2011:113), Hockings (2005:323) and Buller (2015).

The enabling role of deliberately creating space for the process of professional learning for teaching in work agreements is also of importance, especially when taking into consideration challenges due to lack of time and high workload, as alluded to by lecturers (also see Section 6.5.2.1.1) as well as by senior management (see Chapter 3). Because undergraduate teaching forms a substantial part of the workload of many lecturers, space for professional learning for teaching may be expected to be

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factored into their work agreements, as indicated by a respondent: "The opportunities might be there but the faculty focuses on research and therefore does not necessarily create space in terms of time and workload" (Q). Related to a previous point indicating that the enjoyment and passion for teaching are not enough to motivate a lecturer to make choose to participate in professional learning opportunities for teaching and the creation of space for professional learning is the following response: "I do my best for the students and do enjoy teaching, I just do not have the time to attend courses for teaching" (Q). Not having time due to workload and work-life balance seems to be another important reason for non-participation.

8.5.1.7 Work-life balance not perceived to be valued

8.5.1.7.1 Time and workload

Workload and a lack of time can rightly be labelled the biggest constraints to academics' decision making for participation in the process of professional learning for teaching. In this regard, the findings from this research are in line with similar research done elsewhere (Viskovic, 2009; Crawford, 2010; Bexley *et al.*, 2011). Academics across the globe are describing their daily reality using the discourses of high workload, heaps of administration, low salaries and less autonomy (Bexley *et al.*, 2011). The pressure created by the balancing act and 'collision' of the demands from work and life was also described by Webster-Wright (2009:719).

The issues of time and workload have featured in this research as significant constraints to the individual academic's decision to become involved in the process of professional learning for the teaching function. One lecturer in this research commented on this tension: "I struggle to find a balance between research and teaching commitments and sometimes feel if I could at least just prepare for class, it has to be sufficient" (Q). From both the personal and professional spheres of the life-world of the individual academic the constraining influence of the considerations of lack of time and high workload were overwhelming (see Sections 6.6.2.1.1 and Chart 7.1). This state of affairs creates a lot of tension as the opportunity cost for becoming involved in the process of professional learning for teaching became very high, as indicated by one respondent: "I do enjoy teaching, but have very little time available to invest in professional learning for teaching -- the opportunity cost in terms of research and management time is just too high" (Q).

The issue of not having enough time is often related to institutional expectations to excel in all three roles of an academic, which denote that academics spend more time doing research and more time teaching and preparing for teaching (Milem, Berger & Day (2000) in (Wright *et al.*, 2004:14; De Angelo, Hurtado, Pryor, Kelly, Santos, *et al.*, 2009). All the different expectations confronting lecturers were also mentioned by a lecturer in this research: "I am busy! I publish on average 2 to 3

articles per year, I teach undergraduate, honours courses, run a sub-department, sit on University committees, serve on a number of subject-specific organisations, participate in conferences, and supervise 4 master's and 3 doctoral students at any given time!" (Q). As indicated by a lecturer in this research, such a pressured environment obviously also impacts on the time and space available to reflect on teaching: "there's really no space to stop and think about … why am I struggling with assessment? Why am I struggling with teaching? Because we [are] constantly on the move" (L14).

Lecturers in this research indicated that they often approach these issues from a work-life balance angle: "Time is an issue, you only have [a] certain amount of hours in the day and then you have to go home to your family" (L6). This finding is also supported by Hockings (2005:321) when indicating that academics often spend their weekends and holidays marking scripts.

8.5.1.7.2 Unrealistic expectations

Other constraining considerations included the perceived unrealistic expectations set by the university, often without the availability of relevant support structures. Some of these considerations resulted from the growth of student numbers which has resulted in having to teach large classes, as indicated by one respondent: "Our undergraduate class numbers have exploded in engineering over the past years, with increased pressure to produce research outputs. We are expected to simply up the pace and make time (learning for teaching is then far down the list of priorities)" (Q).To continue delivering 'good' teaching despite the lack of administrative and support staff was also mentioned while the expectation that lecturers excel in the roles of research, teaching and service was also implicated as unrealistic. This sentiment was echoed by an interviewee saying: "You can have only so many balls in the air, and then you start dropping them" (L2).

This situation sometimes caused lecturers fall back on survival strategies which were often detrimental to the aim of 'quality student learning' and sometimes also counter-productive, even undermining to the mission of the university. Among the 'survival strategies' reported by interviewees in this research was the implementation of multiple choice assessments as the only assessment method in a module with large student numbers: "Ja, and I've, I have chosen to manage it by multiple choice questions. I just can't anymore. I can't do the grading of three hundred and fifty papers for a test. You know and then it's the exam and maybe some of them don't make it. They get to the second exam and it, it adds up. So I, I decided … I started with multiple choice only at the first year level for all the tests and for the exam" (L13). Another strategy involved 'side-lining' of teaching responsibilities by buying in substitute lecturers with less knowledge and experience (these substitute lecturers would usually be paid with money from the academic's

research funding): "Ja, I would say even for me to be quite honest I would say, I would say that I use my research money more often to buy in replacement teachers to free me to do research than, I would if there was more benefits attached to teaching for me. So what I do is I take myself who has that PhD and who's senior and has experience sometimes out of a course and put in someone much less experienced and much less highly qualified so that I can do research, but on the other hand maybe it's just rationalizing stuff" (L8). Similar findings regarding unrealistic expectations often being a stumbling block, or in conflict with good teaching have previously been reported by Hockings (2005:321) and Wright *et al.* (2004:146).

Accompanying these unrealistic expectations from the side of the institution is the finding that support structures for 'good' teaching were not always put in place at the institution (Wright *et al.*, 2004:146). Examples of this include the perceived absences of well-equipped classroom infrastructure: "I mean, we didn't have enough space to ... we didn't have a big enough lecture room" (L9); recognition and reward for teaching: "in a way one is encouraged implicitly by the institution to disinvest in teaching and invest more in research, because there are more rewards that are attached to research, obvious rewards; more recognition; more status and more money, promotion that teaching per se doesn't come with rewards except its own rewards" (L8); dedicated time and opportunity for the process of professional learning for teaching, including time for reflection, in the workload planning of lecturers: "The opportunities might be there but the faculty focuses on research and therefore does not necessarily create space in terms of time and workload" (Q); care for personal wellness of individual academics: "I struggle to find a balance between research and teaching commitments and sometimes feel if I could at least just prepare for class, it has to be sufficient" (Q); adequate preparation of new academics for the teaching function: "but I felt incredibly ill-equipped to be performing that task of how do you teach" (L10); and the availability of sufficient administrative and support staff: "Lack of properly trained support personnel and labour make it difficult if not impossible to get through a day at work never mind doing the extra mile - the extra mile is part of everyday anyway" (Q).

8.5.2   Clear communication

8.5.2.1   Misaligned messages

The discourses of quality control, excellence, high quality student learning and throughput are moving the focus in higher education towards efficiency and effectiveness (Nixon, 1996) rather than towards pedagogy (Ball, 2003; Miller, 2008:111) and people (Buller, 2015). 'Good' universities, including research-intensive universities, are expected to provide exciting and

stimulating learning environments led by passionate and motivated lecturers (The Group of Eight, 2013:6). For lecturers at research-intensive universities, the decision to devote time and energy to 'good' teaching might be tough, however, as the reward structures very much favour research and the prevalence of mixed messaging in this regard is high (Wright *et al.*, 2004:149) as was indicated in this research: "[Neither teaching nor professional learning for teaching] taken into account when evaluated for performance, only the number (not even quality) of publications. Even though Head of Department says teaching and community interaction are important, I know only publications count. University equally ambivalent about role of teaching - when it comes to promotion, teaching and community interaction does not count, even though the importance of the latter two are pontificated about endlessly. Dire situation!" (Q)

Institutions sometimes influence individual decision making through the availability of incentives and penalties (Clark & Strauss, 2007:18), as pointed out by a respondent in this research: "My faculty is very supportive in terms of my teaching endeavours, but when asking about a promotion from a lecturer to senior lecturer, the first comment is not about teaching, but the number of publications ... very, very mixed signals, making me very unsure" (Q). This often leads to a situation where spending time on teaching, or teaching-related activities, is not the most important activity for lecturers as pontificated in the following response: "It needs to be a specific choice to make time for professional learning for teaching. It certainly comes after service and research" (Q).

Stellenbosch University stated in its Institutional Plan 2012-2016 (Stellenbosch University, 2012b) that "the main element of [its] lasting competitive advantage is based on the expertise of its staff – as producers, conveyers and appliers of knowledge". How this 'competitive advantage' is maintained in terms of expertise in teaching is not clear. When the process of professional learning for teaching is not factored into work agreements, the time and energy spent, or not, on teaching and professional learning might go unnoticed, as described by one respondent: "I have been actively engaged in my Department in numerous initiatives to enhance learning in our undergrads particularly … I am actually one of the few people in our environment who is interested in undergrad learning … I have never been acknowledged or rewarded in any way for the work I do in developing teaching and learning. It has to be its own reward, or you don't do it" (Q).

8.5.2.2   Teaching not perceived as a profession or a career

For teaching to be called a profession implies the existence of a career. Such a profession would rely on teaching competence guided by specific standards and demeanours (Hargreaves, 2000:152) and constant improvement in quality, i.e. professional learning (Sachs, 2003:8). Professionalism of lecturers would thus influence their professional learning and willingness and ability to change

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(Beijaard *et al.*, 2000:753). As professionals, academics thus have a 'double professionalism' (Viskovic, 2009) as they have to function both within their discipline and within an educational context (Frick & Kapp, 2009). Lecturers in this research realised this 'double professionalism' and indicated the accompanying difficulty: "Trying to be a specialist in two fields is difficult. There are many aspects that overlap in my own field and teaching and learning but to keep updated in both is problematic!" (Q).

Workplaces often afford more value to the learning and development of some practices than others (Wenger, 1998). Lecturers participating in this research were clear about the fact that it was only research that 'counted'. The fact that teaching at SU was often only measured through student feedback and throughput rates led to a perception that there were no career prospects or recognition and reward for investment in the teaching function: "Institutionally recognition is supposedly given, but when it comes to career advancement, only research is really taken into account. (And definitely not educational research)" (Q). This 'fault line' or fragmentation between teaching and research in higher education was also referred to by Rowland (2002:53).

This eventually leads to lecturers experiencing difficulty when having to decide whether or not to spend time on their teaching because of the trade-offs and the struggle to choose between 'accumulating capital' in research, teaching or management (Knight, 2006:32).

8.5.3   Trust

Policy and social contexts are important influences on teaching (Nixon *et al.*, 2003:94). Policies, however, are often perceived by academics as mechanisms to control and monitor rather than to support (Hockings, 2005:321-322). Academics furthermore often view the manner in which senior management conveys messages with suspicion. The issue of trust, or then mistrust, comes into play here. Related to some of the aspects around unrealistic expectations, as explained above, are the following responses from lecturers which point towards the nature of their trust relationship with different levels and environments at the institution, often stemming from mixed messages and uncertainty.

The first of these areas of mistrust is focused on aspects from the institutional processes: "There are institutional awards for teaching but I would say these do not consider 'engagement in professional learning', only popularity and success as a teacher" (Q). Another respondent implied an attitude of mistrust when saying: "Papers at professional learning conference are rewarded with higher assessment points, supposedly enhancing chances for promotion but research output is the overriding qualifying criterion" (Q), while yet another said: "[g]ood teaching is formally rewarded

(but I have strong doubts about the validity of that process) … more about 'results' - as far as I know" (Q).

Secondly, when referring to processes at faculty level, one lecturer implied mistrust through mentioning feelings of uncertainty due to comments from her faculty: "My faculty is very supportive in terms of my teaching endeavours, but when asking about a promotion from a lecturer to senior lecturer, the first comment is not about teaching, but the number of publications ... very, very mixed signals, making me very unsure" (Q).

The third area of potential mistrust was implied on departmental level: "Even though Head of Department says teaching and community interaction are important, I know only publications count … when it comes to promotion, teaching and community interaction does not count, even though the importance of the latter two are pontificated about endlessly. Dire situation!" (Q).

Mistrust, fourthly, was referred to as related to professional learning: "I sometimes wonder about the disconnect between the teaching as a science and what happens in the real world." (Q). One interviewee mentioned the need for professional learning when a lecturer is not managing well, but it seemed as if that was not considered as an option: "So when someone does not perform as is required then we would normally intervene, either by taking the guy off the course. Uh … what I do not like about this system at … is that if you don't perform there's no development that takes place" (L3).

A fifth area of potential mistrust was mentioned as existing between colleagues: "And the teaching doesn't stop in the lecture room - you know, it follows up from e-mails that I send to you; from appointments when students come and sit in front of you, and they are still being taught when they sit in front of you. And I don't think that, that appreciation is always very clear or evident from my colleagues" (L9).

It thus seems that respondents in this research experienced mistrust of anything related to teaching and the recognition of teaching: "They [the institution] pretend that they give recognition for teaching excellence, but in fact they only want more research publications, i.e. they put good researchers on a pedestal while investment in good teaching is considered a waste of research time" (Q).

8.6   Wellness of lecturers

Lecturers in this research also mentioned feelings of disillusionment and of being overburdened, which pointed towards the general wellness of the individual. Some of the responses revealed concerns about lecturers 'not having energy' (Q), feeling like a 'zombie' after teaching a large

number of classes (L13), struggling to find a balance (Q) and, in the end, not being able to cope because "[y]ou can have only so many balls in the air, and then you start dropping them" (L2). This situation could potentially have a negative impact on lecturers, as indicated by one interviewee: "it doesn't impact negatively on the teaching but it impacts negatively on my feelings towards the job [at] SU" (L13).

8.7   Summary

Relevant literature and empirical findings from the Stellenbosch University context seem to confirm that when lecturers make decisions to take part in professional learning opportunities for teaching, such choices are influenced by the daily reality of the individual lecturer (see Figure 4.6). Such decision making seems to be influenced mainly by lecturers' intrinsic motivation. At the same time, an environment that is conducive to and enables professional learning for teaching requires a low opportunity cost and a caring environment where value, communication and trust may raise the level of intrinsic motivation of individual lecturers.

The constraining considerations discussed in this chapter point towards an institutional environment where teaching, professional learning for teaching and lecturers interested in teaching are not perceived to be valued; where mixed messaging and misalignment of priorities lead to unrealistic expectations and the implementation of survival strategies by lecturers; and where mistrust in relation to everything related to teaching and its related activities are evident. If these constraints are approached appreciatively as indications of issues that could be addressed to enable the decision making of lecturers for their involvement in the process of professional learning for teaching, however, there may be potential for creating a more enabling environment.

In the next chapter I draw a number of conclusions based on the findings of the study and also point out a number of implications that flow from the study.

Chapter 9

Conclusions, implications and options for future research

9.1   Introduction

The findings from the empirical part of the study were discussed in the previous chapter. The aim of this final chapter is to draw together all the threads of this multi-layered study in an attempt to make meaning of the findings and the study as a whole. This will be done through a synthesis of the findings to ultimately answer the research questions. I firstly summarise the research in brief. Then I draw a number of factual and conceptual conclusions resulting from the findings, its interpretation and the resulting discussion, followed by suggesting options for future research, as well as a critique of this study. Finally I shall point out the study's contribution to knowledge and how the research questions were answered.

9.2   The research in brief

Professional learning practitioners at the Centre for Teaching and Learning (CTL) at Stellenbosch University (SU) have the responsibility of facilitating the professional learning of lecturers for their teaching. In the first chapter I stated the overall aim of the study as one that would potentially inform the practices of professional learning practitioners in this regard – not only at SU as a research-intensive university, but also at other similar institutions. Lecturers at SU are appointed with a teaching, research and service responsibility. Nowadays, a career in academia is often a career choice instead of just due to 'happenstance', as in the past. Being a lecturer in a complex and challenging higher education system requires knowledge and skills that differ from what was required before, including knowledge of how students learn and how to facilitate such learning. In the section dealing with the literature, I also pointed out that the blame for low student success may often be placed on lecturers – especially at research-intensive universities where the status of and recognition for teaching are low. Professional learning for teaching thus becomes even more essential to promote the professionalising of teaching and learning. The need for such professional learning is widely acknowledged, as indicated by the review of relevant earlier literature, but the uptake of opportunities to such end sadly is often disappointing.

This lack of uptake has also been a worrying factor at SU for some time. Furthermore, where participation in professional learning for teaching has occurred, these learning opportunities did not always seem to facilitate optimal lecturer learning. Professional learning for teaching in the past also did not necessarily lead to change in the teaching beliefs and practices of lecturers. The focus

of this study was therefore on considerations from the personal and professional spheres of the life-world of the individual academic which may influence their decision making about participating in, learning from and implementing what was learned during professional learning opportunities. The interplay between the considerations from the personal and the professional spheres of the life-world of lecturers in decision making and participation clearly represents a complex daily reality.

Understanding the influence of this daily reality on the decision making of academics about participating in professional learning for their teaching role is important for the work of professional learning practitioners. It is also of importance for the teaching function at a research-intensive university where quality student learning is an aim. The research question that motivated my study was thus stated as: *How, if at all, do contextual factors influence the decision making of academics for becoming involved in the process of professional learning for teaching at a research-intensive university?* Two further questions were posed: (1) *Which considerations may contribute to individual academics' decision making regarding participation in the process of professional learning for teaching at Stellenbosch University?* (2) *How can the decision making of academics regarding participation in the process of professional learning for teaching be better enabled at Stellenbosch University?*

An exploratory case study design focusing on academic staff at SU for the period 2007 to 2012 was followed. I focused on narrative data that were generated by firstly posing a number of open-ended questions in an electronic questionnaire to all SU lecturers. This was followed by semi-structured interviews conducted with fifteen purposely selected lecturers adding to the narrative data from the questionnaire. Quantitative data generated by the questionnaire presented to lecturers formed part of a broader multi-institutional study, but were also used in this study to profile the participating lecturers and provide additional and supportive information within the context of the studied case.

The unit of analysis in my study was the decision making of lecturers for participation in professional learning opportunities for teaching. In analysing the data, my aim was to identify factors that are perceived by SU academics to potentially enable or constrain their decision making. The theoretical perspectives I gained, the empirical work done, together with my experience as professional learning practitioner informed the conclusions that I arrived at concerning the influence of context on the decision making of academics about involvement in the process of professional learning for teaching. Those factual conclusions deemed to be the most pertinent in answering my research questions will now be discussed briefly.

9.3   Factual conclusions

9.3.1   The process of professional learning for teaching

I consider professional learning for teaching to be the continuous learning of academics throughout their teaching careers. In particular, as outlined in my initial understanding of this concept (see Section 4.2.3), I defined professional learning for teaching as a change in the beliefs and practices of lecturers in order to ultimately improve student learning. Lecturer involvement in professional learning opportunities for teaching was ultimately identified as a three-staged process resulting from a series of sequential choices similar to that of the decision-making process (see Figure 4.6).

The findings from my empirical work indicate that, although various professional learning opportunities are available at SU (see Section 6.5.1.1), lecturers' choices about their involvement in such offered opportunities are influenced by their unique contexts or daily realities. This individual context could be potentially enabling or constraining to lecturer decision making. At SU as a research-intensive institution, the opportunity cost for involvement in the process of professional learning for teaching seems high, often resulting in a pre-decision which favours non-participation in professional learning for teaching (see Chart 7.8).

The decisions of lecturers to actively participate and learn during phase two of the professional learning process (the actual professional learning opportunity) also seem to be influenced by their individual contexts (see Sections 6.6.1.4.3 and 6.6.1.4.4). During this phase, professional learning practitioners as facilitators of such opportunities, as well as the process of facilitation of lecturer-learning, also become part of such considerations (see Section 4.6.2.3). During the final, post-decision phase, the choice and accompanying consequence(s) of actually implementing what was learned are evaluated by lecturers before they make a choice for implementation or non-implementation. Again, lecturers experience their daily reality as either enabling or constraining their decisions to implement what was learned after participation (see Sections 6.6.1.3, 6.6.1.4.1 and 6.6.1.4.2).

It was concluded from this study that the process of professional learning is only completed once implementation has occurred. Following a three-stage process of professional learning, the lecturer's context proves to influence his or her decision making at three different but sequential points. The intensity of the influencing factors could thus potentially support or jeopardise the process of professional learning at three different points. Context thus seems to have a significant influence on the process of decision making by lecturers at SU to become involved in the process of professional learning for their teaching.

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9.3.2   The influence of context on decision making

The sphere of the daily reality of the individual is created at the intersection of the professional and personal spheres of the life-world of the individual lecturer (see Figure 4.3). I described the professional sphere of the life-world of the lecturer as the narrow end of a contextual spiral encompassing the disciplinary, departmental, institutional, national and international contexts of higher education (see Figure 4.2). The personal sphere, on the other hand, concerns the personal considerations of the individual lecturer. Within the sphere of the daily reality, the interplay between considerations from the professional and personal spheres creates situations which the individual lecturer interprets and it then emerges as an individual context. Following on the work of Berger and Luckmann (1966), 'context' is defined in this study as an individual's daily reality or individual context.

My study indicated that lecturers' emerging individual contexts could either be enabling or constraining in terms of their decisions to participate in the process of professional learning for teaching (see Section 4.2.3). This, in turn, depends on the intensity of the considerations at play at a specific point in time, potentially resulting in a high opportunity cost (see Section 4.4.2).

I reported the range of enabling and constraining considerations or factors as perceived by SU lecturers in Chapter 6. It became clear that the perceived constraining conditions were more intense in nature and also outnumbered the elements perceived to be enabling. The main constraints I pointed out in Chapter 8 (see Section 8.5) include the perceived non-value of teaching and its related activities, which also impacted on those lecturers who were passionate about teaching; the absence of a description and criteria for measurement of 'good' teaching; the absence of support from middle management; individual issues of work-life balance; as well as perceived misaligned priorities and mixed messages.

What also seems to be important for lecturers at SU is raising of their level of intrinsic motivation. This is an important condition for allowing them to make choices to participate in, learn from and implement what is learned from available professional learning opportunities for their teaching (see Section 8.3.3). Raising the levels of intrinsic motivation would depend on external factors at the institution.

9.3.3   The influence of intrinsic motivation on decision making

The study provided sufficient evidence to suggest that lecturers' choices concerning participation or non-participation in the process of professional learning are dependent on the 'internal nature' or intrinsic motivation of such lecturers. It is thus not surprising that intrinsic motivation emerged as

the strongest enabler for decision making of the individual academic for participating in the process of professional learning for teaching (see Section 8.3.2). The level of intrinsic motivation proves to be influenced by the belief of lecturers that participating in or devoting time to something should be worthwhile. The theory of opportunity cost however suggests that even if something such as professional learning for teaching is deemed worthwhile, intrinsic motivation might not always be sufficient to enable a choice towards involvement due to the potential loss of something else. The latter includes, for instance, devoting time to research and its accompanying regard and reward, which inevitably seems to be the case at SU as research-intensive university (see Sections 3.6.8, 6.6.1.1.5 and 6.6.1.2.2).

What the factual findings of my study thus point to is the need for an enabling environment for lecturers to make sound decisions for professional learning for teaching. Such environment would address the identified constraints in an effort of raising intrinsic motivation levels (see Section 8.3.2).

9.3.4 Professional learning as a choice

Theories on decision making indicate that human beings are decision makers and everything we do, or not do, is the result of a decision (see Section 4.3). Through this research it became clear that lecturers' uptake of professional learning opportunities was inextricably linked to their decision making (see Section 6.3). Their decision making, on the other hand, was inextricably linked to their individual daily reality as no decision, nor any learning, takes place in a vacuum. The opportunity cost of a decision to participate in teaching and teaching-related activities was reported as high within SU as research-intensive institution (see Sections 6.6.1.1.5 and 8.5.1.4). Professional learning for teaching is thus an individual choice influenced by opportunity cost as gauged to be present in the daily reality or individual context of the academic.

Lecturers participating in this study implicitly and explicitly referred to the fact that their involvement in the process of professional learning for teaching was indeed a choice influenced by their daily reality (see Sections 6.3 and 8.2). In my discussion of academics as lecturers (see Section 1.7.4), I indicated that lecturers, who are mainly regarded as overwhelmingly rational, are also emotional beings. Thus what and how they feel towards a particular issue may give rise to their subsequent actions. Learning, including professional learning for teaching, can therefore not be separated from the feelings and emotions of lecturers (see Sections 6.7 and 8.4) and making decisions to participate in opportunities offered are thus influenced by such feelings and emotions.

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9.3.5   A caring environment

Humans are emotional beings, and this research found that applying an ethic of care as a normative approach could be fruitful in the creation of an enabling environment conducive to decision making for participating in the process of professional learning for teaching (see Sections 4.6, 8.3.3 and 8.4). Decision making cannot be separated from emotions which, in turn, cannot be separated from the notion of care. As the respondents to the questionnaire survey at SU were broadly representative of the institution (see Section 7.2.1.1), the requirement of a 'care-ful' environment as a prerequisite for the decision making for professional learning for teaching thus is relevant to most lecturers at SU. As an ethic of care approach is also at the heart of good teaching and learning, evidence points to lecturers' high regard for such an environment in relation to their teaching function and high quality student learning (see Section 6.5.1).

As indicated earlier, a 'care-ful' environment would present a potentially productive way of creating an enabling context for decision making. Lecturers indicated that an enabling environment was one where teaching and its related activities were valued (see Section 6.5). From the findings it seems as if such an environment would, at least, be characterised by the availability of support and resources (see Sections 6.5.1.1 and 6.5.1.3.1) and personal relationships (see Section 6.5.2.1.2). These identified aspects point towards the needs and requests of the individual academic and care should thus be manifested where it is experienced (Barnes, 2012:17,31). In this study, context was described as an individual construct and care should therefore be cognisant of the individual academic. From the findings it also became clear that the broader sections of the contextual spiral, as described in Section 4.5.2, had a much stronger and more direct influence on the individual academic than was originally anticipated. The values and discourses evident in the meso-level context – specifically the academic department and SU as a research-intensive institution – seem to be so powerful that it often cannot be overcome through individual intrinsic motivation.

The findings from my study confirmed my original premise that care was one of the considerations on the micro level of the contextual spiral (see Sections 4.4.3, 4.7.2.1) that came into play when a decision had to be made for involvement in the process of professional learning for teaching. I misjudged the intensity of the need for a 'care-ful' environment with this inclusion of care as a possible interplaying consideration on the micro-level, however. The professional sphere of the life-world was seen as subsuming the structures, roles and role players in higher education and at the institution inclusive of the physical infrastructure, the students and the prevailing discourses about issues of teaching and learning and professional learning.

The findings from the research strongly indicated care as an important aspect which should be enacted at the meso-level of the broader contextual spiral including Stellenbosch University as a research-intensive institution, and the academic department and discipline where the individual academic is academically and professionally active (see the end of Section 4.5.2).

9.4   Conceptual conclusions

I gained insightful theoretical perspectives from this study and my theoretical understanding of what potentially influences the decision making of lecturers for professional learning was revealing. Amplified by the empirical work I did amongst lecturers at Stellenbosch University, I could arrive at least four broad conceptual conclusions which I shall discuss briefly.

Firstly, context as a construct that emerges from the interpretation of an individual situation translates strongly into an opportunity cost for the individual lecturer. In this study, the theory of opportunity cost proved to be relevant to the decision making of lecturers about becoming involved in the process of professional learning for teaching (see Section 4.3) at a research-intensive university. Decision making implies the weighing of available alternatives and selecting the best option at a specific time. Losing something when choosing something else results in an opportunity cost. Those lecturers choosing to become involved in professional learning for teaching which is not generally perceived to be highly valued, are thus not afforded the time to engage in other activities that potentially could be better valued at a research-intensive institution. It is thus possible that the perpetual tension between teaching and research shown in research about teaching and professional learning for teaching is potentially not the main issue. From my research it seems as if lack of time sometimes due to a high workload and differentiation in value between the teaching and research roles, as evident through regard and reward, might be culprits in creating a high opportunity cost in the daily reality of lecturers. These are issues that lecturers need to negotiate in their decision making for involvement in teaching and teaching-related activities.

Secondly, adopting an ethic of care approach towards the daily reality of lecturers in an attempt to reduce their sense of burden may be more productive towards promoting teaching and learning excellence. An ethic of care approach implies a supportive and appreciative environment focused on the wellbeing and flourishing of lecturers. Both theoretical and empirical findings from this study indicate that transforming the discourse at a research-intensive institution, as apparent from its structures and culture, has to include and embrace those of value and care for its academics. This in particular points to the teaching function and its related activities.

Thirdly, it seems clear from the study that individual lecturer contexts are influenced by the reigning institutional language and communication implicit in workplace discourses and culture. An

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understanding of the effects of using terms such as 'professional learning' of academics instead of the term 'professional development' which implies a deficit approach, would be one example of changing the discourse and potentially influencing the culture. Valuing such professional learning opportunities is another endeavour which seems to be supported nationally and at SU senior management level. It is common knowledge that many academic staff experience universities as becoming foreign places. Contributing to this dilemma is the fact that teaching, as a normative act regularly perceived as feeding from the axiological aspects of care and passion, is often perceived as being unappreciated and unvalued in environments where neo-liberalist notions of performance, outputs, quality assurance and bureaucracy prevail. The measurement of teaching performance and recognition of 'good' teaching thus pose a challenge – especially at research-intensive institutions such as SU. Describing 'good' teaching is complex. This often leads to a simplistic equation measuring it through the quantitative measures of student feedback and student success or pass rates. Aspects of innovation, curriculum, scholarship, workload and time spent on teaching and its related activities more often than not are ignored in such descriptions and measurements. Because of the skewness in the measurement of 'good' lecturers and 'good' teaching, the notion of professional learning for teaching is often misunderstood and misappropriated. By re-focusing and understanding teaching as a profession which in and of itself is an act of learning implies continuous learning and when learning becomes the core of all activities and lecturers 're-cast' themselves as learners, the existing tensions and accompanying opportunity cost might be reduced.

Fourthly and lastly, both theoretical and empirical considerations related to professional learning for teaching point to raising the stature of teaching – also at research-intensive institutions. As in the case of recognition for research, such an increase requires an 'opening up' to peer evaluation and making the profile of university teaching more public. Such openness not only involves the stature of teaching, but also indicates the stringent requirements that accompany the designing and planning of 'good' learning opportunities for students. An 'opening-up' of the teaching function at research-intensive institutions would imply a re-focus on student learning, professional reflection, peer review and consultancy, involvement in scholarly teaching activities (including professional learning) and promoting the scholarship of teaching and learning.

9.5   Adapted conceptual framework

As indicated above, the findings from this research showed that the broader section of the contextual spiral (the international and national higher education environments and specifically the notion of research-intensive universities on the macro level, as well as Stellenbosch University as a research-intensive institution and the academic's department and discipline on the meso level [see

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Chapter 2]) appears to have a substantial influence on the decision making of lecturers about involvement in professional learning for their teaching. As a result of the findings of this research, my initial understanding of the process of lecturer decision making for professional learning at a research-intensive university (see Figure 4.6 and its description) has developed considerably. For instance, instead of the notion of care being a consideration during decision making on the micro-level of the individual, it seems that an ethos of care at the meso-level of the department and institution may be required if a more enabling environment for lecturer decision making is pursued at SU as a research-intensive university.

This insight has led to an adaptation of the original conceptual framework, as suggested in Figure 9.1 below.
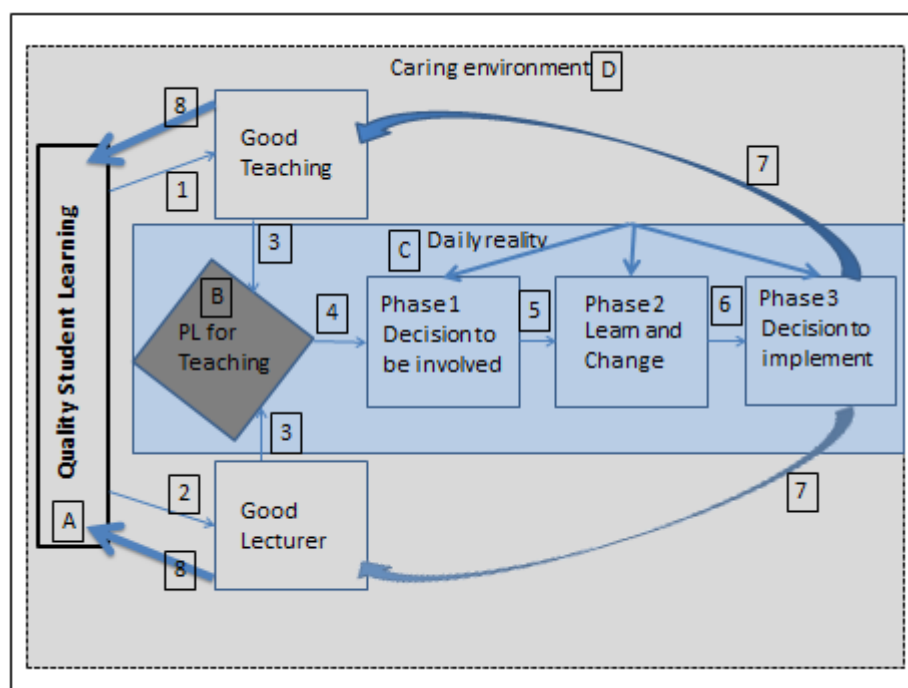
Figure 9.1: Adapted conceptual framework

This study originally set out to look at issues of the professional and personal spheres of the life-world. The influence from the macro environment of higher education internationally, nationally and, specifically, from research-intensive universities, is profound in the local context of being employed at a research-intensive university in South Africa. The simultaneous influence from the legislation, governance and development goals of South Africa cannot be ignored. The sum total of all these have a significant effect on the institutional goals, activities and discourses at SU.

While analysing and interpreting the data, the emotional aspects influencing human decision making almost became overwhelming. The prevailing discourses at the institution and the associated opportunity cost posit a significant influence on lecturer decision making for professional

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learning which could not be ignored as it firmly inserted itself in the findings. All of this pointed towards the need for the notion of care to be placed on a different level than what was originally anticipated (see Section 4.7).

Including an ethic of care approach on the meso level of the institution would therefore be instrumental in promoting a more favourable and enabling environment for the decision making of lecturers about involvement in each of the three stages of the process of professional learning for teaching. As indicated earlier, creating such a 'care-ful' environment would be beneficial to the individual, the institution and society as a whole.

9.6 Implications of the study

The conclusions I have drawn on the basis of this research point towards certain implications for theory, the practice of the various role players at the institution and further research. These are indicated next.

9.6.1 Implications for theory

As argued earlier, the literature consulted while undertaking this research did not yield any research combining the concepts of 'context', 'decision making' and 'professional learning' as was envisaged for this research. Various theories, models and definitions were thus drawn on to create a conceptual framework for the study (see Section 4.8). The theory of the life-world, and specifically the theory of daily reality, was informative to my understanding of the emergence of an individual context from the interplay of various professional and personal considerations. Becoming aware of the individual nature of such emerging contexts was also useful. The explanation of the three dimensions of learning, especially the distinction of the incentives dimension, was instructive to my understanding of learning as a decision. The role that motivation and emotions play in decision making also aided in my subsequent insight and explanation of decision making. How such decisions were influenced by an attached opportunity cost clarified the dilemma that lecturers have to overcome when deciding to become involved in the process of professional learning for teaching. Including the theory of opportunity cost as a lens to look at the decision making of lecturers about their involvement, or not, in the process of professional learning for teaching proved to be useful and productive. It added to the knowledge and understanding of the phenomenon, specifically at a research-intensive university. Understanding this decision making as paralleled to decisions about career choices also added a deeper dimension of understanding. The fact that the process of professional learning could be explained as a three-staged process with three separate but sequential decisions revealed some of the complexity of the decision making process for involvement in the

process of professional learning. Combining these insights with a caring institution has provided me with enhanced insight into the phenomenon for addressing my research questions.

9.6.2 Implications for practice

9.6.2.1 Implications for professional learning practitioners

The main purpose of this study was to inform an understanding of the decision making processes of lecturers for professional learning for their teaching. Such an understanding, particularly at a research-intensive university, may be of much value to professional learning practitioners at SU, but also elsewhere at similar research-intensive institutions. At least four implications for professional learning practitioners emerged from this study. This includes the following: Firstly, professional learning may be considered to be conducted from a relational space. This implies that the primary focus of professional learning needs to be on the flourishing of the individual academic, with a secondary focus on efficiency; secondly, positive professional learning environments should be created attentive of both the cognitive and emotional aspects of learning. Thirdly, professional learning practitioners could act as change agents and critical friends who initiate and sustain dialogue between lecturers and management and lastly, the Centre for Teaching and Learning could become a role player in the virtual professional learning space through an up-to-date website and easily accessible resources and should play the role of 'path clearers', fore-runners or 'task forces' in the field of teaching and professional learning for teaching.

9.6.2.2 Implications for the institution

This study has argued that quality teaching and learning is a key responsibility of university lecturers. Quality teaching and professional learning for teaching are interconnected and therefore universities, including SU, have an equal responsibility to support its lecturers in this endeavour. The findings and conclusions of this study point to three implications for the institution. The first implication for the institution in this regard is to pronounce the value attached to teaching and its related activities by describing what is meant by 'good' teaching and 'good' lecturers and how these are measured, recognised and rewarded. Such descriptions would lead to the second implication, namely that lecturers have to be supported in their 'becoming' in a way that would lead towards the kind of 'good' teaching as described and ascribed to, by the institution. Strengthening lecturers' agency to deal with fewer resources, a more diverse student body and academic renewal should be placed at the core of the institutional activities. In this regard the academic leadership provided by management is of particular importance. The measuring and recognition of 'good' teaching in an

environment where notions of performance, outputs, quality assurance and bureaucracy prevail, pose a potential challenge. The third and last implication therefore suggests that the institutional perspective for quality teaching has to be aligned to the university's teaching and learning strategy, with quality assurance measures including aspects of innovation, curriculum, scholarship, workload and time spent on teaching and its related activities.

9.6.2.3   Implications for lecturers

Based on the findings and conclusions reached by this study, the creation of an enabling environment for decision making by lecturers to become involved in the process of professional learning for teaching also has implications for lecturers themselves. Four implications are listed below. Lecturers firstly have a responsibility to engage in the opening up of the teaching function in an attempt to professionalise this function. Such opening up and participating in 'talking about teaching' would be beneficial for both the professionalising of lecturers and their teaching. Secondly, shifting the focus of teaching to that of learning – including professional learning – and the systematic reflection, studying, sharing and reviewing of their teaching practice would be useful in lifting the stature of teaching at the institution. A third implication would be to become involved in the scholarship of teaching and learning and making teaching more public through the publication of formal research. The fourth and last implication for lecturers suggests that lecturers use their own agency and intrinsic motivation to overcome the constraining considerations at play in their decision making about the process of professional learning for teaching.

9.7   Implications for future research and critique of this study

The need for ongoing research into the process of professional learning for teaching remains critical for informing the practice of professional learning practitioners. One focus area of further research at SU specifically, could be to explore the notions of the workload and time of academic staff members, especially those who are teaching large undergraduate classes. Examining the role and function of middle management to promote quality teaching, specifically of departmental chairs, may be beneficial. Although this research was focused on the role of context in the decision making of academics about becoming involved in the process of professional learning for teaching, calls from the literature about a deliberate focus on learning to be seen as an imperative rather than a choice, is one that could possibly warrant further research at a research-intensive university.

Professional learning practitioners also need to inquire more critically into their practice in order to enhance this service to the academic community and higher education in general. This would include giving careful attention to their offerings and whether context is sufficiently taken into

account during such opportunities. Professional learning practitioners should also undertake studies into the scholarship of their own profession. In recent times the role of professional learning practitioners in the changing field of higher education has been questioned and critiqued in the literature by several authors – both internationally and in South Africa. Calls for enhancing the profession of professional learning practitioners through research and publication have also been made and may warrant further investigation.

Because this study was done as part of a national NRF project, similar data are available for the other participating universities. If this study is replicated at the research-intensive institutions involved in the project it might shed more light on the decision making of lecturers about participating in professional learning for teaching at such institutions and inform the practice of professional learning practitioners at these institutions. Such studies at multiple institutions might generate comparative data which could provide a richer understanding of the South African context, as well as the role of context in general.

Being part of a national project could, however, also be a critique against this study as the findings of this study might have been influenced by the methodology and findings of the broader study. How this risk was reduced was explained earlier in Chapter 5. Another limitation of the study is that only lecturers and senior management were involved in the data generating process and not middle management. Other limitations on the side of data generation could also include the limited data generated on phases two and three of the decision making process as well as about lecturers' personal lives. The generation of a further set of data through a document analysis of for example teaching and learning policy documents, minutes of teaching and learning related meetings and feedback from formal professional learning opportunities could potentially have enriched the study. The specific theoretical lenses applied in this study provided a particular, but limited, understanding of lecturer decision making for professional learning. Other lenses such as the psychological, the disciplinary, or lecturers being part of a specific profession (e.g. Engineers, Accountants, Medical doctors) might have rendered a more differentiated and sophisticated view of decision making for professional learning.

9.8 Contribution of this study[8]

At the outset of this study I indicated that there was a gap in the field of research into the professional learning of academics for their teaching role as their decision making to participate or not to participate in processes of professional learning might not be well understood. The theoretical and empirical findings of this research have narrowed this knowledge gap as I have succeeded in arriving at a better understanding of this problem at one research-intensive university in South Africa. This contribution, although not generalizable, can be of value to professional learning practitioners – at SU, in South Africa and abroad. The findings have added to the body of knowledge in the field of professional learning in higher education in South Africa, specifically as related to research-intensive universities. On the basis of these findings, I am convinced that this study focusing on the influence of context on the decision making of academics about becoming involved in the process of professional learning for their teaching at a research-intensive institution in South Africa contributes to and may prompt further inquiry into the professional learning of academics.

In answering the stated research questions, this study brought together specific views of context, professional learning and decision making in a research-intensive university. Although previous research has been undertaken on the concepts of 'context', 'professional learning' and 'decision making', no published research could be found in which these three concepts were linked in the same way as in this study. A few novel definitions were thus also formulated as an outcome of this research.

In conclusion it is possible to state that this study did arrive at plausible answers to its stated research questions and, in the process, also made a contribution to the understanding of contextual influences on the decision making of academics about participating in the process of professional learning for teaching at a research-intensive university. I thus hope that it might have made a small contribution to promote the field of professional learning in South Africa and has added to a better understanding of what may be at stake when lecturers at a research-intensive university weigh their options in deciding on their own professional learning.

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[8] As a result of a presentation at the ICED conference in Bangkok in July 2012 of the preliminary findings of my PhD research, my colleagues and I were invited by the editors of *Studies in Educational Evaluation* to collaborate on a special issue. This article, *Reflections on professional learning: Choices, context and culture* (Van Schalkwyk *et al.*, 2015) was published during 2015. At the end of 2013, all members of the umbrella NRF study, of which my PhD dissertation forms part, had to write up a case study report about professional learning for teaching at their home institutions. I was one of the authors of the Stellenbosch University report (Van Schalkwyk, Leibowitz, *et al.*, 2013) which included some of the preliminary findings of my research. I had to present the report at the institutional Committee for Learning and Teaching (CLT) during February 2014 on behalf of my colleagues. After this presentation I was invited to present the findings of the report at an institutional teaching and learning seminar during April 2014. The report and presentations have played a role in the renewed focus on the teaching function at SU.

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List of Addenda

Addendum A: Interviewee Matrix

Interviewee Number		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	
Completed questionnaire	Yes	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	**15**
Gender	Female	X		X	X	X			X			X	X	X			**8**
	Male		X				X	X		X	X				X	X	**7**
Race	Black					X					X	X					**4**
	Coloured			X						X					X	X	**4**
	Indian																**0**
	White	X	X		X		X	X	X				X	X			**8**
Faculty	Agri	X															**1**
	Arts and Soc Sc			X		X						X	X				**4**
	Education																**0**
	Engineering						X										**1**
	EMS							X	X	X							**3**
	Health										X					X	**2**
	Law				X												**1**
	Military		X														**1**
	Science													X	X		**2**
	Theology																**0**
Highest Qualification	PhD			X		X					X	X	X	X	X		**7**
	Master's	X	X		X		X	X	X	X						X	**8**
	Honours																**0**
	Bachelors																**0**
Teaching qualification	HED		X					X		X							**3**
	ACE																**0**
	PGCE																**0**
	PGDip																**0**
	Bed/Med																**0**
	MPhil in HE					X											**1**
	None			X	X				X			X	X	X	X	X	**8**
	Other	X					X				X						**3**
Level	Jr lecturer																**0**
	Lecturer		X	X		X		X	X	X		X			X		**8**
	Sr Lecturer	X			X						X			X			**4**
	Assoc. Prof.						X						X			X	**3**
	Prof.																**0**
	Deputy Dean																**0**
	Dean																**0**
	Director																**0**
	Researcher																**0**
Years' experience in HE	<1																**0**
	1 to 5				X												**1**
	6 to 10					X	X	X		X		X					**5**
	11 to 20		X	X					X		X				X	X	**6**
	>21	X											X	X			**3**
Frequency of participation	Once a term or more	X	X		X										X		**4**
	Once a semester						X	X	X	X							**4**
	Once a year or less			X		X					X	X				X	**5**
	Never												X	X			**2**

Addendum B: Interviewee consent form

STELLENBOSCH UNIVERSITY

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

Context, Structure and Agency

You are asked to participate in a research study conducted by a team of researchers led by Dr Brenda Leibowitz, from the Centre for Teaching and Learning at Stellenbosch University. Participating universities are: Cape University of Technology, Rhodes University, University of Cape Town, University of Fort Hare, University of Stellenbosch, University of the Western Cape, Durban University of Technology, University of Venda. You were selected as a possible participant in this study because the study requires the views of members of senior management, i.e. those who provide leadership to teaching and learning, at each of the participating universities.

1. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The study is an investigation into contextual influences on the professional development of academics as teachers in higher education in South Africa. This study, consisting of an analysis of the national context, and eight case studies at public higher education institutions, will explore how material, policy and cultural forces influence individuals' engagement in professional development opportunities, and what kinds of professional development are effective in these environments. The purpose of the study is to guide strategies for the professional development of academics in their teaching roles at national and institutional levels.

2. PROCEDURES

If you volunteer to participate in this study, we would ask you to submit to an audiotaped interview of 30 – 45 minutes at a time of your convenience. You will have the opportunity to read the transcription as well as any report in which the interview is featured.

3. POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS

None

4. POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO SUBJECTS AND/OR TO SOCIETY

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Your participation will aid the generation of findings that will inform the development of adequate strategies for the professional development of academics in their teaching role.

5. PAYMENT FOR PARTICIPATION

None

6. CONFIDENTIALITY

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with you will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission or as required by law. Confidentiality will be maintained by means of a carefully maintained storage system on a website that only research team members will have access to. Further, you would have the right to read the transcription and would enjoy the right to confirm what is said in it, and the right to reply to what is written in any ensuing reports.

The information in its raw form will not be shared with individuals or units who are not participants in this research project.

Given the senior nature of the interviewees, i.e. members of senior management, it might not be possible to keep all informants' identities anonymous. For this reason, particular care will be taken with regard to the careful and respectful reporting and analysis of the data, and with regard to the "right of reply" of interviewees.

7. PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL

You can choose whether to be in this study or not. If you volunteer to be in this study, you may withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind. You may also refuse to answer any questions you do not want to answer and still remain in the study. The investigator may withdraw you from this research if circumstances arise which warrant doing so.

8. IDENTIFICATION OF INVESTIGATORS

If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please feel free to contact the principal investigator, Brenda Leibowitz (bleibowitz@sun.ac.za) (021 808 3717), or [insert name of likely interviewer] or one of the other research team members indicated at the end of this letter.

9. RIGHTS OF RESEARCH SUBJECTS

You may withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue participation without penalty. You are not waiving any legal claims, rights or remedies because of your participation in this research study. If you have questions regarding your rights as a research subject, contact Ms Maléne Fouché [mfouche@sun.ac.za; 021 808 4622] at the Division for Research Development.

SIGNATURE OF RESEARCH SUBJECT OR LEGAL REPRESENTATIVE

The information above was described to [*me/the subject/the participant*] by [*name of relevant person*] in [*Afrikaans/English/Xhosa/other*] and [*I am/the subject is/the participant is*] in command of this language or it was satisfactorily translated to [*me/him/her*]. [*I/the participant/the subject*] was given the opportunity to ask questions and these questions were answered to [*my/his/her*] satisfaction.

[*I hereby consent voluntarily to participate in this study/I hereby consent that the subject/participant may participate in this study.*] I have been given a copy of this form.

_____

Name of Subject/Participant

_____

Name of Legal Representative (if applicable)

_____   _____

Signature of Subject/Participant or Legal Representative   **Date**

SIGNATURE OF INVESTIGATOR

I declare that I explained the information given in this document to _____ [*name of the subject/participant*] and/or [his/her] representative _____ [*name of the representative*]. [*He*/she] was encouraged and given ample time to ask me any question. This conversation was conducted in [*Afrikaans/*English/*Xhosa/*Other*] and [*no translator was used/this conversation was translated into _____ by _____*].

_____   _____

Signature of Investigator   **Date**

Research Team Members

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Addendum C: Anonymous electronic questionnaire

Questionnaire on Participation in Professional Learning activities at Higher Education institutions.

As an academic staff member at XXXX University you are invited to participate in a survey on academics' participation in professional learning opportunities at higher education institutions. This survey is being undertaken by eight South African Universities which are collaborating in a National Research Foundation funded research project. The full title of this research project is: "The Interplay of Structure, Culture and Agency: Contextual influences on the professional development of academics as teachers in higher education in South Africa".

Through this survey, we as participating researchers hope to understand the institutional and individual factors that motivate academics to take advantage of opportunities to enhance our teaching. We intend to use this information to improve the strategies that we put in place to support teaching and learning at our institutions.

This survey has been given approval by the research ethics committees of all participating institutions. It should take you no longer than 20 minutes to complete. Your participation is greatly appreciated, but it is entirely voluntary and you may withdraw at any stage.

Kind regards

The Research Team

Cape Peninsula University of Technology
James Garraway
Chris Winburg
Durban University of Technology
Gita Mistri
Rhodes University
Silvana Barbali
Chrissie Boughey
Lynn Quinn
Stellenbosch University
Michelle Ainslie
Jean Farmer
Nicoline Herman
Brenda Leibowitz (Project leader)
Susan van Schalkwyk
University of Cape Town
Jeff Jawitz
June Pym
Kevin Williams
University of Fort Hare
Vuyisile Nkonki
University of Venda
Elias Bayona
Clever Ndebele
University of the Western Cape
Vivienne Bozalek
Wendy McMillan

* This is an anonymous questionnaire of which the data will be used to inform the professional learning of academics in their teaching function on a national and institutional level. Please tick the appropriate box below to confirm or decline your participation

⊙ I agree to participate in this research project. I am aware that the results will be used for research purposes only and that my responses will be treated confidentially and reported on anonymously

⊙ I decline the invitation to participate in this research project.

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BIOGRAPHICAL DETAILS

* 1. Please indicate your gender

○ Female

○ Male

2. Please indicate your year of birth using numeric characters

[_____]

* 3. Please indicate your race

○ Black

○ Coloured

○ Indian

○ White

○ Other: [_____]

* 4. Please indicate the level of your highest qualification

○ Doctorate

○ Masters

○ Honours

○ Bachelors

○ BTech

○ PGDip

○ National Diploma

○ Other: [_____]

If you are currently pursuing a higher degree, please provide details

* 5. Please indicate the type of teaching qualification(s) you have. Please mark all relevant options

☐ HED

☐ ACE

☐ PGCE

☐ PGDip

☐ BEd

☐ MEd

☐ MPhil in HE

☐ DEd/PhD

☐ I am currently pursuing a teaching qualification

☐ None

☐ Other: [＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿]

If you are currently pursuing a teaching qualification, please provide details

* 6. Please indicate the <u>nature of your position</u> at your institution. Please mark all relevant options.

☐ Permanent

☐ Contract

☐ Full Time

☐ Part Time

☐ Joint appointment eg. University and Provincial Administration

☐ External lecturer

☐ Other: [＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿]

* 7. What is the <u>level of your current position</u>? Please mark all relevant options.

☐ Junior lecturer

☐ Lecturer

☐ Senior Lecturer

☐ Associate Professor

☐ Professor

☐ Deputy Dean

☐ Dean

☐ Director

☐ Senior Director

☐ Researcher

☐ Other: [＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿]

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* 8. Please indicate your discipline. These categories were adapted from the NRF list of primary research fields. Please select the most relevant option.

○ Agriculture

○ Arts

○ Economic and Management Sciences

○ Education

○ Engineering

○ Health Sciences

○ Humanities

○ Law

○ Mathematical Sciences

○ Military Sciences

○ Physical Sciences

○ Natural Sciences

○ Social Sciences

○ Theology

○ Other: [_____]

* 9. To which faculty are you affiliated?

[_____]

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

* 10. How many years have you been <u>teaching in Higher Education</u>? Please use numeric characters

[   ]

* 11. How many years have you been teaching at <u>your current institution</u>? Please use numeric characters

[   ]

* 12. What is the main area of teaching you are involved in? Please mark all relevant options

☐ Under graduate

☐ Under graduate and Post graduate

☐ Post graduate coursework

☐ Research supervision

☐ Other: [   ]

* 13. How would you rate yourself as teacher on a scale of 1 - 5?

(5 = Excellent; 3 = Acceptable; 1 = Very bad)

○ 5

○ 4

○ 3

○ 2

○ 1

○ Comments: [   ]

* 14. How would you rate your interest in teaching on a scale of 1 - 5?

(5 = Passionate; 3 = Neutral; 1 = Not interested)

○ 5

○ 4

○ 3

○ 2

○ 1

○ Comments: [   ]

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PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

Professional learning can be defined as the numerous activities which have to do with the "academic/educational/faculty/staff development of academics in post-compulsory, tertiary or higher education" (Brew 2004:5). Johnston (1998:1) adds that professional learning is "the need for professionals to continue learning as they practice and advance in their careers".

* 15. In which area(s) of your work as academic have you attended professional learning opportunities <u>at your institution</u>? Please mark all relevant options.

☐ Teaching

☐ Research

☐ Community Interaction

☐ Management

☐ Administration

☐ None

☐ Other: [＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿]

* 16. In which area(s) of your work as academic have you attended professional learning opportunities <u>outside of your institution</u>? Please mark all relevant options

☐ Teaching

☐ Research

☐ Community Interaction

☐ Management

☐ Admin

☐ None

☐ Other: [＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿]

Please provide details of these professional learning opportunities you have attended <u>outside of your institution</u>. You can include information about where it took place or by whom it was organised, the date and the topic.

* 17. How often do you participate in professional learning opportunities for your <u>teaching</u>?

○ Once a term or more

○ Once a semester

○ Once a year or less

○ Never

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○ Other: [_____]

* 18. What may prompt your attendance of professional learning opportunites for your <u>teaching</u>? Please mark all relevant options

☐ If I am interested

☐ If the topic is relevant to my teaching

☐ If instructed by my Supervisor/Head of Department

☐ If I have the time

☐ If there is an incentive/reward

☐ If required by my institution

☐ If it will advance my career

☐ If it can help my teaching

☐ If I want to apply for promotion

☐ If I need CPD points

☐ If it speaks to a need I have at the time

☐ If colleagues suggest it would be worthwhile

☐ If I think it would be worthwhile

☐ If there is a positive attitude towards teaching in my department

☐ Other: [_____]

* 19. Where do you go for help/support/advice on your <u>teaching</u>? Please mark all relevant options

☐ Institutional Teaching and Learning Centre/Division

☐ Colleagues

☐ Mentor

☐ Supervisor

☐ Head of Department

☐ Conferences

☐ Internet

☐ Library

☐ Teaching Dean

☐ Dean

☐ Specialist in the field of Higher Education

☐ I do not feel the need for help

☐ Other: [_____]

* 20. If you do ask for help/support/advice, in which areas of your <u>teaching</u> do you ask for this? Please mark all relevant options

☐ Teaching large classes

☐ Discipline in class

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- [ ] Integration of technology in teaching
- [ ] Curriculum design and development
- [ ] Engaging students in class
- [ ] Facilitating interactive learning
- [ ] Encouraging class attendance
- [ ] Managing diversity in class
- [ ] Issues of language in teaching
- [ ] Using student feedback for professional learning
- [ ] Compiling a teaching portfolio
- [ ] Assessment of students
- [ ] Research on teaching
- [ ] Programme planning
- [ ] Integrating graduate attributes in my teaching
- [ ] Using small group teaching techniques
- [ ] Optimising tutorials/fieldwork/practicals
- [ ] Integrating service learning
- [ ] Teaching in clinical settings
- [ ] Work based learning
- [ ] I do not feel the need for help
- [ ] Other: [   ]

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ENABLING AND CONSTRAINING FACTORS

* 21. My institution provides formal recognition for engagement in professional learning for <u>teaching</u>

○ Strongly agree

○ Agree

○ Not sure

○ Disagree

○ Strongly disagree

* Please briefly explain your choice in Question 21

* 22. My institution provides resources for engagement in professional learning for <u>teaching</u>

○ Strongly agree

○ Agree

○ Not sure

○ Disagree

○ Strongly disagree

* Please briefly explain your choice in Question 22

* 23. My workload often hinders my ability to participate in professional learning for <u>teaching</u>

○ Strongly agree

○ Agree

○ Not really

○ Disagree

○ Strongly disagree

* Please briefly explain your choice in Question 23

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* 24. The topics of the professional learning opportunities for <u>teaching</u> are often not applicable in my own discipline

○ Strongly agree

○ Agree

○ Not sure

○ Disagree

○ Strongly disagree

* Please briefly explain your choice in Question 24 and give examples if possible

* 25. I can easily access information on professional learning opportunities for <u>teaching</u> in my institution

○ Strongly agree

○ Agree

○ Not sure

○ Disagree

○ Strongly disagree

* Please briefly explain your choice in Question 25 and give examples if possible

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We value your input and feedback. If you have any comments or questions for the compilers of the questionnaire, please feel free to give these below

The researchers would like to interview a number of respondents in order to explore certain issues in more depth. If you are willing to be interviewed, please provide your contact details below or send an email to nherman@sun.ac.za .

Name:
Email address:

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Thank you for your time. Your responses will support us to design the most appropriate professional learning opportunities for academics at all participating institutions.

The research team

Addendum D: Email messages accompanying anonymous questionnaire

On 8 May 2012 the link to the electronic questionnaire was sent out to the 1083 email addresses with the following message:

Dear Colleague
As an academic at Stellenbosch University we would like to invite you to participate in this national survey which forms part of a National Research Foundation funded research project. Essentially we are trying to understand what factors influence the professional learning of academics as teachers in higher education. Your input will therefore be invaluable for us.

The results of the research will be implemented to enhance the professional learning opportunities for academics in their teaching role at participating institutions, as well as at a national level.

The full title of this research project is "The Interplay of Structure, Culture and Agency: Contextual influences on the professional development of academics as teachers in higher education in South Africa".

Please click on the link above to open the questionnaire. It should take you no longer than 20 minutes to complete. The closing date is 28 May 2012.

Your participation is greatly appreciated.

Kind regards
Brenda Leibowitz (Project leader), Susan van Schalkwyk, Nicoline Herman and Jean-Lee Farmer on behalf of the NRF Research Team

From the 1083 messages that went out, 70 out of office and/or message undeliverable messages were received when the link was sent out for the first time on 8 May 2012. By 14 May 2012, 88 SU academics had responded to the questionnaire and these respondents did not receive the following reminder message.

Dear Colleague
All permanent academic staff members at Stellenbosch University have been invited to participate in this national survey which forms part of a National Research Foundation funded research project. The goal of the project is to understand what factors influence the professional learning of academics as teachers in higher education. The results of the research will be implemented at institutional as well as at a national level.

After the first notice went out, approximately 100 SU academics completed the survey. The voice of each and every academic is important to us; furthermore, your participation will help ensure a good response rate.

Please click on the link above to open the questionnaire. It should take you no longer than 20 minutes to complete. The closing date is 28 May 2012.

With thanks, in anticipation.

Kind regards
Brenda Leibowitz (Project leader), Susan van Schalkwyk, Nicoline Herman and Jean-Lee Farmer on behalf of the NRF Research Team

When this reminder message was sent out, we received 30 out of office/message undeliverable messages. By Monday 21 May the response rate at SU was 164 responses. When the last

reminder message (see below) went out to all the non-responding email addresses on 21 May 2012 another 40 out of office/message undeliverable messages were received.

Dear Colleague
This is the final invitation to all permanent academic staff members at Stellenbosch University to participate in a national survey which forms part of a NRF funded research project. The goal of the project is to understand what factors influence the professional learning of academics as teachers in higher education. The results of the research will be implemented at institutional as well as at a national level.

Your input in this regard will therefore be invaluable. After the first two notices went out approximately 170 SU academics have already completed the survey. The voice of each and every academic is important to us and furthermore your participation would ensure a high response rate.

Herewith a request that you please click on the link above in order to open the questionnaire. It should take you no longer than 20 minutes to complete. The closing date is 28 May 2012.

We would like to hear your thoughts and value your time and effort.

Kind regards
Brenda Leibowitz (Project leader), Susan van Schalkwyk, Nicoline Herman and Jean-Lee Farmer on behalf of the NRF Research Team

On 28 May, the last day for the questionnaire to run, the SU response number was 238. On 29 May the message below was sent to all participants who only partially completed the questionnaire with a request to access it again and complete the whole questionnaire.

Dear Colleague
According to the SUN SUrvey system that is used for this research project, you completed the questionnaire only partially. Herewith a request that you would please consider completing the whole questionnaire.

Click on the link above in order to open the questionnaire. It should take you no longer than 20 minutes to complete. The closing date has been changed to 31 May 2012 to give you this chance.

We would really like to hear your thoughts and value your time and effort.

Kind regards and thank you
Brenda Leibowitz (Project leader), Susan van Schalkwyk, Nicoline Herman and Jean-Lee Farmer on behalf of the NRF Research Team

Addendum E: Interview schedule for lecturer level interviews

STRUCTURE, CULTURE and AGENCY

INTERVIEWS WITH LECTURERS

Section One: Your attitude towards teaching

1. Tell me about yourself as a teacher

   Prompts:

   a. *Your discipline*

   b. *What is your current involvement in teaching?*

   c. *Do you like teaching?*

   d. *Are you satisfied with yourself as a teacher?*

   e. *How long have you been teaching?*

   f. *Teaching qualifications?*

   g. *What are you beliefs about teaching (and learning)? How did you come by it? Have they changed over time? How?*

Section Two: Your professional development as a teacher

1. Does your institution have specific requirements with regard to teaching and learning staff development? Explain.

2. What steps have you taken to enhance your teaching?

   Prompts:

   a. *Individually driven (e.g., read up, reflect) – ask for examples*

   b. *Peer support (from Dean. HOD, colleagues in department and at other universities) – ask for examples*

   c. *Take up opportunities offered by university teaching and learning centre (including , for example, PGDHE) – ask for examples*

   d. *If none, why?*

3. If you have made any significant attempts to improve your teaching, what prompted this?

   Prompt:

   a. *policy, your direct supervisor, student complaints, obstacles, your own curiosity*

4. If you have taken up professional development opportunities, have you implemented what you learnt on these occasions?

   i. *If yes, explain and give examples of what you have implemented*

5. If you have not taken up professional development opportunities, what kind of support would you have wanted, and from whom, to enable you to do so?

Section Three: Relation to your environment

1. Does your environment support or hinder the quality of your teaching? Explain.

   Prompt:

   a. *probe for institutional and departmental level*

   b. *and students*

2. If it hinders, how do you respond/ have you responded?

3. Does it support or hinder your attempts at professional development for teaching? Explain.

4. If it hinders, how do you respond/ have you responded?

Section Four: Closing

1. Do you have any suggestions about what should be done at your university to support lecturers to develop professionally with regard to their teaching role?

2. Anything else you would like to add?

For consideration in selecting interviewees and conducting interviews:

a. The aim is to look at constraints and enablement for people taking up opportunities or not at the various institutions.

b. The interviewer should have section headings in mind before going into the interview, as information most often is covered in previous questions. Interviewers should find out in advance if interviewees mind being recorded (otherwise the interview should be cancelled).

c. Interviewers can help by not saying the name of the interviewee out loud, as the transcriber might include these unintentionally.

d. **yes / no** questions should be filled in beforehand so that the interviewer starts with background knowledge. Too many cross-questions conflate the data and it was decided that there should be definite section headings in the questions.

e. It is agreed that the "Consent" letter with signed consent form be used.

The list below should guide the selection of interviewees according to a range of criteria to ensure the most diverse range at an institution, and so that comparisons across universities can be done, e.g. international lecturers at various institutions.

There should be at least ten interviews per institution. If an institution wants to do more than 15, it should be at own cost. The following categories can be used to ensure a range across institutions:

a) From more senior e.g. Prof., As. Prof., to less, e.g. lecturer

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b) From a range of disciplines at a university
c) Range of academic through professional
d) Those who do take up opportunities and those who do not
e) Range across race
f) Range across gender
g) Some international (especially where these figure significantly at the university)
h) Whether agreed to be interviewed on questionnaire (if applicable)

(UNIVERSITY *e.g. UWC):* **Lecturer level interviews**												
Inter view no. *e.g. 1*	**Name of interview er** *e.g. Jean*	**Date and time of interview** *E.g. 27 Septembe r 2012* *16:00*	**Universit y** *E.g. UWC*	**Faculty** *E.g. Arts*	**Discipline** *E.g. Graphic Arts*	**Academic/ Professional** e.g. Accountancy is professional, English is academic	**Take up yes/no** *(take up ed dev opportunitie s or not)*	**Level** *E.g. Professor*	**Race** *Black, white, Indian, coloured*	**Gende r**	**Nation al/inte rnatio nal**	**Agree d to be intervi ewed on questi onnair e**

Addendum F: Letter of ethics clearance

UNIVERSITEIT·STELLENBOSCH·UNIVERSITY
jou kennisvennoot · your knowledge partner

17 June 2011

Tel.: 021 - 808-9183
Enquiries: Sidney Engelbrecht
Email: sidney@sun.ac.za

Reference No. 582/2011

Dr B Leibowitz
Centre for Teaching & Learning
University of Stellenbosch
STELLENBOSCH
7602

Dr B Leibowitz

LETTER OF ETHICS CLEARANCE

With regards to your application, I would like to inform you that the project, *Context, Structure and Agency,* has been approved on condition that:

1. The researcher/s remain within the procedures and protocols indicated in the proposal;
2. The researcher/s stay within the boundaries of applicable national legislation, institutional guidelines, and applicable standards of scientific rigor that are followed within this field of study and that
3. Any substantive changes to this research project should be brought to the attention of the Ethics Committee with a view to obtain ethical clearance for it.

We wish you success with your research activities.

Best regards

MR SF ENGELBRECHT
Secretary: Research Ethics Committee: Human Research (Humanoria)

Afdeling Navorsingsontwikkeling • Division for Research Development
Privaatsak/Private Bag X1 • Matieland 7602 • Suid-Afrika/South Africa
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www.sun.ac.za/research

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Addendum G: Institutional permission for research project 582/2011

UNIVERSITEIT • STELLENBOSCH • UNIVERSITY
jou kennisvennoot • your knowledge partner

9 June 2011

Dr Brenda Leibowitz   E-mail: bleibowitz@sun.ac.za
Director: Student and Academic Support
Stellenbosch University
Private Bag X1
MATIELAND
7602

Dear Brenda

INSTITUTIONAL PERMISSION FOR RESEARCH PROJECT 582/2011
("Context, Structure and Agency")

With reference to the ethics review report of the University's Ethics Committee, I give institutional permission that you can continue with the survey stage for the above research project providing that you adhere to the findings and recommendations of the Ethics Committee.

Kind regards

PROF JAN BOTHA
SENIOR DIRECTOR:
INSTITUTIONAL RESEARCH AND PLANNING

Copy: Mr Sidney Engelbrecht, Division for Research Development

/E:permission 582_2011 B Leibowitz.doc

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