

# **Nursing students' perceptions of an extended undergraduate curriculum programme within a higher education institution in the Western Cape Province**

By

**Chantal Julius**

Thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of  
Master of Nursing Science in the Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences

The crest of Stellenbosch University, featuring a shield with a red and white design, topped with a crown and surrounded by a red and white wreath. Below the shield is a banner with the Latin motto 'Pactum collegium cultus veritas'.  
at Stellenbosch University

**Supervisor: Cornelle Young**

**Co-supervisor: Anneleen Damons**

**March 2017**

## DECLARATION

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## ABSTRACT

The South African government's solution to correct past discriminations in higher education was to improve access for previously disadvantaged students to tertiary institutions. However, the poor performance of these students indicated their under-preparedness for tertiary education.

Extended curriculum programmes were thus implemented to facilitate the success of these under-prepared students in tertiary education. The aim of this study was to explore nursing students' perceptions of an extended undergraduate curriculum programme within a higher education institution in the Western Cape Province.

The objectives of this study was to explore and describe the perceptions of the R425 Diploma nursing students within a higher education institution in the Western Cape Province about:

- the extended undergraduate curriculum programme (ECP) that they had completed
- whether the ECP assisted with their integration into the mainstream programme
- how the ECP could be improved to better facilitate integration and success in the mainstream programme

A descriptive design with a qualitative approach was applied and a purposive sampling method was utilised to select ten participants for two focus groups. The data was collected via focus groups with the use of semi-structured interviews to acquire diverse perspectives on the extended curriculum programme.

The findings of the study included an insightful description of the extended curriculum programme by the participants, where they candidly spoke about the benefits but also the negative aspects of the programme. The participants articulated that the programme assisted immensely in their successful integration into the mainstream programme and gave valuable information on how the extended curriculum programme can be improved.

**Key Words:** Under-preparedness, extended curriculum programme, academic literacy.

## OPSOMMING

Die Suid-Afrikaanse regering se oplossing om die onregmatighede van die verlede in hoër onderwys reg te stel, was om toegang vir voorheen-benadeelde studente tot tersiêre instellings te verbeter. Die swak prestasie van hierdie studente is egter 'n aanduiding van hoe onvoorbereid hulle vir tersiêre onderrig is.

Verlengde kurrikulumprogramme is dus geïmplementeer om die sukses van hierdie onder-voorbereide studente in tersiêre onderrig te fasiliteer. Die doel van hierdie studie was om verpleegkundestudente in 'n hoër onderwys instelling in die Wes-Kaap Provinsie se persepsies te ondersoek rakende hulle verlengde voorgraadse kurrikulumprogram.

Die doel van hierdie studie was om die R425 Diploma verpleegkundestudente se persepsies binne hoër onderwys instellings in die Wes-Kaap Provinsie te ondersoek en beskryf oor die volgende:

- Die verlengde voorgraadse kurrikulumprogram (VKP) wat hulle voltooi het
- Of die VKP hierdie studente gehelp het met die integrasie in die hoofstroom-programme
- Hoe die VKP verbeter kan word om beter integrasie en sukses in die hoofstroom-programme te fasiliteer

'n Beskrywende ontwerp met 'n kwalitatiewe benadering is toegepas en 'n doelgerigte steekproefmetode was gebruik om tien deelnemers vir twee fokusgroepe te kies. Die data is versamel met die gebruik van semi-gestruktureerde onderhoude om sodoende diverse perspektiewe van die verlengde kurrikulumprogramme te verwerf.

Die bevinding van die studie sluit 'n insiggewende beskrywing van die verlengde kurrikulumprogramme deur die deelnemers in, waar hulle openhartig oor die voordele maar ook die negatiewe aspekte van die program kon praat. Die deelnemers het aangedui dat die program hulle geweldig ondersteun het met die suksesvolle integrasie tot die hoofstroomprogram en hulle het waardevolle inligting verskaf oor hoe die verlengde kurrikulumprogram verbeter kan word.

**Sleutelwoorde:** Onder-voorbereidheid, verlengde kurrikulumprogramme, akademiese geletterheid

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

I would like to express my sincere thanks to:

- My Heavenly Father, who daily bestowed upon me His grace, strength and love, and who guided me to the completion of my research project.
- My husband, Garth, my greatest supporter and biggest fan, words fail me. You are my breath of fresh air and I love you!
- My family, friends and colleagues thank-you for your prayers and support.
- My supervisor, Ms C Young, for your patience, guidance and support. You are a remarkable person and I commend you.
- My co-supervisor, Ms A Damons, for your proficiency and attention to detail
- Ms L Vorster, for assisting with the language and technical editing.
- All the research participants, without you this would not be possible. Thank-you for trusting me with your deepest thoughts and emotions

**Thank-you one and all!!!**

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## ABBREVIATIONS

<b>CAPS</b>	Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement
<b>ECP</b>	Extended curriculum programme
<b>FET</b>	Further Education and Training
<b>NBT</b>	National benchmark test
<b>NSC</b>	National senior certificate
<b>OBE</b>	Outcomes-based education
<b>RSA</b>	Republic of South Africa
<b>SAT</b>	Scholastic Assessment Test
<b>ZPD</b>	Zone of proximal development

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# CHAPTER 1: FOUNDATION OF THE STUDY

## 1.1 INTRODUCTION

After the initial excitement of being accepted in a nursing programme, some students' are soon met with the reality that their secondary education received was not sufficient to prepare them to be successful in tertiary studies towards becoming a registered nurse. Beekman, Dube and Underhill (2011: VI) stated that students are often unrealistic and not aware that studying in a particular field requires the acquisition of new knowledge and skills.

During apartheid, South African education laws encouraged racial segregation with learning opportunities and resources spread unequally amongst different races. White students received the largest allocation of the educational budget with other racial groups receiving substandard education and being ill-prepared for tertiary education. A solution of the post-apartheid South African government to address past discriminations was to improve access to tertiary educational institutions (RSA, Department of Education, 2001: 4). This only meant that the potential students of the previously disadvantaged groups would be given more opportunity to access higher education, not that they would be more successful with their studies at these tertiary institutions. The poor performance rates of these previously disadvantaged students at tertiary institutions of education indicated that they remain underprepared for tertiary educational studies, even with the availability of more access (RSA, Department of Education, 2001: 5).

The Council for Higher Education (2013: 57) defines under-preparedness for studies as difficulty with adjustment to the prescribed curriculum as well as an inability to study independently. Lang (2010: 2) added that under-preparedness includes an absence of intricate skills usually necessary to ensure success in a chosen educational field.

Extended curriculum programmes were thus implemented to ensure success for under-prepared students in tertiary education studies (Council for Higher Education, 2013: 70). These extended curriculum programmes have been offered in the nursing field since 2008 (Bozalek, Garraway & McKenna, 2011: 143).

The purpose of this study was to explore perceptions (the way each one interprets their reality) of undergraduate nursing students registered for the R425 Diploma extended curriculum programme. This study also enabled the researcher to explore how effective the

facilitation of these underprepared students were, towards a smooth transition into the mainstream nursing programmes second year.

## 1.2 CONCEPT CLARIFICATION

**Academic Literacy:** Possessing the necessary language proficiency, cognitive ability and skills synonymous with a particular field of study or employment (Bharuthram, 2012: 205) .

**Academic Support Programme:** Programme developed to assist underprepared students rectify their learning challenges at a tertiary education (Favish & Hendry, 2010: 279).

**Extended Curriculum Programme:** A Department of Higher Education and Training endorsed curriculum programme, whereby a student's tertiary education programme is extended by a year. This initiative was implemented to improve student throughput within tertiary education (Council for Higher Education, 2013: 70).

**National Benchmark Test:** A compulsory admission assessment for all prospective first year university students as a measure to foresee student success at a tertiary level (Allers, Hay, & Janse Van Rensburg, 2016: 81).

**Under-preparedness:** The inability for students to adjust to or study independently due to an absence of complex skills necessary to ensure success in a chosen educational field (Lang, 2010: 2).

## 1.3 BACKGROUND, RATIONALE AND LITERATURE

### 1.3.1 South African education system post-apartheid

There was a challenge post-apartheid to eradicate past discriminations in education. A qualitative study done at the Durban University of Technology (Bass, 2011: 49) revealed that students from previously disadvantaged backgrounds felt that at a secondary education level, they were "spoon fed" and not exposed to doing research. These students believed that lessons were fully prepared and "just delivered", requiring them to learn the information and "give' it back' to the teacher in the exams. Msila (2007: 149) said that this passive way of learning acquired during the apartheid era needed to be reversed.

The outcomes-based education (OBE) system was implemented as an alternative (Msila, 2007: 149) where learners were presented with outcomes that they work towards or reach at the end of their learning process (Van Der Horst & MacDonald, 1999: 7). This meant that students were assessed continuously during the learning process to ensure they stay on

track in accomplishing the prescribed objectives. The outcomes were a guide for educators on how to prepare lessons to facilitate the students to attain these goals. The educational system was thus geared at instilling creative thinking and problem solving skills amongst educators (Msila, 2007: 149). Furthermore the previous education system was not complying with international mathematical and science standards (Msila, 2007:150).

Criticism against OBE has come from within as well as from abroad. Van Der Horst and McDonald (1999: 16) stated that the outcomes were too broad, that life experiences, values and beliefs could be perceived differently and that the educator's lessons could thus fail to reach the true intent of these objectives. In the opinion of the researcher, this is one of the pivotal reasons why certain students were accessing the tertiary education institutions under-prepared. In addition, government included beliefs and values in their outcomes that were against certain cultural or family beliefs (Van Der Horst & McDonald, 1999: 17).

In a South African context with different racial groups and cultural beliefs, this lack of consideration for diversity resulted in some parents seeking alternative methods of schooling such as home or private schooling. They were concerned that the focal point of OBE was not on academic content (Van Der Horst & McDonald, 1999: 17).

OBE has also been described as being expensive as all educators needed to be familiar and equipped in using this new educational system, with the supply of new printed material. This became a problem for schools situated in poverty-stricken areas that relied solely on government funding', as parents were unable to contribute more than the minimum required school fees. This was either due to unemployment, or because these parents were unable to grasp the importance of their children receiving a meaningful education. These schools would also, from a financial point of view, have a problem to send teachers for training or to acquire additional material or resources such as computers or internet to adequately assist their students to reach their full academic potential (Van Der Horst & McDonald, 1999: 18).

Criticism of OBE as well as the need to achieve a high standard of knowledge, skills and qualification within our education system, led to the development and implementation of a new education system (Skosana & Monyai, 2013: 52). The Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) education system was implemented in 2012 to ensure that the above expectations were achievable, as it was envisioned to provide equal and fair education for all pupils regardless of their race, gender and religion (Skosana & Monyai, 2013: 52).

One of the objectives related to the CAPS education system was to reduce the different ways curriculum requirements were being interpreted and to reduce the underperformance of pupils attending primary and secondary schools (Mnguni, 2013: 2). Mnguni (2013: 2) stated that CAPS focuses strictly on the curriculum, with each subject that has its own written policy on the content as well as the teaching strategies to be used. Implementation of these subject policies alleviates any misinterpretation of outcomes or lesson plans and is not influenced by the individual educator's value system, as was the case in outcomes-based education. An interesting fact to note is that CAPS is strongly based on the constructivist theory of the Russian psychologist Lev Vygotsky, who believed that educators needed to be properly skilled in the art of teaching and learning so as to effectively guide their students to develop a higher order of thinking (Skosana & Monyai, 2013: 54). The South African National Department of Education attempted to ensure this was achieved by collaborating continuously with all relevant stakeholders before CAPS was officially implemented into the school system (Skosana & Monyai, 2013: 53). It is, however, stated that the educators workload is heavier with the implementation of the CAPS system and that many of these educators are not qualified enough to effectively implement the principles thereof (Skosana & Monyai, 2013: 55).

### **1.3.2 National benchmark test (NBT)**

According to the Draft National Plan for Education in South Africa (RSA, Department of Education, 2001: 6), even though government wanted to improve access of students into tertiary educational institutions, they also wanted these students to have the opportunity to succeed in completing their studies. The number of underprepared students, who lacked important skills to succeed in tertiary education, was significant. Bass (2011: 49) stated that the student matriculation certificates contributed towards providing students with a false sense of security. While their matric certificates might reflect good percentages, they lacked the necessary skills to succeed at tertiary education.

The national benchmark test was initiated in 2009 (Du Plessis & Gerber, 2012: 82) to test students' quantitative literacy, academic literacy and mathematics ability for the purpose of accessing a tertiary education institution, rather than just the matric exemption certificate (Rankin, Schöer, Sebastiao & Van Walbeek, 2012: 567). Furthermore it also provides the tertiary education institution with valuable additional information as to what programme is better suited for the student, such as the mainstream or extended curriculum programme. This ensures that only students who have the potential to succeed in their studies are allowed access into the tertiary institution (Rankin et al., 2012: 564).

### **1.3.3 Extended Curriculum Programme (ECP)**

Only thirty percent of all students in South African universities and colleges complete their studies in the prescribed 3-4 years (Fisher & Scott, 2011: 7). This was either due to students terminating their studies or not attaining the necessary grades to progress to the following year of study (an indication that they lacked the necessary skills to succeed in a formal tertiary educational setting). The South African government implemented the Draft National Plan for Education (RSA, 2001: 8) to redress inequalities of the past and to ensure equitable access and success towards tertiary qualifications in line with international policy at the time. Ireland's similar "National Plan for Equity and Access in Higher Education" (Dhunpath & Vithal, 2014: 3) addressed educational, economic and social issues giving disadvantaged individuals access to education. Scotland's "More Choices, More Chances" campaign focused on increasing the number of young people that would receive an education (Dhunpath & Vithal, 2014: 4).

Non-credit bearing courses were implemented by tertiary educational institutions to help address the academic challenges of underprepared students (Bass, 2011: 47). Bozalek et al. (2011: 143) stated that these courses initially did not improve the throughput of these students as the focus was on bridging the articulation gap between secondary and tertiary education and improving access to a higher education institution (Dhunpath & Vithal, 2014: 36).

The Extended Curriculum Programme (ECP) was implemented by the Department of Education to address throughput of students. Firstly, they wanted to ensure that they were able to correct the educational disabilities of the students, who accessed the tertiary institution, and secondly to ensure that the underprepared first-year students have a strong academic basis to make it possible for them to succeed at their studies (Council for Higher Education, 2013: 71). It is important to note that there are minor differences in the ECP in the various tertiary departments as it has been adjusted to suit each tertiary education institution's individual needs (Council for Higher Education, 2013: 82).

### **1.3.4 The Extended Curriculum and Mainstream educational programme for registered professional nursing degree/diploma course**

Students in the ECP at a nursing education institution within the Western Cape Province have their first year of education spread over two years. Where a semester's work in the mainstream curriculum is covered in the prescribed six months, the same work in the ECP is covered over 12 months. This is to allow the student enough time to adjust between secondary and tertiary education, to rectify bad learning habits and address educational deficiencies and to ensure successful integration into the mainstream programmes second

year of training. In addition, the ECP students also receive additional lessons in language, numeracy and exercises in scaffold reading to assist with the discourse of their related faculty (Garraway, 2009: 52).

Students with at least a minimum D aggregate (%) or level 4 matriculation pass are admitted to the programme. The programme is regulated by the South African Nursing Council and accordingly, the student will need to complete a prescribed amount of theoretical and practical hours to be able to register as a professional nurse on completion of the programme (Western Cape College of Nursing, 2014: 20). These nursing students, on completion of their last year of studies, will graduate as registered nurses in general, community, psychiatry nursing and midwifery.

Since the health services forms the backbone of our society, it is required that these nursing students be organised, efficient in collecting and analysing information, have problem-solving and critical thinking skills. Students will be practically trained in hospital and clinic settings with patients, whilst also developing their interpersonal and communication skills (Western Cape College of Nursing, 2014: 15). As these students' encounter and experience different situations, their personal values and perceptions are challenged and affected. All the teaching and learning processes will be directed at developing the student to reach these objectives.

### **1.3.5 Successes and limitations of the Extended Curriculum Program (ECP)**

Dhunpath and Vithal (2014: 37) claimed that, although a proper assessment on the performance of the ECP has not yet been done since commencement in 2004, positive reports from higher education institutions were received by the RSA Department of Education which stated that students in an ECP were either equal to, or out-performed their mainstream counterparts (Dhunpath & Vithal, 2014: 39).

The Cape Peninsula University of Technology and the University of KwaZulu-Natal released comparative information from the engineering and science faculties between the overall pass rates of students in the mainstream and ECP at the end of their course. The results support the above statement and indicate how well the extended curriculum programmes are functioning. Garraway (2009: 35) stated that the ECP has helped underprepared students to achieve a strong instructive foundation to build on as they complete their degrees and diplomas, as supported by comparisons between the pass rates of the two streams. Programmes with a successful ECP have dedicated experienced staff within the specific faculty conducting their student selection and only students with the required academic and professional potential are accepted (Garraway, 2009: 35).

Stigmatisation towards students is one of the biggest limitations that prevent an ECP from functioning at its optimal level. The programme design was initially set up for previously disadvantaged students, resulting in the perception that these students are slow or have learning disabilities, and because of the ECP student group being the smaller group compared to the mainstream students within the general population, they can easily be marginalised (Dhunpath & Vithal, 2014: 40). Dhunpath and Vithal (2014: 43) reported that at some institutions, variation of ability of resources and the degree to which the ECP is taken seriously by the institution; can negatively influence the success of the programme. There is the understanding that an ECP only benefits underprepared students however; there are many mainstream students that also struggle with the transition from school to university (Garraway, 2009: 30).

Ineffective placement of students in the extended and mainstream programmes is a major drawback. Originally, the ECP was only intended to improve access to higher education institutions, but in the last decade, the emphasis of the extended programme has been shifted to also include equity of outcomes (Dhunpath & Vithal, 2014: 42). Regardless of policies being put in place to also improve the throughput of students, institutions are still allowing access to students who do not meet the entry requirements for that institution. The result has been that these students are so severely underprepared for tertiary education that they have no prospect of succeeding (Council for Higher Education, 2013: 72).

The ECP structure is the same as the mainstreams structural design, which can also be a restriction to the programme as it is not specific to suit the intended students needs (Dhunpath & Vithal, 2014: 41). According to Dhunpath and Vithal (2014: 41), it is regrettably not feasible to have a curriculum designed from scratch to suit a programme that only represents the minority of the institution's student population.

#### **1.4 RESEARCH PROBLEM**

The ECP in nursing education is being offered at a tertiary nursing training institution within the Western Cape Province. There are some quantitative studies that have investigated the success of the ECP in other faculties, i.e. engineering and pharmacy. However, no formal research has been undertaken in a nursing faculty. This indicates a gap in the knowledge regarding the success of the ECP in nursing education.

Based on the experience of the researcher, the ECP appeared to be successful. However, there were no student viewpoints to support the researcher's perception. The researcher was interested in obtaining the perceptions of the R425 undergraduate diploma nursing students in the Western Cape Province, of the extended curriculum programme just

completed by them. This information would help to determine how this programme has prepared them to successfully integrate (merge and incorporate) into the second year mainstream programme and achieve their educational goals.

### **1.5 RESEARCH QUESTION**

What are the perceptions of the R425-Diploma nursing students regarding the extended undergraduate curriculum programme within a higher education institution in the Western Cape Province?

### **1.6 RESEARCH AIM**

The aim of this study was to explore undergraduate nursing students' perceptions of an extended curriculum programme within a higher education institution in the Western Cape Province.

### **1.7 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

The objectives of this study were to explore and describe the perceptions of the R425 Diploma nursing students within a higher education institution in the Western Cape Province about:

- the extended undergraduate curriculum programme (ECP) that they had completed
- whether the ECP assisted with their integration into the mainstream programme
- how the ECP could be improved to better facilitate integration and success in the mainstream programme

### **1.8 RESEARCH DESIGN**

A descriptive research design with a qualitative approach helped towards relaying the nursing student's perceptions of an extended undergraduate curriculum programme within a higher education institution.

### **1.9 POPULATION AND SAMPLING**

Two focus groups consisting of five participants each were chosen from the population of 47 previous ECP students who progressed to the second-year mainstream programme in 2015. Participants were selected using a purposive sampling method, to ensure they would be able to give rich and detailed information about the programme.

The researcher attempted to contact at least four students who have exited the ECP unsuccessfully to ask their permission to have individual interviews with them as a focus group would not be possible because these students' were not residing in Cape Town anymore. An in-depth representation of the successes and limitations of the programme would be obtained with their inclusion.

## **1.10 PILOT INTERVIEW**

The first focus group organised was used as a pilot interview to determine whether the researcher's interviewing skills was satisfactory, whether the information obtained, and the flow of the conversation in the focus group was of a good quality. It was decided by the researcher, the fieldworker and the supervisor that it was successful enough to suffice as one of the two focus groups originally planned.

## **1.11 DATA COLLECTION**

Data collection was done via interviewing the two focus groups within the natural setting of the participants. The interviews were conducted by the researcher and a fieldworker by using a semi-structured question guide (Appendix D).

## **1.12 DATA ANALYSIS**

Thematic analysis, an interpretive data analysis structure appropriate for this research, was commenced immediately after each focus group, even while the process of data collection was still in progress.

## **1.13 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

Approval to conduct this study, number S15/07/155 (Appendix A), was obtained from the Health Research Ethics Committee (HREC) of the Stellenbosch University before commencement as well as from the ethical committee of the specific higher education institution ( Appendix B) where the study was conducted. The principles of informed consent, including confidentiality, autonomy, justice, non-maleficence, beneficence and veracity were upheld during this research process.

## **1.14 OUTLINE OF CHAPTERS**

### **Chapter 1: Foundation of the study**

Chapter 1 provides the basis and motivation for this research study. In this chapter a brief overview of the literature and research methodology is included.

### **Chapter 2: Literature review**

Chapter 2 provides a comprehensive review and discussion of the literature.

### **Chapter 3: Research Methodology**

Chapter 3 is a description of how the research methodology was implemented in this research.

### **Chapter 4: Results**

Chapter 4 is a presentation of the analysed data of the research study.

## **Chapter 5: Discussion, conclusions and recommendations**

Chapter 5 presents a discussion relating to the conclusion of the research. In this chapter the limitations of the study is identified and recommendations are made for future related research opportunities.

### **1.15 CONCLUSION**

The researcher is of the opinion, through observation, that the extended curriculum programme is a beneficial part of the nursing faculty. There is, however, not enough information to support this opinion because of ECP in nursing being relatively new.

The above paragraphs summarised the foundation for the study and provided a brief overview of the methodology applied to this research. In chapter two, this research study continues with the literature review to provide comprehensive detail of the extended curriculum programme and its related aspects.

## **CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1 INTRODUCTION**

To rectify the educational mistakes of the Apartheid era, the South African government improved access for previously disadvantaged students to tertiary institutions (RSA, Department of Education, 2001: 4). Internationally, access and equity to higher education institutions was recognised to improve global development as early as 1967, with countries such as Ireland and Scotland ensuring their disadvantaged population benefitted from their education systems (Dhunpath & Vithal, 2014: 4).

The implementation of this policy, in South Africa caused areas of concern, such as the large increase of student-to-lecturer ratio and the lack of quality of academic programmes to help bridge the racial divide amongst students (RSA, Department of Education, 2001: 5). The decreased graduate throughput, in relation to the number of students accepted at tertiary education institutions was a clear indication that these previously disadvantaged students were not coping at the tertiary educational level.

Giving disadvantaged students access to university is just part of the governmental stipulation to not just improve access to these students but also to ensure that they have a reasonable opportunity to succeed at their proposed studies (RSA, Department of Education, 2001: 5). The unsuccessful students are identified as being underprepared for higher education. Under-preparedness for higher education is not a new phenomenon, and even though we are more than twenty years post-apartheid, it is a problem that still exists (Council for Higher Education, 2013: 55).

To ensure a general understanding, important factors surrounding this issue as well as the various measures put in place to resolve the problem that the higher education sector is faced with, will be discussed.

### **2.2 LITERATURE SEARCH**

The literature review process commenced approximately three years ago and was guided with the assistance of the higher education institution's subject librarian as well as the research supervisor. Numerous electronic databases were searched; however, great difficulty was experienced in obtaining suitable national and international studies, which can be attributed to the fact that the ECP is known by different names at different institutions, i.e. foundation phase and extended degree programme.

Another area that was problematic was finding material published within a suitable timeframe. The researcher used great care, with exception of two articles, to not use material older than ten years.

According to Burns and Grove (2009:90-91), literature reviews within qualitative studies are not done until the data is collected and analysed so that the literature will not influence the researcher's openness to the phenomenon. Therefore a preliminary literature review was done.

The purpose of the chapter is to introduce the concepts to the reader and not to have an in-depth discussion on the phenomenon as in qualitative research the researcher has to apply literature control and not to be influenced by literature during the data collection process.

### **2.3 UNDER-PREPAREDNESS**

To understand the inability to succeed at a tertiary educational institution, one has to firstly gain an understanding of student under-preparedness for tertiary education. The Council for Higher Education (2013: 57) defined under-preparedness for studies as difficulty with adjustment to the prescribed curriculum as well as an inability to study independently. Lang (2010: 2) added that under-preparedness included an absence of intricate skills usually necessary to ensure success in a chosen educational field.

Based on the above definitions, it is apparent that under-preparedness is multi-faceted as it is not just concerned with the discourse of the chosen curriculum. It also involves the students' emotional maturity and level of understanding, which are both impacted by the student's social background (Council for Higher Education, 2013: 57). Under-preparedness does not mean that the student is intellectually inept; however, from the various literature sources and student experience, it is evident that certain lecturers and students from the mainstream educational pathway perceived it to be so (Machika, 2012: 991). This thought process is further strengthened by the perception that under-preparedness is linked to students with disadvantaged social backgrounds (Dhunpath & Vithal, 2014: 41). Under-prepared students are often seen as not being able to grasp higher order thinking or deeper learning, which is required in tertiary education, thus risk being labelled as not being "university material" (Council for Higher Education, 2013: 58).

The issue of under-preparedness is an international concern as reported by Sheridan and Dunne (2012: 237), when they commented that students entering university in Ireland are equally under-prepared for the move into higher education. These Irish students struggled with the "deeper level of learning", which was required at their university within their first

semester of study. Sheridan and Dunne (2012: 239) further acknowledged that when these first-year students were asked to reflect on their learning process after the first semester, many students had difficulty understanding what that meant and needed guidance and clarification of what was expected from them. A number of students still handed in their assignments in written format compared to a typed out assignment required at a tertiary level, which according to the authors, was a clear indication that these students still strongly identified with the familiar culture and practices of their secondary institution.

As in the South African context, it would be beneficial to discuss the disparity that exists between under-prepared students leaving matric and the demands tertiary educational systems make (Council for Higher Education, 2013: 70). A false perception is created by the National Senior Certificate (NSC) results, where the students potential to succeed once in a tertiary education setting does not correspond with what is reflected on their certificate (Bass, 2011: 49). Students from disadvantaged backgrounds do not have the support structures in place to help them attain the necessary skills to succeed at a tertiary level. Dhunpath and Vithal (2014: 33) identified language, academic literacy and approaches to the culture of learning as areas of concern in the extensive gap between secondary and tertiary education levels. Bharuthram (2012: 205) supported this statement by concurring that students are ill-equipped to adjust to the workload and the learning approach required attaining success at a tertiary educational level. Tertiary education requires a vast amount of independent study, examining and understanding information and unfortunately, if one lacks the skills to approach this undertaking, it's easy to see how you can become unsuccessful.

This failure in theoretical application required at this level of study often leaves students feeling demotivated, which ties in with the emotional factor of under-preparedness (Machika, 2012: 991). Students often enter this domain with unrealistic perceptions, i.e. they believe they will perform as they had at their secondary institution and that they have the necessary skills to be successful at a tertiary level. The harsh reality is that the university culture has very different academic practises and self-directed learning is the key in this environment. Students concurred that they were not informed nor prepared for the change required at their tertiary institution compared to what they were used to at their high school (Bass, 2011: 49).

Students who enter tertiary education from traditionally Model C schools were more exposed to challenging ways of thinking through various assignments and projects and using the library whilst searching for data; whereas students from disadvantaged backgrounds were not as fortunate, resulting in them entering the tertiary domain as dependant learners (Bass, 2011: 49). It is easy to understand how a simple task such as accessing the university library can seem like an insurmountable task to an under-prepared learner. This conjures feelings

of demotivation and inadequacy, further exacerbating the feelings of social exclusion at tertiary education level.

## **2.4 ACADEMIC SUPPORT PROGRAMMES**

Dhunpath and Vithal (2014: 13) stated that tertiary institution under-preparedness is an area of great concern. Tertiary institutions tried to uphold the policies put in place by the South African government by improving access into their facilities, however, they did not anticipate the challenge of under-prepared students. Set faculty courses or programmes still suited certain student groups (self-directed learners) more than others by the expectation or demands that it placed on them (Bozalek et al., 2011: 3).

Due to the increased failure and dropout rate and the decreased graduate throughput, tertiary institutions' needed to change their policies and curriculum to ensure their programmes became better suited for the more diverse student load accessing their facilities. To uphold the responsibility of these institutions to assist the under-prepared students to succeed, they brought about changes in their admissions policy as well as implemented academic support programmes to help rectify the learning challenges under-prepared students were faced with (Favish & Hendry, 2010: 279).

Initially, admission requirements within certain faculties, amongst others the medical and engineering faculties, were set to such a high level that it was virtually impossible for previously disadvantaged students to gain access into these faculties (Machika, 2012: 988). However, whilst improving access into higher education was important, the quality of the graduates could not be compromised (Dednam & Dednam, 2009:941). To assist these academically struggling students, bridging courses were implemented to help bridge the gap of poor schooling by introducing the students to the culture of tertiary education (Machika, 2012:989). It was predetermined that these students could only access the mainstream curricula if they were successful in all the subjects of their bridging course; they were unable to repeat it if they were unsuccessful (Machika, 2012: 989). However, the bridging courses did not adequately assist the students with their learning deficits and it was later suggested that instead of just supporting the under-prepared student, it would be more beneficial to appropriately develop them academically (Machika, 2012: 989). It was then, as a means of academic development that the ECP was implemented.

The development of the ECP was intended to provide enough flexibility within the curriculum so that the under-prepared student could attain a strong educational foundation to ensure their success within higher education (Council for Higher Education, 2013: 70). The student in the ECP has their first year of study spread over two years. Under-prepared students are

then equipped using the additional subjects of language development and academic literacy to overcome their learning deficits (Council for Higher Education, 2013: 70). With the provision of these subjects, the extended curriculum programme fulfills part of their mandate by bridging the articulation gap that exists between secondary and tertiary education within South Africa (Council for Higher Education, 2013: 71).

The other part of their mandate was to increase students access into higher education, which was achieved by providing under-prepared students who did not meet the entry requirements of a faculty, a means by which they now had alternative access (Kirby & Dempster, 2011: 1103). The ECP thus ensured that even though previously disadvantaged students were accessing higher education without meeting admission requirements, the quality of the graduate was not being compromised (Kirby & Dempster, 2011: 1110).

Since the late 1990s the Department of Education has begun implementing extended curriculum programmes at various institutions, of which one such programme is found at the University of the Free State, who started their programme in the Law Faculty in 2005 (Dednam & Dednam, 2009: 941). Although the extended curriculum programme may be named differently at various tertiary institutions (i.e. foundation academic programme, extended degree programme), it ultimately functions on similar principles.

## **2.5 NATIONAL BENCHMARK TEST**

In line with the South African Government's policy to "promote equity of access and fair chances of success to all," universities needed to put measures in place to ensure the "right" students were accepted in their institutions, of which one was the NBT (RSA, Department of Education, 2001: 6). In 2008 many changes occurred on a secondary education level, the Senior Certificate was replaced by the National Senior Certificate (NSC) and the matriculants of that year were the first students whose entire schooling career was based on outcomes-based education (Rankin et al., 2012: 565). The department of Higher Education of South Africa specially designed the NBT as a way to measure the accuracy of the NSC in predicting student success at a tertiary level (Allers, Hay, & Janse Van Rensburg, 2016: 81).

The NBT assesses student competence in three vital areas namely academic literacy, quantitative literacy as well as in mathematics. It is important to remember that although students covered aspects relating to these subjects at school, it is not guaranteed that they will be able to cope with its application at a tertiary level. The academic literacy section covers mostly general knowledge questions, the quantitative literacy covers basic numeracy questions and the mathematics component is only tested if a specific faculty requires it (Allers et al., 2016: 81).

Internationally, assessments and online programmes are also in place to predict student success at a university level before students enter that domain, such as the Scholastic Assessment Test (SAT) that later became the SAT Reasoning Test (Rankin et al., 2012:566). In the United States, due to the various districts having their own curricula, they do not rely only on the marks that students receive when leaving their high school (Rankin et al., 2012: 566).

Rankin et al (2012:567) furthermore believed that one of the objectives of the NBT in South Africa is to determine whether a relationship exists between the secondary education outcomes and the required skills at tertiary level, to enable a prediction whether the students accessing tertiary-level education have the prerequisites to succeed in their studies. Another objective is to appropriately place the student in the correct curriculum programme i.e. mainstream or extended curriculum programme (Rankin et al., 2012: 568).

Although prospective students are requested to complete their NBTs before they commence their tertiary studies, there are institutions that allow these tests to be completed once acceptance to the institution has been guaranteed (Allers et al., 2016: 81). This process benefits students who are struggling financially not to waste funds paying for the NBT when they have not been successfully admitted to that tertiary institution.

## **2.6 ACADEMIC LITERACY**

Academic literacy within a particular discipline can be quite daunting for any new student to a higher education institution. Bharuthram (2012: 205) defined academic literacy as having the necessary language proficiency, cognitive ability and skills synonymous with your particular field of study or employment. It is unrealistic to expect a new student in the tertiary setting to immediately know the discourse of their particular field of study; however, the expectation is for those students to have the basic skills that will assist them in the acquisition of the relevant discourse (Bharuthram, 2012: 205). Under-prepared students unfortunately lack the skills that will enhance their educational experience at a tertiary level.

An additional stumbling block is that many previously disadvantaged students commence their tertiary education having to study in their second language (Zuzelo, 2005: 27). Language therefore forms an important foundation for academic literacy within the tertiary education setting where students are required to do copious amounts of reading on their own. Bharuthram (2012: 205) stated that the expectation is for students to read with understanding, so that they are able to analyse the information critically. She further stated that students lacked these vital comprehension skills leading to unsuccessful academic performance. Students from disadvantaged backgrounds have more than likely not been

exposed to reading with insight or how to gather information, thus putting them at an even more distinct disadvantage.

Due to the majority of under-prepared students coming from previously disadvantaged racial groups, it is important to note that for them, English may not be their first language (Dhunpath & Vithal, 2014: 38). Palmer, Levett-Jones, Smith and McMillan (2014: 69) mentioned that when you speak or hear something in your first language, you immediately internalise it and understand what is being spoken about, but when studying in your second language, this proves to be too difficult an undertaking for some students.

## **2.7 FACTORS THAT DETER ACADEMIC LITERACY**

Language is, therefore, an important factor that influences academic literacy as forming the basis of the skill. Students who were exposed to inadequate schooling may not have been given the opportunity to develop their language in a way to apply it abstractly or critically when doing assignments or forming an argument (Gravett & Geysler, 2007: 73). When listening to a lecture, it is easy to understand what is being said if it is presented in your first language. However, the discourse of a new profession can be challenging even to non-disadvantaged students, how much more so when it is not your home language? When studying in your second language; the whole process of understanding becomes infinitely more complex (Gravett & Geysler, 2007: 76). The student hears the lecture and then tries to translate and decipher the information to create a greater understanding of it.

The difficulties are also applied to different cultures manner of speaking, i.e. pronunciation of words, emphasis placed on certain phrases, differences in meanings of words and phrases (Gravett & Geysler, 2007: 76). In addition to this, there may also be the bad habits that the teacher and lecturer has adopted with regard to their language use that plays a factor in students not being able to understand the full interpretation of the information being covered (Gravett & Geysler, 2007: 77).

Another aspect where language plays a role is in reading text books or course material (Gravett & Geysler, 2007: 77). Whether they are under-prepared for tertiary education or not, students find it very challenging to read academic texts. Students most often do not advance beyond scanning through an article (Gravett & Geysler, 2007: 80). Even though scanning through an article or chapter is acceptable when determining if it is applicable, it is the more detailed practice of reading to understand that is lost to many students.

Reading includes the practice of deciphering information, asking questions about what has been read and verifying information by referencing. (Gravett & Geysler, 2007: 79). These

skills are improved only when we read thoroughly and more often and in doing so, we also improve our use of language.

Another factor that can hinder the acquisition of academic literacy is a student's inability to use resources to improve their quality of education, such as the library and the internet (Bozalek et al., 2011: 15). These resources are vital in helping the students gain extra information on a particular subject and also with writing of assignments and reports.

## **2.8 FACTORS INFLUENCING ACADEMIC LITERACY AQUISITION**

Acquiring academic literacy is a challenging skill for all students and for the underprepared student; the challenge is even greater because of their pre-existing learning inadequacies.

Students in the extended curriculum programme have certain subjects like English literacy added to their curriculum to help them attain the skill of reading and writing at a tertiary level (Bozalek et al., 2011: 15). This subject is more beneficial for students who are studying in their second language, as it provides them with valuable skills in writing assignments, forming of arguments as well as with time management when completing these assessments (Bass, 2011: 50).

Students are also exposed to computer classes to help them become more proficient in using this valuable resource, thus improving their ability to search for information in the library and typing of assignments (Bozalek et al., 2011: 15).

Students, who were part of a previous qualitative study at their tertiary institution, commented on the relationship that developed between them and their lecturer. They commented on the fact that they were allowed to explain certain lesson content back to the lecturer, to ensure they had the right understanding regarding the information presented to them (Bass, 2011: 49). This highlights the importance of a nurturing class environment and a good relationship between student and lecturer.

Students must be exposed to an environment that is safe and encourages them to participate in lessons. Many students struggle with feelings of inadequacy when placed in the ECP because of individual perceptions about the programme as highlighted previously. Therefore, when students have this nurturing and safe environment to work in, most times they excel. This environment encourages them to answer questions and do presentations without the fear of having their educational inadequacies ridiculed and in doing so; their language use improves (Bass, 2011: 51).

Another aspect that can assist in academic literacy in an underprepared student is that of co-operative learning. Co-operative learning is defined as learning that occurs within a small group (Gravett & Geysler, 2007: 43). This type of learning process helps students with their confidence levels when interacting with their colleagues, as it improves their communication skills via encouragement of correct language usage and overall improved discourse of the profession (Bozalek et al., 2011: 15). Discussions that take place within a group setting expose the members to different thought processes and opinions, thus initiating creative thinking skills (Gravett & Geysler, 2007: 46). It improves the group members' accountability to each other because when you belong to a specific group, each one has a role to play in ensuring group success (Gravett & Geysler, 2007: 46). This does not mean that co-operative learning is used all the time, but it is a measure that has proven successful in allowing students to realise their own capabilities, which they may not have been aware of previously, and reach their full potential (Gravett & Geysler, 2007: 43).

## 2.9 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

### 2.9.1 Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development

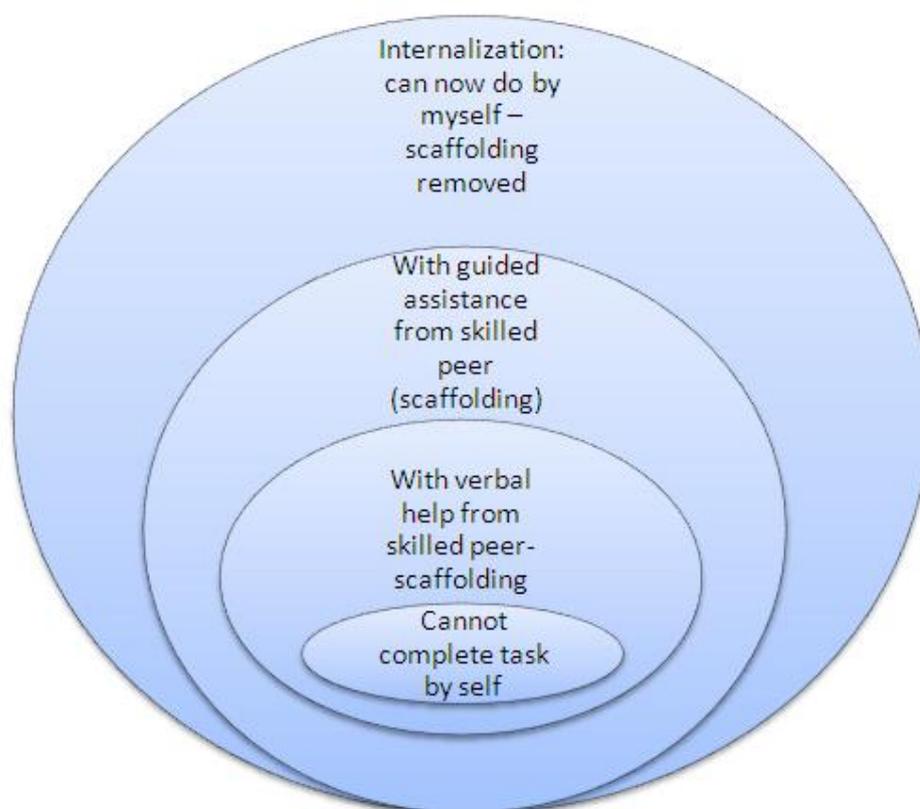


Figure 2.1: Vygotsky's Theoretical Framework

<https://tadahgroup.wordpress.com/vygotskys-theory-2/>

In support of this research, the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) theory contributed by Lev Vygotsky is applied. Vygotsky was a Russian psychologist, who constructed this theory after becoming dissatisfied with the way instructional practices were assessed. He believed that the usual method of assessment technique only evaluated an individual's level of development and not their potential or capabilities (Turuk, 2008: 248). Vygotsky defined the ZPD as "the distance between a child's actual developmental level, as determined by independent problem solving, and the higher level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers" (Turuk, 2008: 249). This translates to the idea that if we socialise with individuals out of our normal context, internal developmental processes are awakened, and that with the right guidance, that individual's hidden potential is unleashed. Two concepts of this theory are relevant:

The first concept is that of mediation or mentoring where an individual can be taken beyond their level of understanding through interaction with another person of significant importance in their life (i.e. parents, teachers, peers). In the ECP the mentor plays a fundamental role in this process of mediation (Bass, 2011: 51). It is important to mediate what and how information is relayed to the individual, as a person can lose interest if something is beyond his/her level of understanding because they cannot grasp it, whereas if the information is too familiar, they lose interest out of boredom (Donald, Lazarus & Lolwana, 2002: 99).

Mentoring within the ECP assists the process of mediation by forming that connection between the students and the academic staff (Bass, 2011: 51). This view is further supported by the interpretation by Donald et al., (2002: 99) that knowledge is not just taken in, but built up by the nurturing by significant people in their lives as well as by their own efforts to assist development. Within the ECP, lecturers place emphasis on getting to know students on a personal level, to build a trust relationship and reassure students that they are seen as individuals and are respected as such (Bass, 2011:48). Students, participating in a qualitative study at their tertiary institution, concurred that the caring attitude and supportive learning environment encouraged them to excel academically and unleashed their hidden potential, as not to disappoint lecturers and mentors that invested so much in them (Bass, 2011: 51).

The second concept is that of scaffolding which is a form of development and learning whereby a student's current skill and knowledge is extended to reach a higher order of thinking (Turuk, 2008: 251). Students in the ECP with inadequate skills to ensure success in their chosen field of study should be provided with more time and education i.e. literacy classes and computer skills, to ensure their success at tertiary level (Machika, 2012: 990).

This author suggests a deep learning approach to be introduced by various teaching and learning strategies, reflective exercises as well as relating ideas to appropriate evidence.

Scaffolding provides a platform to guide the students to reach a deeper level of understanding and develop their critical thinking skills by ensuring teaching strategies are linked with appropriate tasks (Turuk, 2008: 252). The scaffolding method benefits students as the tasks being requested now has meaning to it, as well as providing students with clear guidelines in doing the task. Students are viewed as being more efficient and the energy whilst doing the task is constant, when using a scaffolding approach. Once the student indicates his capabilities has reached its limit, through boredom with the task or completing it more resourcefully, it is an indication that the next level of the scaffolding method needs to be initiated (Turuk, 2008: 252).

## 2.9.2 Bloom's Taxonomy

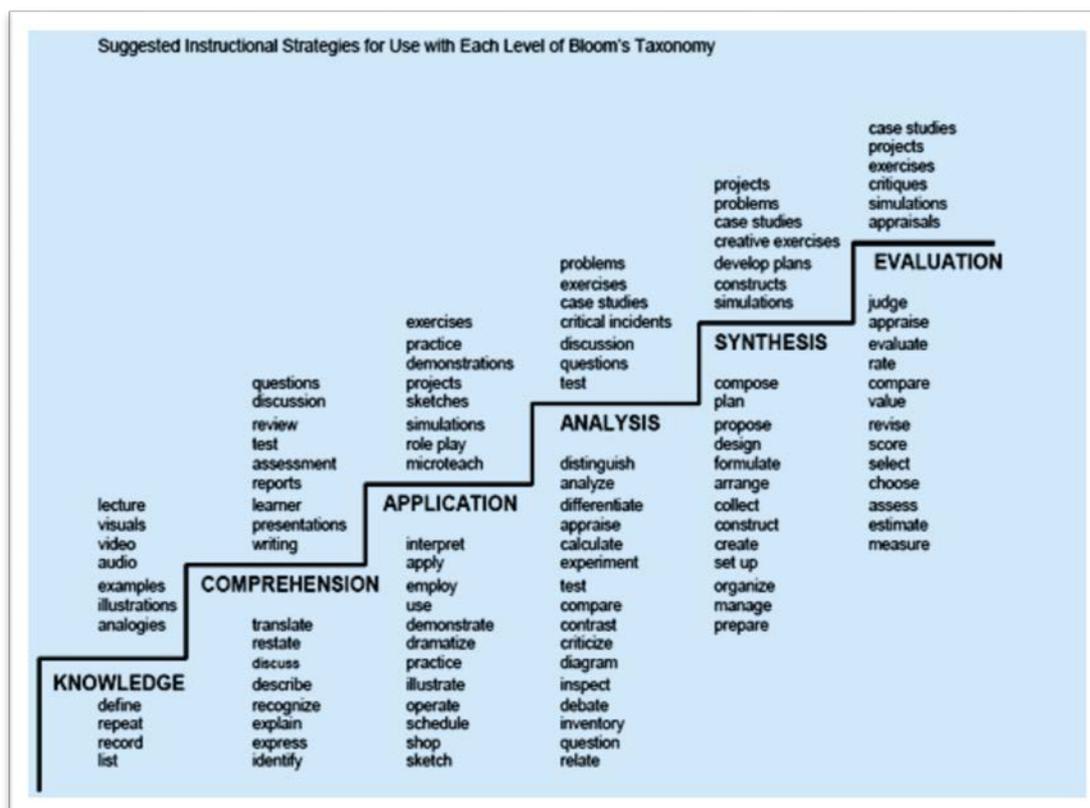


Figure 2.2: Bloom's Taxonomy

<https://www.learningsolutionsmag.com/articles/1105/elearning-guild-research-reconsidering-blooms-taxonomy-old-and-...>

The art of learning is the acquisition of knowledge and skills, however a higher-order of thinking is required within tertiary education with the application of these skills and

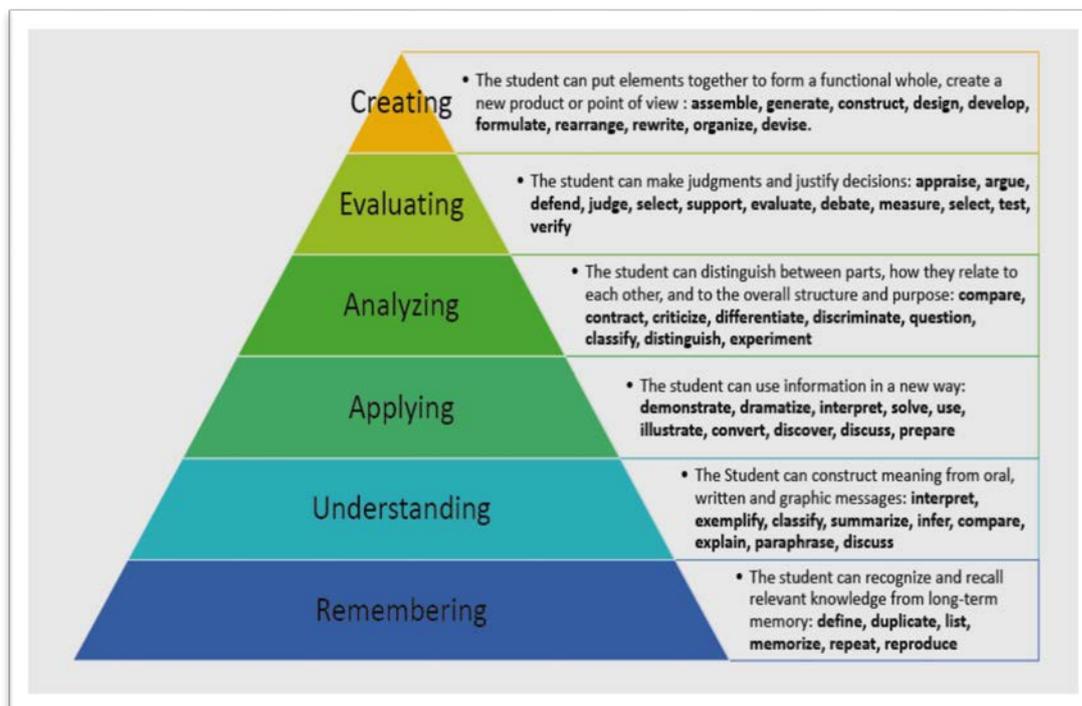
knowledge to various situations (Collins, 2014: 1). The scaffolding method of choice in relation to this research is that of Bloom's taxonomy (Figure 2.1 and 2.2), which is extensively used within the education field. Dr. Benjamin Bloom developed this framework with the objective to encourage evaluation and analysis within the education realm and not just merely to recall facts or information. It focuses on cognitive development, which refers to the students acquisition and recall of knowledge and the development of their intellectual skills (Collins, 2014: 2).

Bloom's framework consists of six levels of cognitive processes to help assist the student to adapt and become skilled at a higher order of thinking (Sideeg, 2016: 162). The first level of Bloom's taxonomy is the knowledge component, learning definitions or facts and the ability to recall this information (Collins, 2014: 4).

The second level of the framework is that of comprehension, do the students have an understanding of the knowledge they have acquired in level one?

A continuation of the cognitive framework is application, where it is determined whether the students are able to relate the information they have attained to various tasks or circumstances as required by the lecturer (Collins, 2014: 4).

The following process is that of analysis where students sift through information, their ability to apply or correlate it to other parts of components and by doing this, extend their own understanding of the subject or material (Collins, 2014: 4). The process of synthesis for the students requires them to combine and separate data, integrate information so as to construct or generate new information or processes (Collins, 2014: 4). The final step in Bloom's taxonomy is that of evaluation whereby students are required to appraise or review their data or learning process (Collins, 2014: 4).



**Figure 2.3 Revised Bloom's taxonomy**

[https://prezi.com/m7z8epdluxd\\_/blooms-taxonomy/](https://prezi.com/m7z8epdluxd_/blooms-taxonomy/)

Lecturers and mentors thus have to construct their lessons appropriately to assist the student to master the current cognitive level they are on, but also create the platform for the student to expand intellectually so as to move on to the next cognitive process (Collins, 2014: 4). This can be done by academic staff determining what their students' objectives are, how will they evaluate the content and what learning activities will produce the most successful results (Sideeg, 2016: 174). It is essential for lecturers to use the correct language and terminology so that students become familiar with verbs such as define; examine; recall and analyse, thus developing the ability to link it to the appropriate cognitive process to ensure they provide the content requested in the correct context (Collins, 2014:4). This allows academic staff to educate and assess students in a methodical and conventional way (Sideeg, 2016: 160).

The researcher is of the opinion that there is a distinct link between Bloom's taxonomy and Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development that is supportive of this research. Vygotsky reiterated the necessity for educators to give their students detailed direction to ensure they are able to achieve beyond their intellectual capabilities whilst Bloom's taxonomy provided academic staff with a practical and logical framework to help guide their students to reach that intellectual potential (Collins, 2014:4).

Vygotsky stated that the communication between lecturers and students should be easily understood, to assist in bridging the gap between the two parties which is supported by Bloom's taxonomy that provides the relevant task and familiar discourse that is related to each cognitive level, which educators need to explain to their students from the beginning of the learning process (Sideeg, 2016: 161).

Vygotsky explained the importance of ensuring that tasks and assessments are useful to the student's intellectual development and not just mere measuring tools (Turuk, 2008: 248). Bloom's taxonomy affords academic staff the opportunity to provide students with meaningful and structured feedback, so that students know their areas of concern and lecturers know how to adapt their teaching strategies to better suit their students' learning needs (Sideeg, 2016: 161).

## **2.10 CONCLUSION**

A large amount of information relating to under-prepared students and measures that have been put in place to rectify past governmental educational problems, have been dealt with in this chapter. However, even though South Africa is well into the new democracy, there is still evidence that students that are ill-prepared for the culture and demands associated with tertiary education and are struggling to succeed.

There is a drastic need to address the obvious gap that exists between our secondary and tertiary educational systems, perhaps that will be remedied once the CAPS is in full effect in our schools. As educators we will remain challenged in being mindful of our students learning needs individually and as a community, thereby constantly being aware of teaching strategies and resources that can benefit us better in assisting our students to become academically knowledgeable and ultimately assisting them in exiting the tertiary institution successfully.

The following chapter entails the research methodology surrounding the students' insight related to the ECP that they are a part of.

## **CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

### **3.1 INTRODUCTION**

Research methodology is described as the process implemented to ensure that the correct data is obtained so that the research problem is explained and objectives are accomplished (Burns & Grove, 2011: 253). The information that has been provided in the preceding chapters should have provided comprehensive groundwork to this research, as well as the supportive literature discussed in chapter two. In the following chapter, the research methodology related to nursing students perceptions of an extended undergraduate curriculum programme within a higher education institution in the Western Cape, will be discussed.

### **3.2 RESEARCH AIM**

The aim of this study was to explore undergraduate nursing students' perceptions of an extended curriculum programme within a higher education institution in the Western Cape Province.

### **3.3 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

The objectives of this study were to explore and describe the perceptions of the R425 Diploma nursing students' within a higher education institution in the Western Cape Province about:

- the extended undergraduate curriculum programme (ECP) that they had completed
- whether the ECP assisted with their integration into the mainstream programme
- how the ECP could be improved to better facilitate integration and success in the mainstream programme

### **3.4 RESEARCH DESIGN**

According to Burns and Grove (2011: 256) a descriptive design helps the researcher explore information about a particular field of study. Due to the fact that very little information exists regarding the ECP in nursing, it was the researcher's intention to provide previous students of such a programme an opportunity to describe the programme, highlight any problems or achievements, and suggest how it can be improved. Qualitative research also allows the exploration of complex issues and various realities about the phenomenon under study (Holloway & Wheeler, 2010: 3). Thus, the descriptive design with a qualitative approach

helped towards relaying these complexities of the programme and the realities that the students' in the programme have to deal with.

An acceptable number of participants in a focus group at a particular time can vary between seven to ten members. However, for the purpose of this research, the information was gathered through two focus groups consisting of five participants each, as well as a telephonic interview with a participant not residing in the Western Cape. The data was acquired via semi-structured interviews to gain diverse perspectives on the extended curriculum programme. Whilst the number of students in the ECP is quite small, it is the researcher's belief that this did not affect the research project negatively, but rather helped to create an intimacy within the group, and a willingness to discuss their perceptions of the programme.

### **3.5 POPULATION**

The ECP research population consists of forty-seven students who progressed to the second-year mainstream programme in 2015, of which six were male and forty-one were female. Their ages ranged between twenty and fifty years, with individuals representing the black and coloured ethnic groups. The students were predominantly from the Western and Eastern Cape; however, it was unknown what the exact total for each province is as the students tend to give an address of a friend or relative in the Western Cape to gain acceptance to the higher education institutions in the area.

The students in this group were, before the commencement of their formal studies, either part of the employment sector or have had a gap year. None of the students in this population commenced their studies immediately after completing their secondary education. Although English is the medium of instruction for this group, the majority of the students are studying in their second or third language, with the predominant home languages being Afrikaans and Xhosa.

### **3.6 SAMPLING**

A focus group is when a number of individuals who have comparable experiences are interviewed by a facilitator with the aim of acquiring thoughts, ideas or perceptions of a certain topic (Holloway & Wheeler, 2010: 125). The students in the ECP have been together for two years and have developed a rapport with each other. The researcher was of the opinion that the focus group would allow diversity in the information that would be collected as the participants were comfortable with each other and willing to share information that they may not have divulged had it been strangers.

It was the researcher's intention to have approximately two focus groups consisting of five participants each, who were chosen from the population of forty-seven previous ECP students that progressed to the second-year mainstream programme in 2015. These students were identified by obtaining a 2014 ECP2 class list from the first-year clerk, after obtaining institutional permission. One interviewer that have been trained and holds a master's degree in research, helped to facilitate the focus groups that did not exceed two hours. It was important that the focus groups should not be too large to allow the interviewers to adequately guide the process whilst also allowing each participant a meaningful opportunity to contribute to the discussion.

The researcher had initially arranged to talk to all students in the population to inform them about the research and invite them to be part of the focus groups. Unfortunately, student protests prevented this and the researcher was given a class list with names to contact the students individually. Participants were chosen using a purposive sampling method, which meant that the participants were chosen for a specific reason - their ability to give rich and detailed information about the programme. The researcher phoned those students she knew could contribute towards the study and also talk with ease. These students were part of her group when she taught at this institution, before she departed for another position at another college. What the research entails was explained telephonically to the students and when they arrived for the interview, they received a pamphlet that explained, in detail, everything they needed to know. The information was explained in English as that is the medium of their instruction. Those students, who agreed telephonically to be part of this study and the focus group, were involved as participants.

Students from the provinces of the Eastern and Western Cape, students varying in ages, as well as students who received a bursary and private students were included in the total of the two focus groups, ensuring a heterogeneous group that would be the best chance of providing rich data. The advanced age of certain students indicated that they were previously directly affected by the unequal allocation of educational resources at secondary level during apartheid, rendering them ideal for the purpose of this study.

The researcher attempted to contact at least four students' who have exited the ECP unsuccessfully and ask their permission to have individual interviews with them. Inclusion in a focus group or face-to-face interview would not be possible as these students were not residing in Cape Town anymore. A more complete representation of the successes and limitations of the programme would have been obtained with their inclusion, but unfortunately, only two of these participants were successfully contacted, of which one declined to participate in this research.

### **3.7 SELECTION CRITERIA**

Nursing students, who have been part of the extended undergraduate curriculum of the R425 programme of the 2013 intake at this tertiary institution, were included in this study with no exclusion criteria. The researcher telephoned all the students in the population until the desired number of prospective participants was reached.

### **3.8 PILOT INTERVIEW**

According to De Vos, Strydom, Fouche and Delport (2011: 370), pilot testing of focus groups can be quite difficult to separate from the actual situation surrounding the research. It is, however, important to test how the interviewers will conduct the process, whether proper language has been used in the questions and whether they are unambiguous. It is also equally vital to determine if the environment is conducive for the proposed study.

The first focus group organised was used as a pilot interview. As the interviewing skills of the researcher was satisfactory, and the information obtained as well as the flow of the conversation was good, it was decided by the researcher, the fieldworker and the supervisor that it was successful enough to include as one of the two focus groups originally planned.

### **3.9 DATA COLLECTION**

A focus group is when a number of individuals who have comparable experiences, are interviewed by a facilitator with the aim of acquiring thoughts, ideas or perceptions of a certain topic (Holloway & Wheeler, 2010: 125). The students in the ECP have been together for two years and have developed a rapport with each other. The researcher was of the opinion that the focus group would allow diversity in the information that would be collected.

Data collection was done via interviewing the focus groups within the natural setting of the participants, which is the library of the higher education institution at which the students received their instruction. A private, well-lit, and ventilated room with a round table and chairs, as well as a table for refreshments was used. The researcher and fieldworker (that have been trained and holds a master's degree in research) facilitated the focus groups.

The semi-structured interview questions allowed some structure whilst also providing the facilitator/interviewer the freedom to deviate when the participants offered extra information that required exploration. Silent students were encouraged to give their opinions and interesting comments were more deeply explored and reflected back to students to ensure that interpretation of information was correct. All interviews were recorded using an audio recorder and the transcribed tapes were verified by the fieldworker and supervisor for determination of authenticity, completeness and trustworthiness.

### **3.10 DATA ANALYSIS**

It was the researcher's intention to provide an insightful description of the participant recollection of the ECP programme and to undertake that this would be achieved using an interpretive data analysis structure. According to Braun and Clarke (2006:11) thematic analysis, an example of an interpretive approach, is the most frequently used method of data analysis when doing qualitative research. The first step in the data analysis process was for the researcher to be familiarised with the data. Data analysis commenced immediately after each focus group, even while the process of data collection was still in progress. The researcher and fieldworker (in conjunction with the transcribed tapes) made valuable notes of the group discussion, such as emotions that were evoked or participant attitudes during the discussion. These aspects were compared during debriefing by the researcher and fieldworker after the events, and included in the narrative presented in Chapter 4.

The next step of thematic analysis was the generation of codes, which included the sorting and grouping together of information that have a common meaning. A fair amount of the data collected was interrelated which made this section of data analysis very important. This led to the searching for "themes", a name for a group of common information or codes. The researcher gave transcripts and audio files to the supervisor, who confirmed that transcriptions were accurate, and concurred with the themes and subthemes that emerged.

The next steps in the analysis process, which are interconnected, dealt with reviewing, defining as well as exploring a connection between the themes. This process entailed that the information was reprocessed to make sure the proper coding was done and the proper themes had been identified. This process continued until the researcher and supervisor was satisfied that the data was appropriately interpreted as indicated by the participants' in the focus groups and properly represented in the narrative.

### **3.11 TRUSTWORTHINESS**

This is the expectation that the "richness of the data" will be conveyed regardless of the limitations that exist in the study (LoBiondo-Wood & Haber, 2010: 128). Trustworthiness ensures that the appraisals put in place achieve excellence in the research process. With the undertaking of this research, it was important for both the researcher and fieldworker involved to be aware of their opinions and perceptions of the ECP and to verbalise their feelings to one another, thus limiting bias in the study. Application of the principles of dependability, credibility, transferability and conformability also helped to improve the trustworthiness of the study.

### **3.11.1 Dependability**

Dependability determines whether the research done is reasonable, if it's well documented and if it's been reviewed (De Vos *et al.*, 2011: 420). Throughout the process the researcher ensured that the data made sense and that the research process followed in a logical and consistent order. This guaranteed that individuals would be able to assess the competence of the study through following the decision-making process of the researcher. This process was upheld by having an external auditor, the supervisor of the researcher, constantly checking the progress made during the research on a two weekly basis.

### **3.11.2 Credibility**

Credibility is defined as the measures that have been taken to ensure the study is accurate and valid (LoBiondo-Wood & Haber, 2010: 576). This process includes a thorough explanation of the dynamics of how participants were chosen for the study, the setting, as well as the constraints that have been put in place to ensure that the research process was not deterred. The researcher also explained the study thoroughly to the participants, to ensure that each participant understood their role and the importance thereof to the study.

During the focus group, summaries and reflections were given of the participants comments to ensure that it has been correctly interpreted. This served as member checking, which allowed participants to verify what they have said or to rectify information they felt was interpreted incorrectly (Holloway & Wheeler, 2010: 305). It was the researcher's intention to allow the participants to read through the transcriptions, thus allowing them to remain part of the research process and ensuring that the results of the study was the true reflection of their opinions (judgement, not necessarily facts). This was, however, not possible due to the "fees must fall" protest, where certain students were protesting for free tertiary education. These protests resulted in restricted access onto the premises of the tertiary institution due to safety concerns, as well as participants' being asked to leave the residence as a safety measure and also because formal lectures at this institution were suspended.

### **3.11.3 Transferability**

Transferability is obtained when the results of the current study can be used in another situation (De Vos *et al.*, 2011: 420) because in-depth, substantial information was received from the participants. Although this study took place at a tertiary institution within the Western Cape Province, enough common issues were presented, which might be perceived as similar in other provinces and other ECP programmes in South Africa. The students in the ECP are usually in the minority and could be faced with the negative undertones associated with the programme on a daily basis, for instance their daily struggle with the correct

language use initially. This study helps towards production of knowledge to compare with other such studies, build upon them and use it in future learning programmes.

#### **3.11.4 Conformability**

Conformability determines whether the findings and conclusion of the study has achieved its objectives (Holloway & Wheeler, 2010: 303). All data collected must accomplish the aims that have been set out for the study and must be free of any preconceived ideas the researcher might have had of the study topic. The importance of bracketing and member checking to improve conformability is accentuated again. All anonymous information, audio tapes, researcher and facilitator notes, as well as the transcriptions are available for scrutiny to verify how the researcher concluded the findings.

### **3.12 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

Approval to conduct this study, number S15/07/155, was obtained from the Health Research Ethics Committee (HREC) of the Stellenbosch University (Appendix A) before commencement. Once this approval was received, approval for the study was also obtained from the ethical committee of the specific higher education institution where the study was conducted (Appendix B).

All participants were thoroughly briefed what the study is about, informed consent inclusive of a confidentiality agreement (Appendix C) was obtained on signing the consent forms before the undertaking of study (Pera & Van Tonder, 2011: 72). Although the consent forms were in English, a consent form in Xhosa was available to help participants better understand the study on their request. However, these were not used as the participants felt they understood the English consent forms clearly.

It was reiterated to the participants that only the researcher, fieldworker and the supervisor would handle the data received from them and would also be required to sign confidentiality agreements (Pera & Van Tonder, 2011:61). Confidentiality was further addressed in the focus groups by having all members in the group sign confidentiality slips to ensure that no-one would speak out of the group.

The principle of autonomy was adhered to by explaining that a participant could withdraw from the study at any time if they no longer wished to participate in it (Pera & Van Tonder, 2011: 53). The principle of justice was upheld by each participant and their contribution being equally important in the study, making sure the process was fair to all (Pera & Van Tonder, 2011: 58). The questions asked and the care given by the researcher when doing so, was the same for each participant, so that no participant should feel inferior or

disrespected compared to the rest of the group. Refreshments were available for the participants, as the focus groups took place over tea and lunch time.

The principles of non-maleficence allowed the process and environment to be safe for participants' (Pera & Van Tonder, 2011: 55). This was done by ensuring the venue was conducive for the interview process. The group was allowed to set up rules they felt were important, thus also allowing them some say in the process; i.e. when a participant spoke no-one should interrupt that person until they were done. Should participants become emotional or highlight a problem that was not possible to address in the current format, besides the support that the member would receive from the group, there was also a trained psychologist on the premises that the participant could have been referred to for counselling as needed.

The principle of beneficence was upheld by explaining the equal importance of each participant's role in the study, that questions were not asked to offend personally but to obtain an accurate description of the programme from them (Pera & Van Tonder, 2011: 55). This also tied in with the principle of veracity and it was explained to each participant how important it was to tell the truth, no matter how difficult it may be as this would uphold the integrity of the study (Pera & Van Tonder, 2011: 60). The researcher, fieldworker and supervisor discussed their ideas and preconceived ideas with one another to prevent bias and uphold the integrity of the research. The participant's right to anonymity was protected by identifying them only by using letters of the alphabet, e.g. participant A (Pera & Van Tonder, 2011: 335). All audio tapes, transcriptions and field notes will be locked in a safe at the home of the researcher for five years. All research information stored on the researcher's computer is password protected. After the required time period the research data will be destroyed i.e. all written material destroyed via shredding and all electronic information deleted and erased off hard-drive.

### **3.13 CONCLUSION**

The above chapter gave a detailed explanation of the process behind the research methodology related to this study. In the following chapter, a detailed explanation of the data analysis and interpretation thereof will be provided.

## CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

### 4.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter a brief explanation is given of the participants' biographical data and the results interpreted from the data analysis, which followed on the data collection interviews via focus groups. The research data acquired will be discussed using themes and sub-themes. It is important to stress that these themes are the researcher's interpretation of the data collected during the interview process; however, the researcher has undertaken to ensure that personal prejudice is not forthcoming by highlighting prominent themes as raised by the participants. To maintain the trustworthiness of the study, relevant literature and participant quotes from the focus interviews, as evidence to this, has been included. A pseudonym was given to each participant to maintain the ethical considerations of participant privacy and anonymity within this research (De Vos et al., 2011: 120).

### 4.2 BIOGRAPHICAL DATA OF PARTICIPANTS

The information regarding the selected nursing population that formed part of the extended curriculum programme was obtained from the administrative clerk responsible for the group. The total accessible research population consisted of 41 black and six coloured students of which six were male and forty-one female. These students were predominantly from the Western- and Eastern Cape Provinces with their ages ranging between twenty and fifty years.

The researcher is unable to give the actual data of how many of the students within the ECP are actually from the Eastern Cape, as the students are inclined to give an address of family members within the Western Cape to gain admission into a tertiary education institution in the region. There is no indication of any student from the Eastern Cape on the document received from the administrative clerk; however, during data collection the participants were forthcoming regarding the information. The following information relates to the participants only.

#### 4.2.1 Age

The ages of the participants ranged between 22 and 51 years. The researcher purposefully selected the youngest and the oldest students respectively in the class, to ensure a detailed outlook is obtained regarding the programme. The rest of the participants ranged between these ages.

#### **4.2.2 Gender**

The research sample consisted of ten participants who were divided equally amongst two focus groups of which three were male and seven female, as well as one female participant that was interviewed telephonically. This is a greater representation than the acceptable ten percent sample size as stated in De Vos et al. (2011: 225).

#### **4.2.3 Ethnicity**

The sample of eight black and three coloured participants were representative of the research population. The participants were equally divided as those coming from the Eastern Cape Province and those students indigenous to the Western Cape Province. It is important to note that all the students in the selected research population received a bursary whilst in the ECP. The improved financial opportunities may be suggestive of why students come from the Eastern Cape Province to study in the Western Cape Province.

All the students in the selected population and research sample were undertaking their tertiary education in their second or third language, with their first and (often) second languages one of the other official 11 languages in South Africa besides English. Lack of language proficiency was one of the areas of concern for under-prepared students, with English being the chosen medium of instruction in tertiary education in South Africa (Bharuthram, 2012: 209).

#### **4.2.4 Participant previous experience**

Only one of the participants had previous nursing experience as he was working as an enrolled nurse assistant for several years whereas another participant worked as a home-based carer in the community before starting their education journey. The other participants had previous work experience in various different fields ranging from working on the fishing docks for I & J, filling paint drums for Plascon, accepting an administrative internship at a governmental hospital, to waitressing in a restaurant before committing to formal studies. The number of years these participants were out of secondary education varied between 3 and 30 years, as one of the participants was working in retail for more than nineteen years. Three of these participants articulated that they worked towards saving up of funds to pay for their tertiary education. Only three of the participants started their tertiary education after taking a gap year post matric.

There were two participants who admitted that nursing was not their first choice as a career. The one participant was encouraged by her aunt to do nursing and enjoyed it once she commenced her studies. The other participant, from the telephonic interview, communicated

that she could never settle in her studies as it was not what she really wanted to do. This participant is currently in her second year of study within the law faculty.

Eight participants were staying in the residence provided by their tertiary institution at the time of data collection whilst two of the participants were staying at their respective homes within their communities. The participant interviewed telephonically was staying in residence at an FET College in East London.

### 4.3 THEMES AND SUB-THEMES

An important detail to be mindful of is that a fair amount of the information discussed by the participants were consistent and interrelated. Below is a diagrammatical representation of the themes and subthemes as interpreted and confirmed by the researcher and supervisor.

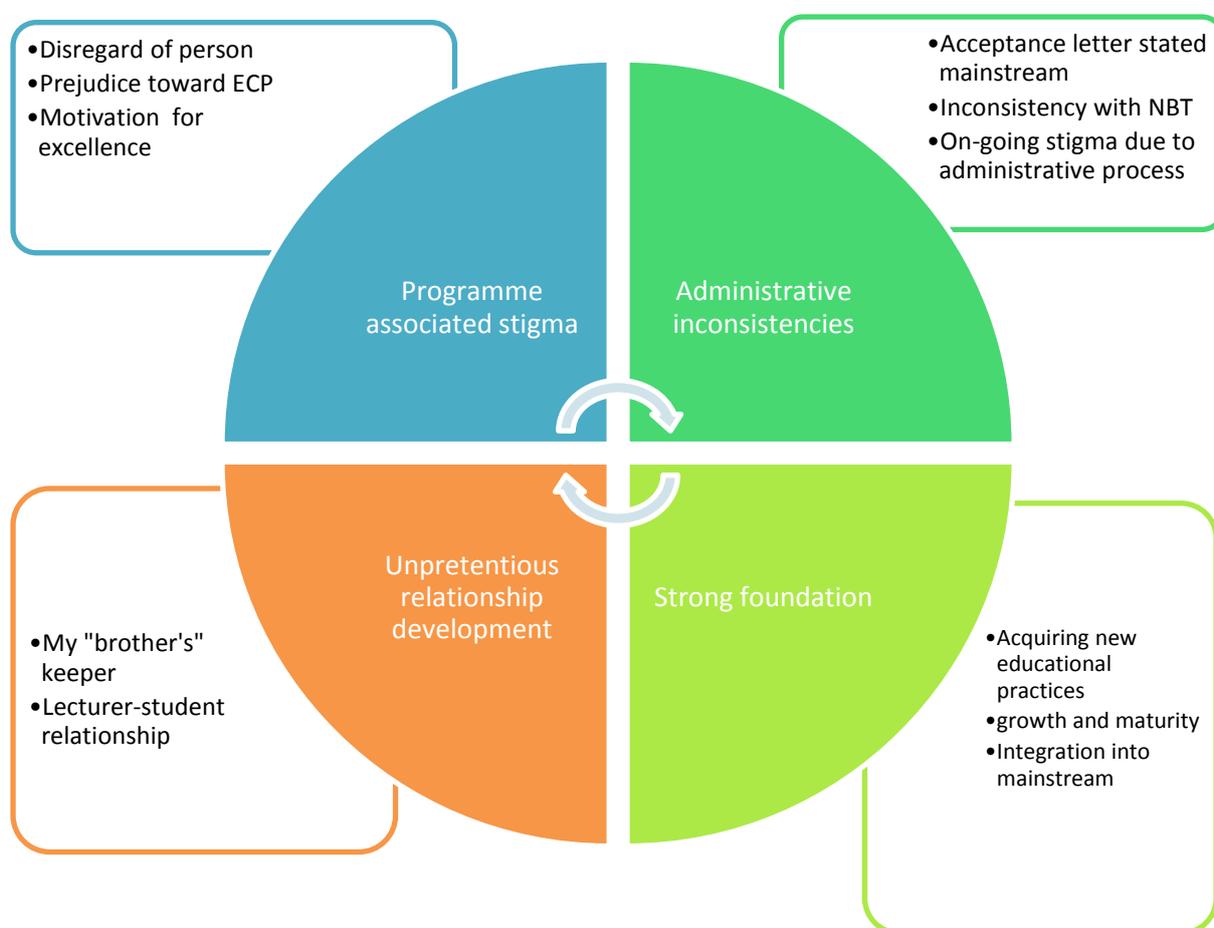


Figure 4.1: Themes and subthemes

### **4.3.1 Theme 1: Programme- associated stigma**

The leading concern associated with the ECP is stigmatisation. This was also passionately discussed by all the participants and they were quite willing to expose their emotions in such a candid way. It became clear that the students endured prejudice due to institutional practices that have developed, due to uninformed decision-making processes by certain management and academic members of faculty.

#### **4.3.1.1 Subtheme 1: Disregard of person**

All the participants acknowledged that they had no previous knowledge of the existence of an extended curriculum programme. Many of them expressed the anger they experienced related to their introduction to the extended curriculum programme and with no platform to verbalise these frustrations before. Most of the students were already part of the mainstream class when they were openly asked to join the ECP. The need for segregation is understood in the bigger picture but the option of this programme was not communicated to the students individually before commencement of their studies. This created the opinion amongst some of the students that they were picked at random and unfairly for the ECP, having already been chosen for the mainstream programme. What is also interesting to note is that even though the students never knew what the extended curriculum programme was all about, the perception was somehow communicated that the programme was for “slow learners”, either by faculty members or the college.

*Telephonic interview participant:” ... I felt like weak... and... was discouraged. Uhm I thought ECP is for people labelled the slow learners.”*

#### **4.3.1.2 Subtheme 2: Prejudice toward ECP**

The participants expressed the turmoil they endured by the prejudice displayed at the institution and by their own damaged self-image. Many students remained angry at the inefficiencies within the system, linked to their admission into this higher education institution. Participants indicated that a negative connotation persists around the programme that has proven beneficial to under-prepared students’. This negative perception regarding the extended programme and the students spill over to the mainstream student population as well, with perpetuation of the beliefs by mainstream academic staff and students to react the way they did. The participants were in agreement that it is caused by individual perceptions and being uneducated about the programme.

*Group 2, Participant B: “Even last year when we get in second year when we get in sim lab the mentors there, I don’t know what was the matter but their first words when they open their mouths, talking to us were that they were sick and tired of ECP*

*students that use to be spoon feed. Now is the time to work on your own. We didn't even do nothing; I don't know what was the matter; it was the first time we get into sim lab but they were like cross to us. We didn't do nothing. I don't know what's the problem. If they don't want ECP program here"*

**Group 1, Participant D:** *"That stigma will be eliminated because it's only based on what people think it's not what they know about the programme."*

Newly accepted students need to "become and achieve something", and in this process are willing to accept ill-treatment from their mentor(s) to fulfil that dream. Participants mentioned the degree to which college or academic staff have made students in the ECP feel helpless, and thus accept the manner in which they are treated. The prejudice surrounding this programme has not only been experienced at this tertiary institution, as supported by literature (Dhunpath & Vithal 2014: 43).

**Group 2, Participant C:** *"Ok for me it was one of the worst experiences I've ever had because ... they just (should) say (to) people (from the beginning) "no go" or else if you want to go home (allow you to) just go home. I... decided ok let me just go (do the course) because at least I was accepted but I didn't like it..."*

#### **4.3.1.3 Subtheme 3: Motivation for excellence**

Resilience and motivation was acquired by the extended curriculum students as a result of enduring this treatment. It can be said that this became the driving force for the students in this programme to achieve excellent results, and this thought process extended well after they integrated with the mainstream curriculum students in second year. A noteworthy detail highlighted by the participants is that there is no prejudice experienced from the mainstream students toward them now that they have joined together as one class.

**Group 2, Participant A:** *"Yes even though you are seeing us as nothing we are better, people just like you. Because we kind of like we have to study harder so that we can be seen like students just like any other so it kind of gives us that driving force. "*

**Group 1, Participant A:** *"So now I keep going you know and then I realized you know you can do this because uhm they, they are motivating me you know."*

### **4.3.2 Theme 2: Administrative inconsistencies**

The participants articulated inconsistent administrative practises that contributed to them questioning the legitimacy of their placement into the ECP

#### **4.3.2.1 Subtheme 1: Acceptance letter stated mainstream**

Students initially received acceptance letters stating that they were part of the mainstream programme, so the expectation was created that these students would be studying for four years.

**Group 1, Participant A:** *“... it was not nice because my acceptance letter wrote that I was taken for main stream course. Then I came here... we were told that our names were on the other side, but we didn’t go there we just sat there with the main stream. Jhor it was not nice really. I was really hurt.”*

The participants are of the opinion that no structured process or guideline existed for students to be placed in the programme, which meant they were randomly being chosen for ECP.

**Group 2, Participant B:** *“...I’m using two surnames my years. And on the surname and my married surname. So they wrote both surnames. (Name) and (name). The first surname (name) was called for main stream. Then the second one for ECP. Then I’m getting confused. I go to one of the mentors and ask where I must go. She asks me who are you then I told her, she say go to ECP...”*

Students were now faced with the reality of not only being labelled “slow learners” but also with the extra financial burden of studying for another year before being able to qualify and earn a full registered nurse salary. This administrative inefficiency thus caused these underprepared students to have an added disadvantage.

**Group 1 Participant C:** *“For me it was also not nice really. Because... I was working and I was used to getting paid every 25<sup>th</sup> of every month and to be here without money, my parents are not working and now I have to do an extra year”*

#### **4.3.2.2 Subtheme 2: Inconsistency with National Benchmark Test**

The National Benchmark Test (NBT) has been put in place as a requirement for admission to a tertiary institution. However, the participants verbalised that not all the students, ECP and mainstream wrote the NBT.

**Group 2, Participant C:** *“No they were in main stream. I asked them but guys if we are accepted here we write this test and then we are, that test decide for us. But they say no we never even heard about the test. I’m in main stream but I never hear about the test.”*

Some participants felt that the NBT disadvantaged students coming from the Eastern Cape Province due to the questions that were asked. These participants perceived that these students may not have been exposed to situations that would allow them to have the appropriate general knowledge examined in the NBT.

**Group 2, Participant D:** *“... for an individual to get that better general knowledge you need to be a exposure to things...I’m a person from the Eastern Cape and I come to Western Cape and you ask general knowledge based on the Western Cape life then it’s going to be difficult...knowledge that I have is based on the rural areas.... Or the level of exposure to things that are in the rural areas. So that will create some difficulty for me if the test I write will be based on the Western Cape life”*

One of the participants was already attending classes with the mainstream students when he was asked to join the ECP and was not given his NBT results on request thereof.

**Group 2, Participant C:** *“But for me to know that I did write a test and I passed it and then I got accepted and registered as main stream and then to be told no you are not. Then I said where is the proof because I didn’t see my results but here is the proof that I passed, you’ve written that I made it.. So I just did it. Cos I thought ok should I not come then maybe it will be a loss forever for me so let me just accept it.”*

Due to non-transparency and academic inconsistencies surrounding the ECP, this participant developed a deep-seeded anger and frustration that was evident in the way he articulated himself in the interview. The negative experience resulted in the participant being unable to see or not willing to admit to any benefit ECP had on him.

**Group 2 Participant C:** *“It (referring to ECP) might help others but for me it wasn’t working.”*

#### **4.3.2.3 Subtheme 3: Ongoing stigma due to administrative processes**

Participants highlighted the concern of still being labelled as ECP students after integration with the mainstream group as “ECP” still reflected next to their names when the results were put up on the notice board. There were opposite feelings about this, as certain participants were unhappy about it as they felt the stigma related to the programme continued to follow

them. Other participants; however, didn't mind as most of the extended curriculum students were passing with distinctions and they felt proud about that fact and wanted everyone to see their achievements, after being stigmatised as being slow learners.

**Group 1, Participant B:** "... because when they put marks ne next to your name, now we in 3<sup>rd</sup> year now but next to your name they say ECP2... it's not nice."

**Group 1, Participant E:** "...the name when you will check on the board it's good to see ECP got distinctions and all that..."

### **4.3.3 Theme 3: Strong foundation**

The participants verbalised that they were confident that they received an excellent educational foundation due to the fact that they were still receiving distinctions for subjects in their third year of study. Participants concurred that even though they needed to adjust to the pace, they were well-prepared when they integrated into the mainstream curriculum programme.

#### **4.3.3.1 Subtheme 1: Acquiring new educational practices**

The majority of the participants articulated that in retrospection, they would not have coped with their course had they not been in ECP. Many students attributed this perception to being out of school for a long period of time and the need to adjust to formal education again.

**Group 1, Participant C:** "No, I don't think I would have been in the main stream cos I was already nine years out of school so my mind was relaxed."

It was evident from the focus group discussion that these students were still upholding practises such as group work and discussions, from the extended programme that assisted in their academic success thus far. The participants also verbalised their ability to recall information they learnt in first year, much better than their mainstream colleagues, and attributed it to the depth of learning that they were exposed to in the extended curriculum programme as one of its benefits.

**Group 2, Participant D:** "...So we get enough time to be taught well thoroughly what it is the human engineering... Because now some of the stuff I just recall I don't have to go back to the book. Just like the other students will say but I've never been taught that and we will refer them to the book. With us you just recall...I was thinking this was the worst thing ever but now I can happily say it worked for me, because I can see now that I am going to finish..."

#### 4.3.3.2 **Subtheme 2: Growth and maturity**

An important factor highlighted by the participants was proof of their development within the programme and how they linked the challenges of getting to know their colleagues in the extended programme with their ability to relate to colleagues and patients in the clinical setting. Participants indicated that they knew “one another’s backgrounds” and got used to the different cultures in the group, which assisted them to relate to people. The participants also verbalised that, because of their various backgrounds, certain students within the extended group needed to be schooled in acceptable behaviour and attitudes, which they were able to supportively rectify within the confines of their fellow group or class.

**Group 2 Participant D:** *“...sometimes the behaviour will change on certain days and sometimes we come in a bad mood but you cannot do anything to that person because that person is a member of this group you have to make sure that the person finds a way to get to their proper behaviour so that you can focus on the work that you guys are doing...Because they say you know with nursing, nursing is a team work or you get taught how to work in a team as early as possible which makes it much easier when you get into the field of nursing.”*

As discussed in Chapter 1, entering into the culture of higher education can leave any student feeling isolated and lost. Under-prepared students even more so become demotivated and have an obscured self-image once their learning deficits are highlighted. Their level of maturity reached was shown when participants verbalised the importance of not internalising the stigma and prejudice associated with ECP. They recognised that they were being treated a certain way due to ignorance regarding the programme.

**Group 2, Participant D:** *“Yes we tend to not individualise our experiences but compare our experiences with others...if the person that I am comparing with seems to be in a better place than I am then it’s because of the ECP. Not knowing not looking at what is the ECP actually doing for me individually... you know that you are not a slow...That has now created some kind of inferiority complex in you but I think that is based on ourselves in our heads man. With me I don’t have a problem.”*

#### 4.3.3.3 **Subtheme 3: Integration into mainstream**

The participants concurred that the ECP assisted them to integrate into the mainstream successfully. They acknowledged that most of the group were still attaining excellent marks and even distinctions.

**Group 1, Participant B:** “And, and you know and, and the nice thing was that the ECP were getting distinctions.”

Although the participants agreed that they were able to integrate into the mainstream successfully, some participants initially struggled to get used to the pace of second year.

**Group 1, Participant D:** *For me the pace was a bit hectic the second year to tell the truth. It's different because you know there's deadlines...So the pace was in the first few months ya there was a struggle but then afterwards you do get used to routine...They say the pace is now really hectic but you do manage to cope.*

The learning obtained from the extra literacy and computer classes, which were used to rectify past educational disabilities, contributed to further application in life. The participant that exited the ECP unsuccessfully, articulated that these classes helped her in her current studies within the law faculty, as expressed as follows:

**Telephonic interview participant:** “...it is a good foundation even in, in the language that we are speaking...Because at least ECP helped me a lot now, at least I can communicate...with the people who doesn't understand my home language...I'm getting a, outstanding results because I understand the question properly now”

#### **4.3.4 Theme 4: Unpretentious relationship development**

A vital attribute contributing to the success of the ECP is the bond that has developed amongst the research population, as indicated by the participants. The extended curriculum consists of a small number of students, as explained in the biographical data, and most of their lectures with exception of the literacy and computer studies are facilitated by the same lecturer. The extended curriculum programme also functions largely with group work amongst the students. This constant interaction with the same people results in a sense of family as the students now have a source of support and feel that they belong.

##### **4.3.4.1 Subtheme 1: My “brother’s” keeper**

The participants made reference to the fact that they look out for one another in the programme, no-one will get left behind unless they themselves refuse to work.

**Group 2, Participant B:** “...ECP make us a family. In ECP we were like, we were not like the other students. We were like family like brothers and sisters...If she's struggling with something everybody knows. We know our back grounds...She don't but we have study groups like we spend 2 to 3 hours together we don't just do like

*everybody do and go on. We have to know that she has something on her mind so that we know that if we writing the test tomorrow everybody is going to pass.”*

Due to most of the students in the extended programme having learning deficits, it became easier to ask for assistance when clarification or understanding of information is needed. The participants articulated that they have become accountable to one another and stressed the importance of being prepared when doing group work as they have identified that they learn from one another’s experience or perspective.

**Group 1, Participant E:** *“when we done early...Then we decide where we gonna meet at a venue...for an hour or two just to go over the work, and those that didn’t understand ask please explain me this again because I didn’t catch it in class...And some of us know those who are struggling we will pull them also...We don’t want our friends to fail... We are looking out for each other...I would go to them also if I struggle.”*

Due to group member accountability, students were forced to know their content at all times resulting in them excelling in their formal assessments. This improves the students’ confidence, which results in their individual capabilities being stretched and developed.

**Group 1, Participant C:** *“I think we’re all ... more confident because we were working in groups and there were many presentations as well in the ECP programme... I say the group work they make you stronger like in hospital you have to work in a group...”*

#### **4.3.4.2 Subtheme 2: Lecturer-student relationship**

The participants made reference to the supportive relationship they shared with their lecturers and the patience they showed when they delivered their lessons.

**Group 2, Participant A:** *“Ok, there’s that personal relationship between lecturer and the student individually, because the lecturer spends more time with us. The lecturer gets time to understand each students weaknesses and strength, like for me to make an example, because I’m we, we in class for quite a long time...she’s struggling with this maybe a nervous system she’s weak in that part and there’s still enough time to assist her. Even if you maybe some of us take a week to understand a chapter while others takes one day. So it gives us time for everyone to, to actually understand everything before we go on to the next chapter. And then we, we like family. And then we stay in like groups, so that interaction is like a family. Isn’t just morning class turn to page what, what, and then there after we always interact. It’s quite interesting...much because it gave us so much support... Even if you have a problem*

*the lecturer always have time for you. He doesn't say no, no, no I taught you this in class yesterday I'm moving on to the next chapter today. It's fine there is still time...*

The depth of the relationship made them feel comfortable enough to, even though they are in mainstream now, still consult with the original lecturer if they didn't understand something. This was evidence in the development of the trust relationship between the lecturer and the students.

**Group 1, Participant C:** *"And we could always go back to miss P to ask her if we don't understand something in second year if you don't understand. She will explain to us."*

An indication of the lecturer commitment was demonstrated when participants verbalised that the ECP lecturer will still come and find out how the participants are doing in the mainstream, especially before they write exams.

**Group 2, Participant A:** *"For me it is they haven't forgotten about us and this ECP thing and she is very proud of her students. It's nice its really nice support throughout."*

#### **4.4 CONCLUSION**

The above chapter was a presentation and discussion of the biographical data and the results pertaining to this study. The participants discussed in great length the ECP as they experienced it and based on their discussion the researcher developed a framework with four prominent themes as seen in Figure 4.1. The first theme was a discussion relating to the ECP associated stigma. The participants articulated that they had no previous knowledge of the ECP, but due to negative institutional practices that have been adopted by faculty academic staff; they endured unnecessary prejudice that have the potential to damage students' self-image. This total disregard of them as individuals has been a motivating factor to excel for many of the participants.

The participants discussed how, with their acceptance letters stating they were accepted into the mainstream programme as well as the fact that not all students wrote the NBT, these inconsistencies have resulted in them questioning the legitimacy of their placement in the ECP. These inconsistent practices caused a lot of anger and frustration amongst the participants, with one participant being unable to identify the need he had to be placed in the ECP initially or any benefit the programme contributed to his educational success.

In hindsight, even though they were initially discontented about their placement in the ECP, the majority of the participants saw its value to their individual educational growth. The participants articulated that the ECP assisted with their successful integration into the mainstream and concurred that because of the strong educational foundation they received, they were able to maintain the positive results that they received whilst in the ECP now that they were in the mainstream.

The participants verbalised that they appreciated the relationship developed with the lecturer and the rest of the ECP class. Their constant interaction with one another and genuine family orientated mind set provided them with a sense of belonging. In the following chapter the limitations and recommendations regarding the study will be discussed.

## **CHAPTER 5:**

### **DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **5.1 INTRODUCTION**

The following chapter provides conclusions regarding the nursing students' perceptions of the extended curriculum programme within a higher education institution and draws on the results discussed in the previous chapter. The conclusions will be considered in relation to the research objectives, as well as the limitations surrounding this study.

#### **5.2 DISCUSSION**

The aim of this study was to explore nursing students' perceptions of an extended undergraduate curriculum programme within a higher education institution in the Western Cape Province. The following is a discussion of the research findings as it relates to each objective.

##### **5.2.1 Objective 1: The R425 Diploma nursing students' perceptions of the extended undergraduate programme they had just completed**

The Council for Higher Education (2013: 70) stated that the rationale for the implementation of the ECP was to ensure that under-prepared students with the potential to succeed, was provided with reasonable opportunity to access tertiary education. Additionally, they would then receive a sound educational foundation to successfully exit the higher educational institution.

The participants verbalised that they exited secondary education a number of years before, either entering ECP from the employment sector or after taking a gap year (see chapter 4, section 4.2.4). A number of participants also mentioned their need to save funds in order to commence their tertiary education journey; thus, indicating that they did not come from privileged backgrounds. The research population all received bursaries, which is further evidence to the fact that this group of students' were under-prepared for tertiary education and was nevertheless able to access this domain via the ECP (Bass, 2011: 49).

The participants articulated, with the exception of one, that in their opinion they received a strong educational foundation in the ECP. They agreed that in hindsight, being out of secondary education a number of years before accessing tertiary education, they would not have been successful had they joined the mainstream student population (chapter 4, section 4.3.3.1). They agreed that the ECP allowed them enough time to get back into the art of

learning, as well as equipping them with the skills to rectify past educational disabilities or negative learning habits (Dhunpath & Vithal, 2014: 44).

In relation to the theoretical framework discussed in chapter 2, Vygotsky articulated the importance of providing students with the necessary time and skills to be able to develop their educational practices to attain critical thinking skills (Turuk, 2008: 251). In addition to the extra time, the ECP students received literacy and computer classes, as stated previously, which provided these students with the skills to improve their educational practices. These applications are evidence of the importance of applying Bloom's taxonomy in the curriculum for the ECP students, with the ECP students being guided through the different scaffolding processes by their lecturer, after needing to start at the very beginning of the process due to educational disabilities or bad learning habits.

The manner in which the participants articulated the data emphasised the value they attributed to their relationships formed with the lecturers. The patience that the lecturers portrayed in ensuring that all ECP students understood the lesson content, and the fact that they still took the time to check on their former students whether they have integrated into the mainstream, is evidence of the authenticity of their bond. The importance of mentoring is one of Vygotsky's key concepts in the development of the student, and he argued that a nurturing trust-relationship can motivate students to excel (Turuk, 2008: 249). The information shared by the participants gave the impression that the lecturers' concern for them was "holistic", as the students felt free to share their personal problems and joy with them. This is an indication that the lecturers were concerned about the student as a "whole" (Bass, 2011: 52).

The participants expressed, in great detail that the ECP classmates became like a "family" due to spending so much time with one another (chapter 4, section 4.3.4). They were exposed to diverse cultures and backgrounds which resulted in them being exposed to different attitudes and behaviours'. They felt that this allowed them a safe environment to be authentic as well as to educate certain colleagues in displaying appropriate behaviour in the culture of tertiary education (Dhunpath & Vithal, 2014: 172). This resulted in strengthening the bond amongst the ECP students and in doing so; they started "looking out" for one another. The participants verbalised that this prepared them to deal with people better, whether it be other colleagues or their patients in the clinical setting.

The participants agreed that their confidence improved as they saw the value of ECP in the growth and success they achieved, however this opinion was almost marred by the way ECP was introduced to them. All participants received acceptance letters stating that they

had been accepted into the mainstream curriculum programme of that faculty; however once they started their tertiary education they were told to go to the ECP. The approach that was undertaken by the faculty staff showed disregard to the participants and set them up for prejudice that the ECP student group endured for the total of two years (Dhunpath & Vithal, 2014: 42). The stigma attached to this programme is the one factor that can have a lasting and crippling effect on the ECP students. Whilst most of the participants were able to rise above this negative aspect and see the value of the ECP to their educational journey, one participant displayed profound anger and frustration associated with his placement in the programme (chapter 4, section 4.3.2.2). His emotions were so palpable that he was unable to identify whether the programme was of benefit to him.

The administrative inconsistencies (chapter 4, section 4.3.2) have resulted in the credibility of student placement in the ECP to be questioned. Certain participants agreed that they saw the value of the programme and how it has been of benefit to their educational growth; however, they queried the effectiveness of the NBT in placing students in the correct curriculum programme, such as mainstream or extended. These irregularities that have occurred have given the participants the impression that there is no structure or specific guidelines being followed when students are placed in the ECP and question whether the programme is considered essential by the faculty (Dhunpath & Vithal, 2014: 43).

### **5.2.2 Objective 2: The R425 Diploma nursing students' perceptions of whether the ECP assisted with their integration into the mainstream programme**

Dhunpath and Vithal (2014: 37) stated that a formal evaluation of the ECP, in all tertiary institutions, has not been completed as yet. The researcher is in agreement with this statement, as most of the information regarding the success of the programme has been provided from an institutional perspective. In relation to this research, the participants verbalised that they needed to adjust to the faster pace at which to approach their work when they integrated into the mainstream programme in second year. However, they all agreed that ECP provided them with a strong educational foundation to ensure that their integration was successful (chapter 4, section 4.3.3.3). They articulated that they were still able to recall to memory work done in their first year, which they concurred their colleagues that were from the mainstream programme, struggled to do. The participants verbalised that they still practiced group work, that formed a fundamental part of ECP, and reiterated that they believed they have the right skills to ensure their success at their studies, and attributed the high pass marks within the mainstream curriculum programme as evidence to the fact (Bass, 2011: 49).

The participant who exited the programme unsuccessfully verbalised that she was able to apply the knowledge she acquired in the ECP to her current studies, making distinct reference to the literacy and computer classes she received. This indicated that the ECP assisted with her integration into the mainstream programme, even though it was at another tertiary institution and faculty in a different province (Bass, 2011: 50).

### **5.2.3 Objective 3: The R425 Diploma nursing students' perceptions of how the ECP could be improved to better facilitate integration and success in the mainstream programme**

The participants articulated the success of the ECP by mentioning their educational achievements thus far, whilst still in ECP and since they have joined the mainstream. Their achievements were not just measured in successful formal assessments, but included the educational disabilities that have been rectified and the maturity displayed as the participants reflected on their experiences. Their contribution on how the ECP can be improved, therefore, had nothing to do with the curriculum or educational instruction; however, spoke in great length regarding the stigma associated with the ECP and the effect it continues to have on them (chapter 4, section 4.3.1).

The participants articulated the need for transparency regarding ECP, with evidence that the faculty regards the programme as important and values its contribution to their student population. Their understanding of transparency is for prospective students to be informed of the programme, so that they are aware that it is a possibility. The participants were of the opinion that this stand from the faculty will result in the much needed inclusiveness of the programme that is lacking. However, on inspection of the institution's website by the researcher the institution openly discussed their ECP in the various faculties with pride, but in hindsight, computer skills in this research population was severely lacking on acceptance to this tertiary institution. Therefore, the possibility that these students accessed the website for extra information seems unlikely. The reality is that the stigma-related problems exist in the implementation processes followed by the faculty staff.

Education about the ECP to the faculty staff was the other recommendation mentioned by the participants in eradicating the stigma. Participants were of the opinion that the mainstream academic staff displayed prejudice toward them because they didn't understand the programme. As previously stated, the programme was initially identified to assist the disadvantaged minority students, thus creating the perception of inferiority (Dhunpath & Vithal, 2014: 43). This opinion has spilled over to the mainstream students, thus perpetuating a negative attitude towards the ECP students. The participants articulated their successful results in comparison to the mainstream students, proved their worth at the

institution. So why are the ECP students still being marginalised? The researcher is of the opinion that until a comprehensive evaluation of the programme is concluded across the different tertiary institutions and the findings documented so that its value is made known, the programme will continue to be viewed as inferior to the mainstream.

### **5.3 RECOMMENDATIONS**

In relation to the data collected and the interpretation thereof the researcher is of the opinion that the following recommendations are fundamental. The participants have identified that the mainstream academic staff need to be educated regarding the ECP. They are of the opinion that this will be a fundamental step in eradicating the stigma associated with the programme. Dhunpath and Vithal (2014: 44) state that more opportunities for professional development amongst lecturers are imperative. By staying abreast of important teaching strategies as well as curriculum reform, whether in mainstream or ECP, all lecturers will be included in the changes in the educational sector. Ensuring that academic staff is aware of the value Vygotsky's theory adds to education and sharing best practises amongst one another regarding practical application of Bloom's taxonomy within the classroom. This measure of inclusiveness rids the faculty of academic staff working in silos, and will provide that safe and nurturing environment that all students, whether the mainstream or the ECP, should be exposed to (Machika, 2012: 991).

As a follow on from the above recommendation, the participants articulated the supportive relationship that they developed with their lecturer and how she understood their individual educational needs and developed each student accordingly. The relationship between the lecturer and student is also highlighted as an important aspect leading to the success of the scaffolding framework (Turuk, 2008: 250). Once a relationship is formed and the student's educational strengths and weaknesses are identified, the lecturer can use various teaching approaches to ensure that the student's educational needs are met. The successful results that the research population are experiencing, is evidence to the effectiveness of the teaching strategies that the lecturer has put in place. There is noteworthy application of Vygotsky's theory regarding scaffolding and mediation in ECP and has resulted in the educational success of these students at their tertiary institution. The participants have also expressed that certain mainstream students were struggling with their curriculum, to the extent that some of them wanted to join ECP. It would therefore be interesting to explore the feasibility of one of two committed lecturers teaching the first two years of a nursing curriculum and the benefit it has on the comprehensive development and throughput of that student in tertiary education.

The researcher is of the opinion that insight to the reason for the prejudice toward ECP would be obtained by exploring the mainstream academic staff and student perception of the ECP. The participants have verbalised, as well as evidence from literature state, that many mainstream students wanted to join ECP when they started struggling in their chosen programme (Bass, 2011: 51). The question then needs to be asked why the prejudice exists, if the value of ECP is visible to students and perhaps lecturers in the mainstream. This can only be explored on discussion with the mainstream population.

The inconsistencies related to the NBT and the administrative practises, has resulted in the placement of students in the ECP being questioned. The participants articulated that they questioned the legitimacy of their placement in the programme, as they had initially received admission letters that stated they were accepted into the mainstream programme. A discrepancy in the management of resources has been identified within faculties between mainstream and ECP, and has been linked to ECP bearing the burden in this instance (Dhunpath & Vithal, 2014: 43). It would be interesting to explore current practices in the placement of students in the ECP.

An area of special interest to the researcher is the concern surrounding the NBT, where participants verbalised that not everyone wrote the prerequisite for the admission criteria to the faculty. With the NBT being vital in the placement of students in the mainstream or the ECP, a concern is that this is not consistently implemented for all students (Rankin et al., 2012: 569). Participants that wrote the NBT also verbalised that they perceived it to favour students indigenous to the Western Cape Province. Therefore, the researcher is interested in determining the practicality of developing an undergraduate pre-admission testing programme applicable to the nursing faculty.

#### **5.4 LIMITATIONS**

The biggest limitation of this study was finding the relevant articles related to the ECP, to support this research. A vast number of studies were done at institutional level, with the information disseminated in their faculty-related information guide and not published to a wider audience. Therefore, whilst the research information may be vast, the actual citable references are minimal in comparison.

The other limitation in this study was the “fees must fall protest”, where certain students were protesting for free tertiary education. Once the interview process had to commence, the protest action made accessibility to the research population difficult. The researcher was going to address the entire population to provide them with all the information surrounding the research, however, the students were either asked to leave their residence to ensure

their safety, or formal lectures were suspended or the students were working in the clinical areas. After approximately five months of trying unsuccessfully to see the students, the researcher was advised by the tertiary institution, to telephonically contact the participants to ask their permission.

In hindsight, the “fees must fall protest” did not affect the population of this research academically. Initially the data collection process was planned to commence whilst they were in their second year of the mainstream programme, however due to the protest this process could only occur in the students third year. The participants verbalised that although formal lectures were suspended as a safety precaution during the protest period, they had arranged individual meetings with the lecturers to clarify content information and examinations were conducted at various venues, not on the institutions premises. These measures are indicative of the ECP students’ motivation and commitment to succeed on their tertiary educational journey.

The small research population and sample was another limitation. It would have been interesting to explore the perceptions of previous ECP students, at different years of their educational training, of the programme and its value to their integration into the mainstream programme. This would identify if the current year of study that the student is in has any bearing of their perceptions of the ECP.

## **5.5 CONCLUSION**

The participants described the ECP and its relevance to their educational success thus far, with high praise. They expressed the various reasons they believed the ECP assisted with their successful integration into the mainstream programme. However, it is undeniable that the negative effects that the association with this programme has had on the participants has taken its toll. While most of them could rise above it, unfortunately, one participant still experienced anger and frustration due to incidents he has had to endure.

The R425 Diploma nursing student perceptions of an undergraduate extended curriculum programme was enlightening to the researcher. The researcher is of the opinion that the participants needed the opportunity, that this platform provided, to voice their frustrations related to the ECP as experienced by them. The researcher has also recognised the responsibility educators have in the development of their students, and that their actions can have life-long positive or negative consequences on them.

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# APPENDICES

## Appendix A – Ethical approval from Stellenbosch University



UNIVERSITEIT•STELLENBOSCH•UNIVERSITY  
Job kennisverdiel + your knowledge partner

### Approved with Stipulations New Application

11-Aug-2015  
Julius, Chantal C

Ethics Reference #: S15/07/155

Title: Nursing students' perceptions of an extended undergraduate curriculum programme within a higher education institution.

Dear Mrs Chantal Julius,

The New Application received on 15-Jul-2015, was reviewed by members of Health Research Ethics Committee 2 via Expedited review procedures on 22-Jul-2015.

Please note the following information about your approved research protocol:

Protocol Approval Period: 11-Aug-2015 -11-Aug-2016

The Stipulations of your ethics approval are as follows:

#### 1. Scientific design

This is a qualitative and descriptive study. Information will be collected through focus groups via a semi-structured interview to acquire diverse perspectives on the extended programme. The study lacks a control design.

The researcher should motivate why a control sample would not provide more information for a similar effort (or acknowledge that it would be an ideal, but not feasible).

#### 2. Selection of participants.

It is the researcher's intention to have approximately two focus groups consisting of five participants each of the population of forty-seven previous ECP students that successfully progressed to the second year mainstream programme in 2015. Participants will be chosen using a purposive sampling method. The researcher also intends to contact, if possible, at least four students who have exited the ECP unsuccessfully and ask their permission to have individual interviews with them but a focus group will not be possible because not all these students are from Cape Town. Inclusion (and exclusion) criteria are stipulated but it only reflects the successful candidates as participants. The researcher should clarify why the unsuccessful candidates are not included in the inclusion criteria, albeit perhaps in a different subsection of the study. Also consider that inclusion of the unsuccessful candidates would add scientific value to the project.

#### 3. Research procedures

The researcher observed that "most students in ECP, specifically students from the Eastern Cape, struggle with correct language use initially. It is for this and reasons already discussed that students will be purposefully chosen for the focus groups and interviews, to ensure that the true intent of the study is achieved".

This statement appears to reflect some selection bias. It is unclear whether participants would be included or exclude because of this observation. Please motivate and confirm that purposeful sampling would be representative of the study population as a whole.

4. It is also mentioned that consent forms would be provided in Xhosa should participants require assistance to better understand the study. Please indicate whether and how participants would be assisted in their second language during the course of the study interviews, if required.

Please remember to use your **protocol number** (S15/07/155) on any documents or correspondence with the HREC concerning your research protocol.

Please note that the HREC has the prerogative and authority to ask further questions, seek additional information, require further modifications, or monitor the conduct of your research and the consent process.

#### After Ethical Review:

Please note a template of the progress report is obtainable on [www.sun.ac.za/rds](http://www.sun.ac.za/rds) and should be submitted to the Committee before the year has expired. The Committee will then consider the continuation of the project for a further year (if necessary). Annually a number of projects may be selected

randomly for an external audit.

Translation of the consent document to the language applicable to the study participants should be submitted.

Federal Wide Assurance Number: 00001372

Institutional Review Board (IRB) Number: IRB0005239

The Health Research Ethics Committee complies with the SA National Health Act No.61 2003 as it pertains to health research and the United States Code of Federal Regulations Title 45 Part 46. This committee abides by the ethical norms and principles for research, established by the Declaration of Helsinki, the South African Medical Research Council Guidelines as well as the Guidelines for Ethical Research: Principles Structures and Processes 2004 (Department of Health).

#### Provincial and City of Cape Town Approval

Please note that for research at a primary or secondary healthcare facility permission must still be obtained from the relevant authorities (Western Cape Department of Health and/or City Health) to conduct the research as stated in the protocol. Contact persons are Ms Claudette Abrahams at Western Cape Department of Health ([healthres@pgwc.gov.za](mailto:healthres@pgwc.gov.za) Tel: +27 21 483 9907) and Dr Helene Visser at City Health ([Helene.Visser@capetown.gov.za](mailto:Helene.Visser@capetown.gov.za) Tel: +27 21 400 3981). Research that will be conducted at any tertiary academic institution requires approval from the relevant hospital manager. Ethics approval is required BEFORE approval can be obtained from these health authorities.

We wish you the best as you conduct your research.

For standard HREC forms and documents please visit: [www.sun.ac.za/rds](http://www.sun.ac.za/rds)

If you have any questions or need further assistance, please contact the HREC office at 219389207.

#### Included Documents:

Application form

Protocol Synopsis

Declaration C Julius

Protocol

Request to conduct research

Declarations C Young & A Damons

Consent form

Checklist

CV A Damons

CV C Julius

CV C Young

Sincerely,

Mertrude Davids

HREC Coordinator

Health Research Ethics Committee 2

## Appendix B – Permission obtained from Department of Health on behalf of Western Cape College of Nursing



STRATEGY & HEALTH SUPPORT  
Health.Research@westerncape.gov.za  
Tel: +27 21 403 4657; Fax: +27 21 483 9895  
5th Floor, Nelson Mandela House, 5 Buitenkop Street, Cape Town, 800  
[www.westerncape.gov.za](http://www.westerncape.gov.za)

REFERENCE: WC\_2015RP4\_849  
ENQUIRIES: Ms Charlene Roderick

Stellenbosch University  
Private Bag X1  
Matieland  
7602

For attention: Chantal Julius

Re: **NURSING STUDENTS PERCEPTIONS OF AN UNDERGRADUATE CURRICULUM PROGRAMME WITHIN A HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTION.**

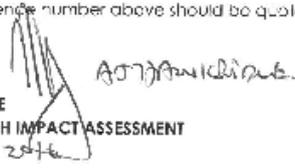
Thank you for submitting your proposal to undertake the above-mentioned study. We are pleased to inform you that the department has granted you approval for your research. Please contact the following people to assist you with any further enquiries in accessing the following sites:

Western Cape College of Nursing (WCC)      M Bock      Contact No: 021 940 4567

Kindly ensure that the following are adhered to:

1. Arrangements can be made with managers, providing that normal activities at requested facilities are not interrupted.
2. Researchers, in accessing provincial health facilities, are expressing consent to provide the department with an electronic copy of the final feedback (**annexure 9**) within six months of completion of research. This can be submitted to the provincial Research Co-ordinator ([Health.Research@westerncape.gov.za](mailto:Health.Research@westerncape.gov.za)).
3. In the event where the research project goes beyond the estimated completion date which was submitted, researchers are expected to complete and submit a progress report (**Annexure 8**) to the provincial Research Co-ordinator ([Health.Research@westerncape.gov.za](mailto:Health.Research@westerncape.gov.za)).
4. The reference number above should be quoted in all future correspondence.

Yours sincerely

  
DR A HAWKRIDGE  
DIRECTOR: HEALTH IMPACT ASSESSMENT  
DATE: 15/2/2016  
CC:

## Appendix C - Information leaflet and consent form

**TITLE OF THE RESEARCH PROJECT:**

**REFERENCE NUMBER:**

**PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR:** Chantal Julius

**ADDRESS:** 9 Geland Road  
Grassy Park  
7941

**CONTACT NUMBER:** 0792861549

You are being invited to take part in a research project. Please take some time to read the information presented here, which will explain the details of this project. Please ask the study staff or doctor any questions about any part of this project that you do not fully understand. It is very important that you are fully satisfied that you clearly understand what this research entails and how you could be involved. Also, your participation is **entirely voluntary** and you are free to decline to participate. If you say no, this will not affect you negatively in any way whatsoever. You are also free to withdraw from the study at any point, even if you do agree to take part.

This study has been approved by the **Health Research Ethics Committee at Stellenbosch University** and will be conducted according to the ethical guidelines and principles of the international Declaration of Helsinki, South African Guidelines for Good Clinical Practice and the Medical Research Council (MRC) Ethical Guidelines for Research.

#### **WHAT IS THIS RESEARCH STUDY ALL ABOUT?**

- The study will be conducted at the Western Cape College of Nursing with approximately 14 participants.
- The study aims to explore the R425 nursing students perceptions of the Extended Curriculum Programme. The study will help determine if the students regard it as being successful or not in having prepared them for their integration into the mainstream programme.
- The information will be collected by having two focus groups with five participants in each group with the assistance of two facilitators. If possible four individual interviews will be held with students who have exited the Extended Curriculum Programme unsuccessfully.
- Students will be purposively chosen for the study.

#### **WHY HAVE YOU BEEN INVITED TO PARTICIPATE?**

- You have valuable information to share because of your experience gained whilst being part of the Extended Curriculum Programme.

#### **WHAT WILL YOUR RESPONSIBILITIES BE?**

- You will need to be responsible in attending the focus group at the time which we will agree to as well as answering all questions honestly.

#### **WILL YOU BENEFIT FROM TAKING PART IN THIS RESEARCH?**

- You will not benefit personally as you have already integrated into the mainstream programme, but you will be assisting in possibly improving the Extended Curriculum Programme for future students who will access it.

#### **ARE THERE RISKS INVOLVED IN YOUR TAKING PART IN THIS RESEARCH?**

- The only risk identified is the emotional response the questions can bring to mind whilst you part of the focus groups

#### **IF YOU DO NOT AGREE TO TAKE PART, WHAT ALTERNATIVES DO YOU HAVE?**

- There is no obligation to take part in the study if you do not feel comfortable with it.

**WHO WILL HAVE ACCESS TO YOUR MEDICAL RECORDS?**

- NA

**WHAT WILL HAPPEN IN THE UNLIKELY EVENT OF SOME FORM INJURY OCCURRING AS A DIRECT RESULT OF YOUR TAKING PART IN THIS RESEARCH STUDY?**

- No injury is anticipated

**WILL YOU BE PAID TO TAKE PART IN THIS STUDY AND ARE THERE ANY COSTS INVOLVED?**

No you will not be paid to take part in the study, but your transport and meal costs will be covered for each study visit. There will be no costs involved for you, if you do take part.

**IS THERE ANYTHING ELSE THAT YOU SHOULD KNOW OR DO?**

- You can contact the Health Research Ethics Committee at 021-938 9207 if you have any concerns or complaints that have not been adequately addressed by the researcher.
- You will receive a copy of this information and consent form for your own records.

**DECLARATION BY PARTICIPANT**

By signing below, I ..... agree to take part in a research study entitled  
*(insert title of study).*

I declare that:

- I have read or had read to me this information and consent form and it is written in a language with which I am fluent and comfortable.

- I have had a chance to ask questions and all my questions have been adequately answered.
- I understand that taking part in this study is **voluntary** and I have not been pressurised to take part.
- I may choose to leave the study at any time and will not be penalised or prejudiced in any way.
- I may be asked to leave the study before it has finished, if the researcher feels it is in my best interests, or if I do not follow the study plan, as agreed to.

Signed at (*place*) ..... on (*date*) ..... 2016.

.....  
**Signature of participant**

.....  
**Signature of witness**

**DECLARATION BY INVESTIGATOR**

I (*name*) ..... declare that:

- I explained the information in this document to .....
- I encouraged him/her to ask questions and took adequate time to answer them.
- I am satisfied that he/she adequately understands all aspects of the research, as discussed above
- I did/did not use a interpreter. (*If a interpreter is used then the interpreter must sign the declaration below.*)

Signed at (*place*) ..... on (*date*) ..... 2016.

.....  
**Signature of investigator**

.....  
**Signature of witness**

**DECLARATION BY INTERPRETER**

I (*name*) ..... declare that:

- I assisted the investigator (*name*) ..... to explain the information in this document to (*name of participant*) ..... using the language medium of Afrikaans/Xhosa.
- We encouraged him/her to ask questions and took adequate time to answer them.
- I conveyed a factually correct version of what was related to me.
- I am satisfied that the participant fully understands the content of this informed consent document and has had all his/her question satisfactorily answered.

Signed at (*place*) ..... on (*date*) .....

.....  
**Signature of interpreter**

.....  
**Signature of witness**

## **Appendix D – Semi-structured interview guide**

### **Interview questions**

1. What school did you come from, rural or urban before starting studying?
2. How did you feel when you were told that you going to be part of the ECP?
3. Tell me about the extended curriculum programme that you were part of?
4. Do you feel the extended curriculum programme has helped or not in assisting with your integration to mainstream?
5. In your opinion what are the challenges/differences that exist between the extended curriculum and mainstream programmes?
6. How do you think we can improve the extended curriculum programme?
7. What recommendations/advice do you have that you would like to share with incoming underprepared students to integrate easier?

## Appendix E: Editing certificate



To whom it may concern

This letter serves as confirmation that I, Lize Vorster, performed the language editing and technical formatting of Chantal Julius's thesis entitled:

**Nursing students perceptions of an extended undergraduate curriculum programme within a higher education institution in the Western Cape Province.**

Editing is done in track changes and the student has final control over accepting or rejecting changes at their own discretion. Technical formatting entails complying with the Stellenbosch University's technical requirements for theses and dissertations, as presented in the Calendar Part 1 – General or where relevant, the requirements of the department.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Lize Vorster', is written over a simple line drawing of a pen nib.

Lize Vorster  
Language Practitioner