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Teaching Academics and their Approach for the Engagement of their Students:
An Australian Regional University Qualitative Case Study

Thesis Submitted by
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in June 2021

in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the
Doctor of Philosophy (Education)
College of Arts, Society and Education
James Cook University

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Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to those who began this journey with me but could not be here to see me at the finish line. To Allen, Ruby and Nola, your endearing love and unwavering pride has continued to sustain me in ways I cannot explain. Thank you. To Lottie Goldie, thank you for your unconditional love and support. I miss your knowing and understanding ways every day.

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This research project has been conducted and reviewed under ethics approval by the James Cook University Ethics Review Committee (H6892).

Aspects of this thesis have been published prior to completion of this thesis and has benefited from peer review. This includes:

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Abstract

Pedagogical literature and policy documents clearly identify teaching academics as an integral part of the engagement of tertiary students. However, university-wide student engagement metrics only narrowly seek input from students. The voices of teaching academics are missing. To help address this gap, an interpretivist qualitative case study is used to explore the perspectives of ten teaching academics from one Australian regional university campus. Two research questions were used: How does the teaching academic approach the engagement of their students? and What are the teaching academic's perceptions of how and why their chosen approach to student engagement might make a difference? With these two research questions informing the emergent research design, data were collected using individual interviews and focus group meetings. Intensive thematic and narrative analyses reveal that for the ten participants, their student engagement approach is a dynamic process that is enmeshed, inseparable and intertwined with their student engagement philosophy, pedagogy and evaluation. In the words of one participant: *The more meaningful[ly] I engage the students, the better I am at facilitating this process.* Research recommendations include: the development of shared conceptual understandings of student engagement between the teaching academics and the university administration; and, a whole of university evaluation process of student engagement that takes into account its dynamic nature within the temporal and pedagogical context that informs educational praxis.

Key words: *Student engagement, interpretivist research, university, teaching academics, qualitative research, case study*

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Chapter One: Setting the Scene

Teachers make a difference

A quote – a statement – made by many researchers (e.g., Good, Hattie, McCaslin, Mood...)

Teachers make a difference

Does it matter what sort of difference?

Good? Bad? Everything in between?

Teachers make a difference

Define ‘teacher’?

How does one *be* a teacher?

How to *be* a teacher of difference – a difference maker...

Teachers make a difference

How do teachers’ *make*?

What are the ingredients for the *making*?

Are all the *making* ingredients essential?

What are the essential ingredients for teachers *to* make a difference?

Introduction

My study is about teaching academics and their student engagement approach in an Australian university. In essence, I sought to understand if and how *teachers make a difference*. I realised that it was necessary for me to begin by exploring upfront who I am and how this study resonates with me. I was encouraged to do this by Pitard (2017) who states: “for a reader to trust the perspective of a researcher as presented in qualitative inquiry, the disclosure of the researcher’s position to the data is vital” (p. 1). Once I have done this, I then proceed onto the background information, research statement and details of my qualitative study.

About Myself: The Difference Makers and my Teaching Philosophy

As I began this research, I reflected on the teachers in my life. The ones I perceive to be the *difference makers* to my engagement as a learner, some positive and some negative. The more I researched student engagement, the more cognisant I became of the ways my

teachers made (and continue to make) a difference in my life. One way I see a sustained difference is through my own philosophies of practice as a teacher of adults in universities.

I wrote a teaching philosophy once. I used a fairly generic definition, *philosophies of teaching involve consideration of personal beliefs of education, clarification of goals that guide practice and descriptions of pedagogies* (Goodyear & Allchin, 1998; Kearns & Sullivan, 2011; Payant, 2017). At the time, the document fulfilled a coursework component for my Bachelor of Primary Education degree, which I began as a mature-aged student.

Over the years, in moving on from my course, to teaching children and now adults, I can see the evolution of my philosophy beyond the definition. I see how it informs my practice and decision making (Soccorsi, 2013). I have also developed an appreciation for discussions about educational philosophy. Such conversations can create a space to explore the role and lived experiences of a teacher – or what a teacher perceives their role or experiences to be (or could be).

Teachers have played different roles in my life. As a child in primary school I was, by default, connected to the school. My mother was the ‘all important’ school administration person that assisted in ways to ‘answer all the questions’ and ‘solve all the problems’. Teachers knew me because they knew her. Most afternoons and on school holidays, I could be found in the corner of the teacher aide or library rooms. She was such a valued member of the school and it felt like I was seen only as her daughter, not for myself – Donna.

The only time I sensed I had my own identity was in grade two. For some reason, Mr H called me Donna Glue. With my new name I felt real. He even awarded me with a

‘student of the month’. On the certificate, Mr H wrote about my sense of humour. It is the only personalised comment I remember receiving from my teachers. From my perspective (and learning from Mr H), students feel valued when they are made to feel like individuals. More importantly, in my philosophy, teachers can make a positive difference when they take the time to get to know who their students are.

High school was entirely different. My experience was largely one of invisibility, in that teachers did not know my name. Often I was marked absent despite my presence in the classroom. Although a challenge to experience, those feelings of indistinctness did not deter me from learning and instead, enriched my own teaching viewpoint. Subsequently, my philosophy includes caring for and *seeing* my students for who they are (and could be), something that did not happen to me in secondary school.

An undergraduate teaching degree at university turned out to be a good fit for me. I quickly made new friends and teachers remembered my name. After the return of my first few assignments, I felt as if I (and my school teachers) may have underestimated the abstract capacities of my brain. My passion for learning continued to grow and as I was sitting in a humanities class one day I thought, “I would love to be a lecturer”. I realise now it was because the humanities teacher was one of my *difference makers*.

The humanities academic’s passion for the subject became mine. She read stories, dressed up as characters and the assessments were authentic and connected to my future profession. In becoming a lecturer, I can once again make connections to my philosophy and practice. From my perspective, it makes sense to teach in ways that worked for me.

Strategies such as, reading stories aloud to my students and authentic, content connecting tasks have become regular occurrences in my classrooms.

In my role as a teaching academic, supporting each student's engagement in learning became my priority. I began this research because it was important for me and I wondered if it was important for others. My focus narrowed in on the nexus of teaching academics and student engagement. I became curious as to what ways the teacher can drive, or not drive, more successful engagement in university subjects. I was intrigued at the ways they could *make a difference* and in particular, if and how they knew this. I explored the background information to teacher knowledge, simultaneously weaving my story in with the literature.

The Ways Teachers Know

My own teacher knowing involves an enmeshment of professional and personal experiences and factors. I draw upon this knowledge as I work to both engage and facilitate understandings. Webb and Blond (1995), explain teacher knowledge as being “historical, autobiographical, storied, embodied, relational, and situated within the continually changing context of teachers’ professional and personal lives” (p. 613). When it comes to engagement, this is potentially what makes teachers *difference makers*. From my perspective, this is why philosophies of practice can move beyond words on a page. In essence, my knowing and philosophies cannot be separated from who I am (or could be).

Connecting Philosophy, Research and Practice

As I reflected on my own philosophy making – my values, beliefs and developing ideas of pedagogy – I was intrigued by the ways I (and perhaps others), embody teacher knowing and how they learn from others. Lipson Lawrence (2012) ascertains, embodied

knowing is when teachers “bring their whole selves and the sum of their embodied and affective lived experiences to their learning environment” (p. 12). This can be exemplified by teachers when they attend to students’ body language, non-verbal cues and respond and adjust practice as necessary (Lipson Lawrence, 2012).

In my eyes, when teachers *know* their students’ engagement through embodied understandings they are working as human-instruments. The term, *human instruments*, is associated with naturalistic, qualitative research methods. To be an instrument, it requires the use of human characteristics of responsiveness, flexibility and sensitivity in the development of meaning and understandings through inquiry (Peredaryenko & Krauss, 2013). According to Guba and Lincoln (1982), non-human data instruments can be more cost effective and provide objective information that can be systematically aggregated. However, human instruments are able to be more insightful and can provide holistic information as they “process and ascribe meaning to data simultaneously as their acquisition” (Guba & Lincoln, 1982, p. 245). Both non-human and human instruments are valuable.

Teachers working as human instruments notice patterns and unique details in student characteristics, events, instances or cases in their classrooms (Lundsteen, 1987). In my time as a teacher in primary schools, discussions about students and ideas of engaging pedagogies were a regular occurrence. In the context of my teaching in universities and engagement research, I became fascinated with the possibilities of conversations on teacher philosophy and ways of knowing as human instruments. In particular I was intrigued by the connections between philosophy and teacher knowing. How did they know how to interpret and adjust practice to foster engagement? I searched for this teacher perspective in the higher education student engagement research. What I uncovered was more one-sided than I had expected.

Exploring the Perspectives within University Student Engagement Metrics

In drawing connections between student engagement and academic performance, universities globally invest heavily into measuring and predicting student engagement (Ashwin & McVitty, 2015; Australian Council of Learned Academies [ACOLA], 2016; Biggs & Tang, 2011; Christenson et al., 2012; European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2015; Radloff et al., 2012). I use an example of this investment from Australian universities where institution-wide questionnaires are administered at regular intervals. Surveys such as, the Australian Survey of Student Engagement (AUSSE) and Student Experience Survey (SES), aim to capture learners' perceptions of their engagement and learning. An additional higher education engagement measure is analytic software. The aim of this application is to calculate and report on student engagement behaviours in online class spaces, for example, the amount of time spent in the space and the materials accessed.

These university engagement metrics primarily capture the perspectives and behaviours of students. In these tools, large volumes of data are collected, statistically analysed and generalisations made (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2018). Whilst this information is valuable and performs a wide range of internal and external reporting purposes, the embodied teacher knowing and philosophies are missing.

In the context of my research, the quantitative information did not help me to further understand the ways teachers perceive they *make a difference* to student engagement. This led me to further explore where and if teacher philosophy had a place. I turned my attention to university pedagogical policy and literature in search of ways of knowing that can drive teacher practice.

Exploring the Perspectives in University Policies and Practices

In university policy documents and tertiary teaching and learning literature a connection exists between pedagogy and student engagement. This link is exemplified by the inclusion of constructivist, learner-centred approaches to foster student engagement in both document areas (e.g., Biggs & Tang, 2011; Chickering & Gamson, 1987, 1999; Good & Brophy, 2002; James Cook University Australia, 2015; MacGregor, 2007; The University of Queensland, 2016; The University of Sydney, 2012). Such pedagogical approaches position teachers and students as active participants in the learning process. It requires a type of mutual relationship – a co-engagement – between teachers and learners to facilitate understandings and achievement (Guilbault, 2018). Whilst similar teaching approaches are emphasised in both document areas, the philosophical underpinnings are absent. I recognised a gap in the student engagement research. The teacher voice is largely missing from student engagement metrics, policy and pedagogical literature.

Statement of the Problem

In higher education research, policy and practice teaching academics are recognised as being key influencers on student engagement. With the engagement metrics narrowly focusing on the perspectives and behaviours of students, the philosophies and ways of teacher knowing are paradoxically glaringly absent (Kelly & Zhang, 2016; Richards, 2011). I contend there is scope for exploring holistic teacher perspectives of their intentional pedagogic views of student engagement.

Purpose of my Research

The purpose of my research is to explore the philosophies of ten teaching academics

on the ways they approach student engagement from one regional university in Australia. More specifically I am interested in studying the nuanced teacher's perceptions of pedagogies and the ways they work as human-instruments to reflect, evaluate and justify their engagement practices.

Research Questions

In alignment with the problem statement and study purpose, the following questions are at the heart of this research:

1. How does the teaching academic approach the engagement of their students?
2. What are the teaching academic's perceptions of how and why their chosen approach to student engagement might make a difference?

Research Approach

My study is framed by the interpretivist paradigm, defined as the understanding and sense-making of multiple perspectives on a topic in a particular context (Lincoln & Guba, 2013; Willis, 2007). This paradigm was chosen intentionally due to the alignment with the overarching research purpose of gaining deep, rich insight into the student engagement philosophies and experiences of teaching academics (Greene, 1994). The theoretical underpinnings provide scope for inductively exploring, valuing and presenting the social realities of teachers on the topic of student engagement (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011).

Drawing on this interpretivist framing, I plan to utilise a qualitative case study approach. The use of qualitative case studies is common in educational research and is suitable when using 'how' and 'why' questions such as those in this study (Hamilton et al., 2012; Yin, 2009). It will be bound by both a ten-teacher academic participant community

and the walls of one regional university campus. This will create a space for deep reflection in the study context (Baxter & Jack, 2008).

I will utilise two data collection phases to explore the participant's philosophies. Phase one involves ten individual intensive interviews, a conversational technique that has been demonstrated to foster participants' own stories and perspectives of practice (Charmaz, 2014). Phase two comprises of a series of focus groups. In using this strategy, I collect qualitative data from small groups of participants (Creswell, 2011). The focus groups will involve monthly meetings over the duration of a semester of study.

I will analyse the qualitative data collected from both phases using Applied Thematic Analysis (ATA) (Guest et al., 2012). Employing multiple inductive analytic techniques, the fundamental aim of ATA is to describe the perceptions of practice through the voices of the participants (Guest et al., 2012). To support this process, I plan to identify emergent themes using a suite of different strategies as detailed by Ryan and Bernard (2003). ATA is particularly suited to my study as it emphasises the identification of participant understandings from qualitative data.

Rationale and Significance of the Study

Teaching academics are connected to the engagement of students in universities. This link is being increasingly acknowledged in university pedagogical policy and practice literature. Despite the nexus of teaching with engagement, university metrics give prominence to the perspectives and behaviours of students whilst silencing academics. This needs to be investigated.

By exploring the ten teacher perspectives through a qualitative case study approach, I will engage in knowledge-related research (Barnett, 2010). My aim is to gain diverse particular understandings about teaching and learning. The inclusion of the individual teacher voice will expand the existing behaviourist and reductionist engagement research and has the potential to enrich the current literature with more finely nuanced interpretations.

Ethics of the Study and Limitations

This study operates under ethics approval from James Cook University (H6892) as a low and negligible risk to the participants. I will describe my ethical decision-making process in detail in Chapter Three.

Regarding research limitations I am conscious of my own investment in the research as a teaching academic and ‘insider’ within the community. I am cognisant of the ways that this will inform my analysis, interpretation and reporting of data. Although some would assert that the presence of personal subjectivities in research is a limitation, other researchers see this as a distinct strength (Alvesson & Sköldbberg, 2018). The results from this study are not generalisable (Smith, 2018). Although a feature in positivist studies, generalisation does not apply to qualitative research involving bounded systems (Stake, 2008).

To support my processes for trustworthiness and credibility, I endeavour to take utmost care to ensure an alignment with current literature and follow the processes as per ATA (Guest et al., 2012). To further assist with data clarity, I will incorporate ongoing member-checking strategies. This involves inviting the participants to view their transcribed data and any emerging themes throughout the research process to provide comment as to the authenticity and accuracy.

Thesis Overview

In Chapter One I outline my research proposal.

In Chapter Two I explain the methodology.

In Chapter Three I describe in detail the ethically-informed underpinnings of the methods I employ in this study.

In Chapter Four I present the first part of my phase one data collection and analysis.

In Chapter Five I present the second part of my phase one data collection and analysis.

In Chapter Six I present the phase two data collection and analysis.

In Chapter Seven I report the research data and discuss how they inform the first research question.

In Chapter Eight I report the research data and discuss how they inform the second research question.

In Chapter Nine I detail the summary, the findings, the lynchpin statement (designed to link my findings), and the research recommendations. This chapter concludes my thesis.

Chapter Two: Research Methodology

...knowledge of the world is mediated by structures that humans invent, and the characters of these structures are not passive, they operate in shaping what we think about and how we think about it. By expanding the array of tools, we implicitly expand also our assumptions about how we come to know and how the world can be studied and described. (Eisner, 2004, p. 202)

Chapter Outline

In this chapter I develop the methodology for this study through sharing my research preparation. I weave in rationales from the literature and my own story to support the scaffold of my chosen study design. I then go on to refine my research focus.

Deciding on the Research Paradigm

Initially I completed a discrete comprehensive survey of the higher education literature on student engagement metrics, policy and practice. On critically examining this research I quickly discovered that the voice of the teaching academic is largely absent. I also found most of this body of research to be unhelpful for the progress of my thesis. This is because the literature is dominated by positivist research.

Research paradigms set both the rules and the process by which to carry out scientific studies (Kuhn, 1970). Each paradigm has a specific philosophy and vocabulary which details the assumptions of the world, purpose, approach and role of the researcher (Firestone, 1987; Gorad, 2010).

In positivist research the aim is to simplify social reality, using as reductionist an

approach as possible, to achieve a nomothetic or single objective reality. Statistical analysis is used for testing hypotheses (Creswell, 2011). Generalisability is predicated on statistical probability.

My research focus is to explore the diverse, particular lived perspectives of ten individual teaching academics (see Chapter One). There is no intention to explore nomothetic norms and so an alternative investigative paradigm is essential - away from the positivist research mainstream. I therefore decided to adopt an interpretivist paradigm (Glesne, 1998).

The Interpretivist Paradigm

The interpretivist researcher works to interpret social reality by analysing the subjective insights of each research participant with an emphasis on gaining depth of understanding. Using inductive reasoning, the researcher examines each participant's viewpoints within the context in which they are situated (Lincoln & Guba, 2013). The underlying assumption of the interpretivist paradigm is that there are "multiple, socially constructed realities" (Glesne, 1998, p. 5).

The interpretivist paradigm is underpinned by specific beliefs associated with ontology (nature of reality) and epistemology (relationship between the knower and the known). Ontology is the philosophical study of "beliefs about the nature of reality" (Schraw & Olafson, 2008, p. 25). Epistemology is the philosophical study of "beliefs about the origin and acquisition of knowledge" (Schraw & Olafson, 2008, p. 25).

The ontological stance of the paradigm is relativist in that realities are socially constructed by individuals and groups (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Firestone, 1987). As Levers (2013) explains:

With multiple interpretations of experience come multiple realities... [T]here are as many different realities as there are people. The purpose of science from a relativist ontology is to understand the subjective experience of reality and multiple truths. (p. 2)

Within this ontology, I aim to study my topic holistically in an attempt to understand diverse multiple realities while simultaneously identifying more questions to ask (Mills et al., 2010). In particular I will investigate teaching academics, from a variety of disciplines, backgrounds and experiences, eliciting perspectives in relation to student engagement.

The epistemic grounding of the interpretivist paradigm posits that knowledge is developed through the active interpretation and construction of views (Jonassen, 1991). Within this epistemology, understandings are fostered through conversational and social means (Glesne, 1998; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Social interactions thereby create an opportunity for me to foster empathic understandings by interpreting individual perceptions (Firestone, 1987; Glesne, 1998; Tracy, 2013). Underpinned by an inductive theoretical understanding, I aim to analyse the participants' stories for theoretical layers to discover the thick descriptions within particular perspectives (Alvesson & Sköldbberg, 2018). By exploring the layers, my aim is to investigate the embodied socially situated habits, intentions and practices and the unspoken philosophies of particular teachers within the collected qualitative data (Given, 2008).

In studying the interpretivist paradigm I developed an awareness as to why there can be no clear distinctions between the knower and the known (Mills et al., 2010). As my purpose as an interpretivist researcher is to actively construct and make sense of multiple perspectives, I will become entwined, immersed and inseparable from my research (Firestone, 1987; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This is because in my interpretivist researcher role, I bring my own insights and understandings to the interpretations of the individual participant's viewpoints (Willis, 2007). With my researcher-connectedness in my study I become a human instrument (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

In interpretivist research, the research instrument is the human researcher. The term, human research instrument posits that the processes of research are a human endeavour. In this endeavour, a human instrument draws upon their research characteristics to collect, analyse and interpret data (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Given, 2008). The instrument is predicated on the researcher's deep reflection of the data, distilled through the researcher's prior experience, knowledge and attitudes (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Human instruments explore the inherent complexities of people and their interrelations that are almost impossible to gain through positivist approaches (Pickard, 2013). This is because human instruments draw upon their theoretical and tacit understandings to collect, analyse and interpret meanings from data (Guba & Lincoln, 1982).

As a human research instrument, I will work towards becoming responsive, flexible and sensitive to embodied teacher understandings (Peredaryenko & Krauss, 2013). This is because embodied understandings, exemplified in classroom practice (Bing-You et al., 2017; Smith, 2001) "might seem to involve something that cannot be (at least fully) put into words"

(Gascoigne & Thornton, 2013, p. 3). As a human instrument therefore, I can cooperatively explore these reflective insights that can be challenging to articulate and are often left unspoken (Rivera & Tracy, 2014).

Alvesson and Sköldbberg (2018) caution that such reflective practices can place increased demands on the researcher. Examples of such demands include the need to have a sufficient command of the literature and being sufficiently flexible and receptive to multiple viewpoints. Elliot Eisner (2004) advises *educational connoisseurship and criticism*. In this approach, as a human instrument, I am to look for significance in subtleties through deep reflection on what I am witnessing and feeling. I am to employ a language in which to share these reflections with others (Eisner, 2004). To me this way of researching is coherent with my experiential background.

As I shared in Chapter One, I entered university as a mature-aged student. Prior to undertaking academic study I had an earlier career as a hairdresser. Like teaching, styling hair requires particular technical skills and knowhow. Through technical training I gained a heightened awareness and appreciation for subtleties in colour and texture that can complement and contrast. Contextual elements and client perceptions are significant. Components such as my skills, lighting, tools, products and hair history make a difference to what I can create. The ongoing attitude of the client to my work is largely dependent on the client's hopes, fears and presuppositions. The dynamic of balancing and communicating expectations and reality is neither easy nor straightforward. It is a process of negotiation and of co-creation – much like interpretivist research.

Paralleling my work in the salon, my work as a developing educational connoisseur is

grounded in relationships (Eisner, 2004). In these professional relationships, what and how I perceive and communicate influences how others can participate in and understand my ideas.

Eisner (2004) explains that as educational connoisseurs:

...we should be recognizing the constraints and affordances of any form of representation we elect to use. Just as a way of seeing is also a way of not seeing, a way of describing is also a way of not describing. The tools we employ for noticing have an enormous impact on what it is that we become aware of. If we want a replete, fulsome, generous, complex picture of a classroom, a teacher, or a student, we need approaches to the perception of such phenomena and, in addition, a form of representation that will make those features vivid. (p. 202)

With Eisner's (2004) words in mind, my next task is to identify the ways I might approach the exploration of teacher perceptions to 'see', 'describe', 'notice' and 'vividly represent' them in my study.

Interpretivist Qualitative Research

The emphasis of the interpretivist paradigm is on the construction and reporting of 'vivid features' through contextual, historically-based interpretations of reality from data (Willis, 2007). This is because the perceptions of people are interwoven with elements of time, location, socio-political trends and uses of language (Goldman, 1999; Tracy, 2013; Willis, 2007). Such situated-meanings are essential for the researcher to construct *thick descriptions* from data (Geertz, 1973).

There is a clear alignment drawn in the literature between the interpretivist paradigm and qualitative research (e.g., Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Gall et al., 1996; Glesne, 1998).

Qualitative research is defined as "a systematic scientific inquiry which seeks to build a

holistic, largely narrative, description to inform the researcher's understanding of a social or cultural phenomenon" (Astalin, 2013, p. 118).

Considering my research purpose (see Chapter One), I was particularly interested in the following examples of interpretivist qualitative research:

- The interpretivist qualitative educational researcher values professional practice-based knowledge (Thanh & Thanh, 2015; Willis, 2007). Because of this the researcher engages with reflections on practice, stories and experiences (Astalin, 2013; Glesne, 1998; Willis, 2007);
- The interpretivist qualitative researcher fosters insights and understandings into contexts and situations through social, long-term interactions. Here the researcher works with an emergent design with no set and distinct research pathway so multiple inherent complexities can be explored (Eisner, 1981; Glesne, 1998; Lincoln & Guba, 2013; Willis, 2007).

I decided to underpin the interpretivist paradigm of my study by employing qualitative research. Data from the fieldwork I conduct are mediated through myself as a human instrument. As I am to report these understandings from the participants' points of view, not being positivist research, making generalisations will not be a feature of my investigation (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Yin, 2009, 2013).

Bringing all these strands together, I summarise in Table 1 my understanding of the interpretivist paradigm, its relationship to my research and my aim within the following dimensions: assumption, ontology, epistemology, researcher connection, data instrument and context and situatedness (see Table 1). The next step in my research preparation is to fashion

an approach that will make this research viable as a doctoral thesis.

Table 1

My Understanding of the Interpretivist Qualitative Research Paradigm

	Interpretivist Paradigm	My Research	Aim
Assumption	multiple socially constructed realities (Glesne, 1998; Lincoln & Guba, 1985)	explore multiple socially constructed realities of teaching academics	to understand, interpret and make sense of specific constructed realities of diverse individual teaching academics
Ontology	realities are socially constructed by individuals and groups (Firestone, 1987)	the teaching academic's social realities are constructed	to understand diverse multiple realities while simultaneously, identifying more questions to ask (Mills et al., 2010)
Epistemology	knowledge is developed through the active interpretation and construction of views (Jonassen, 1991)	the understandings of teaching academics are fostered through conversational, social means (Glesne, 1998; Lincoln & Guba, 1985)	to engage in social ways with teaching academics to interpret individual perceptions and foster empathic understandings (<i>Verstehen</i>) (Firestone, 1987; Tracy, 2013)
Researcher Connection	no clear distinctions between the knower and the known (Mills et al., 2010)	bring my own insights, and understandings to the interpretations of the individual teacher's viewpoints (Willis, 2007)	to actively construct and make sense of multiple perspectives thereby becoming entwined, immersed and inseparable from my research (Firestone, 1987; Lincoln & Guba, 1985)
Data Instrument	human research data instrument (Lincoln & Guba, 1985)	explore reflective insights that can be challenging to articulate and are often left unspoken (Rivera & Tracy, 2014)	to be responsive, flexible and sensitive in the research process as a human research instrument and educational connoisseur (Eisner, 2004; Guba & Lincoln, 1982; Peredaryenko & Krauss, 2013)
Context and Situatedness	construction of contextual, historically-based interpretations of reality from data (Willis, 2007)	the perceptions of teaching academics are enmeshed with elements of time, location, socio-political trends and uses of language (Goldman, 1999; Tracy, 2013; Willis, 2007)	to include situated-meanings which are essential to constructing <i>thick descriptions</i> of practice in research (Geertz, 1973)

Interpretivist Qualitative Case Study Approach

Being an open system, there are dangers in having unlimited scope when conducting research within the interpretivist paradigm. These include being overwhelmed with

complexity and failing to complete. Mindful that a doctoral thesis cannot exceed a certain length, I needed to set boundaries of enquiry. I decided to adopt an interpretivist qualitative case study approach thereby creating a clearly delineated bounded system (Baxter & Jack, 2008).

A case study is defined as an “intensive, holistic description and analysis of a single instance, phenomenon, or social unit” (Merriam, 1998, p. 21). Case studies are used for exploring *why* and *how* research questions (Yin, 2009). Case studies are ipso facto conducted within a clearly defined bounded system (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Stake, 1978), even though “the boundary between the case and its contextual conditions – in both spatial and temporal dimensions – may be blurred” (Yin, 2013, p. 6). This bounding works to separate the research as a type of single entity, affording researchers with a level of breadth and depth required to foster deep understandings (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Creswell, 2011; Merriam, 1998) without being overwhelmed.

Case studies are particularly prominent in qualitative education research because *why* and *how* research questions can facilitate the study into both tacit and explicit teacher knowledge through critical reflections on practice (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Greene, 1994; Stake, 1978). Case studies also allow a focused qualitative investigation on a complex issue involving individuals and communities within a context (Gulsecen & Kubat, 2006; Hamilton et al., 2012; Yin, 2011; Zainal, 2007).

From my perspective these issues are germane because student engagement does not happen in a vacuum, devoid of the context and relationships that sustain them (Guo, 2018; Kahu, 2013). Teachers co-engage with their students to foster learning (Broughan et al.,

2018). Academics make decisions in light of discipline understandings and institutional demands (Kang & Wallace, 2005; Maggioni & Parkinson, 2008).

Merriam (1998) cautions researchers to be cognisant of the affordances and limitations of case studies. This is because of the bounded nature of a case, involving a researcher and participants co-creating understandings of a phenomenon within a particular moment of time, place and space (Guba & Lincoln, 1981; Merriam, 1998). The findings may be rich and detailed but researcher bias is an ever-present risk that needs to be actively mitigated.

I decided to set boundaries for my study both geographically and administratively. These boundaries are represented by both the walls of one regional university campus and by a participant group of ten teaching academics. Whilst there are no particular guidelines on acceptable participant numbers in case studies, there are researchers who deem ten to be an adequate number to gain robust understandings (e.g., Boddy, 2016; Malterud et al., 2016; Sandelowski, 1995).

In my investigation, now developed into an interpretivist qualitative case study, I aim to critically reflect on my emerging understandings, my practitioner-researcher connections, my role as a human instrument and my developing educational connoisseurship (Eisner, 2004; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam, 1998; Wang & Reio Jr, 2018). This awareness led me to start to think about my research methods and the rationale for their use.

My Research Methods

In any study, judicious selection of research methods is essential. This selection involves careful well informed consideration of the options to ensure that there is maximum congruence between the research focus and the research approach (Given, 2008; Heck, 2006). The dimensions I will be concentrating on in this section are: research setting, participant sampling, human instrument, qualitative data collection, emergent design, data analysis, qualitative synthesis, research outcome, qualitative validity and credibility, and ethical considerations. The focus is on why I made the decisions to set the framework for the study in the way I did.

Research Setting

Interpretivist qualitative research takes place in a natural setting. This is because the interpretivist researcher is trying to find out about the complex intricacies of how people behave in their normal day-to-day environment (Given, 2008).

As my study centres on teaching academics, my chosen setting is a single university campus. I have decided to call this campus Regional Campus 1. It is the largest of eight campuses of the host university, which I have named Regional University. To ensure anonymity, references that explicitly identify it have been withheld (e.g., (Name withheld, date)).

To explore the minutiae within the ordinary, Eisner (2017) contends that it is an advantage for researchers to have a deep connection with their research site. I have an especially strong connection with my research setting being actively involved with Regional University over a period of fifteen years. Prior to commencing my doctoral study, I was both

a post-graduate student and a sessional staff member at Regional Campus 1. This campus is also where I completed my undergraduate degree as an internal student.

Notwithstanding the convenience of my inside knowledge of the organisation and ready access to the participants, there are also critical cautions to consider. Even though Glesne (1998) acknowledges ‘backyard research’ as valuable, researchers are advised to develop a strong rationale for choosing that site.

My rationale for choosing the site links in with my research focus and the gap in the literature I identified in Chapter One. There I made the observation that in the student engagement research the teacher voice is largely missing from student engagement metrics, policy and pedagogical literature. Furthermore, any teacher voice that is present comes predominately from the larger, metropolitan universities. Very little information is available regarding the teacher voice from regional universities (e.g., Goldie, 2019; Kirkwood & Price, 2013; Ross et al., 2014; Saye & Brush, 1999; Zepke et al., 2014).

There have been changes to labour regulations in higher education worldwide and adjustments made to how people are employed (Knott et al., 2015). Currently in Australian universities, staff are employed full-time, part-time, casually and contractually (Williams & Beovich, 2017). These employment variations have contributed to a diverse staff group as people can enter academia from multiple pathways (Knott et al., 2015). My experience as an academic has seen me move from contract, to casual, to part-time, to full-time academic. This work history has given me valuable insight into these variations.

With choosing Regional Campus 1 as my research site, I can investigate higher

education pedagogical decision-making through the voice of diverse teaching academics. My plan is to select ten academics from a total staff group of 3 483* (Name withheld, 2017).

This total staff group is made up of people employed in continuing positions, casually and on contracts (see Table 2) (Name withheld, 2017).

Table 2

Regional University Staff Information

Staff Numbers at Regional University* (from available information from Regional Campus 1, 3, 6, 7 & 8)	
Total academic staff	2 382
Total professional / technical staff	2 642
Employment Type* (where information is available)	
Continuing	1 465
Contract	1 049
Casual	2 568
Staff by Location* (where information is available)	
Regional Campus 1	3 483
Regional Campus 3	1 187
Other Regional Campuses	243

*As staff can be located across different campuses and in multiple roles, there have been duplications in total count made in Staff Numbers at Regional University, Employment Type and Staff by Location, therefore the total number of staff is going to be different to the sum of numbers within various categories.

(Name withheld, 2017)

With the adoption of digital technologies for teaching and learning in higher education, delivery of academic course content has become much more flexible. Face-to-face, blended and online modes are used as well as the traditional modes (Carter et al., 2016). As an academic I have been fortunate to have taught each mode on offer at the university. This also provides me with invaluable background understandings. With variations in study options, traditional (straight-out-of-school) students are now joined by non-traditional students in universities. Examples of these non-traditional students are people who are over the age of twenty-five years with work and family commitments, those with additional needs, the first-in-family to attend university and Indigenous students (Linder et al., 2015; Norton &

Cherastidtham, 2014).

Regional Campus 1 offers a diverse student demographic studying in undergraduate, postgraduate, higher degree research and other courses (Name withheld, 2017). This is because the demographic encompasses Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, those with a low socio-economic status and from regional/remote areas and overseas. Similarly reflected in all of the Regional University campuses, more than half the student cohort is the first in their family to attend university (see Table 3) (Name withheld, 2017).

Student diversity has huge implications for teaching academics trying to promote learner engagement. This is because, as the literature tells us, not all pedagogical models and innovations foster engagement for *all* students (Haggis, 2004; Honkimaki et al., 2004). Consequently, as student diversity in universities continues to increase, so too does the complexity of delivering tertiary education. This intensifies the challenge for teachers to promote student engagement and foster learner success (Quaye et al., 2020).

Table 3*Regional University Student Information*

Regional University Campus	Total Number of Students	Equivalent Full Time Student Load (EFTSL) by Regional Campus		
		Domestic	International	Total
Regional Campus 1	13 081	8 024	1 036	9 060
Regional Campus 2	3 246	0	3 020	3 020
Regional Campus 3	4 152	2 442	382	2 824
Regional Campus 4	77	54	0	54
Regional Campus 5	1 289	4	869	873
Regional Campus 6	20	13	0	13
Regional Campus 7	9	4	0	4
Regional Campus 8	122	0	68	68

Origin of Students who are International (from available information excluding Regional Campus 4 and 5)			
France	1.7%	Thailand	1.5%
Norway	1.5%	China	12.9%
Germany	2.9%	Malaysia	3.6%
India	11.3%	Vietnam	5.3%
Myanmar	2.6%	Canada	3.8%
Singapore	21.6%	United States of America	6.9%
Indonesia	21.6%	Papua New Guinea	2.8%
Unknown/other	15.3%		

Equivalent EFTSL by Course Level			
	Domestic	International	Total
Undergraduate	9 398	2 883	12 281
Postgraduate	762	1 289	2 051
Higher Degree Research	337	269	606
Other	44	934	978

Combined Percentages of Student Diversity (from Regional Campus 1, 3, 6, 7, 8)	
Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander	5.84%
Low Socioeconomic Status (SES)	22.75%
Regional/Remote	87.87%
Gender (female : male)	60.7% : 39.3%

Commencing Domestic Students First in Family to Attend University (from available information from Regional Campus 1, 3, 6, 7, 8)	
Regional Campus 1	56.7%
Regional Campus 3	59.0%
Regional Campus 6	84.2%
Regional Campus 7	75.0%
Regional Campus 8	75.0%

(Name withheld, 2017)

Participant Sampling

Participant sampling is a vital part of project preparation in interpretivist qualitative research (Creswell, 2011). This is because interpretivist researchers are to purposefully

choose participants to best support them to gain in-depth understandings of the central topic, in alignment with the research aims (Glesne, 1998).

To better enable this selection, Patton (2002, 2015) advises researchers to purposefully select participants based on particular characteristic-options. These characteristic-options are summarised from Patton (2015, pp. 267-275) in Table 4 and present examples of the types of purposeful sampling strategies, the details and possible uses for each (see Table 4). I initially rejected non-purposeful forms of sampling because I wanted to be proactive in my preparation in order to maximise opportunities for learning.

Table 4

Summary of Purposeful Sampling Strategies, Details and Uses as Informed by Patton (2015, pp. 267-275)

Sampling type	Characteristic details	Useful for
Maximal variation strategy / Heterogenous sampling strategy	Participants are selected that have varying characteristics.	Illuminating both unique experiences and those which are significant because they emerge out of variation.
Homogenous sampling strategy	Participants are selected that have like-characteristics.	Revealing in-depth information about a particular group.
Typical case sampling	Participants are selected because they have been profiled as being a 'normal case' for a particular study. Selection is often informed by statistical information from surveys which profiles a 'typical case'.	Explaining what is average, typical and normal to a particular group. Useful for evaluative research for policy initiatives.
Key informants, key knowledgeable, reputational sampling	Participants are selected because they have highly-specialised knowledge about a topic/concept. Can be used in conjunction with another sampling method.	Illuminating expert-knowledge on a particular topic/concept.
Complete target population	All people from a particular group/area of interest are selected.	Revealing information/ experiences/ ideas from a whole group.
Quota sampling	A pre-determined number of participants are selected because they each fulfil a particular identified category which represents a larger population.	Illuminates information from certain identified categories from a larger population / group.
Purposeful random sampling	Participants/cases are randomly, purposely selected from a larger case group to make a study more credible and manageable.	Revealing in-depth information about a selection from a larger case group, not to generalise, but to illuminate.
Time-location sampling	All people at a particular time/location become participants.	Generating information about a sample at a particular place and time.

Each purposeful sampling strategy creates an opportunity for researchers to learn different information about a topic and research site to fulfil research aims (Glesne, 1998). My research aim is to illuminate both individual and shared stories of teaching academics. Therefore, the sampling strategy I have chosen to use to select participants is maximum variation sampling.

Maximum variation sampling is defined as “a purposeful sampling strategy in which the researcher samples... individuals that differ on some characteristic or trait” (Creswell, 2011, pp. 207-208). I have chosen this sampling strategy because Patton (2002) contends, the collection and analysis of data with the maximal variation strategy results in two kinds of findings: “high quality, detailed descriptions... which are useful for documenting uniqueness” and “important shared patterns that cut across cases and derive their significance from having emerged out of heterogeneity” (p. 235).

In choosing participants with varying characteristics in my study, I will be searching for people of different ages, background and educational pathway. I explain this in more detail in Chapter Three.

Although I have chosen a particular sampling strategy, Glesne (1998) reminds researchers to be flexible in their selection. This is to ensure researchers are prepared to adapt if needed to reach their study aims to learn more about their topic. Also in conjunction to particular participant characteristics, it is of equal importance that researchers select participants that can give the time required, are willing to participate, and can communicate their experiences during the data collection phases (Etikan et al., 2015; Spradley, 1979).

Human Instrument

Unlike positivist research which uses tools such as valid, reliable test instruments to collect data, the interpretivist researcher collects data in a much more direct way. Data collection is through their own observation. The researcher becomes the instrument, a human instrument. I am the human instrument in my study.

A human instrument collects, analyses, interprets and co-creates meanings from data (Guba & Lincoln, 1982). Carefully drawing together certain humanistic characteristics and technical skills, a developing human research instrument works to foster rapport and relationships in an effort to strengthen a study. As Mason (2002) writes, the researcher being a human instrument gives qualitative research “an unrivalled capacity to constitute compelling arguments about *how things work in particular contexts*” (p. 1).

Rapport is a type of mutual agreement, grounded in respect and trust between a researcher and participants. It facilitates empathic understandings. The co-construction of meanings from data collected depends on a complex interplay between the human research instrument, the study participants and their mutual rapport (Glesne, 1998).

For an interpretivist researcher, developing an excellent rapport with study participants is essential, which requires an active approach rather than happenstance. I must be mindful to follow Glesne’s (1998) advice, to continually reflect on and monitor the quality of my research relationships throughout the progress of my study.

Reading the literature, elements that enable/frustrate rapport are those which involve personal elements, such as interpersonal etiquette and research elements, for example a breach of trust (Caplan, 2004). Rapport can also be damaged when the researcher is ill-prepared with equipment and materials and care has not been taken to reduce possible interruptions (Watson et al., 2008). To foster rapport in qualitative data collection Watson et al. (2008) advises researchers to be culturally aware, listen in a non-judgemental way and appear empathic in conversations.

To develop relationships and foster rapport, proficient listening skills are critical (Jacob & Furgerson, 2012). I am fortunate that listening is a skill that I have been able to develop from early on in my working experiences both as a hairdresser and teacher. Little did I realise at the time what such strong grounding those years were providing my future self as a researcher and communicator. For example, I was learning how to get ready for the interview, prepare an interview guide, gently test my questions with probes, be aware of cultural and power dimensions, build rapport, become a co-creator of the story, know how to steer the client in particular directions, understand how to effectively deal with unanticipated emotions, and keep notes in preparation for the next visit (McGrath et al., 2018).

From my perspective, rapport is fostered when people feel comfortable and relaxed in both the setting and with each other. In the study I will be especially mindful of enabling elements. These include arranging to meet participants in places of their choosing, at times of their choosing, and taking note of their level of physical and emotional comfort to ensure they are ready and willing to contribute.

Qualitative Data Collection

The goal of my research design is to derive great insight into the perspectives, both explicit and tacit, of the ten study participants. This involves including obtaining rich description, gaining depth of understanding, uncovering nuance, appreciating context, grasping complexity and comprehending multidimensionality (Fasso et al., 2016).

In interpretivist research, qualitative strategies enable the researcher to explore individual “views, values, beliefs, feelings, assumptions, and ideologies” (Creswell, 2011, p.

429). Qualitative data collection strategies are predicated on a human instrument making observations while using semi-structured, open-ended social interactions with the participants (Creswell, 2007). Data can be collected through individual interviews or through focus groups, involving “interviews with a [small] group of people” (Creswell, 2011, p. 218). The focus group technique is a guided discussion where open-ended prompts or questions are asked by the researcher (Hennink, 2014).

Whilst a structured set of questions are used with an aim of testing hypothesis, interpretivist researchers use semi-structured techniques to explore nuanced perceptions and experiences of people (Low, 2013). Such semi-structured strategies can create opportunities to gain in-depth understandings of participant’s thoughts and ideas captured through their own words. However, because the interviews can have differences, they do reduce the option to systematically compare like-responses from across a data set (Blee & Taylor, 2002).

Semi-structured strategies are particularly useful for gaining nuanced insight into a particular phenomenon. Consequently, Low (2013) believes researchers need to have proficient interpersonal skills to effectively execute the method. This is because researchers need to ‘read’ the interviewee in order to adjust the pace if required, pursue unanticipated themes if they arise, and be considerate of the potential emotional aspects for both participant and researcher.

Even though I am not intending to progress my research into grounded theory, I will employ Charmaz’s (2014) intensive interviewing strategy for the qualitative interviews. This strategy is defined as “a gently-guided, one-sided conversation that explores research participants’ perspective on their personal experience with the research topic” (Charmaz,

2014, p. 56). I intentionally chose this strategy because of the key characteristics outlined by Charmaz (2014), which I found to be particularly suited to my study. These encompass:

- Carefully selecting participants who have experiences which align with the research focus.
- Asking open-ended questions.
- Deeply exploring participants' experiences and situations with an aim to gain detailed responses.
- Emphasising cooperative understandings from the nuanced perspectives and meanings of the participants.
- Flexibility to follow up on unanticipated areas, responses, hints and tacit ideas and accounts.

The aim of the intensive interviewing conversational technique is to facilitate participant reflection and story-telling (Charmaz, 2014). To do this, I am to create an interview guide and have a practise test-run of the interviews for suitability and practicability (McGrath et al., 2018). The questions in the interview guide should be designed to invite focussed reflection and discussion on a topic (Charmaz, 2006). As well as containing focused, topic-specific questions the opening question/s should be ones that the interviewee will most likely be familiar with to foster participant comfort. The interview should also end with inviting the participant to share anything else they would like to add (McGrath et al., 2018). I explain in detail the elements within the interview guide in Chapter Three.

Intensive interviews are useful for exploring individual insight and ideologies. Nonetheless, Wimmer and Dominick (2011) caution researchers to reflect on the biases they may present in an intensive interview through their verbal and non-verbal behaviours. Also

during the post-interview analysis stage Johnson and Rowlands (2012) argue researchers must take care to consider their positioning as an active sense-maker in the intensive interview analysis process. This is because any findings that emerge are highly dependent on the researcher's own standpoints. Consequently to enhance the rigor of a study, it is advised that researchers utilise an additional data collection strategy in conjunction to the intensive interviews (Johnson & Rowlands, 2012).

In my research I will follow the intensive interviews (phase one) with a series of focus groups (phase two). The data from phase one are used to drive phase two. Using these two phases provides a greater range of information than would be possible using only one phase. While the individual interviews provide details about personal feelings, the focus group provides details about the feelings of the group. Also having two phases offers another way to check for clarification of understanding.

Focus groups are a “carefully planned series of discussions designed to obtain perceptions on a defined area of interest in a permissive, non-threatening environment” (Krueger & Casey, 2015, p. 2). I have chosen this strategy to create a further opportunity for me to gain deeper insight through spontaneous interactions between the participants (Acocella, 2012).

My role in the focus group is to be less directive than in the individual intensive interviews. This is because the emphasis in this strategy is exploring the multiple realities of the participants (Krueger, 1994). To support this process, I am to prepare open-ended questions or prompts and be prepared to be flexible to explore participant-driven areas of interest (Krueger & Casey, 2015).

There are elements to consider when choosing focus groups as a research strategy. Such elements include hierarchical power issues, cultural differences and other possible opposing views between members of the focus group (Acocella, 2012). To alleviate such issues, researchers are to explore topics where each participant is familiar with and create a welcoming, supportive environment with an aim of facilitating rich conversations (Acocella, 2012).

From my perspective, focus groups are an essential enabling component of my study. This is because my participants are teaching academics who will be reflecting on their practices. Through the discussions, my focus will be on exploring holistic understandings of the teachers' actions. Such understandings can be developed through cooperative critically reflective processes (MacIntyre, 1994) such as focus groups (Krueger & Casey, 2015).

Reflecting critically on practice (Schön, 1991) involves *careful* thinking about one's actions (as perceived by self and others), with an aim of analysing professional performance and providing reasoning for particular decisions and activities (Hatton & Smith, 1995). Such reflection is enhanced when it involves a group of teachers. For Blumberg (2013) and Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1999) interactive critical reflection between colleagues can assist teachers to deepen their own knowledge, gain further insights into their practices and support them in the design of rich learning experiences for their students.

Emergent Design

Because of the flexibility of the interpretivist paradigm, it is essential that my research design be adjusted and appropriate strategies utilised for me to be able to address my research

topic while remaining open (and possibly able to answer) what other questions may arise (Mills et al., 2010). This type of research is called emergent design, and according to Salkind (2010) requires interpretivist researchers to “have a high tolerance for uncertainty and the ability to work independently for extended periods of time, and these researchers must be able to think creatively under pressure” (p. 884).

In an interpretivist research design, the process can be described as non-linear, cyclic and responsive. This is because the researcher is not pursuing an objective, pre-determined path and instead resides within a role that requires flexibility to move and adapt to what may emerge (Mertler, 2019; Salkind, 2010). In this role, the “theoretical understandings and assumptions about research held by a researcher... provide an overarching frame that shapes and influences the research design at every point” (Given, 2008, p. 761).

In interpretivist research, an emergent design provides scope for adjusting research procedures as and if needed through the research process to reach study aims (Bruce, 2007; Given, 2008; Tom, 1996). With an emergent design I can accommodate for the complex and multiple realities of studying with an interpretivist paradigm (Bruce, 2007; Creswell, 2009; Mills et al., 2010). In order to be accommodative and flexible, Salkind (2010) believes the researcher must let the project become somewhat ‘messy’ to be able to respond to the realities of the interpretivist research context.

As well as flexibility in scope, from a developing educational connoisseurship perspective, emergent design is essential in my study. As Eisner (2004) outlines, “connoisseurs are people who come to know” (p. 199). For me, this process of coming to know (or developing my *knowings*) takes particular information and reflection over time. As

the interpretivist paradigm affords me a level of openness to explore (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), my aim is to effectively and reflexively adapt my research design. In this way, my reflections on my developing educational connoisseurship *knowings* can act to strengthen my study in light of what may transpire and emerge.

Data Analysis

Data analysis is a central component of a research project (Flick, 2014). This is because this is the part of the research process where understandings can be drawn and sense made of the information that has been collected (Coghlan & Brydon-Miller, 2014; Creswell, 2011).

As my research focus is to explore the collected information for meanings and rich descriptions, I have decided to use interpretive qualitative data analysis (Flick, 2014). In qualitative data analysis linguistic material is explored for distinct elements as well as shared patterns to foster descriptions of a phenomenon in finer detail. The aim of exploring the material in this way is so a rich picture of understandings can develop from the collected data (Creswell, 2011).

To organise and describe both the implicit and explicit meanings within the linguistic material, researchers use themes and thematic coding (discussed in detail in Chapter Four) (Guest et al., 2012). This is because “without thematic categories, investigators have nothing to describe, nothing to compare, and nothing to explain” (Ryan & Bernard, 2003, p. 86). To identify the themes, researchers use an inductive approach to explore the layers of meaning within the text. As interpretivist researchers are interconnected with their research, they can also use a priori approach to draw upon agreed definitions from literature as well as their

developing understandings of the topic to assist with theme identification (Guest et al., 2012; Ryan & Bernard, 2003; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2009).

There are implications to consider when planning to undertake qualitative data analysis. Examples of such implications can be the time it takes to work through data analysis theme-identifying strategies, ensuring data is not taken out of context at the cost of meaning, and identifying too broad/narrow ideas which can minimise pertinent nuances (Allen, 2017; Denscombe, 2014). To address these implications, researchers are to ensure care is taken in the coding process, use evidence-based theme identifying strategies, become familiar with the collected material, and draw upon the data to support all interpretations (Allen, 2017; Denscombe, 2014; Guest et al., 2012; Ryan & Bernard, 2003).

In an aim to capture the complexities within the data, qualitative data analysis will become an ongoing part of my interpretivist qualitative research project (Glesne, 1998; Guest et al., 2012). This is because when the data analysis is ongoing, interpretivist researchers have time to “consider relationships, salience, meanings, and explanations” (Glesne, 1998, p. 84). This can lead to new insights and lines of questioning as well as prepare me for a more concentrated period of analysis which follows data collection completion (Glesne, 1998).

Qualitative Synthesis

Once all the data have been analysed using the initial set of strategies, a qualitative synthesis process will be used. A synthesis process is a high level abstraction technique which aims to connect two or more themes together by integrating and aggregating the themes from across qualitative data sets (Guest et al., 2012; Sandelowski & Barroso, 2007). In interpretivist research, qualitative synthesis can be used to explore the findings in

published studies from a range of authors or used to assist with identification of ‘uber-themes’ and potential findings in a single research study (Guest et al., 2012; Levack, 2012).

The challenge in undertaking a qualitative synthesis process is that there are various strategies and techniques within the literature. Researchers, therefore, need to be highly skilled in systematically working reflectively to further challenge assumptions and more deeply interrogate familiar data (Walsh & Downe, 2005). In working this way, I am to aim for further refinement of the interpreted meanings (Walsh & Downe, 2005).

In carrying out a qualitative synthesis process, I am to take care that the meanings and experiences that were originally captured remain within the context (Levack, 2012). This is to ensure alignment with the interpretivist paradigm and possibly lead to deeper, holistic understandings. Walsh and Downe (2005) advise researchers to utilise a precise approach to effectively carry out their qualitative synthesis. I detail my synthesis approach in Chapter Seven.

Research Outcome

In my interpretivist study any research outcomes that emerge will be through an inductive approach. For induction to occur, I am to draw on interpretation and inference (Given, 2008). Through this interpretation and inference, I will explore particular teacher’s stories, explanations and meanings within. Because the ontological underpinning of the interpretivist paradigm theorises that the meanings are socially constructed, any research outcomes are informed by co-constructed findings. Instead of seeking ‘absolute’ or fixed truth, my focus will be on searching for the individual academic’s nuanced reflections on their practical knowledge.

Tentative Outcome

As my research study is underpinned by an interpretivist paradigm any outcome which may emerge will be tentative. A tentative outcome is non-generalisable and is to be considered with caution (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). This is because of the uniquely designed and context-dependent nature of my study. In this design, both mine and the participants' understandings are contingent on reflexive processes and pre-existing understandings (Given, 2008; Heidegger, 1962; Holland, 2013).

Part of the process of having a tentative outcome is the practice of ontological humility. This is because ontological humility invites a continuation of dialogue and critique. Here I invite the reader to be alongside me in decision making for confirming and disconfirming evidence, questioning my knowledge claims (Holland, 2013).

In my effort to develop my understandings of ontological humility, I was once again drawn to the work of Elliot Eisner (2004). This is because Eisner (2004) writes of the ways the ways educational criticism invites multiple points of view. This invitation of varying perspectives can strengthen my own awareness of my researcher understandings and further develop my educational connoisseurship. In the words of Eisner (2004):

There is no inclination on my part to suggest that there is only one way to see something. One of the great virtues of criticism is that it affords multiple perspectives, which can, of course, be deliberated with those holding other views. In the process, it is very likely that one's awareness of the content and form of a text, for example, will be deepened or made more expansive... Promoting the ability to see a

process or a work from multiple perspectives is utterly consistent with connoisseurship. (p. 200)

Qualitative Validity and Credibility

An interpretivist researcher foregrounds qualitative validity in a study. Qualitative validity involves employing certain practices in a study in a strive for dependability, credibility, and confirmability (Creswell, 2009; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Nowell et al., 2017; Shenton, 2004). Throughout my project, these practices will be used at different times and in intentional ways to foster research – and researcher – trustworthiness.

As qualitative research is a complex endeavour, researchers must ensure they clearly explain their decisions which guide their processes (Nowell et al., 2017). This is to illustrate researcher dependability to build reader trustworthiness. It is my aim throughout my thesis to effectively illustrate my decision-making in a dependable way.

For a study to be credible, researchers are to ensure there is a congruency between the views of the participants and the interpretations (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). To demonstrate confirmability, researchers must clearly illustrate how the interpretations are derived from the data (Nowell et al., 2017). Essential to demonstrating these elements is the use of direct quotes from the participants along with the reporting of the themes. In using these themes and quotes, however, researchers must ensure that the move beyond a description of what was captured to illustrate the depth and richness within (Nowell et al., 2017). If the presentation is more descriptive and less analytical, the significance, credibility and confirmability of the research can be reduced.

In a further attempt to build research and researcher trustworthiness, I will analyse the data for negative and deviant cases (Guest et al., 2012). Deviant case analysis is:

... based on the view that any findings generated from data should be able to explain a wide range of observations. This provides both the opportunity for finding novel theoretical relationships as well as confidence that a study has been conducted in a rigorous way. (Mills et al., 2010, p. 290)

The practice of deviant case analysis involves searching for both confirming and disconfirming patterns with supporting examples from the data (Jupp, 2006). The process is described as “analytic tasks that challenge researchers to be critically self-reflective interpreting data by challenging their interpretations” (Hennink, 2014, p. 182). During the interpretation, data are triangulated using the perspectives of the participants across the data sets and theory from authoritative literature (Creswell, 2009). This validity strategy can lead to new, alternative or contrary understandings (Guest et al., 2012; Mills et al., 2010).

While the process of deviant case analysis can enhance the rigor of a study, there can be some challenges. This is because of the time and skills required to reflect, revise and challenge interpretations (Allen, 2017). To address these challenges, Allen (2017) advocates the use of systematic record keeping and documentation, and inviting a third party to review the interpretations.

There are additional strategies I will use throughout my project to assist with credibility and trustworthiness. For example, I will spend ample time at the research site and meet with most of the participants at least four times. I will also be the only data collector and utilise a semi-structured set of interview questions (Charmaz, 2014; Glesne, 1998;

Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The interviews and focus groups will be audio recorded and transcribed verbatim by me. I also plan to use password-protected codebooks in NVivo and meet regularly with my supervisory team to clarify, justify and reflect on my analysis and ethical processes. I will provide further details of the specifics of these strategies in Chapters Three, Four, Five and Six.

Member Checking

Member checking is a strategy that can foster data trustworthiness and credibility (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This is described as providing the participants with documents used in the research process and inviting comment as to the accuracy of the information (Carlson, 2010; Creswell, 2009, 2011; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). I will use member checking in my study.

As well as a credibility strategy, member checking can have implications. This is because participants can elaborate, delete, censor, modify or edit their transcript or narrative data (Birt et al., 2016; Thomas, 2017). The use of different text-types and the way I construct the documents (e.g., transcripts, representative vignettes, word clouds, emerging themes placemat) can also position individuals differently and elicit particular responses (Enciso, 2001).

Whilst I am mindful of the potential implications of member checking, for me this is a vital strategy for interpretivist research. This is because with the interpretivist paradigm, the realities, co-constructed understandings and truths contained within data documents will be owned by the participants (Lincoln & Guba, 2013). From my perspective, therefore, the

member checking strategy is both an acceptable and essential trustworthiness strategy to use in my study (Birt et al., 2016; Thomas, 2017).

Ethical Considerations Pertaining to the Role and Positioning of the Researcher

As part of carrying out a study, researchers are to consider the potential ethical implications (Glesne, 1998). Ethical considerations are defined as a set of morals and values that are included as part of the research design. These morals and values are enacted to ensure research is conducted and reported with integrity and is ethically acceptable to the participant and consumer communities (Behi & Nolan, 1995). In preparing to ethically undertake my study I explore: my researcher role and my positioning (the ethical decisions pertaining to the methods are detailed in-depth in Chapter Three).

The Role of the Researcher

The interpretivist paradigm recognises my connection and researcher bias in this study (Glesne, 1998). Researcher bias is defined as “the selection of data that fit the researcher’s existing theory or preconceptions and the selection of data that ‘stands out’ to the researcher” (Maxwell, 2005, p. 108). To assist me in proactively monitoring my researcher bias, I am intentionally journaling throughout my study and maintaining auto-ethnographical insights (Ellis & Bochner, 2016; Willig, 2013).

The type of journaling I am using is reflective. To support and focus my reflective journaling, I am utilising the strategies provided by Willig (2013), to explore both my *personal* and *epistemological reflections*. *Personal reflectivity* involves the researcher carefully considering the ways individual “values, experiences, interests, beliefs, political commitments, wider aims in life and social identifiers have shaped the research” (Willig,

2013, p. 10). *Epistemological reflectivity* requires an in-depth questioning process to “reflect upon the assumptions (about the world, about knowledge) that... [I may] have made in the course of... [my] research, and it helps... [me] to think about the implications of such assumptions for the research and its findings” (Willig, 2013, p. 10). I am incorporating some of these reflections throughout this thesis.

In weaving my own story and philosophies through this thesis, I am working to clarify my existing understanding and preconceptions that may influence the study and subsequent findings (Armour et al., 2009; Guba & Lincoln, 1983; Khan, 2014). As I am a practitioner-researcher, I feel such writings are both helpful and pertinent for me in exploring my implicit and explicit assumptions. I am using my own story to interrogate my existing understandings and further investigate the intricacies within my research and my positioning (Hamilton et al., 2012).

Insider-outsider / Outsider-insider Researcher Positioning

I feel that it is important for me to deeply consider my positioning as an interpretivist researcher. Intuitively I was uncertain whether I was an insider researcher or something more nuanced. I therefore deeply meditated on this issue before beginning my data collection.

With no clear distinctions between the knower and the known, I felt my exploration of my researcher positioning was a necessary part of my preparation (Mills et al., 2010).

Researcher positioning is defined as “the process of reflecting critically on the self as researcher, the ‘human as instrument’” (Lincoln & Guba, 2000, p. 183). During this process, researchers “explain their biases, dispositions, and assumptions regarding the research to be undertaken” (Merriam, 2009, p. 219).

As I begin this study, I have taught in various subjects within pre-service teacher education in face-to-face, blended and online learning spaces at Regional Campus 1. Because of my experiences, interests and training, I have knowledge of pedagogical frameworks and approaches for engaging students in such environments. In conjunction to teaching, I have worked as an assistant on various projects across different colleges in academic, research and professional roles.

From my initial reading of the literature it seems I could position myself an insider researcher. Insider research takes place within a community where the investigator is a member, whereas an outsider researcher does not belong (Humphrey, 2013). However, from my perspective at least, I have always had a way of working both on the fringes and from within. Also, as an interpretivist researcher I am not sure if a distinction of position (and positioning) can be made where there is an emphasis on co-construction of understandings.

With the nature of sessional teaching work in higher education involving the beginning and ending of contracts, I have worked (and continue to work) in flexible roles and in different areas at Regional Campus 1. In my previous line of work in the salon, I was frequently there for pertinent life-moments, but only during the transactional hair experience. During my teacher training and work with children in regional and remote communities of Australia, it was as if I could not entirely be a part of the internal tapestries.

In all my work experience, it feels as if the nature of the employment with the commencement and ending of contracts also mirrors my thinking. I am also cognisant that as a researcher, interacting with participants from disciplines outside of mine, I could be

perceived as an outsider and positioned by others in different ways. In my preparation to undertake this study, I searched for a more accurate way to describe my positioning.

In considering my research positioning (and how I may be positioned by participants) I will intentionally adopt a more flexible positioning. In this research, therefore, I take on a more fluid, insider-outsider / outsider-insider researcher position (Beals et al., 2019). By purposely taking on this positioning, I am not ascribing to or excluding either an insider or outsider research position.

With an insider-outsider / outsider-insider researcher position, I am (in my eyes at least) intentionally working in alignment with the interpretivist paradigm to foster empathic co-constructed understandings. I will use this fluid positioning to consider the ways co-construction is dependent on both mine and the participants' existing and developing understandings and the relationship that is fostered to explore these. Therefore, the intentional and explicit exploration of my own positioning illustrates that co-construction as a concept is influenced (and dependent) on what we know (and can know) as a researcher and participant/s in the context of this case study.

Clarifying the Topic of Student Engagement in my Research Context

I plan to investigate the research topic of student engagement. However, I am aware that this task will be more challenging than I had originally predicted before I completed my survey of the literature. I therefore feel it is important for me to clarify the topic of student engagement before I move on to data collection.

Since the 1980s, higher education institutions have invested heavily into positivist metrics measuring and predicting student engagement from the learner perspective (Buckley, 2018; Coates, 2007; Henrie et al., 2015; Hockings et al., 2008; Inda-Caro et al., 2019; Junco et al., 2011; Mombourquette, 2013; Shea et al., 2015; Wyatt, 2011). This is because of the repeated connections drawn between student engagement, the student experience, academic performance and attainment of transferrable attributes (Ashwin & McVitty, 2015; Christenson et al., 2012; Radloff et al., 2012). What I discovered is that although a large body of research exists, various conceptualisations of student engagement make it a challenge to research (Fredricks et al., 2004; Kahu, 2013; Zepke, 2015, 2017).

In academic research, the topic of student engagement mostly contains three elements: behaviour, cognition and emotion (Fredricks et al., 2004). Intersecting combinations of these elements have since become widely accepted in the literature (Ding et al., 2017; Kahu, 2013; Zepke, 2015). For example, Coates' (2007) definition centres on learner behaviours and affective responses. Students participate in learning activities, communicate with teachers and feel supported by the university community. A different understanding comes from Henrie et al. (2015), emphasising 'academic engagement' which involves the exertion of "cognitive and emotional energy... to learn" (p. 132).

As well as the research into its components, others study engagement-influencing factors. Aspects such as, the socio-political context, structural elements (e.g., culture, curriculum, learner background) and student motivation are identified as affecting student engagement (Kahu, 2013; Kahu & Nelson, 2018). Within this engagement-influencing research, teaching academics are repeatedly identified as having the single greatest effect on

student engagement (e.g., Gilbert et al., 2004; Guo, 2018; Hattie, 2003; Inda-Caro et al., 2019; Kahu, 2013).

With the consideration of the literature as part of my emergent design, instead of working towards a definition, my understandings of student engagement for my study can be more fluid. For me, I liken my developing conceptual ideas of the construct to the work of Nick Zepke (2017, 2018). Instead of a definition, Zepke (2017) offers a perspective, where student engagement becomes a “metaphor; a prism through which we can discover diverse understandings of what can lead to effective learning and teaching” (p. 8). With this perspective in my study, my aim is to work to gain in-depth holistic understandings of student engagement from particular teaching academics. I plan to tell their specific stories through my interpretivist qualitative case study approach.

Chapter Summary

The philosophies of teaching academics in the context of student engagement are largely absent from higher education metrics, policy and literature. To address this gap, I have fashioned an interpretivist qualitative case study approach. In a natural setting of Regional Campus 1 and with ten diverse teaching academic participants, I will employ two phases of data collection with an aim of gaining robust insight. My focus will be on conducting a study that is trustworthy, credible and ethical. In the next chapter, I will report in detail on the ethically-informed decisions pertaining to the methods employed in my study.

Chapter Three: Ethically Informed Research Methods

The lesson to be learned... is that sheer description unguided by value considerations is rudderless. Seeking and selecting require guideposts. (Eisner, 2005, p. 51)

Chapter Outline

In this chapter I explain in detail my ethically-informed decision making for the methods I will employ. As the ethical elements were such an indispensable aspect of my research preparation I felt it warranted a separate chapter. In the process I was able to develop a scaffold that helped inform all stages of the research process. This chapter therefore acts as a vital bridge between the interpretivist research methodology and the data collection and analysis.

Ethically-Informed Research Decisions

Ethically-informed research decisions are intertwined with each step of interpretivist research. This crucial process involves initially taking the time to carefully consider the ethical components prior to any recruitment of participants (Glesne, 1998; Lincoln, 1998) and maintaining this type of decision making throughout the conduct of the research. This is because as an interpretivist researcher I will work to connect with humans to foster co-created understandings (see Chapter Two).

The investigation into the ethical elements of my research project happened in conjunction with the construction of my ethics application. This is because any research involving humans must be explicitly explored and explained (The National Health and Medical Research Council [NH&MRC] et al., 2018). This explanation is then detailed in an ethics application and submitted for approval to the Regional University Human Research

Ethics Committee (HREC). Ethics approval must be awarded by the HREC to researchers before commencing participant recruitment and data collection.

The HREC of Regional University works in accordance with the *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007) – Updated 2018*, which states:

All human interaction, including the interaction involved in human research, has ethical dimensions. However, ‘ethical conduct’ is more than simply doing the right thing. It involves acting in the right spirit, out of an abiding respect and concern for... [all peoples]. This National Statement on ‘ethical conduct in human research’ is therefore oriented to something more fundamental than ethical ‘do’s’ and ‘don’ts’ – namely, an ethos that should permeate the way those engaged in human research approach all that they do in their research. (NH&MRC et al., 2018, p. 3)

To demonstrate the permeation of the ethic ethos, I paid particular attention to: the types, levels, management and monitoring of risks; obtainment of informed consent; the data collection guideline; and participant recruitment. I also reflected on how I plan to work towards protecting participant privacy and anonymity in the reporting of my data collection, data analysis, results and findings.

Considering the Levels of Risk

In the context of research the level of risk pertains to the likelihood of harm, discomfort and / or inconvenience to occur and the potential severity and consequences of this harm (NH&MRC et al., 2018). The first step therefore is to gauge the risk of harm, discomfort and inconvenience to the potential participants in my study.

I had to consider both phases of data collection because only one ethics application was required. I therefore constructed Table 5 (see Table 5). This outlines a clear pathway for me to consider each step of risk assessment. In particular I was interested in exploring the types of harm, discomfort and / or inconvenience for the participants and to gauge, minimise and manage potential risks as identified by the NH&MRC et al. (2018).

Table 5

Considering the Types of Risk and Ways to Gauge, Minimise and Manage Risk Informed by the NH&MRC et al. (2018)

Types of Harm			
- physical harm (e.g., injury, illness, pain)	- devaluation of personal worth (e.g., humiliation, disrespect, unjust treatment)	- social harm (e.g., damage to social networks, relationships)	- economic harm (e.g., cost to participate)
- psychological harm (e.g., feelings of worthlessness, distress, guilt)			- legal harm (e.g., prosecution of criminal conduct)
Types of Discomfort (less serious than harm)			
- discomfort (body and / or mind) from side-effects of medication, measurement of blood pressure, anxiety induced by interview (note: when reactions exceed discomfort = harm)			
Types of Inconvenience (less serious than harm and discomfort)			
- inconvenience caused by participating (e.g., filling in a survey, giving up time to participate)			
Gauging Risk			
Researcher to consider:			
- kinds of harm, discomfort and / or inconvenience that may occur			
- likelihood of (harm / discomfort / inconvenience) occurring			
- severity of any harm that may occur			
Minimising Risk			
Involves researcher consideration of:			
- assessment of research aims, importance and methods to achieve research aims			
- level of risk is justifiable because of the potential benefits (when not justifiable aims and / or methods need review)			
Low Risk / Negligible Risk Research			
- low risk: applies when discomfort is identified as only risk			
- negligible risk: applies when only risk is inconvenience (no risk of harm and / or discomfort is identified)			
Managing Risk			
After risks have been identified and gauged and research approved by relevant Ethics committee, researchers include in research design:			
- mechanisms to deal with any harms which may occur			
- monitoring processes throughout study			

Types of Risks

When conducting qualitative research the level of risk relates to potential emotional harm (as opposed to physical harm) (Guest et al., 2013). There will undoubtedly be some emotional risk to my participants. This is because I will be asking them to reflect and recall events in their lives, which can sometimes stir positive and negative emotions (Clarke, 2006).

To assist with gauging the type of risk I considered my own teacher reflections and the educational reflective practice literature. As a teacher reflecting on my practice, I am aware that I can feel a range of emotions. For example, feeling happy when students gain conceptual understandings, sad when a student divulges personally distressing information and feeling frustration when my students have not engaged as I thought they would.

Such emotional responses during my reflection are not surprising and are identified in the literature. As Zembylas (2014) argues emotions are an essential core feature of effective teacher reflection. Furthermore, as Brookfield (2017) explains, teacher reflection is an important way to help clarify these emotional responses.

Risk Assessment

Consideration of the connection between reflection and emotion is critical to assessing risk. In my study I identify a potential risk as the possibility they might experience emotional discomfort through reflecting on their own teacher practice. Still after due consideration with the guidelines I assess this risk as being low.

Another risk is inconvenience. Participants will need to take the time to attend both phases of qualitative data collection. As mild inconvenience is an acceptable part of any research study I am able to assess this level of risk as negligible (NH&MRC et al., 2018) (see Table 5). In my application I therefore ascribe my overall level of risk as low and negligible.

Management and Monitoring of Risks

In conjunction with the NH&MRC et al. (2018) guidelines once I identified the risk of discomfort as low I developed a plan to manage it. The two mechanisms I put in place were to employ a monitoring process and a harm alleviation process.

The monitoring process involves using my attributes as a human research instrument (see Chapter Two). Participant responses are to be carefully observed in light of when to probe, when to move on from a topic and when to take a break. As a human instrument I aim to respond with sensitivity and understanding in order to monitor and manage ethical risks (Clarke, 2006). The second mechanism involves the inclusion of the contact details of available counselling services at Regional University in the participant information/invitation sheet (details of this sheet are explained in more depth on p. 64).

To manage the risk of inconvenience I spoke with five teaching academic colleagues about their ideas of possible timings and attendance for one interview and a series of focus groups. I explained my plan to conduct one individual interview during the first semester of study to be followed by a series of focus groups during the second semester (a period of three months). Each of the colleagues I asked advised preference for the interviews to be around thirty minutes in length and no more than one hour. As participation in the focus groups requires more than one meeting, they also advised that they would prefer a duration of thirty minutes.

I also consulted the research literature regarding optimum duration of interview and focus group meetings. The advice within the literature somewhat differs emphasising either

participant comfort or the gaining of in-depth understandings. From my perspective it seems that both (human and research) priorities need to be balanced.

To ensure participant comfort is prioritised and I reach my research aims I have decided that the interviews and focus groups will have a thirty-minute duration. As participants can feel somewhat fatigued if research conversations extend beyond thirty minutes (Bolderston, 2012), my attention will be on maximising the timing I have set. Such maximisation can be gained by fostering rapport, employing active listening and a stance of openness and non-judgement (DeJonckheere & Vaughn, 2019). Fortunately for me these are crucial skills that I have developed in my years spent as a hairdresser and now teacher.

Informed Consent

The concept of informed consent implies researchers and participants have a clear understanding that people participate in a research project by choice (in a voluntary capacity). Of equal importance is that participants have an explicit awareness of any potential risks and benefits associated with participation. As explained by Flynn and Goldsmith (2013):

The term informed consent implies that... [participants] know and understand the risks and benefits of participating in the research. They must also understand that their participation is completely voluntary. There must be no coercion even at a subtle level... Informed consent also implies comprehension. That is... [participants] must be able to understand the risks and rewards of participation in the proposed research... Finally, informed consent implies that... [participants clearly understand that they] participate voluntarily, with no coercion or undue influence brought to bear. (p. 13)

To exemplify informed consent the NH&MRC et al. (2018) state that attention be given to appropriately communicating and obtaining informed consent to the particular participant group. This is to ensure that the concept is not approached “merely as a matter of satisfying a formal requirement” (NH&MRC et al., 2018, p. 16).

I decided to use an informed consent form to communicate and obtain consent from the participants (see Appendix A). This form was included as an appendix with the ethics application. The form contains an area where a participant signs to acknowledge they have read and that they understand the concept of informed consent prior to data collection. In conjunction with reading and signing the form each participant will be verbally asked about their understanding of informed consent and acknowledgement of comprehension gained before starting an interview.

The Interview Guideline

To ensure I collect data in an ethical way, I developed an interview guideline with consideration of both the style and types of questions for the phase one individual intensive interviews. This is because Charmaz (2006, 2014) highlights the need to develop the interview guide by being particularly mindful of minimising the risk of potential harm to research participants. These types of questions will also inform the focus groups as part of my emergent design. I therefore included the guide in the ethics application to illustrate to the HREC panel that I have accurately assessed the type and level of risk with my focus on participant reflection on practice in alignment to my research aims.

Deciding on What Questions to Ask

As explained in Chapter Two in phase one of the study I will be conducting individual intensive interviews. The style of interviewing uses questions that are designed to be open-ended and non-judgemental. This style of questioning helps to both scaffold the interview and allow for exploration of unanticipated but potentially significant ideas (Charmaz, 2006, 2014). Such exploration of unexpected ideas aligns with my interpretivist research emergent design underpinnings. This is because I am afforded a level of flexibility to investigate participant-driven ideas that I had not previously considered (Salkind, 2010).

My intensive interview questions are structured in three sections: initial open-ended questions, intermediate open-ended questions and ending open-ended questions (Charmaz, 2006, 2014). The initial questions are ones for which all the participants will have a sense of familiarity, for example, “Reflecting on your teaching role in university, can you tell me about the ways you work with students?”. The intermediate questions are more topic specific such as, “How do you define student engagement?”. The ending questions are designed to capture anything else the participant would like to add including, “Is there anything else you would like to share regarding your student engagement practices?”.

Intensive interview question content is informed by the student engagement literature. For example, I included the types and explanations of student engagement in the interview guide as relating to the cognitive, behavioural and affective (Fredricks et al., 2004). I also included a question on higher education student engagement evaluation and measurement that relates to student feedback surveys and learning analytics (Henrie et al., 2015; Radloff et al., 2012). After developing the interview guideline (see Table 6) I practised by asking the questions to a critical friend before deciding how to ethically capture participant responses.

Table 6*Phase One Intensive Interview Guideline as Informed by Charmaz (2006, 2014)*

Initial Open-Ended Questions

- Reflecting on your teaching role in university, can you tell me about the ways you work with students?

Possible supporting questions

- What are the most important aspects of your teaching role?
 - What are the most challenging aspects of your teaching role?
-

Intermediate Open-Ended Questions

- What is your teaching like?
- How do you define student engagement?
- What do you do to promote engagement in your classes?
- Why do these x promote engagement in your classes?
- How do you know these x can make a difference?

Possible supporting questions for further information

- Cognitive engagement is when teachers support students to incorporate thinking strategies and go beyond ROTE learning of facts and information.
 - How do you promote cognitive student engagement?
 - Why do these ways promote cognitive student engagement?
 - How do you know these practices make a difference?
 - Behavioural engagement is when students exert effort and concentration as a result of teaching practices.
 - How do you promote behavioural student engagement?
 - Why do these ways promote behavioural student engagement?
 - How do you know these practices make a difference?
 - Emotional engagement is when students experience emotions during their learning that impacts their learning and engagement.
 - How do you promote emotional student engagement?
 - Why do these ways promote emotional student engagement?
 - How do you know these practices make a difference?
 - It is said that teachers need to provide experiences for the ‘Goldilocks’ level of emotional engagement – this means, ‘just right’ – not insufficient or not too much.
 - What are your thoughts of ‘just right’?
 - What are your thoughts on this ‘Goldilocks’ level?
 - Can you recall any experiences when _____?
 - What were the implications of _____?
 - Do you use any engagement tools to inform your teacher practice, such as the Student Feedback Survey or learning analytics data provided through the Learning Management System?
-

Ending Open-Ended Questions

- Have your practices or views on student engagement changed your pedagogical strategies throughout your teaching career?
 - What advice would you offer to those teaching in your area to engage students (cognitive, behaviourally, emotionally)?
 - Is there anything that you might not have thought about before that occurred to you during this interview?
 - Is there anything else you would like to share regarding your student engagement practices?
 - Is there anything you would like to add?
 - Is there anything you would like to ask me?
-

Deciding on How to Capture Participant Responses to the Questions

Initially I contemplated using video recording to capture the participant responses. Although not a direct representation of the conversation (in a two-dimensional form) videos can capture participant reactions, responses and interactions (Given, 2008). After reflecting on the ethical elements such as my emphasis on maintaining confidentiality and consideration of participant comfort in front of a camera (Given, 2008) I began to question the use of video recording.

To seek clarification I contacted an ethics administrator at Regional University. The ethics administrator advised that unless there are very particular reasons for video recording interviews and focus groups (that move beyond the capturing of participant responses and non-verbal information), it is highly unlikely that ethics approval would be granted. I therefore decided not to use video recording.

I decided to only use three methods to ensure I ethically and as accurately-as-possible capture participant responses during each interview and focus group meeting. These are use of a digital audio recording device, the taking of field notes and typing transcriptions (Tessier, 2012). A digital recording device captures the conversation as it happens; field note taking occurs both during the conversation and in the immediate time post-conversation; and the transcription occurs in the twenty-four hours post-conversation. These three elements work together to capture the conversation (audio recording), the context (field notes), and a combination of the conversation and context (transcript) (Tessier, 2012).

My transcription process will involve typing out verbatim each audio recording (Halcomb & Davidson, 2006) within twenty-four hours of their occurrence. I am able to

transcribe the audio recording in this time as I have frequently worked as a research assistant where I have typed out verbatim transcripts of interviews and focus groups in a timely manner. I will use the field notes to annotate the transcriptions with contextual details such as non-verbal responses and natural interactions that could not be captured by the audio recording device (Ashmore & Reed, 2000).

Participant Recruitment

Participant recruitment is defined as locating, choosing and enlisting people who can be contributors to a study (Arcury & Quandt, 1999). Before beginning to recruit participants, I was mindful of the potential challenges. These challenges include the time it can take and the resources required to recruit the participants (Archibald & Munce, 2015). To help alleviate these potential issues researchers can develop a recruitment strategy (Mack et al., 2005). This strategy includes: an overview of participant attributes and eligibility requirements; details of possible official and unofficial gatekeepers who can assist with access to participants; and outlining participant commitments (Arcury & Quandt, 1999; Ellard-Gray et al., 2015; Mack et al., 2005).

There are advantages and limitations when developing a recruitment strategy. Examples of advantages include: clarification of researcher goals in alignment with the types of participants being recruited, identification of potential gatekeepers and selection of appropriate strategies which can be used to recruit the participants (Hennink et al., 2011). Examples of limitations include the need to adjust the recruitment strategy and data collection methods for different participant groups (Hennink et al., 2011).

To address the potential recruitment strategy issues Glesne (1998) advises that researchers do not create an over-complex recruitment strategy. Instead the advice is to draw on the literature and their researcher experiences to outline the types of participants required and possible ways to recruit them (Glesne, 1998). I am also mindful that as I am using an emergent design it is an option for me to explore more than one way to recruit participants if and when required.

As outlined in Chapter Two I am to recruit teaching academics of varying characteristics in age, gender, background and educational pathway. These academics are to have a teaching role of some description and be located at Regional Campus 1 and be willing and able to attend both phases of data collection. I decided that possible strategies that I could use to recruit participants include: emails sent through administrators (at Regional Campus 1), advertising through newsletters and / or use of professional networks as an insider researcher (Patel et al., 2017). My aim is to recruit participants who will help me explore experiences insights and perspectives at both an individual and cohort level (Patton, 2015).

The contemporary academic workforce is made up of a substantially diverse group in relation to age, gender and background (Knott et al., 2015). Such diversity is thought to have been influenced by changes to labour regulations in higher education which have created opportunities for people to enter academia from multiple pathways (Knott et al., 2015). For example approximately two-thirds of the Australian academic workforce identify as female (Larkins, 2018) and almost one-third of academics obtained their higher education qualifications from countries other than Australia (Hopkins, 2011).

As well as staff diversity, changes to labour regulations have influenced the ways

people work in universities. For example, traditionally teaching academics were employed with 80 per cent of their workload allocated equally to teaching and research and 20 per cent allocated to service (Flavell et al., 2018). Nonetheless by 2016 in Australian higher education institutions these traditional allocations had shifted. Currently approximately 46 per cent of teaching academics are employed in the traditional (40/40/20) way and an estimated 27 per cent in teaching only roles with the remaining 27 per cent in research only positions (Universities Australia, 2018).

The changes are not only limited to permanently-employed staff. Norton et al. (2018) identify casually employed teaching staff as the fastest growing group in the academic workforce worldwide. These researchers estimate that in Australia 43 per cent of people teaching in higher education are employed on casual or sessional contracts. It is my aim therefore to reflect this breadth of diversity in both personal and employment characteristics in the teaching academic participants I recruit.

With the diversity within participant characteristics explored and possible recruitment options outlined, the next step was to develop an overview of my research. Glesne (1998) refers to this overview as a “lay summary” (p. 35). This summary is given to both the ethics committee and research participants to explain who I am, my research goals and the role the participant has in my study (Glesne, 1998).

To communicate my lay summary to potential participants, I created an information sheet in the form of an invitation to participate. The invitation clearly states the purpose and aims of the study, the data collection methods and time commitments required (Mack et al., 2005). I detailed how the information gained in the study will be used in academic

publications and conference presentations. I also explained how particular care will be taken to ensure confidentiality and make it clear that any participant can leave the study at any time without any explanation required (Mack et al., 2005) (see Appendix B).

After developing the recruitment strategy, I re-connected with the ethics administrators to discuss any recruitment protocols at Regional University that I had possibly not considered. The ethics administrators suggested participants be recruited via an invitation in the weekly, university-wide electronic newsletter. In this they were acting as an official gatekeeper of the organisation advising on recruitment guidelines at my research setting (Mack et al., 2005). I concurred with their recommendation and the ethics administrators' recruitment plan became part of the emergent design for my study.

With my ethics application complete I submitted it to the Regional University HREC. My application was approved with no corrections or amendments. Once I updated the recruitment invitation to include the ethics approval number (H6892) it was published in the electronic newsletter the following week. The response from potential participants was quicker than I had anticipated.

Participant Response

When teaching academics started responding to my invitation, an unintentional snowball participant sampling occurred. A snowball sampling strategy is a respondent-driven method of identifying participants who may provide a substantial contribution to a study (Cohen et al., 2011; Heckathorn, 1997; Patton, 2015). Interested respondents encouraged others who they felt had potential pertinent insights to enquire about participation (Creswell, 2011). In my study I was emailed by teaching academics who had received the invitation via

their colleagues expressing their interest. I welcomed this development and found that it greatly helped me to achieve the desired diversity of participant characteristics for my study.

My Ethical Scaffolding

Before I introduce the participants I explain my reasoning for the way I present their details. This is because protection of my participants' privacy has been an ongoing focus of mine throughout the conduct of this thesis and has shaped my decision making at all levels. For me the challenge is both an internal and external balancing of protecting privacy with providing details of participant interactions. Attending to this challenge has been a major focus throughout my reporting process.

My aim in my research conduct and thesis presentation is that I do not disclose too much participant identifying information and thus introduce the potential risk of social harm. The ethical risk of social harm is where networks and reputations can be affected if readers connect what is written to an individual participant (NH&MRC et al., 2018). I therefore required ethical scaffolding so by the time participant quotes are used my focus can be on presenting rich information without being preoccupied by the possibility of compromising confidentiality.

My ethical scaffolding comes from the research literature. I learned that limitations exist when incorporating strategies that aim to maintain participant confidentiality. Kaiser (2009) cautions that "unlike changing a name, changing additional details to render data unidentifiable can alter or destroy the original meaning of the data" (p. 5). Furthermore altering textual data or personal details can sometimes result in negative feelings from the participants towards the study, so there is a need for balance (Corden & Sainsbury, 2006).

Kendall and Halliday (2014) and Sanjari et al. (2014) advise addressing confidentially issues by incorporating ethical techniques into each research phase. The ethical strategies I adopt are detailed by Petrova et al. (2016) (see Table 7). These come to the fore at different stages of the research process, including: during recruitment, during data collection, during transcription and data analysis and during the dissemination of research results. I have annotated the table *in Italics* to illustrate where I explain and / or utilise these processes in this thesis.

Table 7

Research Strategies when Dealing with a Small Qualitative Sample (Petrova et al., 2016, p. 452)

During recruitment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - ethical clearance – university research ethics committee/faculty research ethics committee or provider-based organisation – <i>Chapters Two and Three</i> - invitation letter – <i>Chapter Three</i> - information sharing opportunities (with facilitated discussion about values and beliefs and motivations) – <i>Chapters Three, Four and Five</i> - building a rapport – <i>Chapters Two and Three</i> - informed consent in discussion with participants– <i>Chapter Three</i>
During data collection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - revisiting consent in discussion with participants– <i>Chapter Three</i> - two phases of semi-structured interviews– <i>Chapters Two, Four and Six</i> - deepening the trust among the participants and the researcher– <i>Chapters Two, Three, Four, Five and Six</i> - used to check authenticity of the data– <i>Chapters Two, Three, Four, Five and Six</i> - location: chosen by the participants– <i>Chapters Two, Four and Six</i> - ensuring confidentiality – no one apart from the participants and the researcher were present during the interview– <i>Chapters Three, Four and Six</i> - limiting access to the audio tapes – <i>Chapter Two</i>
During transcription and data analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - revisiting consent in discussion with participants– <i>Chapter Three</i> - using numerical codes– <i>During data analysis – note: reported using gender-neutral pseudonyms</i> - removal or cleaning of raw text in order to prevent from indirect disclosure – <i>Chapter Three and during transcription</i> - member checking – strengthening credibility of the study– <i>Chapters Two, Three, Four, Five, Six and Nine</i> - validating with participants that the transcripts reflect their reality– <i>Chapters Three, Four, Five and Six</i> - minor changes to the participants’ transcripts in relation to strengthen confidentiality– <i>Chapters Two and Three</i> - limiting access to raw data and transcribed data– <i>Chapter Three</i> - participants to have access to their data for their learning purposes– <i>Chapters Four, Five and Six</i>
During dissemination of research results	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - revisiting consent in discussion with participants– <i>Chapter Three</i> - final draft of the results is read by participants and by an independent person – <i>Ongoing</i> - each excerpt is labelled with the participants designated code together with a number which represents the first or the second phase of data collection– <i>Chapters Four, Five, Six, Seven and Eight</i> - referring to the participants by using a gender-free term or by using either the male or female pronoun regardless of their actual gender– <i>Chapters Three, Four, Five, Six, Seven, Eight and Nine</i>

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Petrova, E. Dewing, & M. Camilleri, 2016, *Nursing Ethics*, 23(4), 442-454. p. 452. Copyright

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I reflected on the size of my research setting in order to further strengthen my ethical scaffold. I was aware that due to the size and confined nature of Regional Campus 1 participants and the wider university community may know me and each other. Participant familiarity and reader connection to participants are therefore ethical concerns (Baez, 2002; Lincoln, 1998). Although participant familiarity can foster rapport, trust and information sharing (Drake et al., 2018), I needed to address the possibility of reader connection to participants.

I therefore constructed a matrix to visually explore the participant familiarity that existed prior to my study. I was interested in investigating how many participants knew each other and me as part of our professional networks. I used gender neutral pseudonyms and placed an 'X' where participant familiarity existed. For example, Alex and I knew three participants prior to starting data collection. Tobin, Drew, Reece, Chey and Finn knew two; Sam knew one; and at the start of data collection Blair, Quinn and Kai did not know any (see Figure 1).

Figure 1*Matrix Illustrating Participant Familiarity (Using Gender-Neutral Pseudonyms)*

Researcher				X		X		X			
Tobin			X		X						
Drew		X			X						
Alex	X					X		X		X	
Reece		X	X								
Chey	X			X							
Blair											
Finn	X										
Quinn											
Sam				X							
Kai											
	Researcher	Tobin	Drew	Alex	Reece	Chey	Blair	Finn	Quinn	Sam	Kai

(Key: X = participant familiarity)

As illustrated in Figure 1 more than half of the participants had a level of familiarity. I therefore deliberately chose not to introduce each participant as an individual. Instead I aim to provide demographic details in the form of a table.

I constructed Table 8 to illustrate the diversity across participants': ages; identifying gender; background; discipline; academic career; and employment type (see Table 8). After presenting Table 8, I discuss the participants' demographic information at a 'group-within-the-group' level.

Introducing the Participants

Table 8

Participant Recruitment Overview

Variations in Characteristics (Note: (x) = number of participants)			
Ages	-	between 30-45 years (5)	
	-	between 45-60 years (5)	
Identifying gender	-	female (5)	
	-	male (5)	
Background	-	Non-English-Speaking Background (5)	
	-	English Speaking Background (5)	
Discipline	-	social work (1);	- criminology (1);
	-	pre-service teacher education (2);	- nursing sciences (1);
	-	sport sciences (1);	- veterinary sciences (1);
	-	journalism (1);	- alternative pathway/entry into university programs (1).
	-	medicine (1);	
Academic career	-	postgraduate and doctoral students on sessional teaching contracts (2);	- early career researchers (2);
	-	industry-employed partners (1);	- lecturers (2)
			- senior lecturers (2);
			- tenured professors (1).
Employment type	-	sessional lecturing and tutoring (2);	- full-time teaching only (2);
	-	fixed-term (1);	- full-time teaching and research (4).
	-	part-time (1);	
Gender Neutral Pseudonyms Used to Identify Participants in the Thesis Text			
1	Tobin	6	Blair
2	Drew	7	Finn
3	Alex	8	Quinn
4	Reece	9	Sam
5	Chey	10	Kai

Table 8 clearly demonstrates how substantial diversity was achieved across the ten participants in age, gender, cultural and linguistic backgrounds. Participants were teaching in a range of levels from university preparation, undergraduate, postgraduate and higher degree research courses. They also came from different disciplines, were at different stages in their academic careers and were employed in diverse ways from tenured staff to casual.

At the time of the data collection the age range of the participants was between 30 and 60 years. Five were between 30 and 45 years with the remaining five between the ages of 45 and 60. Research on age demographic in Australian universities identifies 56 per cent of the

academic workforce as aged between 56 and 76 years so the age range of my cohort was slightly younger (Hugo & Morriss, 2010).

In this study there is a gender representation of five participants identifying as female and five as male. This figure is also slightly different to the broader Australian academic workforce which records female staff as accounting for 57 per cent of the total staff demographic (Larkins, 2018).

Half of the participants in this study are from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds and were born outside of Australia. The other half were born in Australia. This representation from diverse backgrounds is similarly somewhat higher than that reported in the literature which estimates that almost one third of academics are from overseas (Hopkins, 2011).

Once my ethical decision template had been established in relation to data collection and participation I was able to begin phase one of my study. Phase one is where I individually interview each participant. In the next chapter I explain how I collect and analyse the first phase of data collection.

Chapter Summary

Working to clarify the ethically-informed methods in my study provides a bridge between my methodology and collection of data. This is because the ethos of ethically-driven research is permeated through each step of interpretivist qualitative research. My aim in exploring each ethical step ensures that I can effectively balance participant confidentiality and comfort whilst gaining robust insight into the particular understandings of teaching

academics. I detail how I gain and initially analyse the first phase of my investigation into these understandings in Chapter Four.

Chapter Four: Phase One Methods Part One

In educational criticism a story is told, perhaps about a class and its teacher. The class is vividly described so that readers can visualize the scene, the meanings of the actions within the classroom are explained, and the educational value of the events described and interpreted is discussed. It would seem that a critic does all that can be done when description, interpretation, and evaluation have been completed. But there is more. (Eisner, 2017, p. 103)

Chapter Outline

In this chapter I explain in detail the step-by-step enactment of the first phase of my interpretivist qualitative case study approach – the individual interviews and their initial data analysis. This synthesis led me to take an unexpected turn in my emergent design which I will report on in Chapter Five. During this preliminary stage of my reporting I provide the occasional example from my data to more clearly illustrate my actions. The majority of the data will however be presented in later chapters.

The Individual Intensive Interviews

Phase one of my project requires individual intensive interviews with each of the ten participants. Planning involves organising and testing the digital audio recording equipment and making bookings for mutually convenient times and locations (Mack et al., 2005). Once the interviews were scheduled and locations locked in, the interviews took place without incident.

I began each interview with a brief explanation of my responsibilities regarding my ethical scaffold (see Chapter Three). I wanted to assure the participants that, in addition to

them being audio recorded, I would be taking explanatory field notes to provide valuable context. I also explained that for my data analysis and reporting I would be particularly careful to maintain participant anonymity by giving each participant a pseudonym and deidentifying their data by providing minimum distinguishing details in their descriptions.

Being aware that all ten of my participants are teaching academics who also conduct their own research I felt it was important for me to show the permeation of ethics throughout the study not only in words but also in deed. This approach seemed to engender a new level of trust that promoted an unanticipated generosity of sharing that went beyond words to include their own intellectual property artefacts. For example, participants voluntarily shared their teaching planning documents, class notes, assessment designs and their own formal and informal student feedback on their teaching. I could then annotate the transcripts with these contextual details (recorded during the interview in my field notes).

The Phase One Data Analysis

After completing each interview, I transcribed the audio recording and annotated the transcript using my field notes. Each participant was then emailed their interview transcript for member checking. Interestingly, the participants checked and confirmed their transcripts without requiring any alterations. Then I began the data analysis. The particular data analysis procedures I employed came directly from interpretivist researcher recommendations.

As briefly described in Chapter Two, my data analysis centres on exploring the data for implicit and explicit meanings using inductive qualitative strategies. These strategies are to be well organised, systematic, rigorous and clearly explained to foster trustworthiness and

credibility (Nowell et al., 2017). To facilitate this type of analysis qualitative researchers utilise systematic, analytic processes to explore the qualitative data for themes and organise these themes using thematic coding techniques (Guest et al., 2012).

Defining Themes and Thematic Coding in Qualitative Research

In qualitative data analysis themes can encompass elements such as concepts, explanations, descriptions and ideas (Given, 2008; Nowell et al., 2017). These themes emerge as researchers analyse the textual data paying particular attention to words and phrases which illustrate or express these elements (Given, 2008; Guest et al., 2012; Ryan & Bernard, 2003). For example, phrases such as: *I feel happy when I see x; I gain enjoyment from noticing x; I get great satisfaction by observing x*, can be linked to a theme of experiencing contentment for *x* reason.

In conjunction with exploring qualitative data for themes, qualitative researchers undertake a process of thematic coding. Thematic coding involves highlighting the section of text where a theme is present (Gibbs, 2007). This process is called segmenting. Researchers then ascribe a code to this highlighted segment which contains the theme (Guest et al., 2012). In extending on the above example, the code of 'contentment' may be placed beside the segments of text that contain those particular participant statements about their feelings about *x*.

Analysing data by exploring for themes and thematic coding are not separate, linear processes. Instead researchers work iteratively analysing textual data for themes and codes (Given, 2008). To identify themes, researchers move beyond the counting of words (as used

in quantitative data analysis) and study the meanings associated with words and phrases to inform the development of a code (Given, 2008).

A single theme may encompass more than one code. Therefore, as the analysis progresses it may be necessary to explore relationships that exist and ascribe meta-codes (Ryan & Bernard, 2003). These meta-codes encapsulate the multiple, related codes (Guest et al., 2012). Once again to extend on the above example, the meta-code of 'feelings' may encompass all the participants' affective statements in relation to their reactions to *x*.

Applied Thematic Analysis

To analyse my collected data I will be using Applied Thematic Analysis (ATA) (Guest et al., 2012). ATA is defined as "a rigorous, yet inductive, set of procedures designed to identify and examine themes from textual data in a way that is transparent and credible" (Guest et al., 2012, p. 15). In essence ATA encompasses a multitude of clearly explained literature-informed qualitative analysis and organisational techniques to ensure an efficient, systematic analysis process (Guest et al., 2012). ATA is particularly suited to use in my study as the focus of the strategy is on inductively investigating the voices of the participants and their perceptions of practice (Guest et al., 2012).

Although emphasising the utilisation of qualitative thematic analysing strategies, ATA does include non-thematic-based quantitative techniques. One example of a non-thematic-based strategy is the counting of frequently occurring words (Guest et al., 2012; Ryan & Bernard, 2003). Although ATA stipulates that these frequently occurring words cannot act as stand-alone themes, the technique can provide researchers with a way to explore the meanings of the words as used by different participants. The aim is to help researchers to

add another layer to their investigation by providing additional way to explore participant-driven meanings (Guest et al., 2012).

Guest et al. (2012) identify a potential limitation of ATA as the possibility that fine nuances within data can be missed. To address this limitation I am to embody my educational connoisseurship to “think more about the qualities that constitute a set of phenomena” (Eisner, 1976, p. 140). With this embodiment I re-interrogate my analysis to appreciate the subtleties that may exist and take into account the finer details for comparison and contrast (Eisner, 1976). Through this process I examine themes by noticing “texture and nuance, to capture some rich diversity, rather than just a single idea” (Braun et al., 2016, p. 198).

A central component of ATA is the development of a codebook (Guest et al., 2012). A codebook “is a discrete analysis step where the observed meaning in the text is systematically sorted into categories, types and relationships of meaning” (Guest et al., 2012, p. 52). The aim of the codebook is to provide a way for me to move beyond descriptions of the emerging themes and foster deeper, explanatory analysis (Guest et al., 2012).

The development of the codebook happens in conjunction with the thematic analysis process. Initial construction of the codebook occurs as the transcripts are read (and re-read) and text segmented (Guest et al., 2012). Then the ascribed code is defined in the codebook and parameters stipulated regarding when to and when not to use the code (Guest et al., 2012). As more themes and codes emerge definitions and criteria for use are recorded in the codebook.

The codebook is refined as the analysis progresses (Guest et al., 2012). This refinement requires researchers to explore patterns and relationships among the meanings of the themes and codes (Guest et al., 2012). By investigating the relationships and patterns higher level meta-themes and codes are added (Guest et al., 2012).

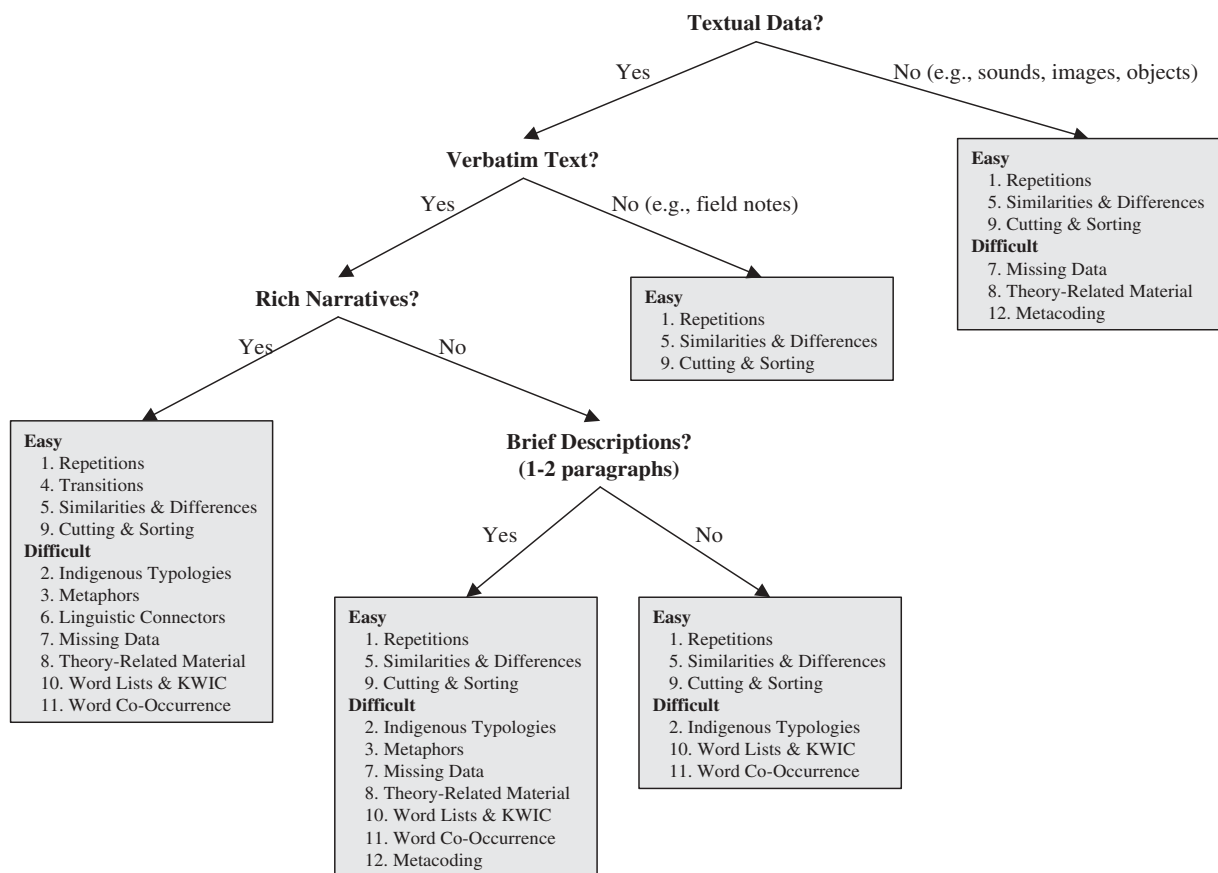
Data Analysis and Codebook Procedures

In my analysis I employ a suite of ATA theme-identifying inductive strategies proposed by Ryan and Bernard (2003). They advise researchers to select the strategies which align with the type of data they have collected. For example, as I have textual data in the form of verbatim transcriptions that include rich descriptions as per Figure 2, I employ four 'easy' and seven 'difficult' theme-identifying strategies (Ryan & Bernard, 2003).

Differences in analysis technique level of difficulty are aligned with the type of inductive process used. For example, repetitions in text are easy to identify whereas investigating relationships between words/phrases through linguistic connector are more difficult. That said, despite Ryan and Bernard (2003) distinguishing a technique as either 'easy' or 'difficult', in practice I discovered that I must devote equal amounts of precision to each strategy.

Figure 2

Selecting Among Theme-identification Techniques (Ryan & Bernard, 2003, p. 102)



KWIC = key words in context.

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I used the following Ryan and Bernard (2003) strategies to analyse the interview data:

- *Repetitions*: a theme may emerge when a concept reoccurs throughout and/or across transcripts (Guest et al., 2012; Ryan & Bernard, 2003). For example, one theme often repeated was the types of ways students engage.

- *Transitions*: natural shifts in discussion content may indicate a theme within textual data (Guest et al., 2012; Ryan & Bernard, 2003). For example, the idea of see one, teach one, do one.
- *Similarities and differences*: themes may be identified as the result of a systematic comparison within a section of textual data and across transcripts (Guest et al., 2012; Ryan & Bernard, 2003). For example, the observation of similarity was particularly pertinent when the participants described their conceptualisations of student engagement.
- *Cutting and sorting*: a theme may emerge when key quotes are physically cut from each of the transcripts (with supporting context) and sorted into sections of similar quotes (Ryan & Bernard, 2003). For example, the academics' perceptions of the student experience quickly emerged as a lead opportunity for cutting and sorting.
- *Indigenous typologies/categories*: a theme may arise when local terms, those that are familiar to the participants or are a part of the culture of the group, are evident within the textual data (Guest et al., 2012; Ryan & Bernard, 2003). For example, this approach was particularly useful for analysing discipline-specific discussion.
- *Metaphors and analogies*: identifying an underlying theme that is expressed by participants through metaphors and/or analogies (Guest et al., 2012; Ryan & Bernard, 2003; Strauss & Quinn, 1997). For example, the way practice is informed by personal experience, belief systems and family background.
- *Linguistic connectors*: causal relationships may be evident in data when existing linguistic connectors are made explicit through the analysis (Guest et al., 2012; Ryan & Bernard, 2003). For example, an early theme to emerge was the 'I do this because' story.

- *Theory-related material*: themes may emerge when data are analysed for information that is pertinent to the wider social sciences (Ryan & Bernard, 2003). For example, connecting single instances of practice to pedagogical theory.
- *Word lists and Key Words in Context (KWIC)*: identification of word frequency within textual data can add breadth to potential emerging themes (Ryan & Bernard, 2003). For example, the use of action verbs.
- *Word co-occurrence*: words are analysed for connections to the surrounding text for potential theme identification (Ryan & Bernard, 2003). For example, students engage 'when' / 'by' / 'because'.
- *Missing data*: a theme may emerge when data are analysed for any absent elements. This can occur when a participant either intentionally or unintentionally does not discuss a topic/subject. This strategy is also used to review any data not yet associated with a theme (Guest et al., 2012; Ryan, 1999; Ryan & Bernard, 2003). For example, a teaching academic might engage in a level of professional restraint by avoiding discussing particular aspects of their employment.

Codebook construction coincided with my working through the theme-identifying strategies. There was a synchronicity about the process. All the while I employed an iterative approach where I was learning while doing, making adaptations along the way. This involved deliberately shifting between theme induction strategies, sections of the data and managing the codebook.

To facilitate this process, I organised my codebook into three sections. Section one contained the definitions of the themes and codes and the criteria for when to use them. Section two included transcript segments along with corresponding themes and codes.

Section three involved theme refinement. By exploring relationships among the meanings within the themes and interrogating and including aligned literature I was able to create a codebook overview. For this overview the emerged themes were organised into single ideas, sub-themes, themes and overarching themes (details of this overview will be given on pp. 83-90).

To manage the intricacies of ATA Guest et al. (2012) suggest researchers use the tools within NVivo, a Qualitative Data Analysis (QDA) computer software package. In essence NVivo is used by qualitative researchers not to analyse the data but to assist with organisation of the analysis process (Zamawe, 2015). Concrete examples of how NVivo can be effectively used to support qualitative data analysis include: data and ideas management, codebook development, word frequency counts, and the creation of visual models (Bazeley, 2007; Guest et al., 2012).

While NVivo tools can be used as an organising application for ATA, I was especially aware that I, as the human research instrument, would be the one to systematically analyse the data by inductively identifying the themes and constructs that emerge in the codebook (Guest et al., 2012).

For this reason, I mainly used the NVivo tools as a way to segment the text within the transcripts to identify themes and assign relevant codes (Nodes in NVivo). As my themes and codes within my codebook became more refined, so too did the NVivo Nodes. My actual working process involved a combination of three actions. Having the transcripts in electronic format as a Word document, having them in an electronic segmented version in NVivo and having them as cut up hard copies on paper. This combination helped me to more

effectively manage the potential ‘messiness’ of the theme induction and analysis process.

Phase One Initial Data Analysis

At the beginning of my data analysis single ideas emerged from the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). I then engaged with the research literature to explore these ideas in greater depth. This engagement was done to help me: “make sense of evidence... to extend, revise and test ideas” (Ragin & Amoroso, 2011, p. 57); and to “link ideas and evidence through the use of theories and constructs” (Guest et al., 2012, p. 75).

The application of the theory I identified in the literature to the single ideas greatly assisted me in the refinement of the data (Braun et al., 2016). This proved to be a useful strategy because many of the participants were discipline experts rather than experts in pedagogical theory. It was especially helpful for identifying themes and sub-themes by making connections between individual descriptions of practice and recognising relevant theoretical underpinnings.

An example of how I connected a single idea with theory is illustrated in the following two quotes from Quinn and Blair. Here they explain their reasoning for ensuring the content is relevant to their students:

- *... making it relevant and making it real is really important to... [the students], because if they can't connect why they need to know then they switch off and think, well I don't need to know this, it's not relevant to me. (Quinn, intensive interview)*
- *I try to show the relevance for... the profession... [This] puts them in a kind of critical context. Because that makes things more interesting for them...*

otherwise... [the students] are not interested and they will not engage. (Blair, intensive interview)

The literature enabled me to connect their single idea to the sub-theme of material relevance and student engagement practices. Their teaching and learning experiences meant students could make connections with the real world. This in turn provided them with a sense of purpose and ownership over the task (Christenson et al., 2012).

The Overarching Themes

By closely studying hard copies of the data I was able to further refine the topics and sub-themes into higher level themes. This process led to the emergence of four overarching themes:

- Conceptualising student engagement.
- Guiding engagement practices.
- Student engagement practices.
- Evaluation of student engagement practices.

Within my codebook I placed these overarching themes alongside quotes from the participants and supporting literature. This is because ATA “situates the coding process in the realm of evidence rather than ideas” (Guest et al., 2012, p. 75). Therefore, once I completed this process in the codebook I made certain I had sufficient evidence to justify each overarching theme. I then worked through each overarching theme one-by-one until I could develop a brief succinct rationale with a clear example from the participant quotes and aligned literature.

Rationale – Conceptualising Student Engagement

In each intensive interview I asked the participants to define student engagement. This is because a teacher's assumptions, ideas and beliefs can influence their pedagogy (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD], 2009). This question led to my first overarching theme 'conceptualising student engagement'. By actively analysing the transcripts using this overarching theme I was able to connect each of the participant's definitions. For example, the definitions from Tobin and Kai, whilst containing nuances, are clearly connected by the idea of the conceptualisation of student engagement:

- *Student engagement I define as the frequency in which students are able to connect with the subject and able to find the meaning of those discussions and see the practical applications. (Tobin, intensive interview)*
- *So to engage would mean that they're actually putting into the class and that they're getting out of it... the students that are getting in, being a part of the group, getting something out of it for themselves, I would say is student engagement. (Kai, intensive interview)*

Rationale – Guiding Engagement Practices

The overarching theme 'guiding engagement practices' is made up of three sub-themes: encompassing self (teaching academics), students and the environment. It emerged because during the interview participants explained their engagement approaches 'in light of / because of / in response to': their own upbringing and their culture; their beliefs; their schooling and / or tertiary pathways and experiences of learning; and how they perceive one comes to know. As Reece explains:

I had wonderful lecturers when I got to university... I'm trying to, yeah, to remember this and see if I can do as well as they've done for me. (Reece, intensive interview)

When I first identified this overarching theme emerging from the sub-themes I felt the ideas needed to be more refined within my codebook. This is because the participants' single ideas of the elements that influence their pedagogies could be aligned with more than one sub-theme. To help me sort the elements I once again turned to educational theory. This time I constructed an ontological and epistemic theoretical framing (see Table 9 for details of each frame) which comprised:

- Ontological and relational aspects (Kang & Wallace, 2005; Perry, 1999). For example, students constructing their own understandings or as receivers of information.
- Contextual and / or discipline factors, issues or considerations (Maggioni & Parkinson, 2008). For example, learning discipline-specific information.
- Epistemic influences (including demographic, family, cultural and educational background and experiences) (Schommer, 1990). For example, family background and ideas of education.
- Consideration / incorporation of teaching and learning goals (Kang & Wallace, 2005). For example, making connections to the learning outcomes of the course.

Table 9*Ontological and Epistemic Theoretical Framing to Organise Guiding Engagement Practices**Data Analysis*

Ontological aspects
For example: - certain, fixed, singular truth - multiple realities, more than one answer and interpretations - knowledge as contextual - use of evidence to evaluate sources. (Kang & Wallace, 2005; Perry, 1999)
Relational aspects
For example: - knowledge is transmitted and received - knowledge is constructed by integrating prior and new knowledge - value in sense-making and meaning-making - student opinion matters. (Kang & Wallace, 2005; Perry, 1999)
Contextual factors
For example: - discipline considerations - institutional influences / considerations. (Maggioni & Parkinson, 2008)
Epistemic influences – demographics and family
For example: - age - gender - familial influences. (Schommer, 1990)
Epistemic influences – culture
For example: - cultural values & beliefs. (Schommer, 1990)
Epistemic influences – Educational background & experiences
For example: - schooling experiences - educational pathway - institutional/ tertiary pathway. (Schommer, 1990)
Instructional goals
For example: - teaching and learning goals - subject/course aims. (Kang & Wallace, 2005)

Rationale – Student Engagement Practices

For the overarching theme ‘student engagement practices’ I connected three sub-themes: making connections / material relevance; the student experience; and the university experience. This is because, in addition to sharing examples of their pedagogical strategies

for use inside the classroom walls, participants discussed their approaches they perceived could be used to extend engagement beyond the walls of the lecture room. This approach is supported by researchers such as Devlin et al. (2012) who argue that university-wide resources work as a complement to teaching academics work to support students to engage and learn. As Sam describes:

Having worked in academic development for a few years and worked with all our student support, learning advisors, library, student admin in a closer way... I saw them as part of my team ...they're there to help me help my students to learn the things I can't deliver in passion and inspiration in the classroom, I know they're out there to help. (Sam, intensive interview)

Rationale – Evaluation of Student Engagement Practices

The overarching theme ‘evaluation of student engagement practices’ aligns with one of my research questions. This research question underpins my exploration of the participants’ perceptions of how and why their engagement approaches might make a difference. Guest et al. (2012) argue that it can be challenging for researchers to address a particular research question during data analysis. This is because the collected data must have sufficient richness to align with the aim of the research (and therefore address the research question).

Having an awareness of this potential challenge prior to conducting the interviews greatly supported me in my analysis of the data and identification of this overarching theme. This is because during the interviews I intentionally asked probing questions to ascertain the participants’ explanations and justifications of their engagement pedagogies. These probing questions provided an opportunity for the participants to critically reflect on their practice to

provide justification for particular pedagogical decisions (Schön, 1991). An example of a response to one of these probing questions comes from Finn:

... well even, it's probably a pathetic thing but the ones that want to stick around and keep talking. They want to, they haven't had enough, you walk out and... [the students] want to keep chatting to you about what you were talking about. (Finn, intensive interview)

Phase One Codebook Overview

After applying the inductive theme-identifying strategies and justifying my overarching themes using evidence, my phase one data analysis and codebook seemed near complete (see Table 10 for Codebook Overview). Despite this development, I was mindful that a small amount of collected data had not yet been aligned with a theme. I therefore re-examined the remaining data to see if I could gain new insights. When I could no longer inductively identify any new information nor align the remaining data with existing themes I placed the left over data aside (at least for the present) (Guest et al., 2012).

Table 10*Phase One Codebook Overview*

Topics	Sub-themes	Overarching themes
Definitions	Definition of student engagement	Conceptualising student engagement
Cognitive engagement	Types of student engagement	
Behavioural engagement		
Emotional engagement		
Ontological and epistemological beliefs	Self (teaching academics)	Guiding engagement practices
Teaching and learning philosophies		
Reflexivity/mindful practitioner		
Current ways of teaching and learning		
Conceptualisations of students	Students	
The 21 st Century learner		
Learner demographics		
Modes of delivery	Environment	
Neoliberal agenda ideas and challenges		
Connecting theory and practice	Making connections / material relevance	Student engagement practices
Real life connections		
Connecting content across subjects/semesters/course		
Collaborative peer/collegial strategies	The student experience	
Post-lecture/subject practices		
Resources to support the university experience	The university experience	
Networking opportunities		
Professional learning for students		
How I (TA) know these practices make a difference/promote engagement	Evaluating engagement practices	Evaluation of student engagement practices
Why I (TA) know these practices make a difference		

After the Initial Phase One Data Analysis

Once the initial analysis of the data has been completed Barbour (2001) recommends asking a trusted person to review the coding framework. Barry et al. (1999) however caution that such a procedure could result in too many varying perspectives thereby making the process unconstructive. Despite this I threw caution to the wind and invited my supervisors to critique my analysis. This then becomes the beginning of my phase one part two analysis.

Chapter Summary

Individual intensive interviews were conducted with ten teaching academics to give voice to their stories of how they perceive their role in promoting student engagement. Inductive techniques were used to thematically analyse verbatim transcripts of the interviews. Here my focus was on investigating the nuances and shared patterns within each individual participant's understandings. This second part of my phase one data analysis is presented in the Chapter Five.

Chapter Five: Phase One Methods Part Two

... the types of meaning that we are able to construe from the forms of representation we encounter are related both to the limits and possibilities of those forms and to our ability to “read” them. Forms of representation both reveal and conceal. They make particular kinds of meanings possible. They give us access to unique worlds. (Eisner, 1994a, p. 7)

Chapter Outline

In Chapter Four I outlined how I conducted part one of phase one: the individual interviews. Now in Chapter Five I detail part two of phase one, how I introduced a new approach to my data analysis, thereby illustrating emergent design in action. Placing greater emphasis on stories and narrative inquiry enabled me to refine, clarify and deepen my analysis. As in Chapter Four I only provide limited examples of the participants’ stories in order to highlight the process of my analysis. A fuller presentation of the participants’ stories appears later in this thesis.

Roadblock

After completing an initial analysis of the transcripts of my interviews I sought feedback from my supervisory team. During the meeting, in addition to them affirming both the process and the transcript codebook, one supervisor suggested that I “Go deeper” with my analysis.

At the time this idea to go deeper felt somewhat too intricate and complicated for me to immediately take on board. That day I wrote in my personal reflective journal:

To go deeper in my data analysis reminds me of the archaeological processes of stratigraphy. Here I am to take each layer at a time, one-by-one. In each of these layers I am afforded the opportunity to explore, consider and learn from the context within. It is an exercise in both breadth and depth. To examine the information in both the layers and the context requires the right tools and care or precious finer details which offer insight can be destroyed and lost.

I hit a roadblock though when I repeated the analysis process of the interview transcripts using the same thematic identifying techniques. My new codebook was much like the first. I was not deepening my analytic insights. The breadth and depth within the contextual information was missing.

The exercise of trying to go deeper was turning out to be a highly frustrating experience. I was not obtaining richer information from within the layers, just more of the same. This is when I realised that if I continued to use the same kind of analysis, I would continue to find the same kind of information.

Rather than admitting defeat I returned to the ontological and epistemological underpinnings of the interpretivist paradigm and searched for other ways to explore participant meanings. Within each of their interview transcripts, there was evidence that every study participant had a story to tell of their experiences of student engagement. I decided to start here.

Holman Jones (2016) explains:

Stories are our *way in* to understanding – to theorizing, and thus to knowing and working to change – our culture and ourselves. Stories also awaken us to the existence and experience of others – especially those others who are different from us. In this way, stories are windows – and doors – to understanding, and the more complex, nuanced, and multiple our stories become, the greater our understandings become. (p. 230)

I needed to construct a working definition of story to guide my research. For Eisner (2005) “stories have particular features. Stories instruct, they reveal, they inform in special ways” (p. 175). As my initial working-definition I therefore settled on the idea of story as the participant’s instructions, revelations, embodied insights and understandings of a phenomenon they experienced at a particular time, place and space regarding student engagement.

I returned to the literature to search for a way into the stories. Eisner (1994a) provided my first pointer. He wrote: “I am concerned with matters of meaning and with the different kinds of meaning that different forms of representation make possible” (Eisner, 1994a, p. 23). I could search for different forms of representation present in the participants’ stories. This might tell me more about what particular kinds of meanings are possible.

Qualitative researchers often use transcripts to analyse the meanings and experiences shared by each participant during an interview (Creswell, 2011). As reported in Chapter Four, I had investigated transcripts of my participants’ interviews by theme analysis. However, transcripts “can powerfully affect the way participants are understood, the

information they share, and the conclusions drawn” (Oliver et al., 2005, p. 1273). Interview transcripts can both “reveal and conceal” (Eisner, 1994a, p. 7).

I realised that my interpretations of linguistic features, non-verbal interactions and emotional context all combined to influence the construction – and therefore the analysis – of each transcript. My transcripts were constructed and were dependent on my interpretations as the transcriber (Tessier, 2012). I now started to question whether my earlier analysis had been sufficiently nuanced.

I was interested to learn how others have sought to overcome their perceived limitations regarding their data representations. Two examples that caught my attention were from Ward (2011) and Nasheeda et al. (2019). Although different approaches, both used narrative devices to re-present their participants’ stories.

Ward’s (2011) re-presentation used poetry. It was achieved by drawing upon personal experiences of reading and teaching poetry. The goal was to “create verisimilitude and a multifaceted narrative of experience” (Ward, 2011, p. 357). I rejected this approach as an option however because I lacked expertise in poetry.

I therefore turned to the re-presentation by Nasheeda et al. (2019). This involved using a “restorying framework to transform transcripts into a story” (p. 2). Their use of narrative devices to re-story the data intrigued me, so I decided to try it with my transcripts.

Re-storying

Re-storying is defined as constructing a story from previously collected data (Ollerenshaw & Creswell, 2002). A re-storying process requires analysing the collected interview data (the transcripts) with an aim of organising and re-writing it in such a way that it: reflects chronological order within a context; contains themes and meanings; and is constructed in a negotiated way between the researcher and participants (Creswell, 2013).

Re-storying provides researchers with an opportunity to confirm and disconfirm identified themes, gain new insights and highlight outliers. My intention is that the re-story of my participants' interviews will evoke "more dynamism, relational and embodied qualities" (Bruce et al., 2016, p. 3).

Ethical Re-storying

I approached my re-storying preparation by reflecting on the ethical dimensions. As an interpretivist researcher my emphasis is on honouring "the participants own words as generative of meaning and knowledge" (Anderson, 2010, p. 1). My honouring requires a significant negotiation and appreciation between the 'what' and 'how' of the participants' stories and my own interpretations of this 'what' and 'how'. As explained by Kovach (2017) when a researcher represents spoken stories in the re-storied form, they do so through their own lens and perspective.

As the human research instrument, I am in a critical position of power. I am the one to interpret and represent what each participant shared verbally as a re-story. Constructing re-storied representations involves a complex interplay between knowing and telling the

participants' stories (Kim, 2016). To ensure I accurately include the participants' big-picture understandings inclusive of depth and fine details this interplay is imperative (Potts, 2004).

Capturing the participants' nuanced contexts through each individual re-story is also important. For example when the participant demonstrated how individual participants make meaning through the ways they speak and communicate their understandings (Goodman & Prince, 2019). I decided that this process needed the involvement of my participants.

Being determined to approach the re-storying process in an ethical way I emailed each participant to invite them into the decision-making. In the email I outlined my re-storying aims and reasoning, requested the participant's permission to re-story their interview transcript and invited their input on elements such as length.

Each participant granted me their permission to re-story their data. For those that advised on length, the suggestion was that each re-story should be approximately two pages. I was on my way.

Preparing to Re-story

Polkingorne's (1995) idea of "narrative configuration" (p. 5) offered me a way to begin my re-storying:

... the process by which happenings are drawn together and integrated into a temporally organized whole. The configurative process employs a thematic thread to lay out happenings as parts of an unfolding movement that culminates in an outcome. The thematic thread is called the plot, and the plot's integrating operation is called emplotment. When happenings are configured or emplotted, they take on narrative

meaning. That is, they are understood from the perspective of their contribution and influence on a specified outcome. (p. 5)

Next I needed a re-storying strategy to identify the thematic threads within the interviews as per Polkingorne's (1995) suggestion. I settled on the approach described by Hunter (2010) who recommends that researchers construct re-stories in two ways: by coding the data they have using themes and sub-themes, and by identifying quotes to represent each participant. With my extensive prior experience in analysing data for themes and codes, I felt these techniques would be apposite for my study.

Re-storying the Interviews

I began by listening to each interview audio recording while simultaneously re-reading and annotating the transcripts. In my annotations I was careful to include as many emotional intonations and details as possible (e.g., changes in voice pitch, pauses). These became my updated transcripts.

Using my updated transcripts I then segmented key passages containing possible themes and applied codes (Guest et al., 2012). Next, I explored the coded themes for relationships and meanings. I followed this process using the theme-identifying strategy of repetitions to highlight three re-occurring ideas within each individual transcript (Ryan & Bernard, 2003) (see Chapter Four).

The re-occurring ideas became my keyword anchors to establish thematic threads. These signposted the scope for each re-story (Englert & Mariage, 1991; Kamler & Thomson,

2014) (see Table 11 for all of the participant's three keyword anchors). My use of keyword anchors as thematic threads can be seen in the following two examples.

Sam's three keyword anchors are: inspire, pastoral care, and listen. Sam's re-story extract demonstrates their use as threads:

... part of my teaching mantra... is to teach the content but listen and look at them and help the students go where they want to go and overcome the challenges in their lives. I try to do that mentorship or pastoral care. That's a big role for me, I just try to be available... And you keep inspiring them. You keep being there and seeing how they're going and being the constant in their semester. (Sam, re-story, underlining added)

Chey's keyword anchors are: respect, conscious approach, and purpose. Chey's re-story extract provides my second demonstration of keyword anchor use as threads:

... I think it is important that I build a relationship with... [the students] and that I offer them respect and get respect back, but I don't think it's my role to be their best friend. I think that's quite a dangerous path to tread... I have a conscious approach and work closely with support services, taking a case management approach... I also think seeing the purpose of what they're doing is important as I know I don't like something if I don't see the reason for it or don't understand the purpose or if it seems pointless. (Chey, re-story, underlining added)

Table 11*Three Keyword Anchors for Each Participant's Re-story*

Participants	Three Keyword Anchors for the Re-stories (Thematic Threads)
Tobin	Promise, possibilities, hope
Drew	Care, love, respect
Alex	Sense making, stories, relevance
Reece	Professional identity, availability, responsibility
Chey	Respect, conscious approach, purpose
Blair	Focus, interesting, contextualised
Finn	Enjoyment, relevance, purpose
Quinn	Student focussed, meeting needs, authenticity
Sam	Inspire, pastoral care, listen
Kai	Connection, interesting, enjoyment

As well as functioning as a writing guide, the keyword anchor strategy helped me deepen my analysis. A good example of this is the theme ‘pedagogic care’ which was not identified in the initial transcript analysis, yet it appeared early during my re-storying. This discovery encouraged me (Eisner, 1994a). I had identified another “*way in*” (Holman Jones, 2016, p. 230). I therefore prepared and proofread re-stories for each of the ten participants.

Re-storied Member Checking

Next the teaching academics were sent their own re-story, invited to member check and provide feedback. They all confirmed their re-story as accurate, although one added an additional sentence. Also, each and every participant made similar comments as to the personal enjoyment they felt reading their own re-story.

One possible explanation came from Finn. The interview transcript was the first time Finn had completed a member check task. They were surprised how challenging the task was. Words such as ‘like’, ‘um’ and ‘yeah’ were extremely distracting. Member checking the distilled re-story without the fillers however, was much easier and therefore more enjoyable.

The participant confirmations plus Finn's observations provided a defining moment. Until then I had been extremely tentative. Now I had more confidence that incorporating this emergent design while collaborating with the participants was worthwhile. It was time for me to conduct my next round of analysis.

Re-storied Data Analysis

The re-stories provide a "means through which meanings can be made" (Eisner, 2003, p. 342). To promote coherence with the transcript analysis, I employed Applied Thematic Analysis (ATA) (Guest et al., 2012). Once again I consulted the Ryan and Bernard (2003) theme-identifying techniques (see Figure 2). This time choosing strategies was not so straightforward as my re-storied data are distilled representations.

I used the same eleven ATA strategies as in part one of phase one (see Chapter Four). As I systematically worked through these I simultaneously built a re-storied codebook (Guest et al., 2012). I kept the re-storied codebook separate from the interview codebook.

When preparing the new codebook, renewed emphasis was placed on creatively adapting existing analysis techniques to give greater focus to study aims (Kim, 2016). This led me to adopt two additional theme-identifying strategies: pattern coding and representative vignettes (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Both draw upon narrative techniques to explore the stories and plots (Miles & Huberman, 1994). When applied post-ATA they help to highlight the threads that 'tie together' the different elements within the analysed data (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

Pattern Coding

Pattern codes are defined as “explanatory or inferential codes, ones that identify an emergent theme, configuration, or explanation” (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 69). Similar to that of meta-coding, pattern coding is the process of moving beyond the first level of analysis to search for more meanings and explanations (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The aim is to gain deeper understandings of recurring patterns within the emerging themes (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Once higher-level themes have been identified, the codes become redundant.

I think of a code as a textual label which I use as a marker for a potential theme. For example, I might create a label such as, ‘behavioural engagement’. I then apply this label each time a participant mentions a behavioural engagement experience. Relationships begin to emerge as more codes are created and more segments of text are labelled.

Exploring this relationship between the labels leads into pattern coding. Continuing with my example, in conjunction with ‘behavioural engagement’, there are other segments of text that are labelled with engagement types, such as ‘emotional engagement’ and ‘cognitive engagement’. When the application of these labels to the different types of engagement becomes repetitive, I create a higher-level label (code) ‘engagement types’. As my analysis continues the process becomes cyclic as patterns within the codes inform the creation of higher-level themes. Throughout this process the aim is to create “more meaningful and parsimonious units of analysis” (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 69).

Pattern Coding in Action. To investigate the higher-level codes that had emerged as part of ATA I searched for recurring phrases, ideas and similar threads among my labels

(Miles & Huberman, 1994). Through this process I refined the codes and identified three potential (non-hierarchical) overarching themes:

- The self (teaching academic): encompassing the principles and philosophies guiding practice and explanations of engagement fostering pedagogies.
- The environment (the contemporary university context): encompassing institutional-driven approaches to teaching and learning (e.g., online and blended modes) and the environmental elements which can enable/constrain engagement.
- The student (the contemporary university learner): encompassing learner background and elements connected to engagement, such as motivation and self-efficacy.

To study these overarching themes I engaged with the literature and both phase one codebooks. My aim was to more deeply connect “ideas and evidence through the use of theories and constructs” (Guest et al., 2012, p. 75). The theoretical constructs that aligned with my thematic analysis at this stage comprised:

- The potential influencers on engagement. For example, the participants’ conceptualisations of engagement, and the interactions between teachers, the environment and students as influencing student engagement (Haladyna et al., 1982; Hawk, 2017; Kahu & Nelson, 2018; Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD], 2009).
- The considerations of the way students can engage. For example, cognitively (e.g., deep learning), behaviourally (e.g., interacting) and / or emotionally (e.g., appearing enthusiastic) (Fredricks et al., 2004; Kahu, 2013).
- Pedagogies for fostering student engagement. For example, socio-constructivist pedagogies, such as maximising teaching and learning time, using effective

assessment design, having high expectations, using student-goal-setting and employing active and reciprocal learning tasks (see Appendix E) (e.g., Biggs & Tang, 2011; Chickering & Gamson, 1987, 1999; Chickering et al., 1989; Glasser, 1993; Good & Brophy, 2002; Hattie, 2003, 2011; MacGregor, 2007).

- Nurturing engagement with pedagogic care. For example, fostering a democratic classroom environment, modelling empathy, providing effective feedback and praise, listening to students and supporting student wellbeing (Mariskind, 2014; Noddings, 2013; Trout, 2012; Walker & Gleaves, 2016).

Using the theoretical constructs I refined the themes, sub-themes and topics that had emerged from both the thematic analysis of the interviews transcripts and the re-storying. I illustrate this refinement with the theme ‘conceptualisation of student engagement’:

- ‘Conceptualisation of student engagement’ emerged as an overarching theme from ATA for both the transcripts and re-stories.
- After applying pattern coding this theme was placed within the sub-theme ‘guiding engagement principles’ (alongside ‘ontological and epistemological beliefs’ and ‘reflective practices’).
- ‘Guiding engagement principles’ was placed within the overarching theme of ‘self (teaching academic)’. This is because the assumptions of teaching academics can drive and guide their pedagogical approaches (Hawk, 2017).

I also used the theoretical constructs to clarify the new insights that emerged throughout the analysis of the re-stories. To illustrate this clarification, I use the sub-sub-theme ‘pedagogically caring’:

- After ATA and pattern coding ‘pedagogically caring’ was placed within the sub-theme ‘engagement practices’.
- ‘Engagement practices’ was placed within the overarching theme ‘self (teaching academic)’. This is because pedagogically caring involves teachers enacting practices of care through relational ways with their students and the environment to foster engagement (Mariskind, 2014; Walker & Gleaves, 2016).

I use an extract from Tobin’s re-story to exemplify the sub-sub-theme ‘pedagogically caring’ within the ‘self (teaching academic)’ overarching theme. In this extract Tobin describes their ‘engagement practice’ of ‘pedagogically caring’ by extending their focus beyond the curriculum and being interested in the lives of the students to nurture engagement:

I love my teaching because I like to engage with my students in a very meaningful way. I go beyond the circles and the squares and I think it’s beyond the curriculum that makes a difference to a student’s life... The fundamental thing is that you have to demonstrate that you are interested in the lives and the learning of the students... It is not about teaching all the time, it’s allowing students to talk about what’s happening to them and that is another type of engagement... I think being passionate and interested in the lives of the students can actually make a difference. (Tobin, re-story)

After refining and clarifying the themes using the theoretical constructs, I updated my codebook and constructed a re-storied codebook overview. The overview aligns the topics, sub-sub-themes, sub-themes and overarching themes that emerged after ATA and pattern coding (see Table 12). With my updated codebook I engaged in the second additional analysis technique, representative vignettes.

Table 12*Re-storied Data Codebook Overview*

Topics	Sub-sub-theme	Sub-theme	Overarching theme
Affective factors (enthusiasm, interest, belonging)	Conceptualisation of student engagement	Guiding engagement principles	Self (teaching academic)
Behavioural factors (time & effort, interaction, participation)			
Cognitive factors (deep learning, self-regulation)			
Values, ideas, beliefs and understandings of how students learn and come to know	Ontological and epistemological beliefs		
How I know these practices make a difference	Reflective practice		
Why I know these practices make a difference			
Practices for behavioural engagement	Pedagogical approach	Engagement practices	
Practices for cognitive engagement			
Practices for emotional engagement			
Effective use of monitoring, assessment and providing feedback			
Emphasising time on task			
Using relevant, active pedagogies and collaborative experiences			
Promoting democratic classroom environment	Pedagogically caring		
Demonstrating and modelling empathy			
Effective use of praise and feedback			
Listening to students			
Maintaining high expectations			
Personalisation of teaching and learning			
Supporting students' wellbeing			
Knowledge and skill development	Challenges	Contemporary modalities and tools for teaching and learning	Environment (contemporary university context)
Use of online tools for discussion and monitoring	Online and blended practices		
Multimodal teaching strategies			
University supports and resources	Contemporary university features and factors	University context	
Facilitating student access to resources			
University demographics			
Student commitments	Student (background, support, family, lifeload) (Kahu, 2013)	Contemporary university students	Student (contemporary university learner)
Student educational background / pathway			
Supporting diverse demographic to engage			
Student positioning			
Technological influences on students	Student (motivation, skills, self-efficacy)		
Motivating students / different strategies for demographic			
Pre / during / post classroom engagement and motivation			

Representative Vignettes

To ensure a more thorough analysis I went beyond the transcripts and the re-storied data to construct representative vignettes. Representative vignettes are defined as “short stories about... characters in specified circumstances” (Finch, 1987, p. 105). Re-storied data is a vertical distillation of a participant’s story whereas the vignette represents a cross-sectional distillation across one or more participants.

In qualitative research representative vignettes have “a narrative, storylike structure that preserves chronological flow and that normally is limited to a brief time span, to one or a few key actors, to a bounded space, or to all three” (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 81). Highlighting the core elements from within a data set, vignettes act as a brief descriptive representation of rich meanings (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

The construction of representative vignettes functions as an analysis technique through data reduction only this time instead of re-stories of individual experiences the vignettes also encapsulate experiences pertinent to more than one individual. Miles and Huberman (1984) define data reduction as:

... the process of selecting, focusing, simplifying, abstracting, and transforming the raw data... [and it] is not something separate from the analysis. It is a *part* of the analysis that sharpens, sorts, focuses, discards and organizes data in such a way that... conclusions can be drawn and verified. (pp. 23-24)

Whilst representative vignettes can provide a glimpse into the perspectives of participants the ‘selecting’ and ‘transforming’ of the data can be complex and challenging

(Evans et al., 2015; Miles & Huberman, 1994). This is because unlike the re-storied data, to be a vignette it must capture some combination of nuanced ideas (e.g., outliers), controlled aspects (e.g., recurring themes) and contextual elements to reflect participants' lived experiences (Evans et al., 2015; Sampson & Johannessen, 2019).

Themes and codes formed the foundation of the vignette construction as I applied the same process of data re-presentation from Hunter (2010). I explored the patterns, relationships and reoccurring thematic threads using an iterative process moving between the interview transcripts, the re-stories and the codebooks. I added these thematic threads to a 'vignette' section in my re-storied codebook and began construction.

In constructing the vignettes my aim was to strengthen my analysis by situating "various stories alongside each other to create verisimilitude and a multifaceted narrative of experience" (Ward, 2011, p. 357). To reflect this verisimilitude, I included individual and shared insights by incorporating reoccurring themes and outliers.

To illustrate the inclusion of repeating themes and outliers I use an extract from a vignette containing an 'outlier' experience shared by Sam. In the interview, Sam explained that they sometimes use transmissive approaches to teaching, whereas constructivist-based pedagogical ideas were repeatedly identified within the data (including Sam's). I therefore included both these elements within this particular vignette:

... I use videos (my own and others), music, peer work, and show images – often confronting – so they can associate it with the content. I break up the work in the classes and try different things in my teaching and sometimes I use the transmission

model. It takes more time in preparation and marking but it seems to be working.
(Phase one part two, vignette, underlining added)

The vignette construction involved engagement with the analysis techniques of data reduction and identification of thematic threads. Nonetheless, post-construction I was determined to see if the vignettes could reveal more insight so I employed ATA. I applied the Ryan and Bernard (2003) theme-identifying techniques of: repetitions, similarities and differences, cutting and sorting, indigenous typologies, word lists and KWIC, and word co-occurrences (see Figure 2). During this process I continued to edit my vignette section of my re-storied codebook.

Instead of adding more layers, ATA confirmed the re-storied themes and topics which had emerged via the other twelve theme-identifying strategies. This confirmation was reassuring as Miles and Huberman (1994) uphold vignettes are a useful way for researchers to reflect on the core elements emerging from the data analysis. My final process was to connect the overarching themes and the theoretical constructs with the representative vignettes in the codebook (see Table 13).

Table 13*Alignment of Overarching Themes, Theoretical Constructs and Representative Vignettes*

Overarching theme	Theoretical construct	Representative vignette
- Student - Environment	- Nurturing engagement with pedagogic care	I teach the content but there is more to my work. It is also about talking to my students, finding out where they are as a person in their life and giving them options now and for their future. I encourage them to make use of the services within the university and try to support the students to access the help available. There are some you just cannot help though.
- Self	- Pedagogies for fostering student engagement	<p>Sometimes I am an unstructured academic and my class probably looks a bit like chaos. It is my favourite time though, being with the students and they know if a teacher isn't interested in them. I try to have an open-door policy, be empathetic and see things from their perspective.</p> <p>I try to be proactive and technologically skilled, whilst maintaining high expectations. I use videos (my own and others), music, peer work, and show images – often confronting – so they can associate it with the content. I break up the work in the classes and try different things in my teaching and sometimes I use the transmission model. It takes more time in preparation and marking but it seems to be working.</p> <p>Some students like what I do, others don't. But I try to create a spark in their minds and when you make a breakthrough and feel as if you've made a difference, those moments are the memorable ones and it's all worth it. I try to be honest and human, it's okay to make mistakes, I am still learning too.</p>
- Student	- Potential influencers on engagement - Nurturing engagement with pedagogic care	<p>The student profile itself has changed along with other things, over a period of time. This is a challenge for academics because we need to re-conceptualise the ways we engage. The students work a lot, they have partners and kids, there are a lot of first-in-family and those from low or medium economic classes. And they don't all have the same access or have computers at home. They are tired and they struggle emotionally and financially.</p> <p>I try to use data to personalise my teaching more and monitor things like attendance as this is something that has changed too. More and more students miss a few classes here and there, some miss many. I try to be sensitive to their needs but treat them as a professional at the same time.</p>
- Self - Environment	- Potential influencers on engagement - Pedagogies for fostering student engagement	<p>I try to use authentic activities so they can realise the answers for themselves. I do this because I want to help different types of learners, we might move outside or I might give them a graphic organiser. I try to structure the classes in a meaningful way, so I break up the lecture into sections and activities. This works better if the students come prepared to class so I try to encourage this.</p> <p>It is difficult though trying to balance my teaching and everything else going on, grant applications, admin, and trying to publish. I understand that universities are now a business, with a focus on outcomes and making a profit but as a teacher, I just want to give the students the time and feedback needed so they can get where they want to in life. It takes patience and dedication because everyone seems in a big hurry. You can't lose sight of the wonderful things happening around us though.</p>

Overarching theme	Theoretical construct	Representative vignette
- Student	- Types of student engagement	Students are engaged when they are interested and enjoy the work and can see the relevance of it. It is about how much they can connect with the content and see the practical applications within it. To me, they are engaged when they ask questions, present new ideas and actively participate in the classroom with their peers. It's important because they need to leave feeling they have learnt something and they need to engage to do this. It's an equal investment though, a two-way street and the ways they engage might be different in different situations.
- Self - Student	- Engagement types - Engagement fostering pedagogies	I try to help all students participate and meet them where they are in their learning. I try to give them the responsibility of it so they can make meaning of the material themselves. I use peer learning tasks, self and peer assessment and have them do presentations. It's easier to engage the students more in the practical classes, the harder work is the heavy, theory stuff that comes before it; these are difficult and their body language lets you know if they are engaged or not. I try to make it interesting and cognitively deepen their understanding of the application so a subject becomes meaningful. I try to make it enjoyable, so I show videos, images and tell stories to intentionally trigger their emotions. When I tell the stories, from my life and personal practice, they are more engaged than when I do anything else.
- Student	- Types of student engagement - Nurturing engagement with pedagogic care	I try to get the students to be involved and work as a group because the research tells us that friends make a difference at uni. So I try to create those opportunities for in-class social networking and support and hope that it extends outside of class. It is important for the students to be able to work in a group and if they are showing others or telling others how to do something, they are also learning it. To get students to work together, I get them involved with peer reviews and feedback, giving presentations and other cooperative learning activities. It can be challenging though because if they don't have any interest in being there, they're not going to communicate with anyone.
- Self - Student - Environment	- Types of student engagement	I can tell when I have had a successful lesson or not and sometimes I get the engagement thing and sometimes I don't. You can tell with the students' physicality, if they are sitting up, making eye contact and talking to people. It is also when they come up after class and ask me questions or send an email or they want the discussion to continue. I also use informal feedback and ask the students how the classes are going because the big surveys come too late. It is also when you see the students on the campus or at the shops, even years later and they tell you about your class, so you know you must be doing something right. I know the analytics can help but there is more that I need to learn there.

After the Re-storied Analysis

With my re-storied data analysis complete I engaged with my supervisory team to review and provide feedback. My aim in this meeting was to gain additional perspectives into the depth and breadth of my analysis (Barbour, 2001). My supervisory team agreed that I had explored more robust layers of meaning within the interview data (at the present time) and I could move onto preparing for phase two of my research project, the focus groups.

Chapter Summary

To deepen my analysis of my phase one data I focused on the participants' stories. After unpacking the possible constraints of interview transcripts I constructed individual re-storied representations for each participant. I employed narrative research techniques to investigate what other meanings could be revealed within the data. Using the re-stories I applied thematic inductive strategies to refine, clarify and synthesise the phase one data analysis. With the phase one data collection and analysis complete I moved onto to phase two of my study, explained in Chapter Six.

Chapter Six: Phase Two Methods

Multiple perspectives make our engagement with the phenomena more complex.

Ironically, good research often complicates our lives. (Eisner, 2005, p. 180)

Chapter Outline

In Chapter Six I continue my search for multiple perspectives, this time through the use of focus groups. With the focus groups my attention moves from the individual to the individual as part of a collective. Here I detail the phase two decision-making processes that took place regarding the conduct of seven focus group meetings.

Operationalising the focus groups began with my developing a focus group facilitation guide. I then move on to tell the story of how I directed the focus groups, managed the data collection and conducted the analysis. As in previous chapters, to illustrate the processes I draw on short extracts from the data.

As this is my final round of data collection, my goal is to reach data saturation. This occurs when little new relevant information is being revealed. Data saturation provides an elegant conclusion to the data collection and analysis process.

Focus Groups

Focus groups are described as “a carefully planned series of discussions designed to obtain perceptions on a defined area of interest in a permissive, nonthreatening environment” (Krueger & Casey, 2009, p. 2). These planned discussions contain essential ingredients encompassing a particular group of people with specific characteristics and a focused and interactive dialogue (Krueger & Casey, 2009). The aim for the planned focus group

discussions is to gain deep understandings of a collective phenomenon (Krueger & Casey, 2015; Morgan, 1997).

Focus groups can be used as a stand-alone qualitative data collection method or used in conjunction with individual interviews. Morgan (1997) recommends using both sources of data arguing that the combination strengthens the research outcome. This is because, as Lambert and Loiselle (2008) explain, each source reveals particular aspects about a research topic and when used in combination assists in providing more comprehensive understandings. I am particularly interested in learning what the participants reveal during the focus group meetings when the audience has been expanded to include other participants.

A defining feature of focus groups is participant interaction with each other and the researcher (as facilitator). As people share their experiences and perceptions, other group members can reflect on their own ideas, offer their own insights and ask questions (Lambert & Loiselle, 2008; Morgan, 1997). Participant interaction within the focus group therefore influences the way the topic is discussed. As I am the facilitator, I must ensure the participants are sufficiently well supported.

My Role as Focus Group Facilitator

The researcher-focus-group-facilitator has a critical role to play (Morgan, 1997; Powell & Single, 1996). To enact such a role I must draw upon a rich combination of topic knowledge and humanistic skills while adopting a non-imposing and non-judgemental peripheral position (Nyumba et al., 2018). My aim is to apply this knowhow to achieve optimal participant rapport, discussion, listening and reflection (Nyumba et al., 2018).

In preparation I meditated on my own experience. I explored the times I had enmeshed my professional and interpersonal knowledge and skills to gain particular understandings and insights from others through a planned group discussion.

Over the years I have managed discussions with many different groups of people. For example, I have engaged in sustained interactions with young children in a preparatory class investigating the use of tally marks for counting in mathematics. I met with community First Nations elders to better understand their children's inclusion needs. I also had meaningful conversations with pre-service teachers on education theory and praxis. In addition, I facilitated focus groups while working as a research assistant.

Through the conversations I have been able to identify areas of strength and elements that required more refining in relation to my discussion facilitation. For example, although I am adept at starting conversations and exploring areas of interest, learning how to gently guide others to stay on-topic has taken practice. In these instances, I have learned to graciously acknowledge what a group member has said while gently re-directing them with a focussing prompt. I have also learned that I can foster longer participant responses by applying teaching micro-skills such as think-time and wait-time (Stahl, 1994). In applying think- and wait-time, I have worked to become comfortable and wait patiently in a period of silence after posing a question to give group members time to reflect before responding.

I have also learned that (regardless of the context) by adopting the facilitator role, an unequal power relationship is introduced. To support me in addressing this issue so a productive conversation can take place, I engaged with the work of Freire (1982). In his work in education, Freire (1982) explains that to foster an equitable dialogue between teachers and

students, the teacher should create opportunities where they position themselves as the student, so the students can become the teacher. So I can create such an opportunity in my facilitation I continually strive to demonstrate qualities of humbleness, curiosity and an eagerness to learn. This involves being responsive to the individuals within the group by actively listening more and talking less (Marsh & Desai, 2012).

During these facilitation experiences I have developed skills in taking notes to document what was said and why. I have used my notes to seek clarification, offer confirmation or follow unexpected but pertinent conversation leads. Post-discussion they became a tool for reflecting on the breadth, depth and tenor of the interactions and my notes have even used to inform future planning and practice.

My next task was to translate this professional experience in managing discussions into research practice, identifying practical ways to enhance research rigour. As a teacher I was used to preparing a series of lessons by developing a unit plan. I decided to adopt a similar strategy and develop a unit plan for my focus group facilitation.

When preparing a sophisticated unit plan it is important for the teacher to simultaneously consider both the learning content and the learning outcome. It is also necessary for the teacher to be thinking about the needs of both the individual student and the class as a whole. I therefore started to search for a comparable template to guide my research planning.

Focus Group Guide

A focus group guide details the specific elements required for the preparation and

conduct of each focus group meeting (Jayanthi & Nelson, 2002). The aim of the guide is to provide the facilitator with a purposeful plan to assist with procedural efficiency, consistency and research effectiveness (Jayanthi & Nelson, 2002). Components of the guide include: the research questions, the conversation structure and the discussion prompts.

My two research questions inform the design of the conversation structure and the discussion prompts. As stated in Chapter One my research questions are:

1. How does the teaching academic approach the engagement of their students?
2. What are the teaching academic's perceptions of how and why their chosen approach to student engagement might make a difference?

The conversation structure and discussion prompts also need to be informed by the timing of the meetings and their specific purpose. As a general rule the earlier the focus group meetings are held in the research process, the more the conversation structure is carefully scripted and the prompts predetermined. This is to ensure a close link with the research questions (Jayanthi & Nelson, 2002).

I decided on a different approach. As my meetings are being held at the end of the study, my conversation structure and discussion prompts need to be flexible and agile. This is because my purpose, over and above that of exploring the research questions, is to reach data saturation. As I have already collected a large amount of data, I now want to design my focus group meetings in order to maximise information sharing. Here my specific goal is to see if anything else can be revealed (Morgan, 1997). In particular I am searching for possible new themes that have not yet emerged.

My Planning Process

Despite a thorough search of the literature I could not find any valuable assistance regarding facilitator planning. I therefore returned to my teacher knowledge. I chose an approach I learned during my teacher training days for preparing a unit plan. It is called backward mapping (Wiggins & McTighe, 2011, 2012). Education research indicates that it is a sophisticated purposeful approach that can be used to help assure student success (Moore & Hansen, 2012).

Backward mapping involves the teacher starting with the end goal and working backwards to design meaningful end goal assessment and to create a carefully staged learning plan regarding how to get there. There are two types of assessment, formative and summative (Scriven, 1967). The formative assessment is the process of ensuring that the participants are ready to be able to complete the summative assessment.

Although the assessment is an essential component in the backward mapping approach, a teacher must ensure that they do not narrowly focus on channelling the students towards a scripted final performance. Instead the focus of backward mapping is for the learning and assessment to be a process of individual student becoming and development (McDonald, 1992). To ensure the approach is individualised the teacher must engage in effective design principles through an intentional step-by-step procedure (Black & Allen, 2019).

In teaching there are five steps to backward mapping. Working backwards these are:

1. Identifying the end goal (which informs the summative assessment).
2. Developing the specific outcomes students would need to achieve this end goal.

3. Ascertaining the teacher's intentions or expectations i.e., what the students need to know and do to be able to demonstrate their achievement. In this step the teacher's intentions are flipped like a coin with one side being the teacher's expectations and the reverse side being what the students need to demonstrate, so it is linked to the formative assessment.
4. Determining what teaching strategies would need to be put in place for students to be able to meet the teacher expectations.
5. Combining everything together to create a well-constructed learning plan template where the summative assessment is detailed.

I decided to use the same procedure for my focus group planning. My focus group planning process therefore would involve:

1. Identifying my key goal.
2. Developing my focus group outcomes.
3. Ascertaining my focus group intentions and formative assessment.
4. Determining my focus group facilitation strategies.
5. Creating my focus group facilitation template for my summative assessment which in this case is my data collection.

Step One: Identifying My Key Goal

As this was my second phase of data collection, my key goal was to scaffold the individual and collective conversations so I could reach a point of data saturation regarding my research questions. In particular I was searching for thematic saturation.

In qualitative research, thematic saturation applies to both data collection and data analysis (Onwuegbuzie et al., 2009). Perman and Havranek (2016) define thematic saturation “as the point at which additional... [data collection and analysis] are not expected to yield novel information” (p. 1008). This point can also be identified when the same stories are being shared during the data collection and when there are repeated themes being inducted from the data during the analysis (Sandelowski & Barroso, 2007; Wang & Park, 2016).

That said, as O’Reilly and Parker (2013) and Wray et al. (2007) caution, the interpretivist researcher must be cognisant that no data can ever be completely saturated. This is because there are always going to be ever-present explorative opportunities. The researcher therefore needs to return to research scope to make a final decision regarding when enough data has been collected. As Saunders et al. (2018) advise this decision involves ensuring that the key goal is a synthesis of research scope, research questions, research aims and knowing when further exploration would not be sufficiently productive for the research to continue.

Drawing these points together I developed a working definition. I defined my key goal as being when the participants’ individual and collective embodied stories of student engagement sufficiency address my research questions. As the human research instrument, I will be working in two ways to identify this point in ‘sufficiency’:

1. Human research instruments can “process and ascribe meaning to data simultaneously as their acquisition” (Guba & Lincoln, 1982, p. 245). I will therefore aim to identify when the participants’ stories are being repeated and consider any connections to the phase one themes.
2. In applying a lesson learned during my part one phase one interview data analysis, my aim is to guard against the need to ‘go deeper’ after completing my analysis

processes (see Chapter Four). I will therefore employ ATA strategies post-each meeting as well as when the series has been completed.

With this working definition locked in I then moved on to step two.

Step Two: Developing My Focus Group Outcomes

Continuing along my backward mapping path, step two began with the question: ‘What can I do as focus group facilitator to achieve my key goal?’. As my key goal involved reaching data saturation where participant stories of student engagement sufficiently addressed my research questions, my focus group outcomes (FGOs) needed to be the behaviours the participants would be required to exhibit for this goal to be achieved.

Informed by Killen’s (2016) principles of effective education discussions I identified four behaviour outcomes. Participants would:

- Include diverse perspectives (FGO.1).
- Create space for conversational spontaneity (FGO.2).
- Maintain topic focus (FGO.3).
- Reflect on prior experiences (FGO.4).

Step Three: Ascertaining My Focus Group Intentions

My next task was to ascertain my intentions regarding what the participants would need to know and do to be able to demonstrate these four behaviour outcomes. The metaphor I had in mind while preparing this task was that of constructing a chute within which participant interactions could be freely channelled towards the four behaviour outcomes and on towards my key goal. These researcher-facilitator intentions involved three specific actions on my part as well as four actions on the part of the participants.

One, I needed to make certain I could model these behaviour outcomes myself. Two, I needed to make certain I could facilitate the discussion without unduly influencing the content, hence the need to construct a chute. Three, I needed some way to assess that my intentions were being met. I concluded that the best way to do this would be to have a clear idea of precisely what those expectations were. Once these expectations had been identified I could then prepare the assessment check points.

I ascertained my focus group intentions (FGIs) were for the participants to:

- Foster rapport with each other (FGI.1).
- Engage in free-flowing discussion with each other (FGI.2).
- Partake in topic-focused reflective thinking (FGI.3).
- Not be unduly influenced by the facilitator-researcher (FGI.4).

Each of the four behaviour outcomes / focus group intentions check points were:

- Participants would demonstrate
 - Effective field relationships (Glesne, 1998), for example:
 - know each other's names
 - build and maintain trust
 - share information and ideas
 - Opportunity for reciprocity (Glesne, 1998), for example:
 - natural turn-taking
 - listening
 - deliberation
 - think-time

- sharing musings and ideas
- Effective discussions on the phenomenon (Glesne, 1998), for example:
 - various explanations
 - multiple perspectives
 - descriptions
 - clarifications

I then aligned my focus group outcomes with my focus group intentions and behaviour check points to form Table 14 (see Table 14).

Table 14

Alignment of My Focus Group Outcomes, Focus Group Intentions and Behaviour Check

Points

Focus Group Outcome (FGO)	Focus Group Intention (FGI)	Behaviour Check Points
- Include diverse perspectives (FGO.1)	- Foster rapport with each other (FGI.1)	- Effective field relationships (Glesne, 1998), for example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - know each other’s names - build and maintain trust - share information and ideas
- Create space for conversational spontaneity (FGO.2)	- Engage in free-flowing discussion with each other (FGI.2) - Not be unduly influenced by the facilitator-researcher (Morgan, 1997) (FGI.4)	- Opportunity for reciprocity (Glesne, 1998), for example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - natural turn-taking and interaction - listening - deliberation - think-time - sharing
- Maintain topic focus (FGO.3) - Reflect on prior experience (FGO.4)	- Partake in topic-focused reflective thinking (FGI.3)	- Effective discussions on the phenomenon (Glesne, 1998), for example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - various explanations - multiple perspectives - descriptions - clarifications

Step Four: Determining My Focus Group Facilitation Strategies

My fourth backwards mapping step was to determine my focus group facilitation strategies. These are carefully selected, deliberate actions which I plan to use at the entrance to my chute, to pass each check point and then as highly-focused-participant-engagement activities related to achieving my key goal.

My overall planning was informed by Noddings (1995) and Glesne (1998). Both emphasise the importance of establishing and maintaining trust. Noddings (1995) links trust to teacher caring. Teacher caring “implies a continuous search for competence” (Noddings, 1995, p. 676) and attention to detail, hence the need for meticulous planning. When students (or participants) trust the teacher (or facilitator) and each other, they can engage in more effective group discussions which “would be hard for a group of strangers to approach” (Noddings, 1995, p. 676).

For Glesne (1998) trust is the cornerstone of qualitative research. This is because it helps to foster effective field relationships and the collection of more robust data. I therefore want to determine in my planning how I can model caring and engender trust. I also need to be alert to any perceived problems that relate to trust. If they arise, they would require immediate attention.

As a consequence, my chute entrance planning focused on how to effectively set up and maintain my focus group environment. Particular attention must be given to rapport building (Glesne, 1998). This is because participants need to feel a sense of security and belonging if they are to comfortably engage in higher order thinking (Kahu, 2013; Maslow, 1968).

I therefore plan to send an email to participants to ascertain:

- How they would like to be introduced to the other participants i.e., using their real name or a pseudonym.
- If they would be comfortable to share other identifying information as part of the introductions i.e., their discipline and role.
- Where they would prefer the focus group meetings to be held with an aim of identifying a mutually agreeable location.

Then at the start of the focus group meeting I plan to provide:

- Time prior to the formal discussion for participants to introduce each other (in their preferred way) so they know each other's names and can engage in general conversation.
- Comfort items such as tissues, drinks and snacks.

For the check points I plan to:

- Begin the first focus group meeting by:
 - explaining the focus group process (i.e., sharing multiple ideas and describing experiences, turn taking, listening and interacting).
 - outlining my research questions.
- Start each subsequent focus group meeting by:
 - recapping the previously discussed topics at subsequent meetings.
 - reiterating my research questions.

For the highly-focused-participant-engagement activities I plan to use scaffolding strategies. Like teaching, the facilitator provides greater support in the early stages and gradually reduces these as participants feel more secure and exhibit greater independence in achieving the key goal (Vygotsky, 1978).

To effectively employ such scaffolding strategies the facilitator must draw on the participants' prior knowledge (Vygotsky, 1978). This prior knowledge is then connected with their developing knowhow relating to critical thinking and reflecting on practice. My plan therefore, is to explicitly draw on the participants' relevant prior knowledge by using the following five actions:

- Creating opportunities for critical thinking about student engagement practice.
- Applying storytelling techniques that concentrate on exploring embodied understandings of student engagement.
- Using participants' own words and shared stories regarding student engagement (from the phase one interviews).
- Presenting a culminating task.

Creating Opportunities for Critical Thinking about Student Engagement

Practice. I plan to scaffold the participants' ability to think critically about student engagement practice. Clarke et al. (2019) define critical thinking as thinking which is "self-directed, self-disciplined, self-monitored, and self-corrective" (p. 6). In the literature critical thinking is often used synonymously with the idea of reflective thinking. The scaffold I have chosen involves the creation of a framework of questions and responses that directly encourage and support this style of thinking. This begins with the use of storytelling.

Applying Storytelling Techniques that Concentrate on Exploring Embodied Understandings of Student Engagement. The use of storytelling will enable me to provide a high level of scaffolding early on in the focus group meeting. To help me provide this scaffolding I will employ a critical thinking framework called Critical Moments Reflection (CMR) (Center for Reflective Community Practice [CRCP], n.d.). CMR is described as a flexible reflective thinking process designed to support deep explorations and discussions of tacit understandings (Amulya, 2004). I determined that CMR would be particularly well suited to my study because it uses storytelling to help overcome the difficulty participants are likely to experience when being asked to verbalise tacit understandings within a group situation (Schön, 1991).

The four stages of CMR (CRCP, n.d.) are:

1. Setting the frame and identifying areas for reflection. For example, participants consider their experiences of student engagement.
2. Generating critical moments. For example, participants reflect on their particular experiences of approaching engagement and consider these in the context in which they occurred.
3. Selecting critical moments for further analysis. For example, a participant selects a critical moment for detailed discussion with the group.
4. Storytelling, lessons and implications. For example, a participant tells a story of their experience in relation to a selected critical moment detailed in the previous step.

Using the Participants' Own Words and Shared Stories of Student Engagement (from the Phase One Interviews). Stage one of the CMR framework involves setting the

frame and identifying areas for reflection. I decided to do this by preparing discussion prompts that have been drawn from my data. My discussion prompts would be the representative vignettes taken from part two of my phase one data analysis (see Chapter Five) and an accompanying NVivo generated word cloud. The word cloud will comprise a set of the thirty-most-frequently-used-words that appear in the re-storied data used to create each vignette. In the word cloud frequency of word use will be shown through different text orientations, colours and sizes (see Appendix F)

I intentionally chose to use these discussion prompts as a scaffold to create scope for open-ended participant responses in a situational-specific way (Downing et al., 2004; Spalding & Phillips, 2007). This is because data-drawn prompts can more actively “engage study participants” to reflect on the data (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 81). In addition, using the participants’ own words can help them gain a sense of shared lived experiences which can foster rapport and stimulate more spontaneous but focused discussion (Kamberelis & Dimitriadis, 2011).

As we move through the four stages of CMR I plan to utilise the discussion prompts in three ways (Törrönen, 2002):

1. As clues which can provoke further thoughts and ideas.
2. As a source for consideration and reflection on existing ideas.
3. As a way to invite critique, questioning and identification of potential gaps.

Once these actions have been achieved and we have moved through the four CMR stages, my plan moves on to the final culminating task.

Presenting a Culminating Task. Teachers plan for the final stage of their learning unit to include a culminating summative assessment task. As the task is used to confirm student learning, it intentionally requires familiar strategies that were employed during the unit but this time the scaffolds have been removed (Killen, 2016) so independent mastery can be assessed.

My culminating task is designed to align with the research aims (questions). It will provide participants with a final opportunity for critical thinking, reflection, discussion and sharing in a less structured environment. The task will take the form of a discussion prompt which I have called an emerging themes placemat. During this activity I will be particularly interested to observe whether the culminating task provides evidence of data saturation.

Step Five: Creating My Focus Group Facilitation Template

Step five involves combining all the planning stages together to form a focus group facilitation template (my final focus group facilitation action plan). This template will be used to inform the conduct of the focus group meetings. Details of this template are given in Table 15 (see Table 15).

Table 15*My Focus Group Facilitation Template*

Research questions:	- How do teaching academics approach the engagement of their students? - What are the teaching academic's perceptions of how and why their chosen approach to student engagement might make a difference?	
Focus group key goal:	- Identify point in thematic saturation in alignment to the research questions	
Working definition of a point in thematic saturation to achieve my key goal:	- When the participants' individual and collective embodied stories of student engagement sufficiency address my research questions	
Focus Group Outcome (FGO)	Focus Group Intention (FGI)	Behaviour Check Points
- Include diverse perspectives (FGO.1)	- Foster rapport with each other (FGI.1)	- Effective field relationships (Glesne, 1998), for example: - know each other's names - build and maintain trust
- Create space for conversational spontaneity (FGO.2)	- Engage in free-flowing discussion with each other (FGI.2) - Not be unduly influenced by the facilitator-researcher (Morgan, 1997) (FGI.4)	- Opportunity for reciprocity (Glesne, 1998), for example: - natural turn-taking and interaction - listening
- Maintain topic focus (FGO.3) - Reflect on prior experience (FGO.4)	- Partake in topic-focused reflective thinking (FGI.3)	- Effective discussions on the phenomenon (Glesne, 1998), for example: - various explanations - multiple perspectives - descriptions - clarifications
Focus Group Facilitation Strategies		
Chute Entrance / Negotiation-type Strategies:	- Ascertain preferred way for introductions (name, pseudonym, role, discipline) - Meeting location preference (aim: mutually agreed-upon location)	
Check Point Strategies (aim: facilitate trust):	- Begin the first focus group meeting by: - explaining the focus group process (i.e., sharing multiple ideas and describing experiences, turn taking, listening and interacting) - outlining my research questions	
Highly-Focused-Participant-Engagement Strategies (progressive strategies):	- Start subsequent focus group meetings by: - recapping the previously discussed topics - reiterating my research questions	
- Creating opportunities for critical thinking about student engagement practice	- Critical Moments Reflection (CMR) (Center for Reflective Community Practice [CRCP], n.d.)	
- Applying storytelling techniques with a focus on exploring embodied understandings of student engagement	- Representative vignettes and word clouds (from phase one part two data analysis)	
- Using the participants' own words and shared stories regarding student engagement (from the phase one interviews)	- Emerging themes placemat	
- Presenting a culminating task		

My Focus Group Meetings: Organisation and Overview

With my facilitation template complete I was ready to conduct my focus group meetings. However, when I began to organise them it was logistically unworkable to identify a mutually agreeable time for all ten participants. Undeterred I created two mini-focus groups each with five participants.

Mini-focus groups contain less than six participants (Krueger & Casey, 2009). To be effective they are to be made up of participants with a high level of experience and expertise in their area (Nyumba et al., 2018) which suited my study. While smaller groups can sometimes be a limitation, mini-focus groups are especially advantageous when the research aim is to gain in-depth understandings (Krueger & Casey, 2009) which also suited my study.

Seven focus group meetings were conducted. Focus Group 1 (FG1) and Focus Group 2 (FG2) each had three meetings over a period of three months plus there was one Bonus Focus Group (BFG) meeting. In total, three participants attended all three meetings, four attended two meetings, two attended one meeting each and one participant did not attend any. The BFG meeting was organised to accommodate Chey who was unable to make it to any of the other meetings and Alex kindly offered to also attend (see Table 16).

In the end my extensive planning proved to be highly effective with all seven mini-focus group meetings taking place without incident. My extensive planning enabled me to be highly accommodating and flexible yet remain strongly focused on achieving the best research outcome possible.

Table 16*Phase Two Focus Group Series Set Up*

Meeting number	Focus Group 1 (FG1)	Focus Group 2 (FG2)	Bonus Focus Group (BFG)
1	n=3 Tobin, Sam, Kai	n=3 Blair, Finn, Quinn	
2	n=4 Tobin, Alex, Sam, Kai	n=3 Finn, Blair, Reece	
3	n=3 Alex, Sam, Kai	n=2 Reece, Finn	
4			n=2 Alex, Chey
Total focus groups conducted		7	
Total participants in focus groups		9	

The Discussion Prompts

The discussion prompts proved to be an extremely important part of the focus group meetings. There were two sets of discussion prompts. The first set comprised the representative vignettes and the accompanying word clouds. This set was used during the first and second meetings for FG1 and FG2. The second discussion prompt, the emerging themes placemat, was used for the culminating activity during the final meeting for FG1, FG2 and BFG.

A4 sized, laminated versions of the representative vignettes and word clouds were laid out on a table in the meeting room. After the participants reviewed and reflected on these prompts, they shared their individual and collaborative insights and experiences for the duration of the meeting. As well as affirming the information within the prompts, the participants also critiqued and questioned missing elements.

I draw an example from Quinn in FG2 to illustrate how the vignettes and word clouds prompted discussion. Quinn opened the first focus group discussion with a comment on the word cloud:

One [word] that stood out for me was a word that isn't here, I was looking for the

word, authentic... I thought that would've been something that would have come up but when I looked at the word cloud, it's not there. There are other words that are similar like, relevant, but we're talking about student engagement, one thing that I find is that if they see your authenticity and the engagement... I don't disagree with any of it... but yeah, it's just interesting, the one thing I find... [If] I say that it's based on a real case study and they just go, "Oh" and listen more and participate more.

(Quinn, FG2, meeting one)

With this insight shared by Quinn, the other members of FG2 discussed the elements such as the use of authentic strategies in their classes and told stories from their reflections on their critical moments (as per the CMR).

Within twenty-four hours of the first and second FG1 and FG2 meetings I transcribed the audio-recording and undertook an initial thematic data analysis using the theme-identifying strategies: repetitions and theory-related material (Ryan & Bernard, 2003) (see Chapter Four). I then displayed the emerging themes visually on a placemat in preparation for the final meeting for FG1, FG2 and the BFG. The idea for the emerging themes placemat came from Miles and Huberman (1994) who emphasise the use of visual data displays to assist participants to make meaning from the information being discussed. This placemat is provided in Appendix G (see Appendix G).

At the final meetings I gave each participant an A4 sized copy of the placemat. Using the placemat, the participants reflected, confirmed and posed questions of my analysis of their individual and collective understandings. For example, the participants discussed the grouping of the topics with the themes and the connections that were illustrated between the elements. They particularly noted: the interpreted themes in light of their understandings;

commented on the components, such as the colours used and the direction of the arrows; and their ideas of the gaps in student engagement institutional measurement and reporting. Some participants also annotated their placemats with information they perceived as relevant and / or absent (see Appendix H Example of Annotated Placement, shared in this thesis with permission from Alex).

In interpretative research participant-researcher theme co-construction is strongly encouraged (Lincoln & Guba, 2013). This is because it provides the researcher with an additional layer of confirmation regarding their interpretation. Using the placemat to gain participant insights was a particularly effective way to involve the participants in this process. The participants critically and collaboratively discussed with me my interpretations of their experiences and re-shared their own interpretations. The placemat worked well as a theme co-construction instrument. It was in clear alignment with my research methodology and my key goal while providing an elegant conclusion to my data collection.

The Key Goal

The culminating task was not only a closing experience for the participants, it also marked the end of my data collection. This made it a culminating event for me the researcher as well as for the participants. It was a formal opportunity for me to use the placemat as a final co-construction instrument.

In line with good pedagogy I asked the participants to complete the culminating activity because I knew they were ready to do it. We were already reaching data saturation. I pinpointed the moment I realised that we had reached thematic saturation in my reflective journal:

During the second FG2 meeting yesterday I sensed I was nearing saturation point. Throughout this meeting I was listening to the same stories that had been shared in the interviews and prior focus groups. One particular familiar story was the participants' ideas on what it takes for student engagement to occur. They emphasised that both the teacher and the students have a significant role to play.

Now, after analysing the transcript and examining my codebooks to construct my emerging themes placemat I have a clear picture of just how many segments of data I have coded that contain the same stories. The concept of repetition – of stories and coded segments – is also echoed in the connections I am making to educational theory. This is triangulation in action.

For example, each time I code the idea of the engagement role of teachers and students, I am making connections to the way Nel Noddings explains her ideas of caring pedagogy. For Noddings (2005) caring is relational. So, for care to occur there must be a 'carer' and a 'caree'. It seems for these participants, student engagement is also relational. That there must be an 'engager' and an 'engagee' for student engagement to occur. As Noddings observes caring is an apprenticeship.

Reaching my key goal was an affirming moment for me in relation to my focus group preparation and facilitation. I felt like I was in the process of embodying Eisner's (2004) ideas of educational connoisseurship. During this phase of data collection I had "learned what to look for" and "I could give... reasons for my judgement" (Eisner, 2004, p. e-2). In essence, I had become "someone who, in this domain at least, could notice" (Eisner, 2004, p. e-2).

I recorded my feelings regarding this epiphany in my journal:

Eisner (2004) maintains that to be able to ‘notice’ a person must work hard and go through a connoisseurship apprenticeship. Being no stranger to an apprenticeship, a significant component of my skill development was in the construction of my facilitation guide. By clearly identifying my key goal and then working backwards, I was able to effectively apply my tools for my research-trade during the focus group meetings. For me, this process ensured I had a clear idea of what to ‘notice’, how to get there and why.

My pedagogically-informed-facilitator-researcher-approach to my focus group meetings meant I could enmesh my background experiences and expertise as an educator with my developing researcher connoisseurship. The backward mapping approach to focus group facilitation was very important to me as a teacher, as a researcher and as an apprentice. In addition, it helped to provide additional rigour to the research process. I wanted to unpick what was involved in the process, particularly how it related to triangulation.

Multiple Perspectives and Triangulation

I started this chapter with a quote on multiple perspectives which I saw as my inspiration. Gaining multiple perspectives “make our engagement with the phenomena more complex” (Eisner, 2005, p. 180). This has the potential to improve the quality and rigour of the research. Gaining multiple perspectives makes triangulation possible.

Triangulation originated as a navigation and land surveying technique involving the determination of a single point in space by converging the measurements of two other distinct

points. It was adopted in qualitative research as a method to test for credibility, thereby offering an alternative criterion to established tests of reliability and validity which better suit quantitative research (Cohen & Manion, 2000). Triangulation offers opportunities for cross-checking which in turn assists the interpretative researcher to identify and avoid intrinsic bias.

Denzin (2006) lists four different types of triangulation that can be used in interpretative research. They are: the triangulation of data, the triangulation of investigators, the triangulation of theory and the triangulation of methods. In my research I have been able to achieve all four types of triangulation at different levels. I have achieved triangulation of data by obtaining data through individual interviews, through focus group meetings and by collecting data at different times. Through the co-construction of themes with the participants and by seeking critique from my supervisors and critical friends, I was able to involve other investigators. I also sought to achieve triangulation of theory and methods by using a wide range of different forms of analysis. At this point I was reassured of the thoroughness of my processes and I could continue on with my analysis of my focus group data.

Focus Group Data Analysis

In interpretative research the researcher is the principal instrument for both the data collection and the analysis (Creswell, 1994). Data are primarily mediated through the researcher rather than through research tools such as surveys, questionnaires or machines. Because of this a consistent feature throughout the conduct of my research has been my own preparation. My goal for doing such extensive preparation has been my desire to perfect my skills as an interpretative human research instrument as much as possible. It has all been part of my apprenticeship in interpretative research connoisseurship (Eisner, 2005). This preparation now continues into my focus group data analysis.

Focus group data analysis takes a specific skillset and a practical understanding of different types of thematic-identifying strategies (Guest et al., 2012; Miles & Huberman, 1994). To ensure I utilised my particular skillset to effectively analyse my focus group data, my preparation occurred at four stages:

1. Prior to data collection (i.e., gaining understandings of the influence of participant interaction for focus group data analysis).
2. During data collection (i.e., collecting data in a particular way to capture participant interactions).
3. Post-data collection (i.e., constructing the data set in a particular way that participant interactions are included).
4. Pre-data analysis (i.e., identifying suitable theme-identifying strategies for analysing focus group data).

Once I was comfortable with my preparation, my focus group data analysis occurred in two stages:

1. Applying thematic-identifying strategies (i.e., Applied Thematic Analysis (ATA) and pattern coding).
2. Justifying the emerged overarching themes (i.e., re-examining the context of FG1, FG2 and BFG).

Focus Group Analysis Preparation: Prior to Data Collection

As I outlined in Chapter Two, focus groups involve participants cooperatively engaging in critically reflective processes (Krueger & Casey, 2015; MacIntyre, 1994). During these cooperative processes, the participants interact with each other. These

interactions are a core feature of focus groups as they affect both ‘what’ is discussed and ‘how’ (Guest et al., 2012; Miles & Huberman, 1994).

Prior to collecting my focus group data, I therefore needed to understand how participant interaction influenced the data (as it is collected) and how I could ensure this information is included as a critical element within my analysis. As Carey and Smith (1994) observe participant interactions during focus group meetings occur at three levels: individual, group and interactional (between individual and group). Data collection therefore needs to be deliberately designed to capture all three levels if this information is to be included in my analysis.

Focus Group Analysis Preparation: During Data Collection

I employed two strategies to effectively capture the three Carey and Smith (1994) levels during data collection. I audio-recorded each focus group meeting and I simultaneously took detailed field notes. I could do this because I had studied shorthand at secondary school and had maintained and further developed this skill as an adult. The use of shorthand codes enabled me to quickly yet comprehensively and unobtrusively document elements that could not be captured by the audio-recording, for example the interactional group dimensions, the non-verbal behaviours and group exchanges (Guest et al., 2012).

Focus Group Analysis Preparation: Post-data Collection

The next step in my analysis preparation was to construct data sets that represented the three Carey and Smith (1994) levels thus reflecting the participant interactions. To begin, I proofread my transcripts and then carefully annotated them using my shorthand notes. I then re-listened to my audio-recordings, checking that I had annotated the transcripts as

accurately as possible. Next I applied colour coding to the annotated transcripts to explicitly illustrate the three levels:

- Red = interactional dimensions at the group level (e.g., gestures towards whole group, non-recorded and recorded natural turn-taking interactions).
- Orange = interactional element at the individual level (e.g., spoken interactions and non-recorded gestures from one participant towards another to invite them to speak).
- Blue = non-verbal behaviours of individuals (e.g., facial expressions, non-verbal actions).
- Green = non-verbal group exchanges (e.g., nodding in agreement and / or disagreement).

Focus Group Analysis Preparation: Pre-data Analysis

With my data sets ready, the next step in my preparation was to explore the particularities of inducting themes from focus group data using ATA. While I had gained strong skills in thematic analysis in phase one of my study (interviews and re-stories) there was no group element. I therefore needed to account for this element in my selection of ATA theme-identifying strategies for my focus group analysis.

Krueger (1994) advises researchers to remain cognisant of the aims and purposes of the study when including the group element. In alignment with my aims and purposes, I therefore decided to choose strategies which were applicable for analysis of holistic individual insight and holistic collaborative insight. For example the Ryan and Bernard (2003) similarities and differences strategy is well suited for exploring focus group data for divergent and convergent viewpoints both between individuals and between individuals and

groups. However, the Ryan and Bernard (2003) word frequency count strategy is not appropriate because it can only represent occurrences at a group level (Guest et al., 2012). Once I had a list of ten suitable strategies my preparation was complete and I could move onto my data analysis.

My Data Analysis: Applying Thematic-identifying Strategies

The ten ATA theme-identifying strategies I had identified were: repetitions, transitions, similarities and differences, cutting and sorting, indigenous typologies/categories, metaphors and analogies, linguistic connectors, theory-related material, word co-occurrences and missing data (Ryan & Bernard, 2003) (see Chapter Four). In line with my phase one analysis, as I employed each strategy I constructed a codebook (Guest et al., 2012).

I reached thematic saturation after completing ATA of the focus group data. Assurance that I had reached thematic saturation emerged in two ways: repetition of themes and no more new themes being inducted from the data. Despite reaching this point I was determined to use one more strategy to ensure my analysis had been sufficiently rigorous and I had thoroughly explored the connections and relationships between the themes.

To achieve this final check Guest et al. (2012) recommend that after employing ATA researchers utilise an additional particularly beneficial thematic strategy. Based on my previous experience (and success) with using pattern coding to interrogate data for higher level themes, I decided to apply this strategy (see Chapter Five) (Miles & Huberman, 1994). By using pattern coding I was able to further refine my overarching themes, sub-themes, sub-sub-themes and topics. Upon then reviewing my codebook I concluded that I did not need to apply more theme-identifying strategies.

After completing my focus group analysis my overarching themes comprised:

- Conceptualising student engagement: encapsulating the participants' perceptions of the way students demonstrate engagement and the understanding that student engagement functions as a 'two-way street'. The participants' idea of the 'two-way street' emphasises the mutual responsibility of teachers and students for engagement to be realised.
- Student engagement pedagogies: encapsulating the participants' perceived engagement promoting pedagogical approaches, ways of prioritising student engagement, considerations of content relevancy and their humanistic attributes for fostering engagement (e.g., use of humour).
- Evaluating student engagement: encapsulating the participants' perceived aims, challenges and insights for engagement evaluation and the current limitations with evaluating student engagement at Regional Campus 1.

My Data Analysis: Justifying the Emerged Overarching Themes

The final step in my focus group analysis was to be reassured that the overarching themes accurately reflect the participants' multifaceted verisimilitude. I was interested in checking whether these overarching themes were drawn from each of the three focus group meeting streams (i.e., FG1, FG2 and the BFG). My plan was to re-examine the specific underlining context from where each overarching theme emerged. To me, this final step provided a reflective lens which I could use to justify my identification of the overarching themes.

To undertake the context exploration process, I used my focus group codebook and re-interrogated coded segments of text from individual focus group conversations. These coded segments contained topics, sub-sub-themes and sub-themes that were combined to form the overarching themes. Applying the Ryan and Bernard (2003) strategy of cutting and sorting, I re-read the segments to ensure the overarching theme effectively captured the context of the discussion.

Context Exploration – Conceptualising Student Engagement. In re-examining the context of the ‘conceptualising student engagement’ overarching theme I was able to I confirm that regardless of the stream (FG1, FG2, BFG) the participants’ engagement conceptualisations were present and consistent.

Tobin’s and Reece’s explanations of the way the participants connected the concept of ‘student thinking’ to the concept of ‘student engagement’ help to exemplify the participants’ engagement conceptualisations:

- *If [the students] are not made not to think, I think the entire exercise has gone out the square. So, there are many strategies that we might use to get students to think, and there comes the engagement part of it... it’s very much in the literature about, think students, and the concept of thinking students is a concept... I think even the concept of thinking students... it actually encourages them to have a deeper learning. (Tobin FG1, meeting one)*
- *... even in online conversations sometimes obviously in class you don’t have to discuss everything, but you want to create that sort of thinking processes in... [the students]. (Reece, FG2, meeting two)*

Context Exploration – Student Engagement Pedagogies. The overarching theme ‘student engagement pedagogies’ encompasses the participants’ practices they perceive promote student engagement. In re-interrogating the context across the focus group streams, I confirmed that the discussions of practice were connected to the environmental elements of Regional Campus 1. For example, according to the participants, the size of the university can function as an enabling element for engagement to be fostered.

As exemplified by Kai and Quinn in their particular focus group streams, the smaller size of Regional Campus 1 helps the academics to know their individual students which they perceive promotes student engagement:

- *... because we’re a smaller university, I think that helps to with engaging students. They’re not just a number, whereas I’ve had students come from other universities, really big unis, and they feel like they’re a nobody, the lecturer doesn’t know who they are, they don’t know, whereas here... as you progress through the degree, you definitely get to know... [the students] all by name, you get to know about them, you know you can engage a lot more with them, they’re not just a number, they are a person, and I think that helps too. (Kai, FG1, meeting one)*
- *I think it’s as simple as getting to know their names, [it] changes the relationship and then changes your class experience with them as well. Because if you forever have to call the roll and you don’t know who they are... [the students] totally pick up on it. (Quinn, FG2, meeting one)*

Context Exploration – Evaluating Student Engagement. The overarching theme ‘evaluating student engagement’ contains two sub-themes: insights, aims and challenges, and

effectively measure engagement. In re-interrogating the locations from where this overarching theme emerged, I was able to confirm three sub-sub-themes. Participants try to evaluate student engagement so they can:

- Promote engagement with streamlined practices.
- Reflect on practices and make curriculum adjustments to promote engagement.
- Motivate students to promote engagement.

My re-interrogation of this theme confirmed that three areas are connected by the elements the participants perceive influence and / or limit the evaluation of student engagement. An example of one element which was discussed in the focus group streams was an effective engagement measurement tool. As Reece explains:

I would probably say that the fact that we're missing the tool to measure student engagement. We've got plenty of things... analytics, the feedbacks. I'm guessing [these tools] can be used to measure somehow, to figure out their engagement. Having a tool that we can really use to measure student engagement would be good. I don't think that analytics are that accurate... The feedback survey is a disaster, we learn nothing from that and... I'm not saying it out of concern for my feedback scores, they're always good, but I read them and I learn nothing from it. (Reece, FG2, meeting three)

After Completing My Focus Group Analysis

After the re-interrogation of the context was complete and I confirmed my analysis, I created an additional page in my codebook. This page contained an overview of the topics, sub-sub-themes, sub-themes and overarching themes inducted from my focus group data analysis (see Table 17). As per my phase one data analyses, I engaged with my supervisory

team to invite critique. My supervisors affirmed my analysis and my assessment that I had achieved my key goal of thematic saturation. I therefore prepared for the qualitative synthesising process of my three sets of data: the interviews, re-stories and focus groups for thematic data reporting (detailed in the next Chapter).

Table 17*Phase Two Codebook Overview*

Topics	Sub-sub-themes	Sub-themes	Overarching themes
Thinking students - deep, appropriate and meaningful engagement from students exerting cognitive efforts, drawing on prior knowledge, seeking to understand and experience enjoyment as they move beyond core content mastery (e.g., Biggs & Tang, 2011)	Students demonstrating engagement	The nature of student engagement	Conceptualising student engagement
Engagement and under-engagement: deep levels of learning and surface levels of learning – playing the institutional game			
Visual student engagement behaviour does not always equate to learning (behavioural engagement vs cognitive engagement)			
Dual teacher and student accountabilities and responsibilities for engagement – teaching quality reflected in student's learning	Engagement as a two-way street to promote thinking students		
Work to understand learners' epistemologies and ways of learning to develop professional and personal skills and knowhow (e.g., Wyatt, 2011)	Prioritising students to promote engagement	Engagement promoting pedagogies	Student engagement pedagogies
Maximise engagement within the regional university context			
Explicit focus on students' thinking and cognitive discomfort			
Support students to set goals, identify their motivations and 'fail'			
Practice unstructured interactions and pedagogic care to foster student engagement			
Consider the role of relationships but must complement engaging curriculum content			
Capitalise on the 'student as customer' positioning			
Identify connections within and across courses	Content relevancy		
Include authentic learning tasks and assessment			
being human – using humour and sharing mistakes	Personalisation of teaching and learning	Teaching academics personal attributes for student engagement	
Provide time for students – consider academic workload issues	Support student engagement with streamlined practices	Insights, aims and challenges	Evaluating student engagement
Challenges in make curriculum innovations – interrupts teaching and learning cycle	Reflect on and make changes to practices to promote student engagement		
Motivate students to promote their engagement			
Preference for a more effective evaluation tool/s	Limitations to existing student engagement measures and evaluations	Effectively measure engagement	
Effective use of existing evaluation measures (e.g., attendance-taking, discussion board monitoring)	Teaching academic monitoring of student engagement		

Chapter Summary

The second and final phase of my data collection comprised a series of seven mini-focus groups. To scaffold participant interactions I developed a focus group facilitation guide using a backward mapping strategy. This started with my key goal, namely identifying when the participants' individual and collective embodied stories of student engagement sufficiency addressed my research questions. Achieving this goal would provide an elegant conclusion to my data collection and analysis. It would also align with my personal aspiration of becoming an interpretative educational researcher connoisseur capable of identifying how, when and why thematic saturation had occurred.

Focus group facilitation strategies, such as a reflective thinking framework, discussion prompts and a culminating task were employed to scaffold participants' individual and collaborative reflections and stories of their student engagement experiences. Inductive techniques were then employed to analyse the focus group meeting transcripts at three levels: individual, group and interactional between individual and group. Once repeating themes emerged, I re-interrogated conversation contexts to ensure that I had captured participant verisimilitude. In the next chapter, Chapter Seven, I outline my qualitative synthesise process and begin my data reporting.

Chapter Seven: My Presentation and Discussion of Data for Core Themes One, Two and Three

In educational criticism a story is told, perhaps about a class and its teacher. The class is vividly described so that readers can visualize the scene, the meanings of the actions within the classroom are explained, and the educational value of the events described and interpreted is discussed. It would seem that a critic does all that can be done when description, interpretation, and evaluation have been completed. But there is more. (Eisner, 2017, p. 103)

Introduction

In Chapters Seven and Eight I present the data collected in response to my two research questions: How does the teaching academic approach the engagement of their students? and What are the teaching academic's perceptions of how and why their chosen approach to student engagement might make a difference?

I sort my presentation according to five core themes developed through a synthesis of my data analysis. As core themes one to three primarily relate to research question one I present this data in Chapter Seven. As core themes four and five primarily relate to research question two I present this data in Chapter Eight. In the presentation I work to achieve a more connected whole by identifying and aligning literature and locating the data within interpretivism, my chosen research methodology.

Rationale for My Presentation of the Data

I deliberately held back the presentation of my data until after I had completed my analysis to avoid 'data dumping'. This is described as the presentation of large chunks of

verbatim text that loosely connects, contains little evidence of analysis and lacks a succinct narrative (Thorne, 2020). I first became aware of the term when one of my supervisors used it during a supervision meeting shortly after I had completed my data collection.

At the time I reflected in my diary:

Today in the supervision meeting we were discussing the way different researchers approach their write-up. One supervisor mentioned 'data-dumping' and that I am to ensure I guard against it. I have decided to take this comment as a firm caution and use it to design my reporting process. I must take particular care to assure the reader that my research processes are thorough. To do this I must effectively scrutinise and analyse my data before I present it. Part of this process will involve me considering the power-dynamic. The participants' stories are valuable but I must be cognisant that I am the one deciding on the how, why, when and where of the data presentation. The best way I can envisage achieving this is to thoroughly analyse the data and report on this analysis before I present it. This will enable me to assiduously identify the most relevant and most potent segments that best illustrate each core theme.

In alignment with Applied Thematic Analysis (ATA), my core themes are garnered from two or more content-driven overarching themes (Guest et al., 2012). I distilled these core themes using a thematic synthesis process. I decided on this approach because thematically analysed data enable the presentation of larger data segments that can be better “understood as a whole, rather than breaking it up into small abstracted sections” (Harding & Whitehead, 2016, p. 134).

Presenting my data after the analysis and synthesis ensures that even the larger data

segments have integrity, are well-connected and support a succinct yet well-integrated narrative. In addition to the larger data segments, I present some small abstracted sections to highlight specific points from the larger data segment.

Data are mostly presented identifying the participant's pseudonym. On the occasion when this does not occur I simply state Participant Not Identified (PNI). This additional layer of anonymity permitted me to include a highly individualistic data segment that might otherwise be traceable to a particular participant. For the first two core themes the data primarily comes from the intensive interviews but this changes with themes three to five where the re-storied data and the focus group data become more prominent.

I have deliberately held back the inclusion of my critical survey of the literature. As stated in Chapter Two I completed a discrete comprehensive survey of the literature but rejected it for my final thesis. This literature was dominated by positivist research, could not effectively contextualise my study and was too disconnected from my research story (Evans et al., 2011). However as literature work is to be an integral, iterative part of the entire doctoral process (Glesne, 1998; Kamler & Thomson, 2014) I have decided to include pertinent literature connected with my data reporting (in Chapters Seven and Eight).

To effectively incorporate academic sources, I will follow Wolcott's (1990) advice: I expect my students to know the relevant literature, but I do not want them to lump (dump?) it all into a chapter that remains unconnected to the rest of the study. I want them to draw upon the literature selectively and appropriately as needed in the telling of their story... Ordinarily this calls for introducing related research toward the end of

the study rather than at the beginning, except for the necessary ‘nesting’ of the problem in the introduction. (p. 17)

I have decided therefore to draw upon the literature “selectively and appropriately as needed” (Wolcott, 1990, p. 17) in response to my data at the end of the study. This is to enable me to avoid literature clumping simultaneously demonstrating that I am well informed, while ensuring the voice of the teaching academic retains prominence within my overall narrative.

Throughout this thesis, in compliance with the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association (APA) 7th Edition* (2019) recommendations, I use the gender-neutral plural pronoun ‘they’ instead of the gender specific ‘he’ or ‘she’. This pronoun is used solely to make my language more inclusive. It is not meant to imply that I am making generalisations of any kind.

The Summary of My Data Analysis

The summary of my data analysis involved the following nine steps:

- a) Re-reading the three sets of transcripts (ten interviews, ten re-stories and seven focus groups).
- b) Re-reading the three codebooks and codebook overviews while focusing on the topics, themes and theoretical ideas.
- c) Constructing a grid to juxtapose the themes (inclusive of overarching themes, sub-themes and topics) from the three data sets (see Appendix I).
- d) Using the juxtaposed grid and applying theme identifying strategies of repetitions, word co-occurrences, and similarities and differences (Ryan & Bernard, 2003) (see Chapter Four) to identify areas of potential homogeneity and dissonance.

- e) Further refining of the presented themes using the cutting and sorting strategy (Ryan & Bernard, 2003) (see Chapter Four) with the segments of evidence from the transcripts and literature-related material to more deeply explore any “contradictory or alternative explanations” (Walsh & Downe, 2005, p. 209) (see Appendix J).
- f) Regularly meeting with my doctoral supervisors to seek critique of the synthesis of my data analysis process regarding construction of my core themes.
- g) Using a synthesis of the overarching themes, sub-themes and topics to construct five core themes. These core themes are:
 - Perceptions of the student engagement concept.
 - Experiences, beliefs and goals underpinning student engagement approach.
 - Considerations of the students.
 - Pedagogies for fostering student engagement.
 - Evaluation and justification of student engagement approach.
- h) Identifying and aligning literature that supports, expands or refutes each core theme.
- i) Locating the presentation of my data within my interpretivist methodology.

Locating Core Theme Data within My Interpretivist Methodology

My reporting from an interpretivist perspective places emphasis on the perceptions of each participant on their lived experiences at a particular point in time. Although connected in an abstracted way for my thematic data reporting, for each individual participant these perceptions are unique, constructed, contextual, fluid and relational. This is inevitable because perceptions form and re-form as part of everyday individual experience (Firestone, 1987; Lincoln & Guba, 2013).

Using an interpretivist methodology to investigate the research questions involves synthesis. This synthesis was made possible by employing an ethical decision-making process to inform my emergent design: how I apply my research methods, my approach towards data collection, my data analysis procedures, my presentation of data and my alignment of this data with the literature. Researcher values must be inherent in all phases of the research process.

Throughout this process I remained cognisant of Eisner's (2017) counsel to look for "more" (p. 103). I interpreted this to mean I need to locate each core theme within my interpretivist methodology.

To enable me to keep a tighter rein on the course of my research, I have decided to locate my data narrative within the interpretivist methodology at the end of each core theme. Carefully looking back on each core theme narrative in this way makes it possible for me to regularly check that my researcher values have complied with the requirements of the methodology. This form of evaluation provides me with an opportunity to go beyond the research questions themselves and ask a tough question regarding ethical validity, namely: 'What are the potential ramifications of the core themes that emerge from this thesis?' (Angen, 2000).

Core Theme One: Perceptions of the Student Engagement Concept

The core theme 'Perceptions of the student engagement concept' includes ways the participants theorise about the notion of student engagement. As reported in Chapter Three there is considerable diversity between the ten participants. Even with this diversity all ten

participants conceptualise student engagement as a process by which students take an active role to achieve their learning.

Kai's comments exemplify this widely-shared belief that student engagement connects action with learning:

I always think the students don't learn by osmosis as much as they'd like to think they can. Just sit there and it all goes into their brain. It doesn't!... If students go away feeling like they haven't learnt anything, then they haven't engaged. So, engagement would mean that they're actually putting into the class. (Kai, re-story)

Kai argues that students learn more when they participate in the process of "*putting into the class*". Students exert effort so they can achieve an outcome, that is, learn something. This idea resonates with the literature which consistently argues that if a student increases their level of engagement, their learning outcomes will also improve (Biggs & Tang, 2011; Chickering & Gamson, 1987; Mombourquette, 2013; Shea et al., 2015; Skinner & Belmont, 1993; Wyatt, 2011). Korobova and Starobin (2015) however warn that the reverse is not a given. Learning outcome achievement alone tells us little about the quality of a student's engagement. Many other factors may be at play such as intelligence or prior experience.

Another widely held belief is that student engagement involves both the student and the teaching academic. Reece and Alex explain:

- *It's not about us only signing a contract and telling the students this is what I will offer to you, it's also about them saying, I've received this and now I'll do my*

part to make it work... I'll define student engagement as a two-way street.

(Reece, intensive interview)

- *We take personal responsibility for how well students engage but [it]... is their responsibility for their own engagement. I actually think in terms of teaching that authoritative stance rather than authoritarian demanding some kind of tokenistic engagement. You have to take that authoritative position where you are encouraging them to take some sort of responsibility for their own learning.*
- (Alex, BFG)*

Reece's conceptualisation of student engagement as being "a two-way street" aligns with Alex's formulation of it being a two-fold "responsibility". Dual teacher student influence is often presented in the literature as a component of student engagement practice (Broughan et al., 2018; Coates, 2005; Kahu, 2013). Guilbault (2018) describes it as a process of co-engagement – between students and teachers.

PNI likens student engagement to making a curry:

I say this analogy in the class: it's like making curry... you've got lots of ingredients in your kitchen and you want to prepare a very good meal... But you have to get the right proportion, [the] right ingredients and cook it ... [at] the right temperature. Only then will you have a good curry. Only then can you commercialise your curry... If you want to make an authentic curry you have to use everything so I am talking about authenticity, or you can just claim but you will not be making an authentic curry. So, then... [the students] go, "How can I make an authentic curry?" (PNI)

For PNI student engagement not only requires the precise combination of the “*right ingredients and ... temperature*” students also need to ask: “*How can I make an authentic curry?*” This brings in the idea of student motivation. Motivation is described as the energy and direction underpinning an action (Lee et al., 2005; Martin, 2012; Ryan & Deci, 2000). For Lee et al. (2005) this underpinning energy is the “strength, intensity and persistence of an action. *Direction* gives the behavior a specific purpose” (p. 1096).

Even though student motivation has a different definition to student engagement Martin (2012) considers it highly relevant because motivation is identified as a precursor to student engagement. For example, a student may be motivated to engage in their studies in order to achieve particular learning goals (Kim et al., 2017). Motivation therefore can be construed as a critical factor for both engagement in learning and the achievement of learning goals (Kim et al., 2017).

Tobin and Drew extended the dual student teacher influence and student engagement motivation mix by contextualising student engagement within overall student development:

- *My definition is... the intensity and the depth in which the students want to embrace the ideology and for which they want to make a change. Difficult to measure that but. (Tobin, intensive interview)*
- *I see student engagement as a tool... a pathway or a channel for me to bring out the best in these kids... Bring to the surface their nobler selves. Student engagement is for me the tool in which that can be done. The more meaningful[ly] I engage the students, the better I am at facilitating this process of bringing to bear their nobler selves. (Drew, intensive interview)*

Tobin says that when students “*want to make a change*” that provides them with their strength and direction. For Drew this comes from the teaching academic who uses student engagement as a “*tool*” to bring “*out the best*” in their students. According to Quinlan (2011) approaching engagement of the ‘whole’ student in a way that considers overall development, both professional and personal, works to enhance knowledge and skills while supporting the achievement of learning goals. However, as Tobin observes measuring student engagement within the wider context of all these elements is “*Difficult*”.

Another perspective is that of student behaviour as Chey and Finn explain:

- *The ones who just sit there and type notes about it, busily, and then don't review their notes and don't do anything with those notes but they looked busy the whole time, they think they look like a good student... But they're not actually and the notes are unnecessary anyway because they're getting them in the PowerPoint. It's just them doing what they think a student does. It's busy stuff. (Chey, BFG)*
- *You do have those students in your class that are really happy to engage in discussion and they've got eye contact, body language, everything tells you they're interested and they want to learn and then... outside of the room, they may not be doing the readings or putting any extra time in. Like in the room is good but like for [a] university subject you do need to spend another seven hours usually in the week outside [of class time]. (Finn, FG2, meeting three)*

In the above text, distinctions are drawn between superficial and deep engagement. For Chey it is the “*busy stuff*” as opposed to “*review*”. For Finn it is the overt behaviour “*in the room*” versus the covert behaviour outside - spending “*another seven hours*” in

preparation and consolidation. According to Biggs and Tang (2011) surface level behaviours such as taking notes and appearing busy in class can be markers of under-engagement.

Students who engage deeply, “appropriately and meaningfully” exert cognitive effort, draw on prior knowledge, and seek to understand and experience enjoyment as they move beyond core content mastery (Biggs & Tang, 2011, p. 27). Making decisions based on observable behaviours alone can therefore be quite misleading. Fuller et al. (2018) for example, assert that some students can exhibit all the expected engagement behaviours such as nodding and eye-contact as a way of ‘pretending’ to engage while other students who seem to demonstrate off-task behaviours may be engaging more deeply. The teaching academic therefore, needs to be cautious when making assumptions about the quality of a student’s engagement.

While all ten participants conceptualise student engagement as a process by which students take an active role in achieving their learning, individual participants voice ideographic interpretations. At the big picture level participants believe that the teaching academic has a vital role in the student engagement process. It is a process of co-engagement. Different participants however highlight subtly different positions. These mainly refer to the logistics of encouraging student motivation and helping them engage in more purposeful and effective ways to learn and achieve.

A number of participants drew a distinction between superficial and deep level engagement and told stories to illustrate how in class some students pretend to engage but do not adequately follow through with this engagement in their own time. Others considered student engagement and motivation within the overall context of student development, both

personal and professional. This act of combining participant notions that relate to dual student teacher influence, motivation and contextualising it all within overall student development brings to the fore the observation that student engagement is conceptually ambiguous and therefore difficult to measure accurately.

When compared with the literature the ten participants' conceptualisations largely align with the definitions taken from prominent student engagement researchers. My synthesis of the definitions in the literature represents student engagement as: involving teachers supporting students to exert cognitive, behavioural and emotional efforts to meaningfully engage in academically purposeful activities to learn and achieve (Coates, 2007; Fredricks et al., 2004; Henrie et al., 2015; Krause, 2005; Kuh, 2001).

Fredricks et al. (2004), Kahu (2013) and Zepke (2017) maintain that despite these uniform understandings there is still a lack of conceptual clarity surrounding the definition. According to Zepke (2017) this lack of conceptual clarity will continue to limit broad scale positivist research into student engagement, thereby leaving room for more interpretative investigations to help secure our understandings.

Zepke's (2017) claim corresponds with observations made by the ten participants regarding their conceptualisation of student engagement. There remains considerable room for dialogue in which diverse and conflicting interpretations can be negotiated. Furthermore, it is important to recognise that the way each teaching academic understands the student engagement concept informs how they design their own student engagement approach.

Locating Core Theme One Data within My Interpretivist Methodology

Core theme one data highlight the ways particular teaching academic perceptions of student engagement are currently not evident in the formal student-reported, behaviour-focused measurements of student engagement at Regional Campus 1 (see Chapter One). Instead they are disquietly absent. This absence seems to reinforce a nomothetic discourse which fails to adequately take into account the idiographic interpretations (Alvesson & Sköldbberg, 2018) of higher education student engagement processes.

These processes involve a co-engagement relationship between students and teachers; effective student actions and behaviours for learning and achievement and provide a tool which the teaching academic can use to facilitate student agency and development. Each of the participant's ideas regarding these processes relate (in different ways) with their student engagement approach which will now be explored in Core Theme Two.

Core Theme Two: Experiences, Beliefs and Goals Underpinning Student Engagement Approach

Sorting stories under Core Theme One, 'The conceptualisation of student engagement', was relatively straightforward because each story tells us about ways participants theorise about the notion of student engagement. The overarching themes therefore were not used.

Sorting stories for Core Theme Two, 'Experiences, beliefs and goals underpinning student engagement', was more complex. To assist presentation, four overarching themes are used. The four overarching themes are:

- Educational experiences underpinning student engagement approach.

- Cultural beliefs underpinning student engagement approach.
- Instructional goals underpinning student engagement approach.
- Teaching and learning philosophies underpinning student engagement approach.

Educational Experiences Underpinning Student Engagement Approach

All ten participants during the intensive interviews shared stories of the multifaceted ways their own educational experiences influence their student engagement approach. One aspect that applies to all teaching academics is that of being a student themselves.

Blair and Kai for example both explicitly connected their own student experience with their current academic student engagement approach:

- *We should teach how we would like to be taught. I reckon that is very important to have in mind and I'm also a student, I'm enrolled in ... [subject removed for confidentiality] so that being a student helped me to put myself into the shoes of the student and how I can help them and how I can make things easier and better for them. (Blair, intensive interview)*
- *I've been there myself [as a student] and I know it's hard. (Kai, intensive interview)*

Blair and Kai report that their own educational experiences help them consider the learner's perspective. As Blair states, this ability to put themselves in "*the shoes of the student*" motivates them to promote student engagement in ways that relate back to and are informed by their own experiences as a student. Even though this point resonates with the literature, Oleson and Hora (2014) strongly advise caution when teaching academics simply design their pedagogy by reflecting on their own student experiences. Their approach is

likely to be especially influenced by their own ways of learning (or not learning). This might not suit all learners.

Reece and Drew took their personal stories of being a student in a different direction:

- *I had wonderful lecturers when I got to university that I'm trying to, yeah, to remember this and see what I can do as well as they've done for me. (Reece, intensive interview)*
- *[T]he way I teach... is a reflection of some of the teachers I had who really scaffolded me, mentored me and gave me a lot of opportunities... Unfortunately, when I was younger... I made quite a lot of mistakes and then, at a critical age... I did not have the same teachers... At that point of time in my life and due to that, the ramifications of my actions, which were not ameliorated or, which were not sort of addressed, at that time by the teachers, I still feel the ramifications even today... even till today. (Drew, intensive interview)*

For Reece and Drew positive experiences as students provided them with powerful teacher role models. Even the less-positive experiences were seen as being pertinent and perhaps gave Drew a broader palette from which to work. A deep personal appreciation of how long lasting an impact some teachers can have was demonstrated when Drew stated: “*I still feel the ramifications*”. This insight helped Drew amplify the importance of providing scaffolding, mentorship and opportunities to engage.

Lortie (1975) describes the way teachers work to emulate the modelling provided by their own teachers as an ‘apprenticeship of observation’. Behaviours thus learnt tend to be more intuitive and imitative than analysed and located within a sound pedagogical

framework. Unless academics critically analyse the time they spent partaking in formal education, observing teachers, and their teaching approaches, those experiences may become highly influential in their student engagement approach, particularly in informing their default position (Borg, 2004).

A third relevant perspective regarding prior education experience came from Chey:

I do believe in having a professional distance between myself and my students so yes, I think it's important that I build a relationship with them and that I offer them respect and get respect back but I'm also, I don't think it's my role to be their best friend. I think that's quite a dangerous path to tread. And again, maybe that comes from my background as a high school teacher where having a very conscious awareness of the power relationships that are in play, is important so that I don't exploit them but so that I don't overstep marks that could then expose me to risks. (Chey, intensive interview)

Being a high school teacher before becoming a teaching academic provided Chey with the occasion to deeply consider the roles and responsibilities of the academic when moulding their own relationship with their students. When promoting student engagement, the teaching academic must be particularly aware of the “*power relationships*” that come into play. A healthy teacher student relationship according to Martin and Collie (2019) supports student engagement. Chey's approach is reflective of the ways “teachers bring to their work their own idiomatic school biography, the conflicted history of their own deep investments in and ambivalence about what a teacher is and does” (Britzman, 2003, p. 2).

A fourth educational experience underpinning designing a student engagement approach came from Sam:

Whether it's using different styles of learning, visual, audio, kinaesthetic, and getting them to teach others, see one, do one, teach one. My old man taught me that and Aristotle was the same, the highest form of learning is teaching, and I take that as a personal mantra. (Sam, re-story)

The teaching and learning ideas of Sam's father provided a framework for Sam to apply. Sam seeks to promote student engagement by involving students in processes of observation "see one", action "do one" and experience "teach one". Sam's comment illustrates the enduring influence early educational experiences provided by parents and significant others can have. The comment draws attention to the continuing role ontology and epistemology play in the design of a student engagement approach (Schommer, 1990).

Participants identified a diverse range of prior educational experiences they believe shape their student engagement approach. These include: remembering what it was like to be a student themselves (leading to the ability to empathise); reflecting on the quality of their teachers regarding what to emulate and what to avoid; recognising prior working experiences such as being a school teacher and using this knowledge to establish clear teacher-student relationship boundaries; and appreciating the input of significant others particularly parents. Diverse prior educational experiences are thought to lead to tacit connections with teaching ontologies and epistemologies (Eisner, 1994b; Schommer-Aikins, 2004).

Cultural Beliefs Underpinning Student Engagement Approach

Cultural beliefs are particular understandings transmitted via social learning within a

defined group. Academics and students at Australian universities can be part of many different cultures. These include an Australian culture, a university culture, plus the particular cultures with which they associate according to their discipline area, their own belief systems, those of their families and friends.

During the intensive interviews Tobin described the ways their cultural upbringing influences their engagement approach. As Tobin explained:

How much you want to devote and to what extent you want to devote is often an individual philosophical framework that each person brings... Real learning doesn't just happen by completing thirteen weeks of study and how you can make that happen is a challenge. It might be a cultural aspect, the way I was taught and brought up, being influenced by my cultural upbringing or traditional thinking where the teacher is supposed to be a way towards God, which means the teacher is respected and it's about teaching being about growth and learning. (Tobin, re-story)

Tobin's culturally-informed ways of thinking tie in with the role of the teaching academic and their personal definition of teaching. Steered by a philosophy that "real learning" is not limited to the semester timeline, Tobin's approach to student engagement emphasises teacher respect and "teaching being about growth and learning".

Cultural beliefs inform epistemic ideas that then guide the academic's student engagement approach (Schommer, 1990). There is a multi-level transactional relationship between culture and student engagement (Hudley & Gottfried, 2008). This complex culture-student engagement relationship is enmeshed with both context and teaching practice (Mansour, 2009). As Taylor and Woolley (2013) elucidate teaching is not static, instead it is

a creative, constantly evolving endeavour. Teachers and their teaching are continually influenced by their own cultural backgrounds and developing cultural competence.

Instructional Goals Underpinning Student Engagement Approach

All participants connected their student engagement approach with their instructional goals. Instructional goals are defined as broad but achievable content-specific learning outcomes (Gagne et al., 1992).

Blair made direct connections between instructional goals and fostering student engagement:

I know... [the instructional goals] are not easy... There are too many, they're not appealing. So, I had to do something to make them interesting and appealing... If I ... teach them ... [directly] from books, that would make the teaching very boring.
(Blair, intensive interview)

Blair was concerned with the problem of having an overcrowded theoretically challenging curriculum that students perceive as being “*very boring*”. To overcome this problem Blair purposely introduces content in innovative, appealing and interesting ways. Blair intentionally works to facilitate student engagement and support student learning through the creative use of pedagogic design.

The approach Blair describes aligns with maximising learning opportunities (Prozesky, 2000). Students might be given learning tasks that seek to develop higher order, critical and creative thinking, while simultaneously monitoring and reflecting on their own learning. Blair’s approach is different to the more passive transmission model where

teaching academics simply disseminate information to students (Barkley, 2010; Costa et al., 2011; Konopka et al., 2015).

According to Sam the transmission model still has a role to play:

I haven't given up on the didactic way of teaching, I still think a small group of students respect the idea that there is information to transmit, the transmission model. I know it's not the current higher education way of thinking, we should all be doing blended or flipped or letting them do the work. But in the sciences... there is a lot of content that I think needs to be transmitted before they become higher-order thinkers.
(Sam, intensive interview)

Even with an understanding of the current institutional “*way of thinking*” Sam nonetheless believes the transmission model has a place in the promoting student engagement approach toolbox. It might provide a catch-up option for students with insufficient essential learnings to engage in the requisite higher order thinking. Alternatively, the transmission model might be a preferred way of learning for students who have used it extensively in the past.

Sam’s student engagement approach takes the instructional goals of the discipline into account. Doing so Loughran et al. (2006) argue is the sign of an “expert pedagogue” (p. 4). The expert pedagogue “not only chooses particular teaching procedures for particular reasons” but is alert to multiple perspectives that may impact on the learning (Loughran et al., 2006, p. 4). Effective enactment involves balancing one’s own ontologies, epistemologies, contexts (discipline content, institutional requirements), instructional goals and expectations of students (Kang & Wallace, 2005; Maggioni & Parkinson, 2008).

Understanding the array of factors guiding one's teaching, Quin (2017) concludes, is an integral part of designing a more sophisticated student engagement approach.

According to Kang and Wallace (2005) instructional goals do not necessarily align with the ontological and epistemological beliefs of the teacher. This is because instructional goals are discipline level externally predetermined learning outcomes whereas teacher ontologies and epistemologies are a complex entanglement of diverse personal belief systems (Schommer, 1994).

By way of illustration of this point Tobin shared an example of a conflict between instructional goals, ontology and epistemology:

I used to be very spontaneous in the lecture but coming to Australia, I had to re-think and re-phrase. I have to be very academic, I had to re-focus and structure it in such a way that it really matches the subject outcomes and outlines. That was a big shift. But sometimes that doesn't allow me to be who I am... But I think the flexibility for an academic to be talking and intellectual freedom and all that you know, that's somehow lost as we need to be seen as very structured. That's a shift for me. (Tobin, intensive interview)

As Kang and Wallace (2005) and Maggioni and Parkinson (2008) observe there is not always a well-defined connection between the teaching academic's ontologies and epistemologies and their teaching approach. When teachers are required to adjust their teaching to accommodate instructional goals a disconnect may occur. This certainly posed a problem for Tobin who had to "re-think and re-phrase" personal ontologies and

epistemologies to try to make them align with the instructional goals detailed in the curriculum document. In the process something was “lost”.

Tobin’s experience of loss at the interface level is not an isolated event. According to Issac et al. (2018) academics often resist institutional “top-down approaches as they typically do not solve problems that teachers feel they have” (p. 119). When teaching academics do not have a voice regarding input into the design and facilitation of the subjects they teach, problems are more likely to emerge. This is especially the case if the disconnect is between instructional goals and personal ontologies and epistemologies (Hawk, 2017).

Teaching and Learning Philosophies Underpinning Student Engagement Approach

All ten participants discussed the relationship between their philosophy of teaching and learning with their student engagement approach. A teacher’s philosophy of teaching and learning is often expressed as the teacher’s statement of personal beliefs about teaching and learning explicating their role as the teacher and their understanding of how students learn (Pereira, 2016).

For Alex this personal philosophy of teaching and learning forms the basis of enacting their student engagement approach:

I often relate my teaching to my values or principles that align with my philosophy of practice, something like valuing difference and supporting inclusion. Sometimes I deliberately challenge... [the students] in regard to social stereotypes to get them to identify and go deeper in their interrogation of their own positioning and beliefs.

(Alex, re-story)

By drawing connections between their own values and those of their students Alex provides a device to encourage learners to interrogate their “*own positioning and beliefs*” According to Galt et al. (2012) proficiencies such as lifelong critical thinking and analytic skills can be fostered when teachers help students purposefully engage in values-based reflective learning opportunities. Arendt (1958) however cautions against over focussing on the contemplative at the expense of praxis.

A viewpoint exemplifying an explicit, upfront inclusion of teaching philosophy underpinning their approach to student engagement which does include praxis was reported by Reece:

The first slide the students see when they come to my class for the first time is my teaching philosophy. My teaching philosophy is: you are a practitioner. I don't see them as students anymore and I try to follow this up throughout the semester with activities that really put them in real-life situations. I think ways to really engage them is to stop thinking about them as students only but as young professionals in the making. When it comes to my teaching, I try to think about strategies that will allow me to make them realise that soon they'll be graduating, and they will be in the workplace and this is the workplace with some sort of safety net. (Reece, re-story)

Reece's intention is to effectively support student learning through engagement in “*real-life situations*”. This involves identifying the students as “*professionals in the making*”. Christenson et al. (2012) maintain that when teachers explicitly integrate and underpin the discipline content with real-life learning experiences, both cognitive and behavioural student engagement can be more effectively promoted.

Drew provided an even deeper explanation of the ways their teaching and learning philosophy underpins their student engagement approach:

I employ a humanistic pedagogy... which actually tries to break down those walls of objectivity and subjectivity and being objective as opposed to being personal and things like that. Humanistic pedagogy actually requires you to become more than just a teacher... it requires you to actually establish a relationship where it's almost vernacular, I won't say loco parentis, but something very similar... One of the most important things that I would try and do is to remember the student names... and I think that really starts the whole ball rolling. The moment the student realises that the teacher cares enough to memorise everybody's names, notwithstanding the fact that there are so many of them, they then give you the benefit of the doubt. (Drew, intensive interview)

Drew explained that their student engagement approach was informed by a humanistic pedagogy. Often associated with the idea of person-centred education (Mazlow, 1943; Rogers, 1942), humanistic pedagogy is a form of teaching built on giving prominence to human agency, personal freedom, recognition of the whole person and the promotion of student autonomy. For Drew the process of becoming “*more than just a teacher*” involves establishing and modelling caring teacher-student relationships (Noddings, 2013) through strategies such as memorising student names.

Participants shared the explicit connections between their teaching and learning philosophies and their student engagement approach. These included: philosophy as a reflection tool; as a pedagogic guide towards praxis; and as a pedagogic approach towards autonomy. Teaching and learning philosophies can also function in implicit ways. As

Brookfield (2017) maintains, teaching and learning philosophies are informed by an individual's personal views, values and beliefs. The ways these are exemplified therefore can be quite subtle operating more as unspoken tacit understandings.

Despite there being powerful connections between philosophy and practice, becoming cognisant of the influence of philosophy on practice can be enormously challenging. This is because to understand the ways academic teaching practice is connected with philosophies, often involves deep consideration of personal beliefs of education, ontologies, epistemic ideas, goals and the role of a teacher (Goodyear & Allchin, 1998; Kearns & Sullivan, 2011; Payant, 2017).

Locating Core Theme Two Data within My Interpretivist Methodology

Locating each core theme within the methodology is a cumulative exercise. Points raised under Core Theme One also may apply to Core Theme Two.

Core Theme Two data draw attention to the subjective experience of reality and multiple truths of the ten participants regarding their student engagement approach. The situated teaching-academic-understandings of student engagement approach – at a particular time and space – suggest a highly influential but institutionally unreported component of the student engagement experience. In the university context student engagement interventions are mostly ascribed through institution-wide pedagogical processes (Castro, 2019; Delialioğlu, 2012), yet the participants in this study report different decision-making strategies that relate to their own ontologies and epistemologies. The absence of the teacher voice in the university's reporting of the student engagement experience therefore could be seriously problematic.

Pedagogies to promote student engagement may be enacted differently (or perhaps not at all) depending on the connection – or disconnection – between the university prescribed interventions and the particular teaching academic’s experiences, beliefs and goals that are intricately interwoven with their own personal ontologies and epistemologies. It also raises doubt as to whether the student engagement data currently being collected at the university wide level is measuring what it is claiming to measure (Ulriksen & Nejrup, 2020).

Core Theme Three: Considerations of the Students

In Core Theme Three participants consider by what means their student engagement approach takes into account the needs of all their students. Participants’ stories indicate that this is proving to be quite a confronting task. Growing diversity in multiple facets of the learning experience has exaggerated the challenges teaching academics are currently facing when deciding how to design their student engagement approach to more appropriately accommodate the complex needs of this expanding student cohort. As with Core Theme One, the overarching themes are not necessary to sort Core Theme Three data.

From the outset participants regularly made the point that the type of student cohort is changing from a homogenous group of students straight out of secondary school to a much more heterogenous cluster. They told different stories to illustrate this shift. They chose to highlight changes in the way students gain entry to university:

We have students who are entering uni through alternate pathways. So, some students didn’t finish high school... Others have done things like joined the army or have trades and have been out of formal education for a long period of time... Some of our students didn’t finish schooling because of chronic health conditions... We

have a lot of first in family students but also students who would come from families who would be deemed to be middle class, have parents with university qualifications but they disengaged with schooling for a range of reasons. So, their entry into university is an atypical pathway from what was traditional. (Chey, intensive interview)

In Australia students can enter university direct from secondary school (the typical traditional route) or via an alternative “*atypical*” pathway (Anderton, 2017). Alternative pathways include, but are not limited to: a trade certification; tertiary entrance preparatory course; recognition of prior learning (RPL); interview; audition or tertiary admissions test (Anderton, 2017). Atypical entrance pathway students bring with them diverse learning strengths and life skills. These however might not adequately equip them for the realities of academic study. According to Haverila et al. (2020) and O’Shea (2019) students from atypical entry pathways are more vulnerable to disengagement and attrition. Targeted assistance especially during periods of transition may therefore be necessary.

Another transformation taking place to the student cohort is the increase in international students. The expectations and needs of many international students are decidedly dissimilar to those of domestic students. Sam explains how this can create tension:

Internationals [students] are here. They want it delivered straight up, by the learning objectives, talk to the slides if you want, read off the slides if you want, that’s quite adequate. Whereas you’re hitting the money with the domestics [students] because you’re hamming it up, you’re rocking around the lecture theatre. Someone even said, “Don’t walk... stay still. Stay at the front of the lecture theatre”.

And it was like, no I don't do that, so that was quite confronting. (Sam, intensive interview)

The expectations and needs of international students are going to reflect their prior learning experiences (Wekullo, 2019). As many international students are used to teacher-centred lecture formats where little student-student and student-teacher interaction takes place it is only natural for them to want more of the same (Straker, 2016). Being asked to consider the disparate student effects on the teaching academic was something Sam found “*quite confronting*” (Bell & Harper, 1977).

Tobin's story centred on the global idea of a changing student demographic:

I see... the student cohort the profile itself has changed over a period of time. That poses major challenges in the delivery mode, the conceptualisation, the orientation, etcetera, etcetera... I think new market ideologies have come in, new ways of thinking, online delivery, engaging with distance education. The student cohort being changed... have challenged the academics to re-conceptualise the way in which we engage. (Tobin, intensive interview)

This changing demographic, coupled with “*new market ideologies*” and hybrid ways of teaching, present a challenge for academics like Tobin to “*re-conceptualise*” their student engagement approach. Haverila et al. (2020) and Wyatt (2011) maintain that a key element in fostering engagement for diverse learners is high quality teaching. This involves explicitly accommodating the diverse needs of particular students. Achieving this involves: offering different ways of teaching and learning to different groups; providing dissimilar expectations of engagement; and fostering ways for students to become orientated with and understand the

social and academic contexts that align with their student experience (Straker, 2016; Wekullo, 2019).

The student experience introduces another way of coming to terms with this cohort transformation, the notion of student *lifeload*. Kahu (2013) defines lifeload as “the sum of all the pressures a student has in their life, including university” (p. 767). Alex explains:

Uni life is just one small part of their lives [the students]. They are working. They are studying. They have families. They have partners. They are trying to balance so much! (Alex, intensive interview)

According to Kahu (2013) a student’s overall lifeload can be a powerful influencing variable on student engagement. As Alex says university is “*just one small part*” of a student’s life. This is particularly the case at Regional University where a high percentage of students have diverse learner characteristics (see Chapter Two). These include: being over the age of twenty-five, financially independent with work and family responsibilities; being first-in-family to go to university; having lower socio-economic status; being learners with additional needs; and being from diverse cultural, linguistic, social, political and religious backgrounds.

Tobin shares some examples:

They have families. They have children. They work. There are mature-aged students. The first to come to university and [there are] some from poor socio-economic backgrounds... So, we need to be sensitive to what they might need. For example, when they ask for extensions for their assignments, we need to be open.
(Tobin, re-story)

Reduced levels of social and economic capital tend to be accompanied by higher rates of attrition (Allen et al., 2016; Costa et al., 2020). By connecting student engagement approach with student lifeload Tobin is able to be “*sensitive to what*” students may need. This openness to student needs within the background context of student diversity exemplifies what Carroll (2015) refers to as a more inclusive approach to student engagement.

Despite the continuing evolution of policies and technologies fostering opportunities for students to enter university from diverse backgrounds, the required formal university supports to facilitate engagement and retention have lagged behind (Costa et al., 2020). Because of this disconnect, students with diverse needs may not have access to the type of resources, support, experiences, and understandings they need. In particular they might need the hidden elements of the university curriculum to be more explicitly enunciated (O’Shea, 2019).

Quinn’s story explains how these transformations in the student cohort have led to a personal change of focus:

So, what’s changed over time, is my focus has changed. I’ve moved away from content and my focus has switched to student. So, I think that’s where student engagement comes in. Mainly thinking of them being an active learner, and not focussing on the required content. But instead just focussing on them [the students] where they’re at and working with them. (Quinn, intensive interview)

Moving the teaching academic's focus from what is being taught (the content) on to who is doing the learning is a significant change for Quinn. This focus transfer enables Quinn to see each student as an “*active learner*”. Prioritisation of the individual learning needs of the students provide a powerful underpinning to Quinn's student engagement approach.

According to Wyatt (2011) prioritising individual learning needs can be an effective way to foster student engagement. Russ et al. (2016) however uphold academics' pedagogical actions as being “highly dependent on what they pay attention to or how they understand what they are seeing” (p. 400). Matthews (2016) and Ramsden (2003) therefore remind us that there is often a gap between teaching academics' perceptions (of their approach) and the students' interpretations (of that approach).

Chey demonstrated awareness of these challenges and the idea of targeted assistance in the following disclosure:

I have consciously built-in elements within my curriculum about resilience and about scholarly attributes... We have conversations about the fact that it's not just your mind that comes to university... it's your whole body. If you've had a really bad morning, if you've had a fight with one of your kids or your partner or if you're stressed out about money, those things don't just get left in the car park or at home. They come with you so they can impact on your ability to perform as a student. (Chey, re-story)

Chey's decision to deliberately include in the curriculum “*elements... about resilience and about scholarly attributes*” to help students better deal with cumulative disadvantage,

aligns with Kumpfer's (1999) resilience framework. This framework concentrates on five internal resilience factors: cognitive, emotional, physical, behavioural and spiritual and considers the interaction of these factors within the environment which contains protective and risk factors (e.g., family, school, community, peers and culture) (Kumpfer, 1999; Kumpfer et al., 2011). Chey's consideration of how the student's "*whole body*" (i.e., their interactions, children, partner and financial stresses) can impact their "*ability to perform as a student*" informs Chey's curriculum response to the potential impact of these environmental factors upon student engagement.

Similar to the way that Chey considers the interactions between the 'whole student' and the environment in their engagement approach, Thomasse (2020) used this framework to build a resilience intervention program that, rather than position students within a "deficit discourse" (p. i), helps them build on their strengths. This approach reinforces Carroll's (2015) inclusive approach to student engagement where the student and their individual context is considered as part of the curriculum.

Participants shared the ways they consider the perspectives of their students. This begins with gaining a better understanding who these students are, recognising their enormous diversity and acknowledging their lifeload. Participants discussed the need to take onboard these realities and re-conceptualising their student engagement approach accordingly. They also talked about the need to switch focus from content to student as an active learner and to be aware of the polarised ways engagement approaches can be perceived. Chory and Offstein (2017) and Farr-Wharton et al. (2018) argue that when teaching academics actively take on board such strategies, they potentially become more powerful engagement-fostering agents for the full range of their student cohort.

Locating Core Theme Three Data within My Interpretivist Methodology

In Core Theme Three ‘Considerations of the students’ I continue to build on the points raised under Core Themes One and Two.

Core Theme Three data clearly revealed the fundamental role students play in the student engagement process. All participants acknowledge that the students – their diversity and lifeload – are pivotal to their student engagement approach. Their stories highlight a major shift occurring in the student population towards increasingly more diverse levels of social, cultural, economic and academic capital (Bourdieu, 1977) as well as changes in the types of teaching particularly with the use of technology. Participants told stories to illustrate how they are trying to account for these changes when developing their student engagement approach.

This research illuminates the academic experience with students at the engagement interface. Data reveal the participants’ student engagement approach (at the interface) is a complex entanglement of: conceptual understandings, ontologies, epistemologies, philosophies of practice and contextual considerations, particularly those that relate to the students. It is a co-engagement between the teacher and the student and just like teaching – it is an inherently complicated, dynamic, endeavour.

Data highlight the one-sided nature of the institutional approach to measuring student engagement. This narrowness heavily downplays the rich diversity within the university community. Overlooking these shortfalls limits understandings of the academic student engagement experience and elucidates an implicit power dynamic that constricts a

legitimisation of diverse voices (Desivilya et al., 2017). To ensure more inclusive student engagement understandings can emerge that further reflect the diverse population, it is important for the institution to value and incorporate the worthwhile and germane experiences of the teaching academics (Killick, 2017).

Personal Reflection

Given this is the final core theme for the chapter I felt it was appropriate for me to reflect on my own development during the progress of this research. I wanted to ask myself whether I have experienced any transformations? Have I undergone any “deep and lasting change, equivalent to what some people term a *developmental shift* or a *change in worldview*” (Stevens-Long et al., 2012, p. 184)? I went back to my personal journal to investigate.

During my initial time as a sessional staff member I found it well-nigh impossible to obtain formal student engagement information. While I knew my students were completing surveys based on my work there was a disconnect. I could see the questions used in the large-scale student engagement and experience surveys but I could not obtain information about my teaching. The subject-coordinator controlled access and I was not privy to it. I remained an ‘outsider’, fumbling in the dark.

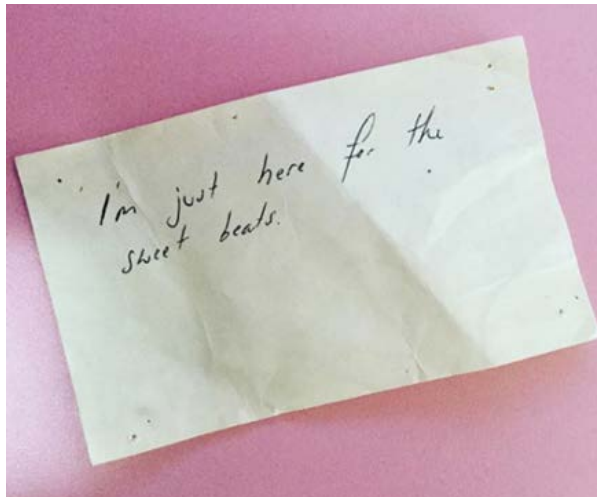
I decided I needed another ‘way in’ to inform my practice, to learn about the engagement of my students. Given I had been a non-traditional student myself I was strongly motivated to discover whether different students required different student engagement approaches. I therefore turned to my trusted teaching tool, the Post-it

note. At different times during the semester I would invite my students to provide feedback about my teaching and their engagement: what they enjoyed, if there was something else I could do. This largely anonymous feedback was useful. The students seemed comfortable with it and I could implement actions based on their feedback to foster engagement almost immediately.

Everything was running smoothly until something extraordinary happened. I received feedback that neither referred to the content, practical understandings nor assessment information. Instead this student simply stated: "I'm just here for the sweet beats" (see Figure 3).

Figure 3

Post-it Note of Informal Student Feedback Statement



This was a reference to the music I played at the beginning of each class to create a welcoming environment. When the song finished, I started class.

The comment excited me. It was a form of thin-slicing that told me something else, that there was a co-engagement between my teaching and this student's learning

(Ambady & Rosenthal, 1992). My pre-engagement cue was working, at least for this one student. The Post-it piqued my interest. I wanted to know if other teaching academics had ever experienced a similar type of feedback so I designed an interpretivist, qualitative case study research project. In my search however, I uncovered a much deeper issue, something that was not even on my radar when I began my study.

During the conduct of my research the more I listened to the stories of my ten participants the more aware I became that I was not the only one who was experiencing a disconnect. My original assumption had been that my disconnect was due to me not being given access to the formal engagement metrics but my participants, who did have access to this information, were also reporting this disconnect.

Through Core Theme One, Two and Three data I learned that for the participants in my study, their student engagement reality was distinctly different to that being reported by the university. For the teaching academics working at the teaching-learning-interface student engagement is a fast-moving, complex, multifaceted issue. Yet the data gathering and reporting systems on student engagement at the whole of university level seem to be based on a different assumption, namely that student engagement can be measured using a simple, fixed, student self-report mechanism, one that was originally adopted from overseas and has largely been left unaltered for decades (Barkley, 2010; Mandernach, 2015).

Chapter Summary

In Chapter Seven I reported the data in relation to the research question: How does the teaching academic approach the engagement of their students? This presentation of my data

was organised by three core themes, namely:

- Perceptions of the student engagement concept.
- Experiences, beliefs and goals underpinning student engagement approach.
- Considerations of the students.

Throughout my data reporting I aligned the content of each core theme with pertinent literature as well as located core theme data within my interpretivist research paradigm.

Potential ramifications of this synthesis of data and literature were highlighted for each core theme. In Chapter Eight I present the data for the remaining two core themes.

Chapter Eight: My Presentation and Discussion of Data for Core Themes Four and Five

Surely all our great teachers, from Montaigne to Montessori and Piaget, *created* and *invented* ways to understand their pupils better. They *perceived* the complexities of children's thinking and *inquired* into them; they reflected upon those perceptions, *collaborated* with colleagues and *represented* their ideas in writing. (Eisner, 1985, p. 262)

Introduction

In Chapter Eight I present data for Core Theme Four 'Pedagogies for fostering student engagement' and Core Theme Five 'Evaluation and justification of student engagement approach'. These core themes provide insights into my second research question: What are the teaching academic's perceptions of how and why their chosen approach to student engagement might make a difference? I continue to include pertinent literature in connection with the participants' narratives. I also resume my exploration into the potential ramifications emerging from this study. I do this by locating my data reporting within the interpretivist methodology.

As my subjective interpretations are such an important aspect of this research methodology (see Chapter Two), I thought it was fitting to start this chapter with a brief update. This will enable me to more clearly demonstrate how and why I worked to base my interpretative analysis on ethically gaining empathy and understanding of the perspectives of the research participants.

Brief Update

I became interested in student engagement as an early-career-teaching-academic. Due to my extensive background in primary education, I was particularly interested in ensuring that my university students were more fully engaging in the learning activities I provided. Focusing on this task made me feel like I, the teaching academic, was an integral part of the student engagement process. I had made the assumption that student engagement was an essential part of the teacher-student relationship. As a teaching academic I wanted to believe that I was able to make a positive difference in each of my student's learning.

When student engagement measures are collected at the whole of university level however, only the students are consulted. The teaching academic's voice is missing. University students are asked to self-report on their own assessment of their student engagement experience. The action reframes university students as customers and the work of teaching academics as product (Royo, 2017).

This represents a paradigm shift away from the traditional academic teacher-student relationship towards a customer-provider relationship. When the teaching academic's voice is missing student engagement at the whole of university level is more a measure of "the value [the students] attributed to their educational experience and the value they expected to receive as a return for their investment" (Kandiko & Mawer, 2013, p. 22).

This assessment is only part of the story. The involvement of the teaching academic is missing. I was interested to learn more about this disconnect so I decided to conduct an interpretative case study research project to investigate how ten teaching academics on one

campus of the same university perceived student engagement. I chose two research questions.

In Chapter Seven I report on the analysis of data to answer the first question: How does the teaching academic approach the engagement of their students? My interpretative analysis of the data led me to observe that the teaching academics in my study approach the engagement of their students as a more knowledgeable other (Vygotsky, 1978), one who guides them towards achieving a higher level of student engagement potency. For the teaching academic in my study the teacher-student relationship continues to remain vitally important with the customer-product relationship kept more in the background. This is because it is through the teacher-student relationship, that teaching academics help to positively transform student learning. Like Montaigne, Montessori and Piaget, teaching academics work to better understand their students so they can enact transmutation.

Now in Chapter Eight I report on the analysis of data to answer the second question: What are the teaching academic's perceptions of how and why this approach might make a difference?

Core Theme Four: Pedagogies for Fostering Student Engagement

Core Theme Four data contain participants' descriptions of their pedagogies for fostering student engagement. Data have been sorted according to two underlying overarching themes namely:

- Using relevant, active and collaborative teaching and learning experiences.
- Employing relational pedagogy.

Using Relevant, Active and Collaborative Teaching and Learning Experiences

The most reported engagement promotion approach is bringing students' attention to content relevancy. This multidimensional strategy involves simultaneously integrating relevance into the overall course structure while linking it with professional application (Perry et al., 2017; Saavedra & Opfer, 2012).

Kai's story stresses the significance of the multidimensional nature of the relevance strategy:

You need to be able to connect... [the students] with their future. Especially... first years! I know in our degree it's all kind of core subjects that they feel are not really related... As you progress through the degree it's more related... I think it's all about connecting them to how it is useful, because if they don't think it's useful, they won't care. They won't be engaged. (Kai, FGI, meeting one)

As Barkley and Major (2020) surmise, when beginning students can situate their learning experiences within the 'bigger picture' of their course, they are more likely to engage. The challenge for teaching academics though is to ensure that the students are accurate in the way they situate this learning. Theory (abstracted practice) provides stabilising building blocks for a bottom-up approach towards learning how to apply that theory in the workplace.

Many participants however, report that engaging students in first-year subjects is difficult because of the initial primary emphasis on theoretical learnings with only peripheral attention given to practice-based experiences. To help address this concern participants work to explicitly highlight how the students' engagement in theory sets their professional

bearings. In first year, the goal is to establish a solid conceptual foundation for more practical work in future subjects.

At this early stage the student's conceptual understanding of the parts and the whole is still formative so great care is needed to ensure that the connections being made are precise. According to Coates (2010) successfully engaging first year students involves extending the students' gaze beyond content-based experiences. This is because motivation to engage seems to come from learning how to connect the parts (bottom up) to the whole (top down) and vice versa, hence the idea that the relevance strategy is multidimensional and requires both active and collaborative pedagogies.

Engagement is predicated on opportunities where students can forge curriculum understandings with community connections (Ashwin & McVitty, 2015). Reece's story provides an ingenious in-between example of how the parts and the whole can start to be brought together:

Something that works well... [is] inviting students that completed the subject and did quite well in the previous year and have them do... a fifteen-minute presentation on a topic... Why they were so interested in it and why did they do so well... [The first-year students] tend to connect with that [invited previous year] student better than with me and... ask questions that the student [guest] could answer that I couldn't answer. So more on the student experience rather than the topic itself and they liked that. They tend to like that a lot. (Reece, FG2, meeting two)

To me, Reece's tactic can be usefully interpreted through a Vygotskian lens (e.g., Vygotsky, 1978). Reece's classroom as the 'sociocultural context' becomes a pivotal place

for fostering community connections (Salkind, 2004). In this context, the guidance from a past student as an intermediary ‘more capable other’ becomes a vital component for facilitating engagement and anchoring achievement by focusing the learning on relevance using pedagogies that are active and collaborative (Salkind, 2004).

These Vygotskian ideas can also be identified within other participant stories especially those where active and collaborative pedagogies are described. In these narratives the participants outline their facilitation of co-engagement experiences as an effective way to support the integration of relevant understandings. Alex and Blair’s reporting exemplify this constructivist lens, where active and collaborative learning is encouraged:

- *Sometimes my classroom looks a little bit like chaos! I think because I try to do those active learning activities. Last week I had a class where there was a lot of people sitting in groups and talking about their learning. I was sitting at the tables with them and having a chat through different things and then moving onto the next group... It’s a lot of student directed learning. (Alex, re-story)*
- *I start them with a case study and after that we have a discussion, and this makes the learning active and student directed. (Blair, re-story)*

Although similar, these individual descriptions pertain to different class sizes and to different disciplines. Alex (with more than seventy students) embraces the “*chaos*” and employs a group conferencing technique to discuss issues related to the social sciences. For Blair, a smaller class size (of approximately forty students) coupled with a case study prompt, effectively enables the engagement of the whole class in a conceptually relevant, learner-driven conversation related to the hard sciences.

According to Ramsden (2003), when teaching academics facilitate purposeful student interactions, they can support learner engagement in sense-making processes. Mittelmeier et al. (2018) caution however, that with classroom diversity, group discussions may not be an effective learning experience for all students. Some students may prefer more intrapersonal ways of learning especially those international students who find such interactions unfamiliar. Teaching academics may therefore need to initially support individual students to understand how to learn through collaborative engagement.

As Kai explains, learning how to learn through collaboration has many potential benefits so individual student support in the early stages is thought to be a worthwhile investment:

I try to get... [the students] involved, which is also important because they are first years. And we've seen the research that is, if you've got friends, they're going to keep going through the degree a bit easier than students who don't have friends. So that's what I encourage. I see my role as both helping them along through the course and getting to know each other. (Kai, re-story)

According to Ahn and Davis (2020) and Mishra (2020), the university setting provides a unique opportunity to develop strong friendships and a sense of belonging. These two components are often reported as being highly influential on student achievement. The idea being when students feel emotionally supported within the learning community, they are more likely to actively engage and learn.

Many participant stories reiterate a focus on a positive affective response. Shernoff (2013) upholds that student enjoyment and interest are key ingredients for driving and

sustaining student concentration and cognition. They argue that students become more meaningfully engaged and learn more effectively when the experience is sufficiently fascinating, rewarding and relevant (Shernoff, 2013). The engagement challenge for the teaching academic is to use relevant, active learning and collaborative pedagogies to steer each student towards personally achieving this level of positive affective response.

To achieve such an end Blair and Quinn both highlight professional preparation:

- *I try to focus every time on practical things... [It] puts... [the students] in a kind of critical context. Because that makes things more interesting for them. Otherwise... they are not interested, and they will not engage - and I understand because it would be very boring. (Blair, intensive interview)*
- *Making it relevant and making it real is ... important to... [the students] because if they can't connect why they need to know then they switch off and think, well I don't need to know this, it's not relevant to me. (Quinn, intensive interview)*

Alongside strategies emphasising positive affective responses, participants note how throughout the progression of a course employing relevant, integrative tactics may also yield an adverse emotional response. This discomfort is thought to be necessary for the student to develop greater resilience, and to be better able to cope with frustration initially during the course and later during their professional working life. For example, Sam reports:

I say it hurts, I say I'm going to make it hurt, especially in second year... You learnt lots of facts and figures in first year. Second year I'm going to ask you to integrate two pieces of information together. I say that's actually going to hurt, not physically hurt, but mentally that's going to be challenging. Being up front with them that this is more difficult, my expectations are higher, you will have to do more of the work now.

I will still inspire you, but you've got to do more of the work. (Sam, FGI, meeting one)

In educational terms, cognitive discomfort can be viewed as a positive experience where one's thinking is being challenged (Sale, 2015). It is a process of learning how to change gear. The down side is as students break-free from familiarity and make new connections, they are likely to experience feelings of distress (Spalding, 2014). Some students equate this experience of "cognitive discomfort" with "student dissatisfaction" (Dudau et al., 2018, p. 260) and complete their student surveys accordingly. This may place the well-meaning teaching academic in a highly vulnerable position if student dissatisfaction is high.

Some students may also resist engagement when rigour is strongly emphasised (Seidel & Tanner, 2013). This resistance can present as a significant roadblock for teaching academics who are at the coalface working to foster greater levels of student engagement through relevant, active and collaborative pedagogies. This is particularly problematic when students are afforded opportunities to report their perceptions of their learning experiences in formal engagement surveys at the end of each semester, yet the teaching academics' voice or perspective is absent.

To alleviate cognitive discomfort Taylor and Statler (2014) uphold that teaching academics need to aim for a "Goldilocks" (p. 595) just right, affective response. This involves facilitating content through ways that the student feels, is neither uninteresting nor overly difficult. However, while this approach may yield high satisfaction scores, too much emphasis on 'just right' experiences can diminish students' development of relevant, robust

understandings and abilities (Belet, 2017). Teaching academics also must be mindful of the requisite professional standards of their discipline.

Student engagement in relevant higher order learning tasks can also be important post-university. As Hervey and Wood (2016) outline, when students are working in the field and identify the workforce applications, previous rigorous, unpopular teaching experiences become the most valued so there is a latent appreciation. Reece's story explains how their method of maintaining high teacher expectations aligns with relevant field applications:

They have lecture schedules and if the lecture starts at ten, the students need to be here at ten. I give them five minutes and if they show up after five minutes, they go home. Because that's something depending on which job you have, you need to be there on time, clock-in, clock-out. So, I try to implement that whole professional environment with the students. (Reece, re-story)

Reece upholds professional expectations to help scaffold the transition from university to work. This is because Reece's subject draws students in their final year of study from a range of similar courses. In this capstone experience, it seems the classroom environment becomes a powerful mediating element between teacher expectations, holistic student development and relevant application. As a student's perception of the environment can greatly influence their experience however, a significant barrier to engagement promotion may emerge if there are differing expectations between teachers and students at the engagement interface.

Alex concentrates on professional preparation by intentionally intertwining relevant theoretical learnings with field-based knowhow:

I do think about those professional competences... I build in critical thinking skills... where they are critically reflecting on policies, theories, practices and what that might mean for them as a professional later on... I'm always aware of how those professional competencies need to come through in my teaching and hopefully that that reinforces their need to engage because it's professionally relevant and purposeful later on. (Alex, BFG)

Alex's reference to graduate attributes provides a powerful framework to reinforce students' "need to engage". It offers a top-down approach to navigate their learning. Since the early 2000s, competencies such as: lifelong learning skills; proficiencies in multimodal communications, literacies and numeracies; and critical and creative thinking have been specifically identified as highly desirable for students to develop as part of their university studies (Barrie, 2006; Hénard, 2010; McCune & Entwistle, 2011). In interweaving both course competencies and professional skills, the teaching academic aims to further students' holistic development towards professional preparedness.

In summary, Core Theme Four – Pedagogies for fostering student engagement data helped to answer the how part of my second research question namely: What are the teaching academic's perceptions of how and why this approach might make a difference? Under this theme the teaching academics referred to a wide range of different strategies where relevance, active and collaborative pedagogies are used to promote student engagement. These include a bottom-up approach with a focus on theory, an in-between approach through course progression where active and collaborative pedagogies are employed to bring it all together, and a top-down approach where the emphasis is on professional preparation.

Some teaching academics also made note of the discomfort experienced by students when they are challenged to change gear in their learning processes, when higher expectations come into play. This requirement for students to work smarter can place the teaching academic in a highly vulnerable situation, especially when they lack a voice in the university wide assessment of student engagement.

Employing Relational Pedagogy

A widely reported engagement approach identified to counter this vulnerability is employing relational pedagogy. It is a dynamic strategy that involves fostering a positive teacher-student relationship for academic, emotional and social development (Reeves & Mare, 2017).

One multi-directional technique reported by all of the participants to support holistic student development is active listening. Noddings (2012) describes active teacher listening as an ethic of care which is a vital way to understand what the student as “the cared-for is experiencing” (p. 772). Tobin and Kai’s stories exemplify the participant descriptions:

- *I have an open-door policy and the students can just walk in anytime. It is about having patience to listen to the students. It is not about teaching all the time, it’s allowing students to talk about what’s happening to them. (Tobin, re-story)*
- *I make it an open-door policy. If they have any questions, they can just come and ask. I say to them, “You don’t have to go off and be confused, you can come and talk to me”. And I get a lot that come... They can email or phone me up and sometimes they just appear at my door and I don’t have a problem with that. (Kai, re-story)*

The participant position on listening aligns with the notion of caring pedagogy, a relational, responsive approach which intertwines both technical and emotional teaching practice (Freire, 2005; Noddings, 2012). The practice is often unstructured (e.g., an open door) and can be contrary to institutional accountability-driven frameworks (Walker & Gleaves, 2016). This highlights a potential tension between the academics' engagement approach and the institutional standpoint as according to Regional University policy, total student consultations are to be limited to four hours per week during a study period (Name withheld, 2018).

Literature on relational pedagogy inherently connect the approach to individual teacher disposition (e.g., Freire, 2005; John, 2016; Noddings, 2012). Tobin's story draws attention to the teacher attribute of "*having patience*" as part of their method. Reece's description of their strategy also contains explicit reference to the actions of the teacher. For example:

I think it comes down to making yourself available to the students. I take that seriously, [to] really be available for my students. They actually have my cell phone number so in case there's something that comes up and they know they can reach me anytime. It's very time consuming so you need to be organised and have the time to do that and there is some degree of dedication... My students are my priority, in ten years I may feel differently but I got into teaching for this. (Reece, re-story)

Reece's "*very time consuming*" statement is echoed by Chey (re-story) who describes attending to students as "*a labour-intensive way of teaching*". These assertions resonate with Hendrick et al. (2006) and Hogan et al. (2017) who posit the combination of: increasing diverse student enrolments, emphasis on teacher accountability and decreasing funding are

creating a challenging space for enacting caring pedagogies. It seems to me while relational pedagogies can help to address one problem (i.e., engagement promotion), the contextual elements may well not afford the sustainability of the approach.

As relational pedagogy is multi-directional, the participant narratives also outline some intentional actions of students which can influence their engagement. Reece's method involves student reflection on personal goals and circumstances:

The whole idea or concept of success can... be something that is a bit outside of that structure or framework... The success needs to be established by the student entering university and saying well, "I will be succeeding if I pass all of my subjects and can keep my part time job and take care of my family all at the same time" ... And then that's not a HD student but from their perspective, they're succeeding, they have succeeded. (Reece, FG2, meeting three)

This brings in the idea of self-efficacy. Self-efficacy is defined as "a person's own judgment of capabilities to perform a certain activity in order to attain a certain outcome" (Zulkosky, 2009, p. 95). According to Shea et al. (2015) student motivation to engage is not static and can increase or decrease depending on their perceptions of success in a particular situation.

Alex took their ideas in relation to student reflection on success in a different direction:

I've heard lots of teachers say, "Sometimes you have to let them fail and let them feel it and let them experience it". Because sometimes when... [students] come back from

that and when they invite you into that failure and say, “What happened here and how do I fix it for next time?”. That actually is something you can work from. (Alex, BFG)

Resilience is broadly defined as a “dynamic, contextual process focused on adaptation (to stress or change) which could be enhanced” (Brewer et al., 2019, p. 1113). Alex’s technique is to help foster student resilience through a reflective question: “*What happened here and how do I fix it for next time?*”. According to Fazey and Fazey (2001) and Zepke and Leach (2010), helping students to regain confidence after experiencing short-term failure (as part of their course) can be a powerful way for academics to foster student engagement. The engagement challenge however, is that not all academics can work to support the retention and engagement of the ever increasing heterogeneous cohort through relational ways of teaching and learning (Tight, 2020).

Even with the increased institutional demands teaching academics continue to be recognised as key agents in supporting student engagement, wellbeing and responding to learner needs (Quaye et al., 2020). To help achieve such agency, one relational tactic the participants described as facilitating these elements is by connecting students with the available resources at Regional Campus 1:

- *Having worked in academic development for a few years and worked with all our student support, learning advisors, library, [and] student admin... I... [see] them as part of my team... They’re there to help me help my students to learn the things I can’t deliver in... the classroom. I know they’re out there to help. (Sam, intensive interview)*
- *I say to them... “If you are struggling just show me your assignment”. I might have a quick look and you may need APA referencing style... “So you need to get*

some support there.... you need to meet with a librarian”... If it’s a culturally and linguistically diverse background then we have other services within the university... And if the students are really struggling with a mental health issue then I say to them, “You know you really need to engage with the student services”. (Tobin, intensive interview)

Carter and Goldie (2018) and Crawford and Johns (2018) maintain, that although university support services are readily available, there is a gap between provision and utilisation. Examples of contributing factors to this gap include: students being unsure if their issues warrant help; concerns of stigma; and unfamiliarity with available resources (especially for new and/or international students) (Harryba et al., 2012). Teaching academics are therefore, identified as being in an essential enabling role, identifying when support is needed and connecting students with the relevant service (Crawford & Johns, 2018).

In summary, employing relational pedagogy is a widely reported engagement approach that is designed to counter the vulnerability teaching academics feel when they try to encourage students to work smarter within a student as customer paradigm. The teaching academics in the study reported a wide range of different techniques that require time consuming intentional actions on behalf of both the teacher and the student. They involve: unstructured interactions; deliberately developing student self-efficacy and resilience; and facilitating connections with available resources.

The aim is to foster a positive teacher-student co-engagement dynamic that promotes holistic student development. The relational pedagogy approach however, is fraught with danger. This is particularly the case when the teaching academics themselves fail to clearly

delineate protective boundaries between public and private access, back-up resources are in short supply and university governance only collects its student engagement data from students.

Taking a critical perspective, I question how much more responsibility teaching academics can feasibly undertake before they start to burn out. The stories teaching academics told highlight an unbridled drift from the formal recognised academic role description to an expanded role. This expanded role is in response to a rapidly changing work environment that requires staff to quickly adjust and adapt to elements such as: contemporary student expectations, diverse learning needs and evolving modes of subject delivery such as those brought on by COVID-19 (Gregory & Lodge, 2015; Sproles, 2018). Participants' descriptions of enacting relational pedagogies to foster student engagement indicate how vulnerable teaching academics have become within a system that fails to provide them with a voice.

Locating Core Theme Four Data within My Interpretivist Methodology

Core Theme Four data highlight the intertwinement of descriptions of participant pedagogies with the underpinning 'how' and 'why' components of their student engagement approach. The detailed explanations of particular strategies interlinked with considerations of the student experience and holistic learner development offer in-depth insight into each participant's student engagement praxis. Data illustrate how this engagement praxis is deeply intentional, not purely action-focused devoid of context and purpose. Furthermore, it is enacted amongst an ever-evolving teaching and learning interface.

Data illuminate the engagement praxis of the participants. A threat therein lies when

the emphasis is given to student engagement *practice* within the institutional policy and practice literature (see Chapter One). As practice is often considered an action-only concept, the moral and ethical components of theory, philosophy, reflection, action and evaluation, which are creatively applied at a particular time and space by each teaching academic, become heavily downplayed.

Teaching academics can greatly influence elements of student engagement, experience and outcome achievement. Largely ignoring the ‘wholeness’ of their student engagement praxis therefore seems short-sighted and irresponsible, especially given the avalanche of changes within higher education. Discounting each teaching academic’s engagement approach also limits opportunities for gaining holistic insights into the two-way street that is student engagement evaluation. Each of the participant’s ideas regarding their student engagement evaluation will now be explored in Core Theme Five.

Core Theme Five: Evaluation and Justification of Student Engagement Approach

Core Theme Five data contain the participants’ descriptions of their strategies for evaluating and justifying their student engagement approach. As there was no coding repetition of participant stories, I do not use overarching themes for the presentation of this core theme. Data presentation begins with reporting the participants’ knowledge sources and then extends to their ideas pertaining to the formal whole-of-university student engagement metrics.

The most reported strategy for evaluating and justifying student engagement involves a two-fold assessment of students’ behaviours and scholarship. Finn and Quinn’s stories exemplify participants’ concerns:

- *The thing for me, ... is everything's physical, so the body language tells me if they're engaged. There are also the things that I know aren't engagement. If I see a mobile phone out, or you know the screen doesn't need to be up, but it is and all that stuff. I know they're not engaged at all. If they're in... group work and they're leaning in... you know they're on task and haven't drifted off to the weekend... [For] some of the tasks I set them they have to stand up and report... or produce something for everyone to see and so in doing that, I know if they've engaged. It is also if they've actually grasped a concept, if they've engaged, they understand. (Finn, re-story)*
- *I guess you know when you've had a successful lesson and when you haven't. You... know by students' body language or... participation or energy levels in the room... And you can... have those light bulb moments where you can see things are aligning in students' minds, or they'll start asking questions that really demonstrate, aha they're getting it. Because in order to ask that question, they are thinking it through. (Quinn, intensive interview)*

These participants simultaneously consider learner actions and evidence of learning to evaluate student engagement during class time. Such considerations involve the employment of situational knowledge where observations and meanings are ascribed to the students' engagement as it is occurring (Tezcan & Tmkaya, 2018). From my perspective, these processes can be likened to those employed by human-research-instruments (Guba & Lincoln, 1981). For example, the participants gather data (i.e., observations of students), interpret the data (i.e., evaluations of student actions) and make decisions based on those interpretations (i.e., noticing if and when student engagement is occurring / has occurred).

Situated ways of knowing can also provide space for multiple interpretations to emerge as illustrated in Alex's story:

Sometimes I can see students in class and I know that they check their phone or they're on Facebook... One time I had a girl who goes, "Yes I'm playing Angry Birds, please don't judge me" ... But I'm also aware that they're there, and they're there for a reason. And sometimes it's not for me to judge whether or not they are there and are on Angry Birds. Or [that students] are doing their online shopping, or checking emails at the same time while they're listening to the things I have to say with their lecture slides open, and their emails open, and their online shopping and the PowerPoint and their readings... I'm aware that... the more I teach the more I don't take those things personally – the ways that they engage... may be different in different situations. (Alex, intensive interview)

Alex's engagement understandings extend beyond in-class learner actions. This type of awareness can be drawn from experiential knowledge where particular choices are made based on professional experiences (McAlpine & Weston, 2000). This type of knowledge comprises "wisdom and know-how gained from personal participation in a phenomenon instead of isolated, unorganized bits of facts and feelings upon which a person has not reflected" (Borkman, 1976, p. 446). Alex's perspective exemplifies this statement as based on their wisdom (gained over time): *the ways [students] ... engage... may be different in different situations.*

Reece and Sam's stories detail how they use their experiential knowledge to evaluate and justify their student engagement approach:

- *Informally I ask them [the students] by week five or six... “How are you doing? Are you learning something?... Is this actually helping you?” ... And I... take notes. So I get that informal feedback by week five or six and then week ten do it again to ask them as well, “Is there anything you’d like to review? And how are you doing? Is that subject helping you? How do you see what you’ve learned so far helping you later on?”. (Reece, intensive interview)*
- *I take that personal touch and try to catch them outside lectures, before lectures in the courtyard... “How am I going?”. Instant feedback. “Were those lectures okay? How’s your week going? What other assessments have you got on for other subjects? How are we travelling in my subject versus the others?” So ... I ... try to gauge their engagement ... through those sort of non-metric ways. (Sam, intensive interview)*

Reece and Sam’s use of key questioning exemplifies another participant-driven student engagement research technique. This is because these academics work in explicit, intentional ways to gain insight into the learning and engagement needs of their specific student cohorts. I align this evaluation tactic with Eisner’s (2004) descriptions of educational connoisseurship and criticism. This is because teachers who embody these two elements strive to identify the strengths and limitations of their practice and become highly adept at employing ways to gain more information to inform their pedagogy.

Embodied processes can be inconsistent with the institutional instruments which attempt to measure engagement as a product rather than a situated process (Harland & Pickering, 2010). It appears that as more emphasis has been placed on engagement as product for measuring accountability and performance, less attention has been given to

engagement tools to inform teaching and learning. Reece's story contains an example of this disconnect:

The feedback survey is a disaster, we learn nothing... I'm not saying it out of concern for my feedback scores, they're always good. But I read them and I learn nothing from it... [for] improving subjects for future students... Having a tool that we can really use to measure student engagement would be good. (Reece, FG2, meeting three)

While serving the institutional purposes, the formal surveys have been identified by teaching academics more as a source of anxiety than a tool for enhancing practice (Boring, 2017; Mitchell & Martin, 2018; Tucker, 2014). This raises significant ethical concerns. Even though students are not provided with professional development on survey completion, the results are utilised by leadership staff as part of their decision-making for teaching academic promotions, employment and future planning. Furthermore, the metrics are static and one sided as teaching academics are not given a voice on the matter.

In their story Participant Not Identified (PNI) highlights some potential implications of institutional use of metrics on pedagogy, academic staff and the student experience:

We're locked to a very clunky system. Getting innovative and being able to change something on the fly is seen as a complete policy breach and you can get yourself in so much trouble... I am actually one of those, a complete rebel. I just break the rules... Because I want to... have the academic integrity to make changes on the fly or to push boundaries... That's my challenge now. I'll work in the grey zones.... which makes you a blacklisted academic, which is fine. I can live with that. If the... [students] are right... I don't care who I get in trouble with... I don't care who I get

hauled before. If the... [students] enjoy what I do and give me the right feedback to say I'm on the right track, or the subject success is good, and the retention and the transition. If I can see all those things working, then I don't really worry... But it does worry other academics, because they're not as confident, they're worried about promotions or annual reviews. This is what does impact on the student experience... staff that are in a different head space... where they're so concerned about just getting it right and not... ruffling anybody's feathers in learning and teaching. (PNI)

In summary, the teaching academics shared a range of embodied knowledge sources for evaluating and justifying their student engagement approach. Human-research-instrument tactics identified include: dually noticing student behaviours and scholarship and seeking informal feedback to inform pedagogy. Despite their philosophically-driven ways often being disconnected from the institutional agenda, the teaching academics in this study continue to value their own ways of knowing more than the formal university metrics. This is because the teaching academics do not believe they are given a voice in the matter and they feel that the institutional instruments are used for purposes beyond the student engagement interface.

Locating Core Theme Five Data within My Interpretivist Methodology

In locating Core Theme Five 'Evaluation and justification of student engagement approach' within my interpretivist methodology I continue to build on the pertinent points raised under Core Theme Four.

Core Theme Five data illustrate the ways the participants embody the qualities of human research instruments and educational connoisseurship to 'notice' and evaluate their

students' engagement (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Eisner, 2004). While emphasis within the stories is on employing philosophical ways of knowing, the institutional approach continues to attempt to measure student engagement as a product rather than a complicated process enmeshed with context and relationships. Even though the academics' grapple with the many facets of student engagement formative evaluation to inform pedagogy, the institutional engagement metrics continue to employ reductionist instruments for reporting beyond the student engagement interface.

Data highlight the ways teaching academic engagement evaluations and justifications could make a unique contribution in a metric-driven environment. As Galdas (2017) argues: ... it is to better articulate the unique value that qualitatively derived knowledge can play within a system that measures impact through an evidence-based decision-making lens. Although it may be more difficult to quantify the impact of qualitative research, we should resist the temptation to reach for a positivist tape measure to solve this problem. To do so will lead us to become apologists for the subjectivity that is the very strength of interpretive work. (p. 2)

The stories shared by the teaching academics in this study describe a separation between the engagement philosophies of teaching academics and the institution's 'positivist tape measure'. This tape measure is not able to effectively capture the ways of knowing and multiple interpretations which are employed to consider scholarship of teaching and learning and inform engagement approach. I contend therefore, 'qualitatively derived knowledge' for gleaning holistic insight for informing teaching and learning has a vital place in the university student engagement discourse.

Personal Reflection

In light of the potential ramifications that have emerged from Core Themes One, Two and Three (see Chapter Seven) and Core Themes Four and Five, I have decided to respond to a question that has been raised throughout my doctoral studies. This question invites exploration into the possible political issues connected with my research.

For my discussion I will use my diary entry from the day of my pre-completion seminar. That day I wrote:

Twice my supervisor has asked me what I deem as being the political issues of my study. The first time they asked was at the beginning of my doctoral journey. I did not know the answer yet, so could not provide a response. The second time was today during my pre-completion seminar – my final institutional milestone. Today I did have an answer but deliberately held back. In an attempt to move on, I merely muffed a sort of half-response.

I realise now that by not providing a detailed reply I was making a political statement of my own. Just as Fulford (2017) argues student disengagement may be an “expression of aversive thinking, and of voice” (p. 113), my silence (as both a student and sessional staff member) was an intentional stance to not speak up against (what I perceived as) the dominant culture in my pre-completion environment.

I have decided though that this question needs to be explored, so I will do it here in the safe space of my research journal. In formulating my response, I bring together a complex assemblage of: my five core themes distilled as student engagement pedagogic praxis; the diverse Regional University student cohort; the intuitional

student engagement policy and practice literature and reporting mechanisms; and the elements of time, location, context and socio-political trends.

The participants' nuanced student engagement pedagogic praxis is an enmeshment of their ontologies, epistemologies, conceptual understandings, considerations of students, discipline considerations and goals, engagement pedagogies and evaluations. It is a complicated process underpinned by individual ways of knowing, doing and evaluating.

For the institution, the focus is on student engagement practice. This practice involves technical, action-only ways of approaching student engagement. While the student engagement approaches (in both educational literature and institutional policy) connect the teacher to student engagement, the powerful embodied ways of teacher knowing are not included within institutional policies ascribing engagement practice.

Further highlighting the limitations of the institutional approach are the participants' responses to my second research question and data reported in Core Theme Five. Participants do not justify their student engagement approach with reference to the institutional metrics. Nor do the stories illuminate how they enact particular engagement approaches to achieve well on the metrics. Instead, their responses indicate a clear focus on the learning and engagement needs of students and reflect the nature of qualitative insider educational researchers where they have:

created and invented ways to understand their pupils better. They perceived the complexities of... [their students'] thinking and inquired into them; they

reflected upon those perceptions, collaborated with [me and their] colleagues... [so I can represent] their ideas in writing. (Eisner, 1985, p. 262)

As teachers come together at the student engagement interface with diverse learners, the current way of gleaning positivist information is contradictory to the constructivist nature of teaching and learning. It seems that while higher education teaching and learning has continued to diversify, the metrics have remained stagnant where engagement has become more of a commodity rather than as a situated example of the pedagogic process.

Not including the teaching academic's voice in the whole-of-university student engagement metrics is seriously problematic. This is because, as the data reveal, the teaching academics in this study are being placed in untenable positions. There is a growing disconnect between the whole-of-university student engagement metrics which align with the customer-provider relationship and the teaching academic who still works to preserve the teacher-student relationship.

In the process teaching academics are being required to work in environments where there are no firm up-to-date job descriptions nor the security of tenure, a lack of clear boundaries between public and private access times and increasingly more blatant levels of disrespect. Not including the voices of teaching academics in the whole-of-university assessment of student engagement is like a form of collusion which enables these problems to fester.

A female friend of mine who critiqued my thesis told me she thought that this is particularly a female problem of:

- 1. Being positioned in an environment of disrespect; and*
- 2. Not being willing or able to actively confront it.*

This makes academics vulnerable to having their work status disregarded or belittled even further.

The situation is even more acute because these teaching academics are now inappropriately modelling to their students. When these students become practitioners themselves, they will be on the front line. They need to know how to cultivate respect within the workplace so they can effectively do their jobs. Part of this is a healthy self-esteem, a certainty that one's contribution is appropriate and valued. Including the teaching academic's voice is necessary to deliver a strong message that their understandings are being valued.

Chapter Summary

In Chapter Eight I present the data for Core Themes Four and Five. These themes comprise of the participants' engagement pedagogies, evaluations and justifications. In essence, the participants work to promote engagement in constructivist and relational ways at the teaching and learning interface. To evaluate their approach, they draw upon the qualities of human research instruments and educational connoisseurship, comprised of their situational awareness and experiential knowledge.

Data emphasise a disconnect between the participants' student engagement pedagogic praxis and the institutional focus on (action-only) student engagement practice.

Opportunities therefore exist to research student engagement with qualitatively derived approaches. I explore these opportunities in Chapter Nine where I present my summary, findings, lynchpin statement, recommendations and conclusion.

Chapter Nine: Summary, Findings, Lynchpin Statement, Recommendations and Conclusion

It is an effort to provide a set of leads that can be pursued and explored. In a sense, this effort represents the beginning of a kind of paradigm supplement rather than a paradigm shift. By that, I mean, I am not interested in substituting one paradigmatic model for another, but rather, am interested in adding to the pantry of possibilities of new methods and views that may have important pedagogical consequences. To the extent to which our practices reflect our beliefs, changes in beliefs ought to manifest themselves at least, to some degree to changes in practice. That is my hope. (Eisner, 2008, p. 29)

Chapter Overview

Chapter Nine is divided into two sections. In section one I present my summary and in section two I offer my two findings, one lynchpin statement (designed to link my findings), and my two research recommendations. This chapter concludes my thesis.

Section One: Summary

Interpretivist research findings are broadly defined as the researcher's refined or distilled understandings drawn from their research summary (Given, 2008). As Bloomberg and Volpe (2008) explain, the findings are the deeply considered inferences made by the researcher through a process of connecting all the components of a study. This is achieved by combining the research proposal, methodology, methods, results (i.e., the collected data) and the data analysis to obtain an interpretivist overview.

When interpretivist researchers make connections, their emphasis is on gaining in-depth idiographic understandings (Sandelowski, 1997). Their aim is to identify diverse, multiple, particular, holistic perspectives on a research topic (Sandelowski, 1997). A critical part of this summary process is to ensure that the identified findings are trustworthy, that is that they are worthy of our attention (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). My summary therefore plays a critical role in this process by outlining and highlighting the procedures that were undertaken to explore and represent multiple perspectives.

In Chapter One Setting the Scene I introduce the topic of my study – student engagement and teaching academics. I also identify a gap in the literature. Specifically, despite university policy documents and tertiary teaching and learning literature acknowledging a clear link between pedagogy and student engagement, university metrics still predominately narrowly focus on the perspectives and behaviours of students while silencing academics. The purpose of my research therefore is to give teaching academics a voice. My plan is to use an interpretivist qualitative case study approach to explore the insights of ten teaching academics at one Australian regional university campus regarding their perceived role in student engagement. My research questions informing this research are:

1. How does the teaching academic approach the engagement of their students? and
2. What are the teaching academic's perceptions of how and why this approach might make a difference?

In line with accepted qualitative research reporting, rather than placing my literature review in a separate chapter, I chose to embed this literature throughout my thesis.

In Chapter Two Research Methodology I share my understanding of the interpretivist paradigm, weaving in rationales from the literature to support my research design. I describe how different axiomatic bases will inform the progress of my research. These include: assumption, ontology, epistemology, researcher connection, data instrument, and context/situatedness. I defend my decision to conduct the interpretivist research within a qualitative case study approach explaining how such an approach will enable me to limit scope by setting clear boundaries of enquiry. This is followed by a depiction of my proposed research methods. These include: setting, participant sampling, emergent design, use of a human instrument, data collection, data analysis, synthesis, research outcome, ethical considerations and trustworthiness. Here my intention is to explain how and why these methods fit my interpretivist case study approach and align with my two phases of data collection namely, individual interviews and focus group meetings. The chapter concludes with a clarification of the concept of student engagement and how it relates to and informs my research plan.

In Chapter Three Ethically Informed Research Methods I detail my ethically-informed decision-making procedures. I felt they warranted a separate chapter because they not only enlighten all stages of my research, they also provide a bridge between methodology, data collection and analysis. In this chapter I chronicle how I obtained ethics approval highlighting my efforts to anticipate, minimise and manage possible risk through informed consent, preparing an interview guideline, participant recruitment, response and introductions and clarifying my ethical scaffolding. For me a strong ethical underpinning enables the development of trust thereby engendering ongoing reciprocity which then leads to trustworthiness. According to Lincoln and Guba (1985, 2013), trustworthiness involves certifying that the identified findings align with four criteria: credibility, transferability,

dependability and confirmability. This endorsement occurs in text and tabular format at the end of my summary.

In Chapter Four Phase One Methods Part One I detail the step-by-step enactment of the first phase – the individual interviews and their initial data analysis. I explain how each interview is audio-recorded, transcribed, member-checked and confirmed as accurate. My application of a suite of inductive techniques to thematically analyse the data is then recounted. It comprises an iterative process of: employing different theme-identifying strategies, defining and refining codes, text segmenting, and codebook development. From this, four overarching themes emerge: conceptualising student engagement; guiding engagement practices; student engagement practices; and evaluation of student engagement practices. In the chapter each overarching theme is accompanied by a description, rationale and illustrative example from my data. One such statement comes from Tobin who says:

I define [student engagement] as the frequency in which students are able to connect with the subject... find the meaning of... discussions and see the practical applications.

The chapter concludes with critical input on my transcript analysis from my supervisors who ask if I can: “Go deeper in my analysis”. This feedback not only played a role in confirming the dependability of my processes, it also prompted an unexpected turn in my emergent design which is recounted in Chapter Five.

In Chapter Five Phase One Methods Part Two I introduce a fresh data analysis tactic designed to help me go deeper. This “pantry of possibilities of new [research] methods” (Eisner, 2008, p. 29) embraces the application of narrative techniques and pattern coding to explore thematic threads and thereby uncover other (more nuanced) meanings. An ‘em-plot-

ment' process, where a series of historical events are assembled into a narrative with a plot, re-presents each interview as a two-page individual story. This scrutiny reveals three themes:

1. The self (i.e., teaching academic), encompassing the principles and philosophies guiding practice and explanations of engagement fostering pedagogies;
2. The environment, encompassing institutional-driven approaches to teaching and learning and the environmental elements which can enable/constrain engagement; and
3. The student, encompassing learner background and elements connected with engagement.

Next, I add an additional data reduction analysis technique – the construction of eight representative vignettes. These were composed by taking in individual and shared insights, recurring themes and outliers. The following excerpt provides a pertinent example from one of the vignettes:

I ... use authentic activities so they [the students] can realise the answers for themselves... I want to help different types of learners, we might move outside or... give them a graphic organiser. I try to structure the classes in a meaningful way, ... break up the lecture into sections and activities. (Phase One Part Two Representative Vignette)

The chapter concludes with my supervisors agreeing that these two new investigative forms demonstrate that my phase one part two analysis has obtained sufficient gravitas for me to move on to phase two of my research.

In Chapter Six Phase Two Methods I describe my second round of data collection, the focus group meetings and analysis of the focus group data. Operationalising these begins with the construction of a facilitation template. It contains: my research questions; key goal;

outcomes, behaviour check points; and focus group facilitation strategies. This template provides an ethical scaffold to manage participant interactions as I move towards my goal of data saturation. Particular features of the template include a critical reflective framework (used at the beginning of the discussions to support reflection on tacit understandings) and an emerging themes placemat (used during the final focus group meetings). The placemat conversation serves two purposes: the co-construction of decisions to enhance research credibility and dependability, and the confirmation of thematic saturation. From this process three overarching themes emerge. They are:

1. The participants' perceptions of the way students demonstrate engagement and the understanding that student engagement functions as a 'two-way street';
2. The participants' perceived engagement promoting pedagogical approaches; and
3. The participants' perceived aims, challenges and insights for engagement evaluation.

As with previous chapters quotations from the data illustrate each theme. For example, the following aligns with overarching theme three:

Having a tool... we can really use to measure student engagement would be good. I don't think... analytics are that accurate... The feedback survey is a disaster, we learn nothing from that... (Reece, FG2, meeting three)

Chapter Six concludes with the presentation of my phase two codebook overview and a demonstration of how triangulation (of the data, with the participants, with theory and with methods) is used to support a heightened awareness of possible risk (and therefore minimisation) of researcher bias.

My aim in Chapter Seven My Presentation and Discussion of Data for Core Themes One, Two and Three I report the research data and discuss how they inform the first research

question, namely: How does the teaching academic approach the engagement of their students? The chapter begins with an explanation of how I employed a synthesis of my data analysis to develop five core themes. I then direct my gaze onto the first three core themes as they primarily relate to the first research question. My synthesis process involved: re-reading transcripts and codebooks; constructing a grid to juxtapose the themes from all three data sets (interviews, re-stories, focus groups); applying thematic analysis strategies to the data within the grid; and seeking critique of my synthesis from peers and supervisors. The three core themes are:

1. Perceptions of the student engagement concept.
2. Experiences, beliefs and goals underpinning student engagement approach.
3. Considerations of the students.

As in previous chapters participant quotations are included to illustrate each core theme. The following example relates across all three themes:

... what's changed over time, is my focus... I've moved... from content... to [the] student... that's where student engagement comes in... thinking of them being an active learner... (Quinn, intensive interview)

In addition to embedding pertinent literature throughout the chapter I also locate the data for each core theme within my interpretivist research methodology. This leads me into a reflection on my own development during the research process. The chapter concludes with the observation that my data demonstrates a clear difference between the approach of the ten teaching academics to the engagement of their students and that being reported by the university.

In Chapter Eight My Presentation and Discussion of Data for Core Themes Four and Five I report my data and discuss how they inform my response to the second research

question: What are the teaching academic's perceptions of how and why this approach might make a difference? Before presenting the themes, I provide a brief update of my research project in order to more clearly demonstrate the praxis of how and why I worked to base my interpretivist analysis on ethically gaining empathy and understanding of the perspectives of the research participants. Core Themes Four and Five are:

4. Pedagogies for fostering student engagement.
5. Evaluation and justification of student engagement approach.

Core Theme Four data enable me to present the participants' shared insights on their pedagogies for fostering student engagement. Core Theme Five data enable me to present the participants' descriptions of their strategies for evaluating and justifying their student engagement approach. Throughout the chapter I continue to align pertinent literature with participant narratives and locate it within the interpretivist methodology. The chapter concludes with a personal reflection where I explore possible political ramifications of my research. In particular I cross examine the disconnect between participant notions of student engagement and those of the institution, as exemplified in the following two excerpts taken from my research journal:

For the institution, the focus is on student engagement practice... It seems that while higher education teaching and learning has continued to diversify... engagement has become more of a commodity rather than as a situated example of the pedagogic process.

[For the participants, student engagement]... is an enmeshment of their ontologies, epistemologies, conceptual understandings, considerations of students, discipline considerations and goals, engagement pedagogies and evaluations. It is a

complicated process underpinned by individual ways of knowing, doing and evaluating.

Returning to the Four Criteria of Trustworthiness

Returning to Lincoln and Guba's (1985, 2013) four criteria of trustworthiness I sought to achieve credibility by: engaging in a prolonged study period; judiciously using more than one research method; comprehensively applying member checks with a variety of text types; regularly obtaining peer and supervisor debriefing; and gaining feedback from critical friends. I was particularly alert to actively pursuing ways to recognise and minimise the problem of researcher bias. I used reflexivity, paid meticulous attention to ensuring data were accurate, factual and valid, employed triangulation whenever possible and actively hunted for disconfirming evidence. During my analysis I also applied pattern matching and neatness of fit of interpretation until I reached saturation. Then when reporting results, I portrayed meaning through presenting the exact words of my participants.

Findings are identified as being transferrable by the reader when they can be usefully applied by those affected by or interested in them (Lincoln & Guba, 2013; Sandelowski, 1997). In interpretivist research no attempt is made to make generalisations. Rather than the accumulation of nomothetic knowledge (the goal of positivist research), with qualitative research the reader is invited to consider whether the findings have a level of portability or interchangeability either across time or place or both. I explicitly shared my research procedures, carefully monitored and reported on my emergent design and conducted an audit trail in order to support the reader when making such an evaluation.

This documentation provides the reader with information to better understand the how and why of my interpretation. It also enables replication of the research. These collective actions help to make the findings more dependable and confirmable as enmeshed with my particular design at this point in time, place and space. They are both determined by and are the outcome of a clear, systematic and transparent research process (Lincoln & Guba, 2013). Each step in this process can be illustrated by carefully constructed tools, including: an ethical scaffold; an interview guide; a focus group facilitation template; and a critical thinking framework. As well, each step contains constructed texts in various modes, namely: audio recordings (interviews and focus groups); transcripts (comprising field note annotations); individual re-stories; representative vignettes; NVivo generated word clouds; an emerging themes placemat; data analysis codebooks; a data analysis juxtaposition grid; personal and epistemological reflective journaling; and my step-by-step reporting in this thesis.

To interrogate my alignment of Lincoln and Guba's (1985, 2013) criteria for researcher trustworthiness within and across my research I constructed Table 18. This table provides a summary of my research processes in tabular form. In this table I outline the techniques by which I distilled my core themes to identify my findings (see Table 18). Trustworthiness is more assured because the participants were involved in co-constructing the core themes. This helps to ensure that the findings more closely align with my interpretivist methodology.

Table 18

Alignment of Lincoln and Guba's (1985, 2013) Criteria and Techniques for Trustworthy Research Findings with my Research Processes

Four criteria for trustworthiness	Techniques for trustworthiness	Application of trustworthiness techniques to my interpretivist qualitative case study
Credibility "establishing confidence in the findings and interpretations of a research study" (Lincoln & Guba, 2013, p. 104)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - prolonged study period - triangulation - use of more than one method - negative case analysis - member checks - peer and supervisor debriefing (Lincoln & Guba, 2013)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - a sustained period of study at Regional Campus 1 - triangulation with data, participants, methods and theory (see Chapters Four, Five, Six, Seven, Eight) - two data collection methods and three data sets (see Chapters Four, Five, Six) - twenty-five thematic-analysis strategies (including negative case analysis) (see Chapters Four, Five, Six) - member checking of 4 text types (see Chapters Four, Five, Six) - regular peer and supervisor debriefing (three supervisors)
Transferability "the applicability of the findings and interpretations... determined by those who want to apply [them]" (Lincoln & Guba, 2013, p. 104)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - present thick descriptions of context (Geertz, 1973; Lincoln & Guba, 2013)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - use of thick descriptions in reporting (see Chapters Four, Five, Six, Seven, Eight) - member checking of four text types (see Chapters Four, Five, Six) - use of researcher-participants co-construction opportunities (re-stories, representative vignettes, emerging themes placemat) (see Chapters Five, Six)
Dependability "addresses how the findings and interpretations could be determined to be an outcome of a consistent and dependable process" (Lincoln & Guba, 2013, p. 105)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - audit of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - data - findings - interpretations - recommendations (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, 2013)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - systematic procedures for collecting data: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - ethical scaffold (see Chapter Three) - semi-structured interviews (see Chapter Four) - backward-mapping focus group planning (see Chapter Six) - focus group series (see Chapter Six) - focus group reflection framework and culminating task (see Chapter Six) - distilling core themes from rigorous data analysis processes (see Chapters Four, Five, Six, Seven, Eight) - findings gleaned from core themes (see Chapter Nine)
Confirmability "how the findings and interpretations are a result of a dependable process of inquiry and as well as data collection" (Lincoln & Guba, 2013, p. 105)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - audit of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - data - findings - interpretations - recommendations - triangulation - reflexive journaling (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, 2013)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - systematic procedures for collecting data: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - ethical scaffold (see Chapter Three) - semi-structured interviews (see Chapter Four) - backward-mapping focus group planning (see Chapter Six) - focus group series (see Chapter Six) - focus group reflection framework and culminating task (see Chapter Six) - distilling core themes from rigorous data analysis processes (see Chapters Four, Five, Six, Seven, Eight) - findings gleaned from core themes (see Chapter Nine) - triangulation with data, participants, methods and theory (see Chapters Four, Five, Six, Seven, Eight) - personal and epistemological reflective journaling throughout research process (Willig, 2013)

Section Two: Findings, Lynchpin Statement and Recommendations

Findings

I have two findings. Each directly relates to a research question.

The first finding answers my first research question, namely: How does the teaching academic approach the engagement of their students?

Finding A: The Ten Teaching Academics in this Study Approach Student Engagement in Particular Ways that Focus on Pedagogic Process

The ways the teaching academics approach student engagement are informed by their own understandings. Their ways encompass their ideas of what and how students need to think, do and feel in order to engage. It is a formative process. Their ways relate to the participant's conceptual understandings of student engagement, ontologies, epistemologies and considerations of the students and their particular needs. These collectively inform their chosen pedagogy during the progress of their teaching. As Quinn explains: "*what's changed over time, is my focus... I've moved... from content... to [the] student...*".

The second finding answers my second research question, namely: What are the teaching academic's perceptions of how and why this approach might make a difference?

Finding B: The Ten Participants in this Study Evaluate and Justify their Student Engagement Approach by Primarily Drawing Upon their Own Understandings and Knowledge Sources of Student Engagement and Student Needs

The ten participants individually evaluate their own pedagogical engagement approach in light of their individual conceptual understandings of student engagement and student needs. This individual attention is what makes the difference. The participants assess and justify their approach in ways that align with their own ontologies, epistemologies and theoretical understandings of what they perceive student engagement is or could be. In the process they utilise connoisseurship (such as situational awareness, experiential and tacit knowledge), human-as-instrument strategies (similar to those used in interpretivist research) and educational criticism. The university's summative assessment of student engagement features less prominently in their ongoing assessment. As Reece surmised: "*The feedback survey is a disaster, we learn nothing from that...*"

Lynchpin Statement

As my two findings stem from my two research questions, I have chosen to connect them together with one lynchpin statement. This statement is designed to outline what I have learned from undertaking this research that I did not know at the beginning of the study (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008). It is a very simple, elegant and surprisingly obvious observation.

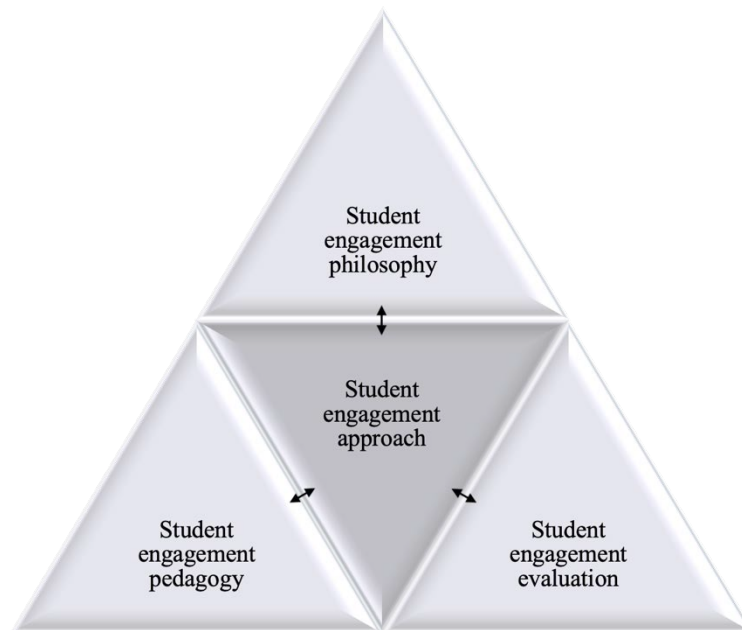
The lynchpin statement connecting my findings is the realisation that:

For the Ten Participants in this Study their Student Engagement Approach is a Dynamic Process that is Enmeshed, Inseparable and Intertwined with their Student

Engagement Philosophy, Pedagogy and Evaluation (This lynchpin statement is presented in graphic form, see Figure 4).

Figure 4

Lynchpin Statement: Student Engagement Approach – A Dynamic Process



Investigating My Lynchpin Statement

To investigate my lynchpin statement, I explored the philosophical works of Heidegger, Dewey, and Deleuze and Guattari (Deleuze & Guattari, 1994; Dewey, 1958, 1971; Heidegger, 1962). My aim for engaging with the writings of these theorists was to more deeply understand the participants' conceptualisation of the student engagement construct. In particular I investigated the potential implications associated with the construction of concepts.

When exploring the *concept* of concepts, Heidegger (1962) writes of *representations*. These representations are not a universal truth nor decisive in definition, but instead their

very conceptualisation can represent or be represented by what they are or what they can be (Heidegger, 1962).

In the context of this study, the concept of student engagement can function as a *representation* as opposed to a universal, generalisable defined truth, and can be a representation in itself or by what it is, for example, engaged student/s. I therefore identify that without having a universal operational definition, the teaching academics draw upon their own understandings of what the students' actions and emotions might *represent* in alignment to what they perceive student engagement to be or could be. As Kai states: *If students go away feeling like they haven't learnt anything, then they haven't engaged. So, engagement would mean that they're actually putting into the class.*

Dewey writes of concepts of *experience* (e.g., Dewey, 1958, 1971). The experience of a concept encompasses a holistic approach inclusive of action, cognition and emotion with the acknowledgement of any relational interactions between the whole being and the world (Hohr, 2013). In this way student engagement can be understood as a concept of *experience*.

By intersecting elements of cognition, behaviour and emotion occurring within the socio-cultural context, we can consider the concept student engagement as experience. When theorised this way investigations into student engagement as *experience*, could work to highlight and include the intentional philosophically-driven approach of each teaching academic.

Deleuze and Guattari (1994) refer to the creation of a concept or *pedagogy of concepts* as a process. The pedagogy of concepts process is not "oriented to focussing on

problems that defy univocal solutions but represent experimentation with the work and ourselves leading to the creation of new meanings and values” (Semetsky & Lovat, 2011, p. 424).

The challenge in defining student engagement for research purposes is not new. As well as conceptual ambiguity surrounding what a concept is (e.g., Heidegger, Dewey, and Deleuze and Guattari), Kahu (2013) acknowledges that no “single research project can possibly examine all facets of this complex construct” (p. 769). According to Barnett (2018) the term student engagement is an example of what Gallie (1956) would ascertain to be an *essentially contested concept*. This is where individuals and groups can have different interpretations and counterviews.

Gallie (1956) espouses for a concept to be contested it has to align with five characteristics. These five characteristics can provide reasoning as to the ways one interpretation and understanding of a particular concept may be entirely different to another. To explore student engagement as an essentially contested concept I constructed Table 19 (see Table 19). In Table 19, I applied Gallie’s (1956) five characteristics to the term student engagement in alignment with the findings from my study.

Table 19*Gallie's (1956) Five Characteristics of an Essentially Contested Concept Applied to the term Student Engagement*

1. The concept “must be <i>appraisive</i> in the sense that it signifies or accredits some kind of valued achievement” (Gallie, 1956, p. 171).	Student engagement signifies valued achievement: - Each individual teaching academic or group within the university specialises in their own pedagogical philosophies and strategies which they intentionally enact to promote engaged students.
2. This valued achievement “must be of an internally complex character, for all that its worth is attributed to it as a whole” (Gallie, 1956, pp. 171-172).	Student engagement is an internally complex character: - Student engagement is multifarious and influenced by and upon a range of internal and external factors but is attributed to student achievement and connected to the student experience. - A teacher is often not recognised as an effective ‘engager’ nor a student for being ‘engaged’. Instead, the engagement is recognised by learning outcomes achievement.
3. That “any explanation of its worth must therefore include reference to the respective contributions of its various parts or features; yet prior to experimentation there is nothing absurd or contradictory in any one of a number of possible rival descriptions of its total worth, one such description setting its component parts or features in one order of importance, a second setting them in a second order, and so on” (Gallie, 1956, p. 172).	Student engagement used in relation to the respective contributions of its various parts: - Student engagement is not recognised as an achievement at a particular point in time for a particular fixed period. - A teacher may attach particular importance to certain features in which informs their approach (e.g., body language, assessment) and approach can be modified over time. - It is difficult for a teacher to attach importance to every single aspect, every single time. Also, different teaching academics (or institutions) may ascribe importance to different aspects than others within the university, which have changed over time and continue to change over time.
4. That “the accredited achievement must be of a kind that admits of considerable modification in the light of changing circumstances; and such modification cannot be prescribed or predicted in advance” (Gallie, 1956, p. 172).	Student engagement admits of considerable modification in the light of changing circumstances: - Student engagement can be influenced, promoted, modified, acted upon and so on, at any given time. - The achievement of student engagement can be vague as there are no strict guidelines to mark an engaged learner. Instead, each teaching academic may enact strategies that work to promote engagement and a student may provide evidence (in a range of ways) that they are engaging. - Engagement approach enacted by a teaching academic at one particular time for one particular student cohort may not translate to effective engagement promotion for another. Also, one approach may yield different results in a different time, different context, different discipline or with a different teaching academic.
5. That “each party recognises the fact that its own use of it is contested by those of other parties, and that each party must have at least some appreciation of the different criteria in light of which the other parties claim to be applying the concept in question” (Gallie, 1956, p. 172).	The utilisation of the term student engagement by each party recognises the fact that its own use of it is contested by those of other parties: - Teaching academics (and institutions) may define certain characteristics as student engagement. They continue with their approach because of their belief in their understanding of student engagement. - In continuing with their engagement methods each party may also exert effort to have others ascribe to their views. Such efforts may not be undertaken with an underlying agenda to exert power, but instead because their approach aligns with their own conceptualisation of student engagement. In this view, these individuals and groups maintain that their approach is the most effective for gaining understandings of and evaluating in order to engage students with an aim to achieve learning outcomes and success.

Using the information in Table 19 (in the context of this research) the term, student engagement can qualify as an essentially contested construct. This qualification can be attributed to the identification of the nuanced, philosophically driven conceptual understandings of the participants as informing their approach to the facilitation and evaluation of student engagement.

My acknowledgement of student engagement as an essentially contested construct is not to provide a *fix* or a *solution*. Instead, my focus can be on how the process of the concept could be further deconstructed and problematised. This process can create an opportunity to add to the ‘pantry of research possibilities’ (Eisner, 2008) through exploration of individual and collective holistic insights of student engagement at the teaching and learning interface.

Recommendations

I propose two research recommendations informed by my findings, lynchpin statement and the identification of the disconnect between the participant’s notions of student engagement with those of the institution. I define my research recommendations as possible actions for gaining holistic insights into student engagement for “pedagogical consequences” (Eisner, 2008, p. 29) rather than for reporting beyond the student engagement interface.

Recommendation 1: Development of a Shared Conceptual Understanding of the Concept of Student Engagement Between the Teaching Academics and the University Administration.

The ten participants in my interpretivist case study identified a clear disconnect between their own notions of student engagement and those of the institution in which they

were employed. To be able to conduct large scale quantitative research (assessment) into student engagement, it is first necessary for the student engagement concept to be unambiguously defined. There needs to be a shared and universally accepted conceptual understanding of what it is, and what it is not. Research is therefore urgently required to: clearly define the attributes of the student engagement concept.

Recommendation 2: Evaluation of Student Engagement takes into Account the Dynamic Nature of Student Engagement, thereby Acknowledging Context and the Need for Both Formative and Summative Assessment.

My research recommendation is to include diverse perspectives by triangulating the philosophies, pedagogical understandings and practice evaluations of the teaching academics with the institutional student engagement data. This is because educational research is important for improving knowledge and practice, for providing information to policy makers and for inviting currently absent voices to participate in informed debates on research topics.

The aim of my recommendation is to find ways for those coming together at the student engagement interface to recognise the value of the available data sources – both human and non-human. ‘My hope’ is to enact “a kind of paradigm supplement rather than a paradigm shift [and thereby add]... to the pantry of possibilities” (Eisner, 2008, p. 29) for student engagement research within the temporal and pedagogical context to inform educational praxis.

Conclusion

My thesis topic is student engagement and teaching academics. My work as a teaching academic led me to become aware of a gap in the area, namely a lack of teaching academic voice in the student engagement literature. Despite university policy documents and tertiary teaching and learning literature acknowledging a clear link between pedagogy and student engagement, university metrics still predominately narrowly focus on the perspectives and behaviours of students while silencing academics.

As a purpose of my research was to give teaching academics a voice, I employed an interpretivist qualitative case study approach to explore the insights of ten teaching academics at one Australian regional university campus regarding their perceived role in student engagement. My two research questions were: How does the teaching academic approach the engagement of their students? and; What are the teaching academic's perceptions of how and why this approach might make a difference?

The voices of the ten teaching academics in this study indicated their student engagement approach is a dynamic process that is enmeshed, inseparable and intertwined with their student engagement philosophy, pedagogy and evaluation. They felt that the current university wide system of assessing student engagement through using a student only summative input metric merely tells part of the student engagement story.

My research recommendations are twofold. I call for a shared conceptual understanding of the concept of student engagement between the teaching academics and the university administration. I also call for an evaluation process of student engagement that takes into account its dynamic nature, one that acknowledges context and the need for both

formative and summative assessment.

My research is significant because it provides particular insight into the area of student engagement that is currently not being adequately acknowledged. If the university continues to ignore the voice of the teaching academic, I predict that this could place universities in an even more precarious position when it comes to having to justify the future employment of teaching academics in the tertiary learning space. It is my grave concern that there is a danger that future funding bodies will simply look towards algorithm informed artificial intelligence forms of pedagogy as a cheaper alternative without recognising the rich dynamic role the teaching academic plays in the student engagement process.

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Appendix A

Informed Consent Form

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR:	Donna Goldie
PROJECT TITLE:	Teaching academics and their approaches for the engagement of their students: An Australian regional university qualitative case study
COLLEGE:	(Removed for confidentiality in this thesis)

I understand the aim of this research study is to research teaching practices for student engagement. I consent to participate in this project, the details of which have been explained to me, and I have been provided with a written information sheet to keep.

I understand that my participation will involve an interview and focus group series (four) and I agree that the researcher may use the results as described in the information sheet. I understand that confidentiality cannot be guaranteed in a focus group. I agree to not disclose to others outside this event anything said within the context of the discussion. All identifying information will be removed from the collected materials, and all materials will be stored as per Regional University policy.

I acknowledge that:

- taking part in this study is voluntary and I am aware that I can stop taking part in it at any time without explanation or prejudice and to withdraw any unprocessed data I have provided;
- that any information I give will be kept strictly confidential and that no names will be used to identify me with this study without my approval.

(Please tick to indicate consent)

I consent to be interviewed	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No
I consent for the interview to be audio recorded	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No
I consent to participate in a series of focus groups	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No
I consent for the focus group series to be audio recorded	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No

Name: <i>(printed)</i>	
Signature:	Date:

Principal Investigator:
Donna Goldie
 (Address details removed for confidentiality in this thesis)
Regional University
Phone: (Removed for confidentiality in this thesis)
Email: (Removed for confidentiality in this thesis)

Appendix B

Information Sheet

PROJECT TITLE: Teaching academics and their approach for the engagement of their students: An Australian regional university qualitative case study

You are invited to take part in a research project about teaching academics' practices for student engagement in contemporary university contexts. The study is being conducted by Donna Goldie as part of a PhD study at Regional University and is supervised by Dr Margaret Anne Carter.

If you agree to be involved in the study, you will be invited to be involved in the research in two ways.

1. You may share your experiences through your participation in an interview. With your consent, the interview will be audiotaped, and should only take approximately thirty minutes of your time. The interview will be conducted within Regional Campus 1 (building removed from this thesis for confidentiality) at Regional University, or a venue of your choice. You will be asked about your practices to engage students in their university studies.
2. You may also consent to participate in a focus group series. This requires you to participate in a series of four focus groups, one per month for four months, of thirty minutes in length. This series, with your consent, will be audio taped and will be conducted within Regional Campus 1 at Regional University, or a venue agreed by participants. You will be asked to further share experiences and reflect on critical moments from themes emerging from the interviews.

Taking part in this study is completely voluntary and you can stop taking part in the study at any time without explanation or prejudice.

Risks: While the level of risk is identified as low and negligible by participating in this research project, if you do experience discomfort, please make contact with the Regional Campus 1 Counselling Service:

(Details of counselling services – location, phone number and email – removed from this thesis for confidentiality)

Benefits: The results of this study will inform student engagement research in current university contexts. The aim is to strengthen understandings of student engagement and insights into student learning.

Expected Outcomes: Research publications in academic publications (thesis, journals and conference proceedings) exploring teaching practices for student engagement and participant-agreed space to exemplify teaching practices for student engagement.

Your responses and contact details will be strictly confidential. The data from the study will be used in research publications. You will not be identified in any way in these publications.

If you have any questions about the study, please contact Donna Goldie or Dr Margaret-Anne Carter.

Principal Investigator:

Donna Goldie

(Contact details removed from thesis for confidentiality)

Supervisor:

Dr Margaret-Anne Carter

(Contact details removed from thesis for confidentiality)

Ethics Approval Number: H6892 (*note: inserted once ethics approval granted*)

If you have any concerns regarding the ethical conduct of the study, please contact:

Human Ethics, Research Office

(Contact details removed from thesis for confidentiality)

Appendix C

RightsLink Copyright Clearance for Petrova, Dewing, and Camilleri (2016)

This administrative form
has been removed

Appendix D

RightsLink Copyright Clearance for Ryan and Bernard (2003)

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has been removed

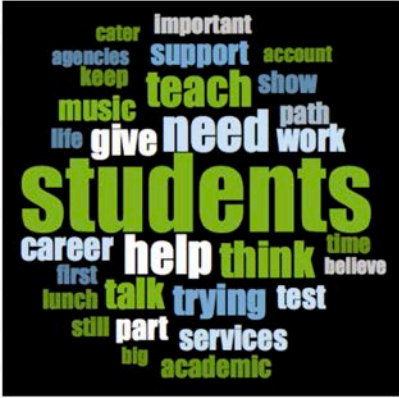
Appendix E

Socio-Constructivist Pedagogies for Fostering Student Engagement

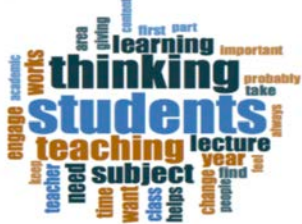
Good and Brophy (2002): Effective teachers	MacGregor (2007): Effective practices of high-quality teaching	Chickering and Gamson (1987): Seven principles of good practice high quality teaching	Glasser (1993): Quality teaching	Biggs and Tang (2011): Seven characteristics of good learning contexts	Hattie (2003): Expert teachers
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Maximum time spent on teaching and learning experiences. - Alignment of educational materials with students' needs. - Monitoring of each programme and progress. - Incorporation of different learning activities, e.g., demonstration of content. - Maintain high, realistic goals. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Students have opportunities to demonstrate lesson goals and objectives. - Maximum time spent engaged in rigorous, relevant learning experiences. - Incorporation of different learning activities, e.g., speaking, writing, producing. - Alignment of educational materials with lesson goals. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Encourage contact between students and students, and students and faculty. - Provide collaborative and reciprocal learning experiences. - Use active learning pedagogies. - Provide prompt feedback to students. - Maximise time spent on teaching and learning activities. - Communicate high expectations. - Provide inclusive learning environments. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provide learning environments that are warm and supportive. - Use lead teaching to encourage student engagement. - Provide relevant learning experiences. - Focus on high quality. - Encourage student self-assessment. - Provide opportunities for students to identify the relationship between effort and outcome. - Provide opportunities for students to identify the outcomes of high-quality work. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provide metacognitive and reflective opportunities to students. - Provide active, relevant learning experiences. - Provide regular, formative feedback to students. - Provide motivating learning experiences that are relevant, successful, student directed. - Provide opportunities where students align new information with known knowledge. - Provide social, collaborative, reciprocal learning experiences. - Ensure teaching quality that engages students in learning, provide variety and consider pacing as well as professional development opportunities and transformative reflection exercises. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Can identify and use deeper, essential representations for each subject, with flexibility to anticipate and problem solve and make decisions. - Guide learning through classroom interactions with consideration of contextual factors. - Monitor, provide and seek feedback for teaching and learning. - Maintain high respect for students and passionate disposition towards teaching and learning. - Influence student outcomes by providing opportunities for self-assessment and esteem, with goal setting and positive influence on outcomes, through deep learning opportunities.

Appendix F

Discussion Prompt: Representative Vignettes and Word Clouds




I teach the content but there is more to my work. It is also about talking to my students, finding out where they are as a person in their life and giving them options now and for their future. I encourage them to make use of the services within the university and try to support the students to access the help available. There are some you just cannot help though.



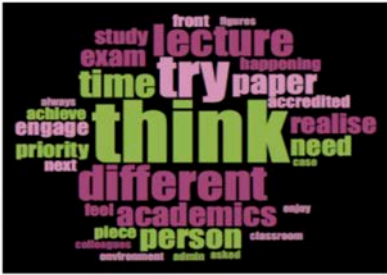
Sometimes I am an unstructured academic and my class probably looks a bit like chaos. It is my favourite time though, being with the students and they know if a teacher isn't interested in them. I try to have an open-door policy, be empathetic and see things from their perspective.

I try to be proactive and technologically skilled, whilst maintaining high expectations. I use videos (my own and others), music, peer work, and show images – often confronting – so they can associate it with the content. I break up the work in the classes and try different things in my teaching and sometimes I use the transmission model. It takes more time in preparation and marking but it seems to be working.

Some students like what I do, others don't. But I try to create a spark in their minds and when you make a breakthrough and feel as if you've made a difference, those moments are the memorable ones and it's all worth it. I try to be honest and human, it's okay to make mistakes, I am still learning too.



The student profile itself has changed, along with other things, over a period of time. This is a challenge for academics because we need to re-conceptualise the ways we engage. The students work a lot, they have partners and kids, there are a lot of first-in-family and those from low or medium economic classes. And they don't all have the same access or have computers at home. They are tired and they struggle emotionally and financially. I try to use data to personalise my teaching more and monitor things like attendance as this is something that has changed too. More and more students miss a few classes here and there, some miss many. I try to be sensitive to their needs but treat them as a professional at the same time.

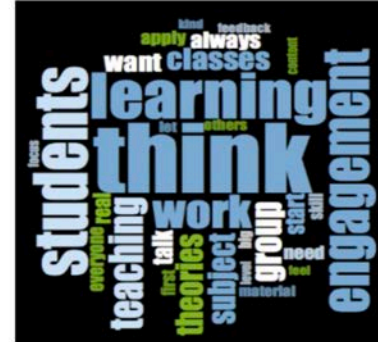


I try to use authentic activities so they can realise the answers for themselves. I do this because I want to help different types of learners, we might move outside or I might give them a graphic organiser. I try to structure the classes in a meaningful way, so I break up the lecture into sections and activities. This works better if the students come prepared to class so I try to encourage this.

It is difficult though trying to balance my teaching and everything else going on, grant applications, admin, and trying to publish. I understand that universities are now a business, with a focus on outcomes and making a profit but as a teacher, I just want to give the students the time and feedback needed so they can get where they want to in life. It takes patience and dedication because everyone seems in a big hurry. You can't lose sight of the wonderful things happening around us though.



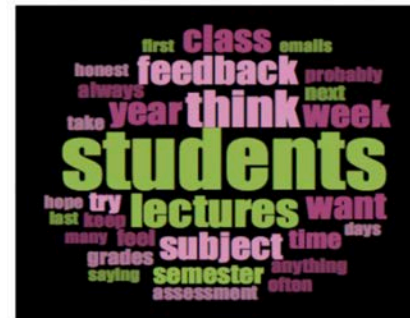
Students are engaged when they are interested and enjoy the work and can see the relevance of it. It is about how much they can connect with the content and see the practical applications within it. To me, they are engaged if they ask questions, present new ideas and actively participate in the classroom with their peers. It's important because they need to leave feeling they have learnt something and they need to engage to do this. It's an equal investment though, a two-way street and the ways they engage might be different in different situations.



I try to help all students participate and meet them where they are at in their learning. I try to give them the responsibility of it so they can make meaning of the material themselves. I use peer learning tasks, self- and peer-assessment and have them do presentations. It's easier to engage the students more in the practical classes, the harder work is the heavy, theory stuff that comes before it; these are difficult and their body language lets you know if they are engaged or not. I try to make it interesting and cognitively deepen their understanding of the application so a subject becomes meaningful. I try to make it enjoyable, so I show videos, images and tell stories to intentionally trigger their emotions. When I tell the stories, from my life and personal practice, they are more engaged than when I do anything else.



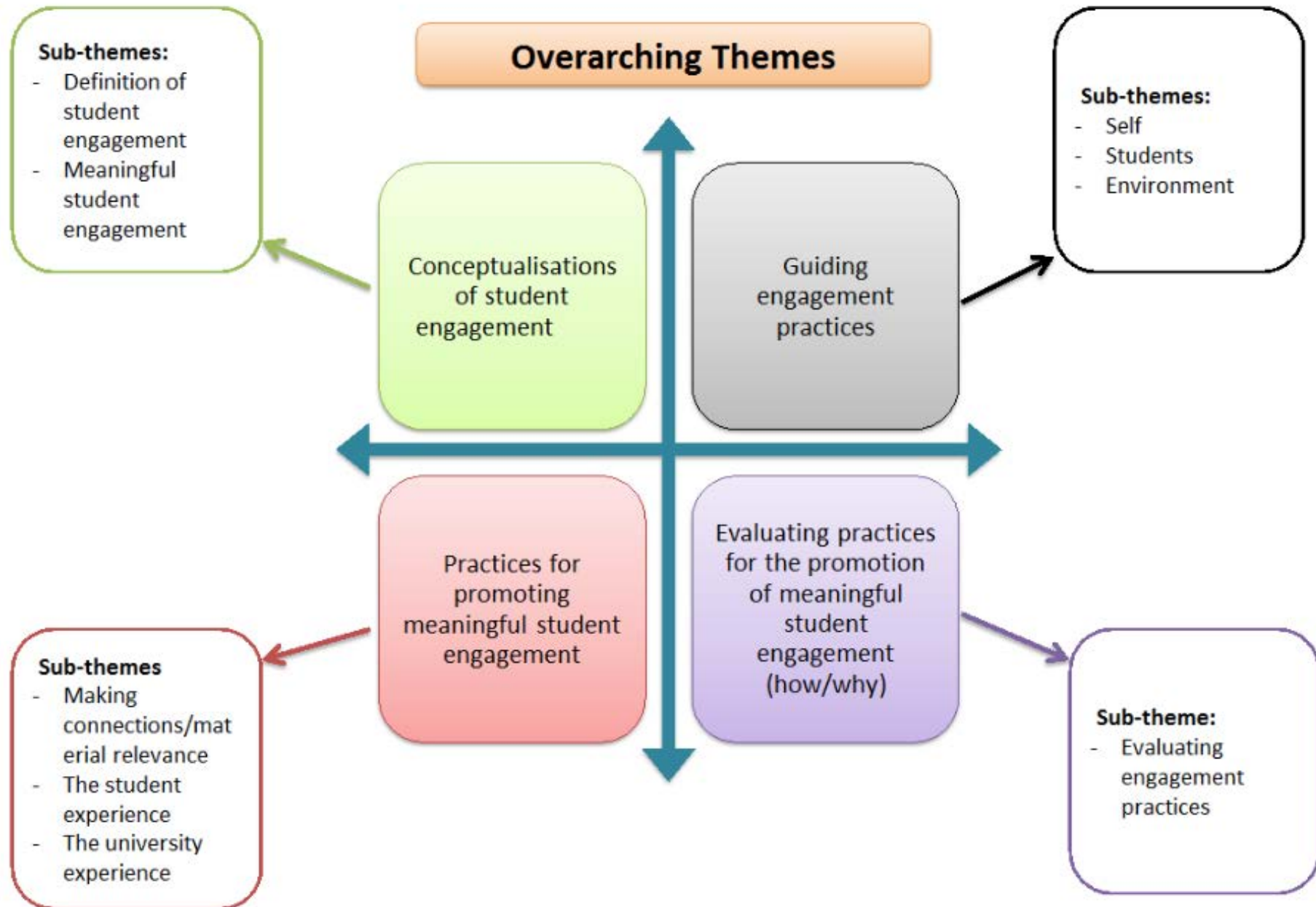
I try to get the students to be involved and work as a group because the research tells us that friends make a difference at uni. So I try to create those opportunities for in-class social networking and support and hope that it extends outside of class. It is important for the students to be able to work in a group and if they are showing others or telling others how to do something, they are also learning it. To get students to work together, I get them involved with peer reviews and feedback, giving presentations and other cooperative learning activities. It can be challenging though because if they don't have any interest in being there, they're not going to communicate with anyone.



I can tell when I have had a successful lesson or not and sometimes I get the engagement thing and sometimes I don't. You can tell with students physicality, if they are sitting up, making eye contact and talking to people. It is also when they come up after class and ask me questions or send an email or if they want the discussion to continue. I also use informal feedback and ask the students how the classes are going because the big surveys come too late. It is also when you see the students on campus or at the shops, even years later and they tell you about your class, so you know you must be doing something right. I know the analytics can help but there is more I need to learn there.

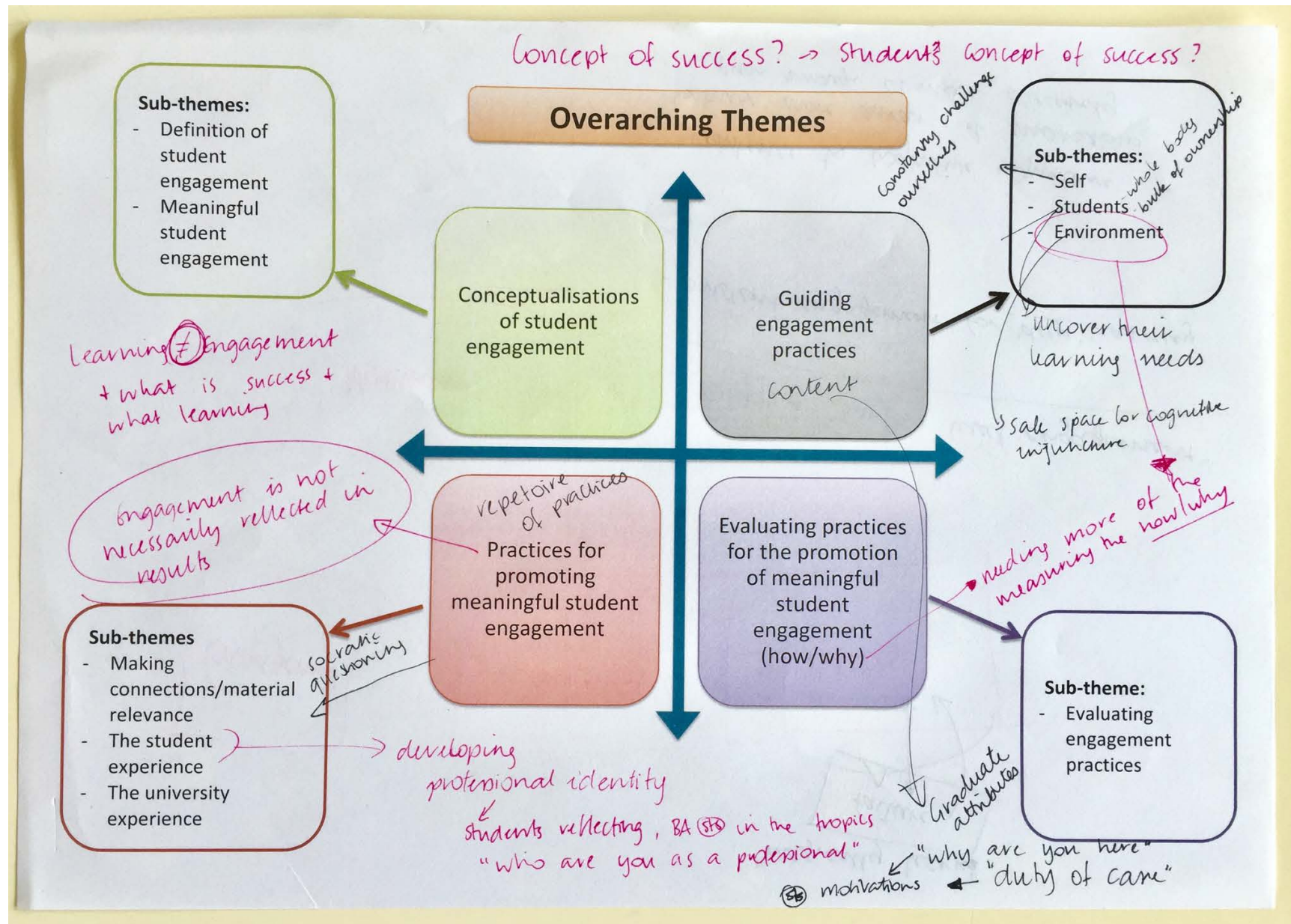
Appendix G

Discussion Prompt: Emerging Themes Placemat



Appendix H

Annotated Emerging Themes Placemat



Appendix I

Juxtaposed Theme Grid

Interviews	Re-stories	Focus groups
<p>Meta-theme one: guiding engagement principles (planning) (Graves, 2008) – factors informing, influencing and guiding teaching academic practices for student engagement</p> <p>Role and influence of self (teaching academic) for approaching student engagement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Epistemologies – epistemological assumptions – their understandings of how knowledge is constructed and the nature of knowledge can guide the pedagogical choices they make (Angeli & Valanides, 2009; Chan & Elliott, 2004; Cheng et al., 2009) o Ontological aspects – nature of knowledge and reality o Relational aspects – between knower and knowee o Contextual factors – discipline, institution o Epistemic influences: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Demographics and family ▪ Culture ▪ Educational background and experiences ▪ Instructional goals o Philosophies of teaching and learning o Conceptualisation of student engagement <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Definition of student engagement <p>Assumptions, perceptions and expectations of students: A teaching academic’s assumptions, perspectives and expectations of their students can reflect an individual</p>	<p>Overarching theme one: Self (teaching academic) – teaching practices informed by individual beliefs, values, experiences, assumptions and attitudes (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD], 2009); teacher practices and choices guided by educational philosophies which encompass an understanding of their role, what education is about and their ideas of students (Pereira, 2016)</p> <p>Guiding engagement principles:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - epistemological beliefs: thoughts, actions, practices to underlying engagement promotion derived from underlying personal theories or epistemological beliefs (Breen et al., 2001) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o can encompass professional and personal experiences, beliefs and culture (Gay, 2010) - conceptualisation of student engagement: definition of student engagement and/or discussion of practices in light of the way/s students engage <p>Enacting engagement practices:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - supporting emotional engagement: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o use of storytelling o knowing student names o using humour o include material to elicit an emotional response for example, shock and awe, entertaining, visually shocking and or nice o student analysis using values-based approaches 	<p>Overarching theme: Conceptualising student engagement = insights into the nature of student engagement and practices for approaching the meaningful engagement of learners</p> <p>Conceptualisation of student engagement with aligned practices:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - thinking students – deep, appropriate and meaningful engagement from students exerting cognitive efforts, drawing on prior knowledge, seeking to understand and experience enjoyment as they move beyond core content mastery (Biggs & Tang, 2011) - Engagement and under-engagement: deep levels of learning and surface levels of learning – playing the institutional game - Visual student engagement behaviour does not always equate to learning (behavioural engagement vs cognitive engagement) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o explicit focus on students’ thinking and cognitive discomfort - engagement as a two-way street to promote thinking students: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o duel teacher and student accountabilities and responsibilities for engagement to occur <p>Student engagement pedagogies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - prioritising the students first: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o work to understand learners’ epistemologies and ways of learning to develop professional and personal skills and knowhow (Wyatt, 2011) o see the student first over the content

<p>viewpoint, which may not match the actual investment of engagement of the learners (Gershenson et al., 2016):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - conceptualisations of students - learner demographics – the 21st Century student - the unique perspectives of the current cohort - challenges associated with engaging the current cohort - implications aligned with engaging the current cohort in learning <p>Environmental contextual elements underlying engagement practices:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - contemporary political agendas, ideas and challenges <p>Meta-theme two: Student engagement pedagogies – enacting (Graves, 2008)</p> <p>Participants pedagogical approaches perceived to support student engagement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - current ways of teaching and learning for promoting student engagement <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o authentic assessment innovations to enable student choice and ownership o use of news bulletins, social media, electronic textbooks o work to connect via video conferencing o break content into intervals o facilitate inclusive environment o connect theory and practice o support real-life connections o acknowledge teacher agency – power with not over - enacting practices for cognitive engagement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - facilitating behavioural engagement: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o active learning requiring student involvement and group work o providing preparation materials o problem-based learning o scenario-based tasks and case studies o practical classes - strategies for cognitive engagement: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o concept mapping o note provision for post-lecture revision (consideration of cognitive load) o real-world connections and personally relevant material provision - socio-constructivist practices to support student engagement: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o emphasis on time-on-task o situating tasks in professional contexts - effective assessment design and provision of feedback: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o staging assessment tasks - providing warm, supportive, inclusive environment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o safe space for peer-sharing o support peer networking and collegial relationships - pedagogically caring: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o demonstrate and model empathy – care for students o democratic teaching and learning environment o personalisation of learning and teaching experiences, foregrounding student needs, interest in their lives and their learning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o maximising engagement within the regional university context o support students to set goals, identify their motivations and ‘fail’ o practice unstructured interactions and pedagogic care o capitalise on the ‘student as customer’ positioning <p>- content relevancy:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o connections within and across courses o include authentic tasks and assessment <p>Teaching academics personal attributes for student engagement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - being human – using humour and sharing mistakes - personalising teaching and learning <p>Evaluating student engagement – insights and challenges:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - aim – support student engagement with streamlined practices: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o provide time for students – consider workload issues - aim – reflect on and make changes to practices to promote engagement: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o challenge to make curriculum innovations – interrupts teaching and learning cycle - effectively measure engagement: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o preference for a more effective evaluation tool/s o Limitations to existing student engagement measures and evaluations o effective use of attendance-taking - aim – motivate students to promote engagement
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- connecting content across subjects/semesters/courses
 - post lecture/subject engagement promoting practices
 - enacting practices for behavioural engagement
 - ask key questions
 - incorporate practiced-based exercises
 - use class discussions and artefact production
 - enacting practices to promote emotional engagement
 - facilitate safe, supportive learning space for peer sharing and content discussions
 - use of storytelling

Student-focussed engagement practices:

- consideration of the student experience
- collaborative peer-collegial strategies for promoting student engagement
- effective use of assessment: presentations, peer review, group work

Environment and contextual factors when enacting practices for student engagement:

- consideration of the university experience
 - promote uptake of student services
 - identify at-risk students
 - support student wellbeing
- identify/provide professional learning opportunities for students
- identify/provide networking opportunities

Meta-theme three: Evaluation of approaches for the meaningful engagement of students – evaluating (Graves, 2008)

- intentional listening to students' conceptual thoughts, understandings and ideas – an open-door policy
- maintaining high expectations and positioning of students as developing professionals
- Supporting students' wellbeing
- enacting agency of teaching academics:
 - acknowledge contribution to student successes
 - empowering students to achieve

Teacher reflexivity and reflectivity:

- knowing *how* practices make a difference for student engagement:
 - observable student behaviours – posing/answering questions online, sitting up and making eye-contact, talking to students
 - students asking questions, clarifying concepts and introduce new ideas
- knowing *why* practices make a difference for student engagement:
 - correlating results and attendance data
 - observable behaviours: student body language, active listening and speaking, student reporting on task, effective assessment to demonstrate engagement
- challenges or identified elements when considering student engagement:
 - effective course/subject design
 - skills and knowhow in using current tools such as analytic data

Overarching theme two: Student (contemporary university learner) – participants' perceptions and expectations of students influencing teaching and

<p>Evaluating engagement practices:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - evaluation of practice as a reflexive/mindful practitioner – deliberate and careful decision-making both in and after the teaching and learning experiences (Schön, 1991) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o constant learning and adaption of teaching practices to engage students o reflection on teaching and learning ideals/ideologies - how I (teaching academic) know these practices make a difference: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o evaluation of student behaviours – attendance, eye-contact, continuing of discussions o evaluation of both student behaviours and data from formal university surveys, informal student surveying and analytics data o evaluation of student behaviours, students demonstrating understandings and formal and informal data sources - why I (teaching academic) know these practices make a difference: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o increasing enrolment numbers o outlier – no use of tools o outlier – lack of understanding of current tools 	<p>learning practices for student engagement (Gershenson et al., 2016; Rubie-Davies, 2010; Timmermans et al., 2016)</p> <p>Student (background, support, family, lifeload (Kahu, 2013))</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - consideration of student profile, their lives and experiences <p>Student (identity, motivation, skills, self-efficacy)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - adaptation of teaching practices to support contemporary learners - identify student role and responsibility for their engagement - consideration of students’ motivation and willingness to be involved <p>Overarching theme three: Environment (contemporary university context)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - challenges – contemporary modalities and tools for teaching and learning: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o current practice involving new and unfamiliar tools and approaches for teaching and learning o knowledge and skill development required to teach in university education when entering as a discipline expert - university context: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o adapt to student profile, new ways of teaching and learning and new market ideologies
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Appendix J

Theme Refinement Using the Transcripts and Literature-related Material

Core theme	Themes and Evidence from Participants	Alignment to the Pertinent Literature
<p>Perceptions of the student engagement concept</p> <p>Overview: the participants' experiences and perceptions inform their conceptualisation of student engagement, which centres on the students' thinking, doing and feeling as they engage and come to know</p> <p>Emerged from:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Interview data - Re-storied data - Focus group data 	<p>Theme: Conceptualising student engagement as 'thinking students'</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>So, there are many strategies that we might use to get students to think, and there comes the engagement part of it... it's very much in the literature about, think students, and the concept of thinking students is a concept... I think even the concept of thinking students... it actually encourages them to have a deeper learning. (Tobin, FGI, meeting one)</i> - <i>I always think the students don't learn by osmosis as much as they'd like to think they can just sit there and it all goes into their brain, it doesn't... If students go away feeling like they haven't learnt anything, then they haven't engaged. So, engagement would mean that they're actually putting into the class and that they're getting out of it. (Kai, re-story)</i> - <i>Biggs actually talks about that as service level behaviours of engagement, they can be seen to be doing certain activities without actually engaging in deep level learning, as they learn to play the game, like the institutional game that they can actually demonstrate those behaviours quite convincingly without having engaging in real, like you know, uncovering misconceptions getting to the heart and actually understanding things deeper. (Alex, BFG)</i> - <i>We have explicit conversations around the fact that you need to be in that uncomfortable zone if you're going to push yourself to the next level and that you need to be feeling out of your depth if you're going to reach your next level and students who respond to that are the ones who wind up achieving. The ones who just sit there and type notes about it, busily, and then don't review their notes and don't do anything with those notes but they looked busy the whole time, they think they look like a good student because they're busily typing notes but they're not actually and the notes are unnecessary anyway because they're getting them in the PowerPoint, it's just them doing what they think a student does. It's busy stuff. (Chey, BFG)</i> - <i>I feel some of the ones I have recently taught it's all about that mark and some of them, yeah, some do know, I wouldn't call it, in some ways I'd call it like a game, they've worked out how to get there and what they need to do... You do have those students in your class that are really happy to engage in discussion and they've got</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - student engagement as encompassing: cognition, behaviour and emotion (Fredricks et al., 2004) - engaged students, exert cognitive and physical effort in active and collaborative ways to learn (Biggs & Tang, 2011; Chickering & Gamson, 1987; Skinner & Belmont, 1993) - teaching academics need to aim for a "Goldilocks" level of, just right, affective responses to promote engaged learners (Taylor & Statler, 2014, p. 595) - cognitive discomfort involves the students feeling uncomfortable as they attempt to learn new concepts, breaking-free of comfort zones and making new connections (Spalding, 2014) - the challenging and potentially uncomfortable process of building such understandings through thinking, involves students working consciously, subconsciously and unconsciously, as they make neural connections in their brains (Sale, 2015) - when students use deep-thinking approaches to construct their own knowledge, they are engaging (and learning) meaningfully and authentically (Biggs & Tang, 2011) - "cognitive discomfort... is entirely compatible with student dissatisfaction" (Dudau et al., 2018, p. 260) - relevant course material may yield high satisfaction scores but also may function to keep students within their own comfort zone, thus minimising the opportunity for them to experience cognitive discomfort and gain deeper understandings Belet (2017) - when students are working in the field and identify the workforce applications, previous rigorous, unpopular

Core theme	Themes and Evidence from Participants	Alignment to the Pertinent Literature
	<p><i>eye contact, body language, everything tells you they're interested and they want to learn and then but outside of the room, they may not be doing the readings or putting any extra time in, like in the room is good but like for university subject you do need to spend another seven hours usually in the week outside and you know that, well, how do you know that it's happening? (Finn, FG2, meeting three)</i></p> <p>Theme: Student engagement as a 'two-way street'</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Student engagement I define, as the frequency in which students are able to connect with the subject and able to find the meaning of those discussions and see the practical applications. (Tobin, intensive interview)</i> - <i>It's that equal investment... I think it's that asking their own questions, it's talking with each other, it's definitely that participation. (P,3 intensive interview)</i> - <i>I define it as a two-way engagement... It's not about us only signing a contract and telling the students this is what I will offer to you, it's also about them saying, I've received this and now I'll do my part to make it work. (Reece, intensive interview)</i> - <i>My definition is of course, the intensity and the depth in which the students wants to embrace the ideology and for which they want to make a change. Difficult to measure that but. (Tobin, intensive interview)</i> - <i>I see student engagement as a tool where a pathway or a channel for me to bring out the best in these kids... it tries to in a sense, bring to the surface their nobler selves and student engagement is for me the tool in which that can be done. The more meaningful I engage the students, the better I am at facilitating this process of bringing to bare their nobler selves. (Drew, intensive interview)</i> - <i>We take personal responsibility for how well students engage but whereas there is their responsibility for their own engagement. I actually think in terms of teaching that authoritative stance rather than authoritarian demanding some kind of tokenistic engagement, you have to take that authoritative position where you are encouraging them to take some sort of responsibility for their own learning but otherwise, it's never going to work if you're the one externally enforcing accountability all the time. (Alex, BFG)</i> 	<p>teaching and learning experiences can become the most appreciated and valued (Hervey & Wood, 2016)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - role and responsibilities of students and teaching academics for engagement to occur (Coates, 2005)
Experiences, beliefs and goals underpinning student	<p>Theme: Ontologies influencing student engagement</p> <p>Evidence:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - all teaching practices are explicitly or implicitly guided by spoken or unspoken principles which underpin action (Cook-Sather et al., 2014)

Core theme	Themes and Evidence from Participants	Alignment to the Pertinent Literature
<p>engagement approach</p> <p>Overview: The participants' experiences (personal and professional) and their values and beliefs underpin (and / or are potential drivers of) their engagement approaches</p> <p>Emerged from: - Interview data Re-storied data</p>	<p>- <i>I try and get them to think of things or to analyse things not just from a technical point of view, where you're looking at the theories and the concepts behind the theories and how those concepts are operationalized in real life, but also and I always tell them... look you've got to study all these theories but the values that you have, those are the types of yardsticks that you'll be employing in order for you to then make a decision for with which theory or which approach, which paradigm resonates most with you. (Drew, intensive interview)</i></p> <p>Theme: Relational ontologies influencing engagement</p> <p>- <i>I haven't given up on the didactic way of teaching, I still think a small group of students respect the idea that there is information to transmit, the transmission model, I know it's not the current higher education way of thinking, we should all be doing blended or flipped or letting them do the work but in the sciences... there is a lot of content that I think needs to be transmitted before they become higher-order thinkers. (Sam, intensive interview)</i></p> <p>- <i>But for me it's all about them engaging with each other, because I've seen them, they learn when they talk about stuff. If they just do it all on their own, there's not much learning going on, they are understanding but I feel like when they have to explain it to each other, that to me they're definitely getting a lot more out of the class. So that's what I try to encourage. (Sam, intensive interview)</i></p> <p>Theme: Contextual ontologies influencing engagement</p> <p>- <i>I provide opportunities for people to voice their opinions, to share their opinions, they can peer share and hear what others are saying, that is also the same for the online learning, we've got a blog site where the students can just write what they view and others could go and you know, share their ideas. (Tobin, intensive interview)</i></p> <p>Theme Epistemic influences:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Demographics and family <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Whether it's using different styles of learning, visual, audio, kinaesthetic, and getting them to teach others, see one, do one, teach one. My old man taught me that and Aristotle was the same, the highest form of learning is teaching, and I take that as a personal mantra. (Sam, re-story)</i> 	<p>- understanding the factors informing and guiding practices are necessary in order to foster student engagement (Quin, 2017)</p> <p>- a teaching academic's <i>ontological and epistemological assumptions</i> – their understandings of the nature of knowledge and how knowledge is – can guide the pedagogical choices they make (Angeli & Valanides, 2009; Chan & Elliott, 2004; Cheng et al., 2009)</p> <p>- the way/s teaching academics view the nature of knowledge (their epistemic beliefs), their role, their assumptions of students and their views on teaching and learning, can have a profound influence on their design and facilitation of their university subjects, however “scant evidence that faculty pay attention to the personal metaphysical and ontological assumptions they hold” (Hawk, 2017, p. 676)</p> <p>- not always a connection between a teaching academic's pedagogical approaches and their epistemic beliefs (Kang & Wallace, 2005; Maggioni & Parkinson, 2008)</p> <p>- family influences, cultural beliefs and values can affect epistemic ideas that guide student engagement (Schommer, 1990)</p> <p>- alignment between epistemic assumptions and teaching and learning philosophies as both concepts acknowledge that pedagogical practices are informed by an individual's views, values and beliefs (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD], 2009)</p> <p>- the purposeful and reflective practices of teaching academic as being the single greatest influence on student engagement and learning (Hattie, 2003)</p> <p>- teachers' practice involves “habitual and individual instances of socially-contextualised configurations of elements such as actions, interactions, roles and relations, identities, objects, values and language” (Kettle, 2011, p. 1)</p>

Core theme	Themes and Evidence from Participants	Alignment to the Pertinent Literature
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Epistemic influences: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Culture <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>How much you want to devote and to what extent you want to devote is often an individual philosophical framework that each person brings... Real learning doesn't just happen by completing thirteen weeks of study and how you can make that happen is a challenge. It might be a cultural aspect, the way I was taught and brought up, being influenced by my cultural upbringing or traditional thinking where the teacher is supposed to be a way towards God, which means the teacher is respected and it's about teaching being about growth and learning. (Tobin, re-story)</i> <p>Theme: Epistemic influences:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Educational background and experiences <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>We should teach how we would like to be taught. I reckon that is very important to have in mind and I'm also a student, I'm enrolled in the (subject removed for confidentiality) so that being a student helped me to put myself into the shoes of the student and how I can help them and how I can make things easier and better for them. (Blair, intensive interview)</i> - <i>I've been there myself [as a student] and I know it's hard. (Kai, intensive interview)</i> - <i>I had wonderful lecturers when I got to university that I'm trying to, yeah, to remember this and see what I can do as well as they've done for me. (Reece, intensive interview)</i> - <i>[T]he way I teach them... is a reflection of some of the teachers I had who really scaffolded me, mentored me and gave me a lot of opportunities and unfortunately when I was younger... I made quite a lot of mistakes and then, at a critical age, and unfortunately, I did not have the same teachers... And it's not because the teachers didn't want to do that it's just that for better or worse, I didn't have those same types of teachers at that point of time in my life and due to that, the ramifications of my actions, which were not ameliorated or, which were not sort of addressed, at that time by the teachers, I still feel the ramifications even today, right, even till today. (Drew, intensive interview)</i> - <i>I do believe in having a professional distance between myself and my students so yes, I think it's important that I build a relationship with them and that I</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - teaching is not static and instead is a creative, constantly-evolving endeavour as teachers are continually influenced by their own cultural backgrounds and their experiences (Taylor & Woolley, 2013)

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	<p><i>offer them respect and get respect back but I'm also, I don't think it's my role to be their best friend. I think that's quite a dangerous path to tread. And again, maybe that comes from my background as a high school teacher where having a very conscious awareness of the power relationships that are in play, is important so that I don't exploit them but so that I don't overstep marks that could then expose me to risks. (Chey, intensive interview)</i></p> <p>Theme: Instructional goals</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>I used to be very spontaneous in the lecture but coming to Australia, I had to re-think and re-phrase, I have to be very academic, I had to re-focus and structure it in such a way that it really matches the subject outcomes and outlines. That was a big shift. But sometimes that doesn't allow me to be who I am. Because I have tried to fit in into the structure so I'm just trying to be fitting into this particular structure where I'm fitting one hour or two hour where I get to speak within the structure... but I think the flexibility for an academic to be talking and intellectual freedom and all that you know, that's somehow lost as we need to be seen as very structured. That's a shift for me. (Tobin, intensive interview)</i> - <i>If you treat them as professional, they'll act as professional, not as students anymore. So I really think it's something yeah that we need to put in place, I guess and from day one, they need to be aware of it. So from day one they know... they're not a high school student with me anymore, they're professionals and they need to act as professionals if you don't perform in your job, you're going to be fired. Same thing at uni really. (Reece, intensive interview)</i> - <i>I know that... [the content] are not easy. They are not easy, there are too many, they're not appealing. So I had to do something to make them interesting and appealing... If I can teach them like that are from books, that would make the teaching very boring... So I try to... individualise... [the content] for... [the students]. (Blair, intensive interview)</i> 	
	<p>Theme: Teaching and learning philosophies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>I think it's all about the how passionate you are about the subject and how you can inspire students. So vitally important your subject content but I think it's also signposting students about the possibilities that are there waiting for them. So I think being passionate, being interested, being interested in the lives of students... And sometimes because of the work pressure, the workload and other stuff, the main priority of teaching gets lost in the in between... It may be a cultural aspect because the way in which we are taught and brought up and the ideology of</i> 	

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	<p><i>teaching itself, being influenced by my cultural upbringing or traditional thinking, or whatever it is, the learning is, the teaching is about growth and learning. (Tobin, intensive interview)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>I often relate my teaching to my values or principles that align with my philosophy of practice, something like valuing difference and supporting inclusion. Sometimes I deliberately challenge them in regards to social stereotypes to get them to identify and go deeper in their interrogation of their own positioning and beliefs. (Alex, re-story)</i> - <i>I employ a humanistic pedagogy... which actually tries to break down those walls of objectivity and subjectivity and being objective as opposed to being personal and things like that. Humanistic pedagogy actually requires you to become more than just a teacher... it requires you to actually establish a relationship where it's almost vernacular, I won't say loco parenthesis, but something very similar... One of the most important things that I would try and do is to remember the student names... and I think that really starts the whole ball rolling. The moment the student realises that the teacher cares enough to memorise everybody's names, notwithstanding the fact that there are so many of them, they then give you the benefit of the doubt. (Drew, intensive interview)</i> - <i>The first slide the students' see when they come to my class for the first time is my teaching philosophy. And the teaching philosophy is: you are a practitioner. I don't see them as students anymore and I try to follow this up throughout the semester with activities that really put them in real-life situations. I think ways to really engage them is to stop thinking about them as students only but as young professionals in the making. When it comes to my teaching, I try to think about strategies that will allow me to make them realise that soon they'll be graduating, and they will be in the workplace and this is the workplace with some sort of safety net. (Reece, re-story)</i> 	
<p>Considerations of the students</p> <p>Overview: the considerations of the students' individual needs, goals and life-circumstances can be viewed as</p>	<p>Theme: Prioritising student needs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Within the three data sets all participants shared the notion that <i>putting the students first</i> facilitates their engagement - “[support students] <i>just enough and not too much</i>” (Chey, intensive interview) - <i>I think for many academics, they see content first, not people. Or not students first, but if you turn that around and say students first, they'll learn the content. We can't transmit our wisdom and our expertise into their heads, they have to come to an understanding that you know the person out the front is worth listening to or lectures are worth studying or the textbook's worth reading. So, I think what we're</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the diverse nature of the student cohort as being a key feature of contemporary universities, whereby international student movement and enrolment has grown (and continues to increase) (Goedegebuure & Schoen, 2014; Le & McKay, 2018; Min & Falvey, 2018) - a teaching academic's perceptions and ideas of the students can influence their practices and subsequently impact educational engagement and progress (Van Houtte & Demanet, 2016)

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<p>pivotal to the participants' engagement approaches</p> <p>Emerged from:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Interview data - Re-storied data - Focus group data 	<p><i>saying is we come to that at a personal level, an academic student relationship and the content will sort of look after itself, you just assume that you are good deliver of content and they will want to engage with the content. (Sam, FG1, meeting one)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>So, what's changed over time, is my focus has changed. I've moved away from content and my focus has switched to student. So, I think that's where student engagement comes in mainly thinking of them, being an active learner, and not focussing on the required content. But instead just focussing on them where they're at and working with them. And so that's how engagement has come in. (Quinn, intensive interview)</i> <p>Theme: Considerations of the perspectives of the current cohort:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>I think being open to listening to them and sometimes they have competing demands in their life, being a student, at work, they have a family, they have children, so sometimes when they ask for extensions, we need to be open. (Tobin, intensive interview)</i> - <i>We have students who are entering uni through alternate pathways. So some students didn't finish high school... Others have done things like joined the army or have trades and have been out of formal education for a long period of time... Some of our students didn't finish schooling because of chronic health conditions... we have a lot of first in family students but also students who would come from families who would be deemed to be middle class, have parents with university qualifications but they disengaged with schooling for a range of reasons. So their entry into university is an atypical pathway from what was traditional. (Chey, intensive interview)</i> - <i>Internationals [students] are here, they want it delivered straight up, by the learning objectives, talk to the slides if you want, read off the slides if you want, that's quite adequate. Whereas you're hitting the money with the domestics because you're hamming it up, you're rocking around the lecture theatre, someone even said, don't walk, they were stay still, stay at the front of the lecture theatre and it was like, no I don't do that, so that was quite confronting. (Sam, intensive interview)</i> - <i>I had some students this week saying they don't have a desk at home and the house may have two bedrooms with ten people living in them and they're attending university here. They don't have what other people would take for granted. (Finn, FG2, meeting three)</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the implicit beliefs teachers' hold of the students and their qualities, for example, the ways abilities and intellectual capabilities can be fostered, has an influence on pedagogical thinking and practice (Rissanen et al., 2018) - when teaching academics prioritise their students, they work to understand their learners' epistemologies and ways of learning, and aim to foster learners' professional and personal skills and knowhow (Wyatt, 2011) - despite a history of competing priorities, challenges and finite resources, universities must focus first and foremost on supporting their students to learn and develop for a "multidisciplinary and multifaceted" world (Spanier, 2010, p. 94) - teaching academics working in contemporary universities, there is a growing need to adapt to increasing student enrolments from non-traditional learners (Norton & Cherastidtham, 2014) - examples of non-traditional learner traits include: people over the age of twenty-five who are financially independent with work and family responsibilities; students with lower socio-economic statuses; learners with additional needs; and students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds (Hainline et al., 2010) - increasing enrolments from non-traditional learners requires teaching academics to employ varying pedagogical approaches to support students' engagement because of differences in prior knowledge, background and experiences (van Seters et al., 2012) - an identified challenge for teaching academics in contemporary universities is not only to engage students, but to consider the processes and practices required for engaging different populations of students who attend (Wyatt, 2011)

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	<p>- ... probably first of the family at university, so you don't have that support system and it's important to have your mother or your father telling you, "Look I know it's hard but we all go through this, university's just about ups and downs and you'll go through it". The first in family, it's not that easy for them to not be able to relate to anyone in their family and they go through something, we know what they go through. University's not easy. (Reece, FG2, meeting three)</p> <p>Theme: Challenges for fostering engagement with the student cohort</p> <p>- The student cohort, the profile itself has changed over a period of time. That poses major challenges in the delivery mode, the conceptualisation, the orientation, etcetera, etcetera. And my own theoretical orientation, Paulo, and the big thinkers who talked about consciousness raising stuff, you don't see that kind of stuff. I think new market ideologies have come in, new ways of thinking, online delivery, engaging with distance education. The student cohort being changed you know, you have mature-aged students... The student profile have challenged the academics to re-conceptualise the way in which we engage. (Tobin, intensive interview)</p> <p>- I don't know if it's because of technology that they don't want to get in and do anything but there's less interaction I find and even to me the students now you get students missing too many classes, whereas when I did this class, I've been doing it for six years, they didn't do that, they always came to all the classes, whereas now they'll miss a few and then they've missed too many. I don't know what's happening. There's still good ones in there. But to me there, yeah, we're finding more and more that they're just not keeping up with the work, or they don't have the interest or I don't know, they're just wanting to pass and that's it. That's what we're finding with our students anyway. I'm not sure if it's a university-wide problem. (Kai, intensive interview)</p> <p>Theme: Implications for fostering engagement with the current student cohort</p> <p>- Four of the participants' interview data (Tobin, Alex, Chey, Sam) contains reference to implications for working with and engaging the current student demographic in their classes. Sam's commentary exemplifies the coded data:</p>	<p>- An evolving student demographic in contemporary universities requires teaching academics to facilitate a more individualised engagement of learners (Allen et al., 2016)</p> <p>- an inclusive environment is nurtured when teaching academics respond to the diverse needs of the students (Carroll, 2015)</p> <p>- when teaching academics take a relational approach and consider the needs of the students, cognitive and emotional engagement is fostered (Chiu et al., 2012)</p> <p>- each learner's engagement can be influenced or affected by their <i>lifeload</i>, which is "the sum of all the pressures a student has in their life, including university" (Kahu, 2013, p. 767)</p> <p>- when teaching academics prioritise the student-working-relationship it can lead to deeper learner engagement (Ramsden, 2003)</p> <p>- contemporary university students are more inclined to prefer teaching academics with strengths in their discipline area who are effective disseminators of knowledge as opposed to those who prioritise relational approaches (Goldman et al., 2017)</p> <p>- the importance of teaching practice with emphasis on both content and relational pedagogies (Goldman et al., 2017)</p> <p>- teaching academics' pedagogical actions that potentially influence student engagement are "highly dependent on what they pay attention to or how they understand what they are seeing" (Russ et al., 2016, p. 400)</p> <p>- universities should conceptualise their curriculum in such a way that values the students' varied life experiences and commitments (Barnett, 2018)</p> <p>- teaching academics should approach engagement by creating opportunities for students to have a sense of control in their learning (Barnett, 2018)</p>

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>These days, for many of them, if they call themselves full-time students, they're trying to do a full-time load on top of a lot of other things. I don't think higher education has realised that... For our students who work a lot, travel a lot, have family, all of those issues we know about, if you can, show some compassion for that or understanding of that (Sam, intensive interview)</i> 	
<p>Pedagogies for fostering student engagement</p> <p>Overview: socio-constructivist and relational pedagogical approaches are described as being intentionally enacted by the participants to foster student engagement</p> <p>Emerged from:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Interview data - Re-storied data - Focus group data 	<p>Theme: Socio-constructivist pedagogies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Emphasising time on task <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>I want good numbers, I want good satisfaction scores, I want time on task, and I want good analytics (Sam, re-story)</i> - <i>I ask students to participate in lectures, actively participate and keep focussed (Blair, re-story)</i> <p>Theme: Socio-constructivist pedagogies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Using relevant, active pedagogies and collaborative experiences <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Every subject that is taught at the university needs to have practical applications. And if I don't have a connection to the grassroots realities and if I'm not connected or have experience then my teaching is just going to be from textbook knowledge which is not going to be strong enough. What really matters is your ability to connect to the field, sharing that with the students and making it accessible for all. It needs to be practical, research orientated and gives them hope, yes, something is possible and that can make a difference in someone's life. Promise, possibilities and hope. (Tobin, re-story)</i> - <i>Everything seems to be on PowerPoint but I will then have some slides where there will be a point about an assessment item and I'll explain it and go, "Okay, this is what you are required to do on your assessment so you've got that in your head, now we're going to talk about it". And it gives them a reason as to why I'm going to show the next lot of slides or for the conversations to make more sense. I will connect them to practice and to the real world because their assessment tasks are the real world of practice, so I try to blend it all together. (Finn, re-story)</i> - <i>Most of my teaching is very much case study based, personal-experience based and research based... If they have a real connection with the academic, if they see they know their stuff, that's one thing, but if they see you as a knowledgeable person in the topic, if you've got it in the real world and connect it, you're not</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - maximising teaching and learning time can support students to engage in their studies (Chickering & Gamson, 1987; Good & Brophy, 2002; MacGregor, 2007) - students' learning is enhanced by spending more quantitative time on their studies (Gibbs, 2013) - relevant, active and collaborative teaching and learning practices can be associated with student engagement (Biggs & Tang, 2011; Chickering & Gamson, 1987; Glasser, 1993; Good & Brophy, 2002; MacGregor, 2007) - active learning approaches may involve the teacher in a facilitator role as the students are required to reflect on their learning and make cognitively-deeper connections within the content (Barkley, 2010; Chan & Elliott, 2004; Costa et al., 2011; Konopka et al., 2015) - promoting meaningful student engagement can involve teaching academics facilitating teaching and learning activities where the students spend time individually and collaboratively on tasks, exerting effort and concentration to meaningfully engage (Biggs & Tang, 2011; Chickering & Gamson, 1987; Good & Brophy, 2002; Kahu, 2013; MacGregor, 2007; Skinner & Belmont, 1993) - effective assessment design is one that is deliberately staged and contains opportunities for students to utilise different types of engagement as they complete the task/s. Students can be engaged behaviourally as they actively work on the assessment tasks and cognitively. This is because students reflect on and take actions from the formative feedback thus, informing the next assessment stage. This practice also helps students in

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	<p><i>only a discipline expert, but you can actually bring it to their level. (Sam, re-story)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>I think it's important, connecting what's being done in the classroom to the real world, what their potential aspirations are and their hopes for themselves as professionals. (Chey, re-story)</i> - <i>I think making it meaningful to make it relevant to practice is essential to like when you're doing policy or when you're doing readings, even including readings that are really, really relevant for practice, there can be theoretical readings but they need to have those examples and those links to practice... so I think that real-life context, meaningful learning. (Alex, intensive interview)</i> - <i>I think yeah bringing in real stories, not just case studies we've made up for the purpose of learning... Because quite often we do have case studies specifically written for the purpose of the learning objectives to meet the content. And they're great, they're a great teaching tool, but they're more successful if I say, if I talk about someone [real]. (Quinn, intensive interview)</i> - <i>And since I come from practice, I share a lot of stories with them and those stories are then connected with the literature. So, the introductory material, the stories and then linking with the literature, so that makes it interesting. (Tobin, intensive interview)</i> - <i>I think... when you're talking about... any profession actually, it's that ability to connect to them with stories, I think I use a lot of narratives around my own personal practice... I think when I tell stories they are more engaged than anything else. (Alex, intensive interview)</i> - <i>Yes, I try to focus every time on practical things and yep, that is the thing. [It] puts them in a kind of critical context. Because that's makes things more interesting for them and otherwise... they are not interested, and they will not engage and I understand because it would be very boring. (Blair, intensive interview)</i> - <i>So, making it relevant and making it real is really important to them, because if they can't connect why they need to know then they switch off and think, well I don't need to know this, it's not relevant to me. (Quinn, intensive interview)</i> - <i>I like seeing students that are taking the initiative and showing others how to do something, or helping others, we do PowerPoint presentations, poster presentations, so forcing students into groups in a working environment, they present it back to us. I make it a big thing as an assessment item that they have to work as a group, there's a lot of skill in that group work. (Sam, intensive interview)</i> 	<p>feeling supported through the learning and assessment process (Spiller, 2014)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - teaching academics can promote meaningful student engagement by working to create safe, inclusive and supportive learning spaces for all students (Chickering & Gamson, 1987; Glasser, 1993; Good & Brophy, 2002) - teachers can enact pedagogic care through relational approaches with students in a learning environment (Mariskind, 2014; Walker & Gleaves, 2016) - teaching academics can demonstrate empathy when they seek to understand (or know) the perspectives of their students and can model empathic practices when they provide opportunities to create shared understandings, feelings and ideas (Jahangiri & Mucciolo, 2012) - teaching academics can demonstrate pedagogic care when they share similar experiences to that of their students (Jahangiri & Mucciolo, 2012) - a democratic university classroom environment can promote engaged and interactive learners (Schneider, 2010) - teaching academics play a crucial role in the success of personalising learning in university education (Wanner & Palmer, 2015) - contextualise content to help students to see both the personal and professional, real-life relevance and application of the course materials to their professional lives (Perry et al., 2017; Saavedra & Opfer, 2012) - to promote meaningful engagement and deep learning, students need to see the relevance of the content to assessment tasks, the professional field and / or their personal lives Belet (2017) - decreasing funding and resources and increasing student enrolments creates an opportunity for creativity and innovation and "identifying newer, more effective products or services, using technological advances

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>I do labelling exercises online, which the students really enjoy, we do practise quizzes, and we'll look at videos as well. This also helps the students that learn differently. I try anything that gets them involved and working together. (Kai, re-story)</i> - <i>I make it really clear in the first week of semester that work is expected to be prepared before class. We engage in a lot of peer review and peer work so I try to intersperse it with new materials that I'm exposing the students to in class with activities that they are engaging with during class and also things that they have prepared in advance and that they work on together in the classroom. There is a big onus on the student, and we can't take that responsibility away from them. (Chey, re-story)</i> - <i>Sometimes my classroom looks a little bit like chaos. I think because I try to do those active learning activities. Last week I had a class where there was a lot of people sitting in groups and talking about their learning. I was sitting at the tables with them and having a chat through different things and then moving onto the next group, sort of conferencing with individual groups in terms of where they were at. It's a lot of student directed learning I think which is what I try to base my teaching on. (Alex, re-story)</i> - <i>I try to make it interactive and use a lot of activities so they're confronted with an issue first. I also have questions for them to answer online about what we've talked about. Not something that will feel like homework, just personal opinions on something a bit engaging like scenarios and challenges and how they would react or feel using their knowledge or skills to confront such a situation. There has to be communication between you and the students and the students and themselves, not just me telling them. (Reece, re-story)</i> - <i>Sometimes I start them with a case study and after that we have a discussion, and this makes the learning active and student directed. (Blair, re-story)</i> - <i>If it's a case study they're working through, I'll break it up into the five sections and each of the teaching sites contribute the answers to that one section, to then form the overall case study that will move into the next twenty-minute segment of the lecture. (Quinn, re-story)</i> - <i>I try to get them involved, which is also important because they are first years' and we've seen the research that is, if you've got friends, they're going to keep going through the degree a bit easier than students who don't have friends. So that's what I encourage, I see my role as both helping them along and getting to know each other. (Kai, re-story)</i> - <i>You need to be able to connect them [the students] with their future, especially</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> more effectively, streamlining processes, and so on” (Dudau et al., 2018, p. 254) - the student-as-consumer positioning does not equate to demanding less intellectual rigor and instead, when academia is viewed as a service, co-creation or engagement is critical (Guilbault, 2018) - the as-consumer positioning can potentially create an opportunity for teaching academics and students to make commitments to achieve teaching and learning goals through collaborative approaches (Guilbault, 2018) - learners expect to be treated as consumers in the areas of providing “student feedback, classroom studies,... communication with academic staff, individual studies, course design and teaching methods... However, [students] do not view themselves as customers when it comes to curriculum design, rigour, classroom behaviour and graduation” (Koris & Nokelainen, 2015, p. 128) - for students to successfully engage in their learning, and subsequently achieve learning outcomes, they need quality formative feedback on their progress (Mortiboys, 2010) - effective feedback from teaching academics can have a lasting influence on student achievement (Hattie, 2003) - teaching academics need to create opportunities for learners to take the time to read, work through and understand the provided feedback (Quinton & Smallbone, 2010) - purposeful listening in a non-judgement way to students can help teachers create safe and supportive learning environments, whereby, engagement can be promoted (Costa & Kallick, 2014) - listening to students requires academics working in partnerships with their learners to facilitate engagement in course materials (Jensen & Bennett, 2016)

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	<p><i>sometimes first years, I know in our degree, it's all kind of core subjects that they feel are not really related. And as you progress through the degree it's more related... I think it's all about connecting them to how it is useful, because if they don't think it's useful they won't care, they won't be engaged. (Kai, FG1, meeting one)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Start off by trying for them to see the picture of where we are going and why we have to start here... I just keep trying. Sometimes you can't avoid it, you have boring content. It's essential, but it's boring. And it's foundational so you have to teach it, no matter what you do, you can throw in all bunches of technology, they're still going to find it boring... But I just try and always link it to future subjects, so they go, I really have to pay attention to this to try and grasp this. Or talk to future concepts... Not only to pass the exam, to be able to apply it one day. (Quinn, FG2, meeting ine)</i> - <i>Wondering if it's hard or difficult, I say it hurts, I say I'm going to make it hurt, especially in second year, well you learnt lots of facts and figures in first year, second year I'm going to ask you to integrate two pieces of information together, I say that's actually going to hurt, not physically hurt, but mentally that's going to be challenging. Being up front with them that this is more difficult, my expectations are higher, you will have to do more of the work now. I will still inspire you, but you've got to do more of the work. (Sam, FG1, meeting one)</i> - <i>Something that works well... because I've tried it out... [is] inviting students that completed the subject and did quite well in the previous year and have them do like a fifteen minute presentation on a topic or something and why they were so interested in it and why did they do so well. They tend to connect with that student better than with me and to ask questions that the student could answer that I couldn't answer so more on the student experience rather than the topic itself and they liked that, they tend to like that a lot. (Reece, FG2, meeting two)</i> - <i>Yeah I think that's a very good idea, but I thought of doing something similar because I start with them in the second year and they find the... [subject content] not very appealing, but when they're in the fourth and fifth years, they are very, very interested now. It's an amazing change in their view on it so I thought I might invite the fifth years to talk to the second years that complained... So yeah, I think that's very good idea. (Blair, FG2, meeting two)</i> - <i>I do think about those professional competences but I kind of, I'm not sure if I make it explicit to students but things like, applying theories and policies to practice, I always try to make that relevant that they need to be aware of how their practices are demonstrating particular orientations... that self-reflective</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - quality listening “requires intentionality and deliberate thought”, from teachers as they actively work to understand their students’ perspectives and thinking, and empathetically relate to their thinking and feelings (Walsh & Sattes, 2015, p. 40) - supporting engagement by facilitating students’ reciprocal discussions (with peers and academics), can empower learners as they recognise their thinking and contributions are valued (Walsh & Sattes, 2015; Yazzie-Mintz & McCormick, 2012) - when teachers practice intentional listening, they can assess their students’ engagement and understanding and help learners talk through and explain their ideas (Ramsden, 2003; Smith et al., 2005) - maintaining high expectations involves teaching academics believing <i>all</i> their students can learn and taking the responsibility to support <i>all</i> their students to achieve (Stronge, 2007) - by enacting a caring pedagogy, teaching academics maintain high expectations of their students and encourage their learners to engage and work towards achievable academic goals (Pratt, 2002; Stronge, 2007) - when students know what is expected of them, they are more likely to take responsibility for their own learning and subsequently spend more time academically engaging in tasks (Gettinger & Walter, 2012) - teaching academics may find maintaining high expectations difficult when students are more concerned with doing what is required to gain their credentials, as opposed to meeting high standards (Chory & Offstein, 2017) - quality teaching is not value-neutral and therefore, needs to involve both technical skills and knowhow and a genuine ethic of care and concern for students and their wellbeing (Lovat & Clement, 2008)

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	<p><i>stance which I think is so important at the moment. I build in critical thinking skills, you know things where they are critically reflecting on policies, theories practices and what that might mean for them as a professional later on... I'm always aware of how those professional competencies need to come through in my teaching and hopefully that that reinforces their need to engage because it's professionally relevant and purposeful later on. (Alex, BFG)</i></p> <p>Theme: Socio-constructivist pedagogies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ effective use of monitoring, assessment and providing feedback <li>- <i>I regularly remind the students of the learning objectives and what they need to know [for their assessments], from the lecture. (Blair, re-story)</i> <li>- <i>Even recently with some assignments where there was a Part A and a Part B due at a later date, I wrote heaps of feedback for Part A so when the second part was handed in, you could see they've actually listened to you and you feel as if you've made a breakthrough. (Kai, re-story)</i> <li>- <i>That's evidence now because employers want that so that's why I get them to do it, those presentations are now evidence of oral and written communication skills. Group work, group didn't work, great, put a reflection in your... [electronic portfolio] account about that because that's what an interviewer is going to ask you in a job interview, tell me about group scenarios that didn't work real well. Guess what, you've got one this semester go and write it down, what worked, what didn't work. And so you turn a negative situation straight away and some will go away and give it as a good example of something on their CV. (Sam, FGI, meeting two)</i> <li>- <i>But I think it's a very good point that you have mentioned when students are asked to work in groups there are often troubles but they are able to get the skills that they are able to manage if things happen or go wrong in the future, so maybe that's what the focus is about, giving them the skills here you may not get a HD here, you get a C but your learning is going to be a HD because you've got the skills, how to manage those situations for the future. (Alex, FGI, meeting two)</i> <li>- <i>So one of the issues would be the amount of work it [authentic assessment design] involves for lecturers, especially when you have diverse cohorts, which will gather twelve plus disciplines. It often means that I really need to be flexible in terms of... giving enough for... the students to make the assignment relevant to them, but also to understand that some students are coming from [subject removed for confidentiality] for example, and I don't have the expertise in</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- A student's sense of wellbeing can influence their engagement and academic success (Van Petegem et al., 2008; Zhang, 2016) <li>- when a student has an optimal sense of wellbeing and feels supported by their teacher, they can meaningfully engage with their studies in order to reach their academic and life goals (Engels et al., 2004; Noble & McGrath, 2008, 2016; Ryan & Deci, 2001; Zhang, 2016) <li>- when fostering engagement by employing an ethic of care, teaching academics need to assume "a significantly well-developed capacity to understand boundaries, individual needs, and deeply personal aspects of self" (Hawk, 2017, p. 673) <li>- academics need to have skills and knowledge in implementing caring approaches, suitable to both inside and outside class times, and able to balance such approaches with their other work responsibilities (Hawk, 2017) <li>- an effective teaching academic approaches their work with care for their students' academic wellbeing (Stronge, 2007) <li>- caring for students is complex and can involve teaching academics investing time and effort in "thinking and feeling, acting and receiving, [and] reasoning and empathizing" (Hawk & Lyons, 2008, p. 309) <li>- students are more likely to be engaged and learn when they feel cared for and valued by their teacher (Wentzel, 1997) <li>- empathy can be defined as feeling "in tune" with another person's emotions. This means that empathy can perform an epistemic role as it transcends an awareness of how others are feeling, and instead provides knowledge of how others are feeling (Deonna, 2007; Smith, 2017). <li>- Jahangiri and Mucciolo (2012) teaching academics can demonstrate pedagogic care when they share similar

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	<p>[subject removed for confidentiality], <i>so to make the task relevant for them, but I'm not, do I have the knowledge to actually mark those tasks? So it calls on flexibility in terms of my marking criteria... So that's something I'd like to highlight. (Reece, FG2, meeting two)</i></p> <p>Theme: Socio-constructivist pedagogies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li> <p>▪ the provision of supportive and inclusive environments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>I try to take a strengths-based approach where I highlight the positives but at the same time, tell the truth. But I think they know that I am talking for their benefit, growth and learning and they understand that needs to happen in the context of a safe environment. Students feel they can talk and share their opinions, peer share and hear what others are saying. It is the same for online learning in the blog site where students can write their views and share their ideas. (Tobin, re-story)</i> <p>Theme: Pedagogically caring</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Demonstrating and modelling empathy <li>- <i>If you can show some compassion... instead of trying to understand their life, you just show them empathy and be available to them if they want to spill their beans or if they're having a hard time. And you keep inspiring them. You keep being there and seeing how they're going and be the constant in their semester. (Sam, re-story)</i> <li>- <i>I think empathy covers all other values of being caring, treating people the way you want to be treated and it requires you to put yourself into the other person's shoes and to walk in their steps and then decide what to do... And the values that I try and teach or try to model for them would be things like equity, fairness, compassion, empathy and I try to do that with my own actions with them... then they'll engage. (Drew, re-story)</i> <li>- <i>I ummed and ahed about whether relationships make a difference to engagement... Because I thought, yes, they do and I think what I got myself stuck on was I know they're not the be all and end all. Like I tend to have good relationships with the students that I teach, however, if I walk in and deliver something in a boring manner, they're not going to engage with me simply because I've got a relationship with them, a good working relationship. And it's</i> 	<p>experiences to that of their students. This strategy can be a way of teachers demonstrating empathy or showing the students are <i>in tune</i> (Deonna, 2007) with them.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- due to the complex nature of the contemporary university environment (e.g., ever increasing staff and student ratios, and student-as-consumer positioning) students may prefer transactional learning experiences over constructivist caring approaches (Chory & Offstein, 2017; Walker & Gleaves, 2016) <li>- teaching academics' responsibility is to foster engagement through the facilitation of a balanced program, with equal focus on the students' professional development and mastery of the course content (Hawk, 2017) <li>- role of the contemporary teaching academic is to not only design and facilitate learning experiences, but to prioritise their students and support their mental health and wellness (Di Placito-De Rango, 2018) <li>- caring is relational, therefore, a care ethic and the benefits such as student engagement, cannot exist without a carer (a teaching academic) and a cared for (a student) working together (Noddings, 2005) <li>- as education is a service, engagement or co-engagement is critical for this service to be enacted (Guilbault, 2018) = student engagement relational <li>- A democratic university classroom environment can promote engaged and interactive learners (Schneider, 2010). A teaching academic working to facilitate a democratic environment can provide opportunities that foster students' intellectual strengths with an aim of building learners' confidence in their perspectives. This fostering occurs while simultaneously, respecting the views of others. According to Dallalfar et al. (2011), a democratic environment is a supportive learning space where all voices, perspectives and narratives are valued.

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	<p><i>amazing, their delivery, some people, they just have you, you know if they say if you talk for nine minutes people have tuned out but some people you can watch for an hour or more and never tune out. (Finn, FG2, meeting two)</i></p> <p>Theme: Pedagogically caring</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Democratic classroom environment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>I provide opportunities for people to voice their opinions, to share their opinions, they can peer share and hear what others are saying, that is also the same for the online learning, we've got a blog site where the students can just write what they view and others could go and you know, share their ideas. Yeah I think engagement is a very crucial term, the shape and the shades through which that happens is manifold. (Tobin, intensive interview)</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Personalisation of teaching and learning situates the students at the centre of the learning process. This process involves facilitating content that is relevant, recognises the diverse needs of students and fosters student ownership of their learning (Bevan-Brown et al., 2011; Domenech et al., 2016; Jones & McLean, 2012). - According to Wanner and Palmer (2015), teaching academics play a crucial role in the success of personalising learning in university education. These researchers argue that personalising learning is vital to foster student engagement in higher education. This is because of the increase in flexible modes of delivery and non-traditional learners. - In an attempt to personalise learning, teachers can incorporate ongoing diagnostic and formative assessment, deliver content that builds on students' prior knowledge, use a variety of resources and media, and explicitly emphasise rigor and student engagement in their facilitation of the content (Domenech et al., 2016). - The contemporary social positioning of students-as-consumers or students-as-customers has been seen to coincide with the introduction and continual increase of tuition fees for university courses globally (Bunce et al., 2017). - Dudau et al. (2018, p. 254) argue, decreasing funding and resources and increasing student enrolments creates an opportunity for creativity and innovation and "identifying newer, more effective products or services, using technological advances more effectively, streamlining processes, and so on" (p. 254). Further, Guilbault (2018) ascertains, the student-as-consumer positioning does not equate to demanding less intellectual rigor and instead, when academia is viewed as a service, co-creation or engagement is critical.
	<p>Theme: Pedagogically caring</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The student-as-consumer positioning <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>[The students] have this expectation that they're laying out money so then they will, it's almost like you're purchasing your degree but you actually have to earn it, you don't buy it. (Chey, BFG)</i> - <i>That [student-as-consumer positioning] actually encourages surface level engagement because they think that they're buying their degree, it requires little effort from them and that means that they can engage in those surface-level behaviours and think that they still deserve a pass or a credit. (Alex, BFG)</i> - <i>And the danger is, that [student-as-consumer positioning] then translates into the curriculum that gets delivered and it's targeted so that the lowest, this is going to sound awful, but so the lowest common denominator of the consumer can buy their degree because they've spent the money. (Chey, BFG)</i> - <i>They're my customers. Every one of them that I can keep here, that's seventeen thousand dollars a year, now whether you do that, through whatever strategy you've got, and that for me is making them feel appreciated... That's the way the university sees them so I just turn it around and say right, my job is to keep as many of these students that I care about here. Or if they need to leave, I need to get them, you know good attrition, there's bad attrition, I need to get them good attrition. If the student is struggling, has health issues and shouldn't be here, I</i> 	

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	<p><i>need to be able to exist them correctly, or those others that are in doubt, they're better off being in another uni or another course, fine, I'll help them get there as well. (Sam, FG1, meeting three)</i></p> <p>Theme: Pedagogically caring</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Supporting students to set goals, align motivations and 'fail' <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>- If they can't identify their own purpose and have a goal, which they can attach to when they're going through tougher parts of the semester, it makes it impossible, I think, to stick with the work. (Chey, BFG)</i> <li><i>- The whole idea or concept of success can... be something that is a bit outside of that structure or framework, where the success needs to be established by the student entering university and saying well, "I will be succeeding if I pass all of my subjects and can keep my part time job and take care of my family all at the same time" ... And then that's not a HD student but from their perspective, they're succeeding, they have succeeded. (Reece, FG2, meeting three)</i> <li><i>- It's also important to recognise the changes of students' lives as well. Some maybe just wanting to get a job, some maybe wanting to get a degree in higher education and so you know, just asking them those open questions, what would you like to be, so that again towards their career and asking them to think about that. Making connections, you know. (Tobin, FG1, meeting one)</i> <li><i>- I've heard lots of teachers say, sometimes you have to let them fail and let them feel it and let them experience it and because sometimes when they come back from that and when they invite you into that failure and say, "What happened here and how do I fix it for next time?". That, that actually is something you can work from and it is that understanding from them that this failure is not your final destination that this [is] just one little stop along the pathway to you getting your degree, being an amazing person, being an amazing professional and actually being able to experience that this is not a bad thing. (Alex, BFG)</i> <li><i>- Or repeating students, who have failed and come in with completely no capital at all, thinking and see them succeed that second time. They see a pass, even a pass or they get a credit and they go, thanks... [Sam] and they say, "Thanks for failing me last year because I would have gone on to fail the next subject and the next subject, you've stopped me. I didn't realise it at the time, thought you were terrible but now you've just changed my life because now I'm getting credits and distinctions because you stopped me, I now know what I should know and now I</i> 	

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	<p><i>do that the second time, I'm going to power on to the next series of subjects". (Sam, FG1, meeting three)</i></p> <p>Theme: Pedagogically caring</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Listening to students <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>I have an open-door policy and the students can just walk in anytime. It is about having patience to listen to the students. It is not about teaching all the time, it's allowing students to talk about what's happening to them and that is another type of engagement. (Tobin, re-story)</i> <li>- <i>It is hard to please all the students but for me, in my classes, they always have the opportunity to come up and ask me questions. I make it an open-door policy. If they have any questions, they can just come and ask. I say to them that "You don't have to go off and be confused, you can come and talk to me", and I get a lot that come. So they're very interactive and I'd like to think that I'm always available to assist them. They can email, or phone me up and sometimes they just appear at my door and I don't have a problem with that. (Kai, re-story)</i> <li>- <i>I want the students to feel comfortable to ask questions. I make myself an approachable person for them. I'll go outside and sit with them and explain something and some of them make appointments when they're really stressing about an assignment and want me to explain it. Engaged students are the ones that want to stick around and keep talking. I tend to get home late on the afternoons I teach because of that. I don't want them to feel they can't just walk up and ask. They've got to feel okay with you but that's probably why I get so many questions after class and in emails because they don't feel as comfortable with their peers. (Finn, re-story)</i> <li>- <i>I think that... kind of, unstructured interaction is actually more of what they want. They don't like coming in to speak to me formally, it is still quite confronting and you can tell that they are still very nervous... Whereas when we just have an informal conversation outside, it is just that. Less threatening. (Alex, FG1, meeting three)</i> <li>- <i>But on campus, they're sitting having lunch and I'll stop by or if I've just had a lecture with them for a couple of hours, I'd say, "How was the lecture today?". Little things like that... It works really well. I'll take them downstairs because they'll book an appointment and say let's meet downstairs at the wooden tables because... it's totally informal they might want the others around or we can go to</i> 	

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	<p><i>a quieter spot, and the consults just go so much better that way. And it's not about, you can come to the academic's door, being seen to come to the academic's door can be some sort of social conundrum for them, but again but if I'm sitting at a bench and they're sitting, chatting and nobody can see what you're talking about, it can be confidential medical issues or how did I go, feedback for an assessment item, or just a discussion about anything, I don't really care. (Sam, FGI, meeting three)</i></p> <p><i>- I think in our department, they're constantly in my office so ours', I would say all of our staff are very interactive so it's probably why they feel okay about coming down our end of the hallway. But that's probably where I talk to them most is when they come in and visit... but definitely, all of us normally just have our doors open so they will appear at times to come and talk to you. Just appear so sometimes they just appear, "Hey do you have time?". "Yes, I have time". So yeah, it seems to work well. (Kai, FGI, meeting three)</i></p>	
	<p>Theme: Pedagogically caring</p> <p><i>- Maintaining high expectations</i></p> <p><i>- They have lecture schedules and if the lecture starts at ten, the students need to be here at ten. I give them five minutes and if they show up after five minutes, they go home because that's something, depending on which job you have, you need to be there on time, clock-in, clock-out. So, I try to implement that whole professional environment with the students. (Reece, re-story)</i></p>	
	<p>Theme: Pedagogically caring</p> <p><i>- Supporting student wellbeing</i></p> <p><i>- I think it comes down to making yourself available to the students. I take that seriously, really be available for my students. They actually have my cell phone number so in case there's something that comes up and they know they can reach me anytime. It's very time consuming so you need to be organised and have the time to do that and there is some degree of dedication... My students are my priority, in ten years I may feel differently but I got into teaching for this. (Reece, re-story)</i></p> <p><i>- To me, ultimately, it's about communicating to the students that I am here to</i></p>	

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	<p><i>support their learning and I try to do that in a range of ways. Whether it's responding to emails, setting high expectations or making time for those learning-based conversations outside of class. I try to give the students some flexibility in class to meet them where they're at and what they need and I think they do really appreciate that I am available in other times. Not just for academic support but sometimes it is that social and emotional support. Their uni life is just one small part of their lives. (Alex, re-story)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>I make a very conscious effort to let students know that experiencing doubt and discomfort and stress is a normal part of the journey. That what they see on the outside on those who they see to be successful is really only the external manifestation of that. They don't see the rapid paddling of feet under the surface of the water a lot of the time. They don't see the breakdowns and the stress and the effort that people put in to get where they are or appear to be. I engage in conversations with the students at the beginning of each lecture about what will be challenging for many at that point in the semester... Sometimes I've actually walked students to the wellbeing office and made an appointment with them to see someone if they seem not to be coping using any of those resources that they have. It is, I guess for some, viewed as a labour-intensive way of teaching. It is not a stand and deliver. (Chey, re-story)</i> - Considering the students' wellbeing as part of their engagement approaches is identified by each participants' re-story (n=10). However, seven of the teachers' references (Tobin, Drew, Alex, Reece, Chey, Finn, Kai) also contain explanations of perceived implications associated with employing an ethic of care. Tobin's comment exemplifies such explanations: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>I think being compassionate and interested in the lives of the students can actually make a difference, but sometimes because of the work pressure, the workload, the research, the main priority of teaching gets lost in between. (Tobin, re-story)</i> - <i>I say to them you know if you are struggling just show me your assignment, I might have a quick look and you may need APA referencing style and so you need to get some support there so a librarian, you need to meet with a librarian and you talk to them. If it's a culturally and linguistically diverse background then we have other services within the university you need to make use of those services. And if the students are really struggling with a mental health issue then I say to them you know you really need to engage with the student services. (Tobin, intensive interview)</i> 	

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Having worked in academic development for a few years and worked with all our student support, learning advisors, library, student admin, in a closer way, and I used to see them as being helpful on the side but didn't understand what they did. Now I... [see] them as part of my team for three or four years... They're there to help me help my students to learn the things I can't deliver in... the classroom. I know they're out there to help. (Sam, intensive interview)</i> - <i>We flag students who we believe are at risk or we think need additional support in a range of ways and endeavour to encourage to take up that additional support. (Chey, intensive interview)</i> - <i>The other challenge is also when there're just students you can't help. Regardless of how much you try, if they can't help themselves, I mean there's just so much you can do. And it's hard to communicate to them or to explain to them why they also need to put their part of effort in this what you won't do it all for themselves, that's when... counselling comes in and really helps, helps us out. (Reece, intensive interview)</i> - <i>I think partially it is also reflected on the way I can share the one or two blunders I make as a practitioner in the field. And I said this is what I did you know, and on reflection... I understood [it] was a mistake that I made but I did not stop. Actually, I wrote about it and I reflected on it and it became a contradiction to the literature, what you should not be doing. So I said, I admittedly made a mistake, but I reflected on it and then I wrote about it and that's why I came to realise so we are not all perfect. Especially humans of this practice, we always make mistakes and it's part of your practice that actually encourages you to move forward... But again, it contradicts our position of being an academic to being in a position of experts. (Tobin, FG1, meeting two)</i> - <i>I make mistakes just as, you know, we expect them to and nothing's perfect and it's okay to say, okay that's just flopped let's just move on. (Quinn, FG2, meeting one)</i> - <i>I was very human yesterday, and they were very engaged... But I think it was the laughter in the room, because... it gets them in and then they were just all hooked and they wanted to know everything. But I just had to, probably embarrass myself, which I don't like doing, but they liked that I think. I'm probably very human for them. (Finn, FG2, meeting one)</i> - <i>Laughter is very good. It helps a lot. It helps very much, laughter. (Blair, FG2, meeting one)</i> 	
Evaluation and justification of	Theme: The reflexive practitioner	- reflexivity involves an examination or questioning of an individual's attitudes, thoughts, habits, actions and

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<p>student engagement approach</p> <p>Overview: the participants' perceive the evaluation of student engagement as a challenge. Therefore, the participants work as human instruments and employ experiential, embodied and tacit knowing, in alignment to their own conceptual understandings of student engagement, to reflect on and justify their practices</p> <p>Emerged from:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Interview data - Re-storied data - Focus group data 	<p>- <i>You learn as you go and doing that... helps you reflect on your practice and what you may have done, not wrong automatically but not sufficiently. For example, things evolve and the whole blended learning and interactive learning and all of that, that's something that I wasn't used to as a student and so it's good to see that you can still learn and adapt your teaching and yeah, so yeah it definitely has changed, it changes all the time and you will keep changing, I'm sure. (Reece, intensive interview)</i></p> <p>- <i>I wouldn't want to be presenting myself as the expert because I don't think that's possible, I think it's an ongoing experience. And it's a continuously evolving practice that has to respond to the context and the students in that context. (Chey, intensive interview)</i></p> <p>Theme: How and why I (teaching academic) perceive these engagement approaches make a difference:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ personal observations and evaluations of student behaviours <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>I find if I miss a class and they don't want to miss a class we won't have it and I said no I'm not coming next week, someone else will come and they say, no, no we want you to be there. So I can sense, not that I'm great but sense sometimes that they want that continuity of the discussions. (Tobin, intensive interview)</i> ▪ a combination of personal observations, evaluations of student behaviours and data <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>You can see when they are physically engaged, they sit up, they make eye contact, they talk with people. (Alex, intensive interview)</i> - <i>I can also see how many students are posting questions and comments online. (Tobin, re-story)</i> - <i>I like to talk to them and I also see their engagement online. (Chey, re-story)</i> - <i>I think the survey comes back too late, obviously during the semester and we need feedback, especially for last year's subject, we need feedback before, the end of the semester, so otherwise it will only help the students the following year, so usually informally I ask them, by week five or six, I ask them how are you doing? Are you learning something? Are you, is this actually helping you? In class and I tell them, look just tell me and I think I take notes, so I get that informal feedback by week five or six and then week ten do it again to ask</i> 	<p>reactions, and how these are informed or influenced by socio-cultural backgrounds, positions and assumptions, whilst acknowledging existing roles and relationships (Blasco, 2012; Bondi, 2009; Clancy, 2013; Finlay & Gough, 2003)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - teaching academics can find learning analytic data challenging to interpret and are not confident that the software provides a true indication of engagement (Dazo et al., 2017) - although analytics data can provide insights into students actions within the LMS, analytic reports are used more by professional staff rather than teaching academics (Corrin et al., 2013) (Wilson et al., 2017) - teacher knowledge is difficult to define as the concept contains various individual circumstances, factors and experiences (Webb & Blond, 1995) - teacher knowledge incorporates understandings beyond conceptual knowledge and facts and extends to knowing <i>how</i> and <i>why</i> something is important and how it works both within its own area and in relation to others (Shulman, 1986, 2013) - teacher knowledge not only involves understanding the content and how to teach it, but includes a personal knowledge, inclusive of emic epistemologies, histories and personality variables (Verloop et al., 2001) - professional standards detailing what teachers should know and do, minimises the personal knowledge of teachers which encompasses the decisions they make within specific contexts and during daily routines Wilson and Demetriou (2007) - teacher knowledge is "historical, autobiographical, storied, embodied, relational, and situated within the continually changing context of teachers' professional and personal lives" (Webb & Blond, 1995, p. 613) - teachers <i>know</i> the content and how it needs to be taught in ways that promote student engagement (Kemmis et al., 2014)

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	<p><i>them as well, is there anything you'd like to review? And how are you doing? Is that subject helping you? How do you see what you've learned so far helping you later on? (Reece, intensive interview)</i></p>	<p>- teacher <i>knowing</i> can be considered as tacit knowledge as encompassing “normative, intentionally directed activities that might readily be characterized in terms of knowledge, but at the same time might seem to involve something that cannot be (at least fully) put into words” (Gascoigne & Thornton, 2013, p. 3)</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 	<p>a combination of personal observations, evaluations of student behaviours, students demonstrating understandings and data</p> <p>- <i>I guess you know when you've had a successful lesson and when you haven't. You kind of walk away and you just, you know by students' body language or students' participation or energy levels in the room whether its been a successful lesson and you can sort of have those light bulb moments where you can see things are aligning in students' minds, or they'll start asking questions that really demonstrate, aha they're getting it. Because in order to ask that question, they are thinking it through and so yeah, how do I know? I guess it is through, an element is through feedback, an element is through in the response that I see from students. (Quinn, intensive interview)</i></p> <p>- <i>I could say they do well in the grades, in the grades profile is satisfactory is by the policy, I have some HDs, not too many fails, success, you know, tick, tick engaged obviously they thought content was alright. Time on task or learning analytics could say well yes, they can keep up with me on a week-by-week basis... So I go for non-summative or non-analytics I guess, its I take that personal touch and try to catch them outside lectures, before lectures in the courtyard... but I try and see that, you know how am I going, instant feedback, were those lectures okay, how's your week going, what other assessments have you got on for other subject, how are we travelling in my subject versus the others so, whenever I can I try and see if I can try to gauge their engagement, that's the wrong word, if I can measure their engagement, if I can analyse their engagement, whatever, through those sort of non-metric ways. (Kai, intensive interview)</i></p> <p>- <i>When we first started it, we did do stats on whether the students improved... and the pass rate was higher... they're also very keen to do it. I think sometimes with the students too, again I think it's about me making them feel that they can, and I do hope that I do that, that they'll come up and ask questions at the end of the class if they're confused, so then you know that they're looking for answers as well. (Kai, intensive interview)</i></p> <p>- <i>I do take attendance and things like that and I think it's a big indicator particularly it seems on the achievement on their assessment as there's such a</i></p>	<p>- teaching academics with situational awareness may be able to assess situations, recognise patterns, be able to plan ahead and enact effective responses with contingency plans as well as be able to promote engagement and pre-empt any issues whilst drawing upon a range of pedagogical strategies (Bing-You et al., 2017; Smith, 2001)</p> <p>- embodied knowing is when teachers “bring their whole selves and the sum of their embodied and affective lived experiences to their learning environment” (Lipson Lawrence, 2012, p. 12)</p> <p>- teachers appear to enact experiential knowing when they make particular pedagogical choices based on their professional teaching and learning experiences (McAlpine & Weston, 2000)</p> <p>- teaching academics appear to employ strategies of human-as-instruments which is associated with naturalistic, qualitative research methods and encompasses the use of human characteristics of responsiveness, flexibility and sensitivity in the development of meaning and understandings through inquiry (Peredaryenko & Krauss, 2013)</p> <p>- teaching academics working as human instruments, can be identified as noticing patterns and unique details in student characteristics, events, instances or cases in their classrooms as part of their daily practices (Lundsteen, 1987)</p> <p>- non-human data instruments can be more cost effective and provide objective information that can be systematically aggregated, however, human instruments are able to be more insightful and can</p>

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	<p><i>correlation between people who are not coming along and not engaging in that communication and then the working they're producing for actual assessment. I even had one student go to sleep a couple of weeks ago, so sometimes I get the engagement thing happening and sometimes I don't. (Alex, re-story)</i></p> <p><i>- I think you know it's word-of-mouth, students hear about it. Okay, that's a good class, and when I started I only had six or seven students in one internal class, now I have twenty-five. (Tobin, intensive interview)</i></p> <p><i>- Based on the sort of feedback I get, students do attend my lectures and that's a measurement that we can make, as lectures being some metric of engagement, I don't know if it's accurate or not, they do seem to come to my lectures. (Kai, intensive interview)</i></p> <p><i>- The thing for me, my background is everything's physical, so the body language tells me if they're engaged. There are also the things that I know aren't engagement. If I see a mobile phone out, or you know the screen doesn't need to be up but it is and all that stuff, I know they're not engaged at all. If they're in a group work and they're leaning in and you know they're on task and haven't drifted off to the weekend or something else... Some of the tasks I set them, they have to stand up and report on it or produce something for everyone to see and so in doing that, I know if they've engaged. It is also if they've actually grasped a concept, if they've engaged, they understand. If the concepts were new and the fact that they can answer them, I know the learning was successful, but I know that they wouldn't be successful if they didn't engage. (Finn, re-story)</i></p>	<p>provide holistic emphasis as they draw upon tacit knowledge to “process and ascribe meaning to data simultaneously as their acquisition” (Guba & Lincoln, 1982, p. 245)</p>
	<p>Theme: Insights and challenges for student engagement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ promote engagement with streamlined practices: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>- I've seen some notices that some people put up... my teaching hours are this and if you want to contact me, this is the time to contact me. But I have a different policy, I say anytime you want to email me, I'll respond to you, and sometimes that gives a very different signal to the students. (Tobin, FG1, meeting one)</i> <i>- It is that busy work, that is just costing us engagement. Time for students, and they are crying out for it, they just, like all students, they want, just time, a friendly word a name, time with you... The work paid model's tightening up</i> 	

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	<p><i>for that, we had to resubmit ours recently, so, trying to look for points... and I was looking for where does mentoring others or doing peer reviews, the basic learning and teaching work that I consider my job, there's nowhere to claim it even... You can see the big administrative jobs, I could get more points, but I think but I am busy and I do value work and I know where those other hours go... And I wouldn't change that for the world, I wouldn't stop talking to students or peer mentoring or mentoring students or doing peer reviews, all of those things that you just do when you're a senior learning and teaching academic. But if I stop doing that, I think the system's got you. (Sam, FG1, meeting three)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>I find for me personally, especially this last semester, just workload has been through the roof, which makes it very hard to be able to put the time I'd like to put into preparing my classes into other things I'd like to do. I kind of had a subject dumped on me in the last second and I'm still trying to, you know, clean it all up and you just, so much time. You're already doing way more hours than you're meant to do to you know get to the level you're at. So that's my biggest problem with our, you know being innovative or even preparing myself really well to do a class is just time is a huge problem for me personally. (Kai, FG1, meeting three)</i> - <i>I would probably say that the fact that we're missing the tool to measure student engagement. We've got plenty of things, what do they call them, analytics, the feedbacks I'm guessing can be used to measure somehow, to figure out their engagement. Having a tool that we can really use to measure student engagement would be good. I don't think that analytics are that accurate, that would be a challenge... The feedback survey is a disaster, we learn nothing from that and I'm not saying that every semester I've got the email saying you've reached that, so I'm not saying it out of concern for my feedback scores, they're always good but I read them and I learn nothing from it. They don't understand that it's part-improving subjects for future students... We learn nothing from that. (Reece, FG2, meeting three)</i> - <i>I also feel that there's this whole range of analytic tools that I just don't have the knowledge of yet and in the moment, I couldn't access them. I'll use LMS to see when their last contact was but that's one area I'd like to get more information on. (Alex, re-story)</i> - <i>I didn't put in place any assessment sort of measures or tools right from the beginning... And I didn't really think even about writing about what I'm doing. So yeah, no. I didn't use anything so, pretty hopeless, but what I'm</i> 	

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	<p><i>going to do now because I do want to try and write about it, I'm going to maybe put in place maybe some of these feedback or assessment tools for the workshops and things like that so I have some empirical base to write more about what I'm doing in terms of the humanistic pedagogy and how scaffolding these kids in a very personalised sort of tailored way can actually improve certain outcomes and things like that. (Drew, intensive interview)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ reflect on practices and make curriculum adjustments to promote engagement - <i>So it's always on my mind, just recently, when you are teaching and as soon as you put the pens down and... you think, wow I need to change something for next year or you learn something, you reflect straight away as a practitioner and you go, right... what is it that I need to do to change my subjects for the next iteration and I'm already thinking ahead. I haven't got any evaluations or data yet, but I've just finished week thirteen teaching, what are the systems that I've got to go through to make it a positive change for any students for next year... but even then the timelines are too late to change things... changes for what I want, very small assessment percentage changes but it's all too late apparently... and you think wow, a little change like that has now moved to 2019 which I'll probably forget about and I'll be thinking, I want to change it again. But I haven't even instigated the last change. (Sam, FGI, meeting three)</i> - <i>Well it interrupts the teaching learning cycle, like it interrupts what we know about good teaching. That good teaching is, you know, planning, practice, reflecting on practice critically for how we actually improve our practice and then instigating those changes so that we can actually iteratively improve that practice, like that interruption does make it difficult. (Alex, FGI, meeting three)</i> 	