

at a time that was convenient for both the researcher and the student. Adequate time was set aside to ensure the interviews were completed without any interruptions. Interviews took between 10 and 30 minutes each. Informed consent was obtained from the participants for the use of an audio recording device and for the taking of written notes. The researcher ensured that the venue provided a great deal of privacy and that it was easily accessible to the student (Brink, 2006:143).

1.8.4 Data analysis

According to De Vos, Strydom, Fouché and Delpont (2011:351), qualitative analysis transforms data into findings. The process decreases the volume of raw data while it identifies significant patterns. Furthermore, the process creates order, structure and meaning to the volume of data collected. All preconceived notions and ideas were avoided and eliminated. The intention was to deal objectively with the data obtained. The process is described in Chapter 2.

An interpretive approach was applied during the data analysis process. De Vos et al. (2011:65) maintain that an interpretive approach implies that we describe and report on what we have seen, heard and understood. Creswell (2007:248) states that an interpretive approach is part of the characteristics of qualitative research and explains it as part of the role of the researcher. In addition, it is stated that the role of the researcher is to represent the individual who supplied the data and to interpret the data that the individual has provided.

Data files were organised and all data were transcribed by the researcher.

Data triangulation was achieved by simultaneously analysing the field notes and the data from the interviews. Data triangulation occurs when multiple sources of data are collected with the hope that they all converge to support a particular hypothesis or theory (Leedy & Ormrod, 2001:105). Data would be stored under lock and key for two years after data had been published, after which they would be destroyed.

1.9 RIGOUR OF THE STUDY

Validity is concerned with the accuracy and truthfulness of the scientific findings (Brink, Van der Walt & Van Rensburg, 2006:118).

Brink et al. (2006:118) elaborate and argue that in order to establish sufficient validity to facilitate conclusions, the empirical reality should be determined. When validity is established it will give rise to credibility, transferability, dependability and conformability.

The above-mentioned concepts will be discussed in depth under research methodology in Chapter 2.

1.10 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The proposal was presented to the Senate Research Committee of the University of the Western Cape. Written permission was requested from the Faculty of Community and Health Sciences and the School of Nursing (Annexure A), to allow the researcher to conduct interviews with the sample population. An information sheet (Annexure B) was given to all participants, explaining the purpose of the study and what would be expected of them in order to participate. The nature of social research, according to Babbie and Mouton (2011:521), means that it "... often represents an intrusion into people's lives". This poses a number of challenges that researchers need to take into consideration. As a result, it becomes imperative that social researchers adhere to some ethical principles if they are to conduct their studies according to acceptable standards. In this study, the researcher undertook to uphold acceptable ethical considerations in the following areas:

- **Right to self-determination and autonomy**

According to Burns and Grove (2015:101), the right to self-determination is based on the ethical principle of respect for a person. All participants had a choice whether to participate in the study or not. They were informed of their rights to withdraw from the study at any time and were assured that the withdrawal would in no way affect their studies. The participants made it clear to the researcher that the discussions had provided them with clarity about the investigation.

- **Protection from harm**

When conducting research, it is essential that care be taken not to subject participants during the research to any conditions that are viewed as detrimental to their well-being. Therefore, it was the researcher's obligation to take measures that would protect participants from any harm. The risk-benefit ratio was discussed with participants during the information session by using an extensive information sheet. There were no known risks in participating in this study.

- **Informed consent**

Gaining informed consent from participants is vital for research (Oka & Shaw, 2000:17). Written informed consent was obtained from the participants (Annexure C). Denzin and Lincoln (2011:65) state that it is every participant's right to be informed about the nature of the study they are involved in. After the research process was explained, those who chose to participate were given a consent form to complete and sign before interviews were conducted. This was to ensure that the researcher obtained written permission from the participants before starting the study.

- **Confidentiality**

One of the cornerstones of the nursing profession is confidentiality. Oka and Shaw (2000:17) assert that research participants are entitled to confidential treatment of all information they have supplied to the researcher. Therefore, it was important that, during the research process, participants were assured of the confidentiality of what they would share. In this study, confidentiality was ensured by the use of codes to represent the participants and not their names.

Burns and Grove (2015:107) state that confidentiality refers to the researcher's management of private information that is shared by the participants and that may not be shared with other people without their consent. The researcher ensured that access to the data were restricted to the researcher, the independent coder and the supervisor.

- **Anonymity and right to privacy**

Linked to confidentiality, was the assurance to participants that their identity and privacy would be protected and respected during the course of the research.

1.11 OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

Chapter 1 is an introduction and outline of the background of the study. It provides an overall picture of the purpose and nature of the study. The main objectives were presented and the conceptual definitions provided.

The research methodology used during the course of the study was appropriate to answer the objectives of the study. The experiences of the students in the Nursing Foundation Programme were grounded in a qualitative paradigm and the researcher made use of individual semi-structured interviews.

Chapter 3 deals with the findings of the research; a discussion is provided about these findings with rich comments from those students registered in the Nursing Foundation Programme.

Chapter 4 deals with the conclusion, limitations and recommendations for lecturers and students on support in a Nursing Foundation Programme.



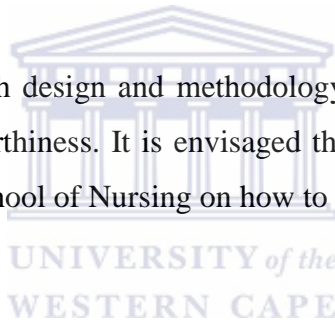
CHAPTER 2

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter focuses on the research methodology and design selected for this study, which incorporates the overall structure of the study and the techniques used for data collection and analysis (Polit & Beck, 2010:258). The purpose of this research study was to explore and describe the support of students by lecturers in the Nursing Foundation Programme. Hesse-Biber (2010:456) declares that “... methodology provides the theoretical perspective that links a research problem with a particular method or methods”.

This chapter describes the research design and methodology, data collection and analysis, and the measures for ensuring trustworthiness. It is envisaged that data produced by this study will provide recommendations for a School of Nursing on how to best support students in the Nursing Foundation Programme.



2.2 RESEARCH DESIGN

According to Green and Thorogood (2014:43), research design refers to the logic of the study, to the what, how and why of data production. This includes the type of the proposed study and the intended methods of producing data (Green & Thorogood, 2014:43). According to McMillan and Schumacher (2006:22), the research design describes how the study is conducted by explaining how the research is organised, what happens to the subjects, and what data collection methods are used.

A qualitative, exploratory, descriptive and contextual design was used for this study to gain insight into the support of students by lecturers in the Nursing Foundation Programme at the University of the Western Cape.

2.3 QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

Kumar (2014:14) describes the qualitative approach as being embedded in the philosophy of empiricism, and says it follows an open, flexible and unstructured approach to enquiry. De Vos et al. (2005:74) also contend that qualitative research assumes that a valid understanding can be gained by the researcher by gaining first-hand knowledge of the issue in question. In qualitative research, the researcher subjectively explores reality from an insider's perspective. Springer (2010:382) adds that the information obtained is expressed in narratives, which consist of extremely detailed descriptions of people, institutions, environments and the different meanings they construct.

Qualitative research aims to help understand social phenomena in a natural rather than an experimental setting, while emphasising the experiences, rather than providing quantified answers to a question (Nieswiadomy, 2008:59). Lauer (2006:17) likewise contends that qualitative research occurs in natural settings with as little control as possible. Qualitative research:

- obtains data usually in the form of words, based on observations and interviews, rather than numbers which are the basis for quantitative research (Fawcett & Garity, 2009:91).
- focuses on obtaining deep and meaningful information from small groups (McCarthy & O'Sullivan, 2008:189).
- uses special data-collection methods such as interviews and case studies.
- focuses on non-statistical methods and small samples which are often drawn up through purposive selection (De Vos et al., 2005:74).

In contrast to this, quantitative research uses numerical data to obtain information about the environment and surroundings. It is used to test theories and examine relationships between variables (Burns & Grove, 2015:19). Kumar (2014:14) describes the quantitative approach as being embedded in the philosophy of rationalism and further contends that it follows a rigid, controlled and predetermined set of procedures to explore. According to Macnee and McCabe

(2008:209), quantitative research is unable to consider the individuality of human experience and, for this reason, a qualitative approach, instead of a quantitative approach, was used in this study.

To gain optimal knowledge and understanding about the experiences of students on the support of lecturers in the Nursing Foundation Programme, the researcher used semi-structured interviews to collect data. Qualitative research assumes multiple realities which are socially constructed through individual and/or collective understandings or views of the same situation. In this study, students (males and females) in different year levels were interviewed about their experiences of the support of lecturers in the Nursing Foundation Programme. Qualitative research seeks to understand a social phenomenon from the participant's perspective (the participant subjectivity is therefore taken into account).

2.3.1 Exploratory research

Watson, McKenna, Cowman and Keady (2008:15) define exploratory research as research that is “conducted when you are not aware of any other studies in this area”. The research study was exploratory because it wished to gain insight into and an understanding of students’ experiences of the support of lecturers within the Nursing Foundation Programme.

2.3.2 Descriptive research

Babbie and Mouton (2011:91) contend that the major purpose of social studies is to describe situations and events. A descriptive study endeavours to describe systematically a situation, problem or programme, while it is providing information about an issue or describing attitudes people have towards an issue (Kumar, 2014:13). The major purpose of descriptive research is exploration and description of the state of affairs as it exists (Kothari, 2007:37). In the case of this study, the aim was to present an accurate description of experiences around the support of students by lecturers in the Nursing Foundation Programme.

2.3.3 Contextual research

According to Babbie and Mouton (2011:272), "... the qualitative researcher has a preference for understanding events, actions, and processes in their context". Babbie and Mouton (2011:272) are of the opinion that a context confers meaning to the events concerned, so that one can truly claim to 'understand' the events. This means that this study was done where there is a Nursing Foundation Programme, and in this case at the University of the Western Cape.

2.4 RESEARCH SETTING

Streubert and Carpenter (2007:28) describe the research setting as the field or place where individuals of interest can be located. This plays a vital role when data are collected, because participants should not feel threatened or intimidated; instead they should feel free to express their feelings and views openly. The setting for this study was the School of Nursing at the University of the Western Cape. This university is located in Bellville, Cape Town and within the Western Cape Province. The university is currently the only university in the Western Cape that offers the four-year undergraduate Bachelors Nursing Programme.

Table 2.1: Accessible population

Year level of the B.NUR five-year foundation programme in 2012	Total number of students in 2012 (N)
Level 1- B.Nursing Foundation year	58
Level 2- B.Nursing I	52
Level 3- B.Nursing II	69
Level 4- B.Nursing III	52
Level 5- B.Nursing IV	10

2.5 THE POPULATION AND SAMPLE

The population refers to "... the theoretically specified aggregation of study elements" (Babbie & Mouton, 2011:116). It is the entire group of people from whom the researcher wishes to obtain knowledge. A study population is "... that aggregation of elements from which the sample is actually selected" (Babbie & Mouton, 2011:116). A study population can be defined as all the individuals who meet the sample criteria for inclusion in a study, and sometimes it is also referred to as the target population (Streubert-Speziale & Carpenter, 2003:24).

The target population included all the students registered in the Nursing Foundation Programme (N=183) at the University of the Western Cape during 2012, who had completed the first year of the foundation programme. Burns and Grove (2015:343) describe an accessible population as the portion of the target population to which the researcher has access to, which for this study, will consist of all the students registered in the Nursing Foundation Programme (N=183) at the University of the Western Cape during 2012, who had completed the first year of the Nursing Foundation Programme.

A sample is "... a selection of individuals taken from the population" (Gerrish & Lacey, 2006:25). The sample will provide the information and data for the study. Sampling refers to the actual individuals from the wider population who are participating in the study. Sampling is thus a subset of a population which represents the whole population (Springer, 2010:100). De Vos et al. (2005:202) argue that a sample consists of people who are representative of the types most commonly found in most characteristic representatives or typical attributes of the population.

The participants for this research study were selected using the method of purposive sampling. According to Morse (2004:884), "... purposive sampling is the deliberate seeking out of participants with particular characteristics, according to the needs of the developing analysis". Purposive sampling was deemed appropriate for this study because the researcher was interested in finding out specific information about the topic under investigation, to yield information-rich data on the topic.

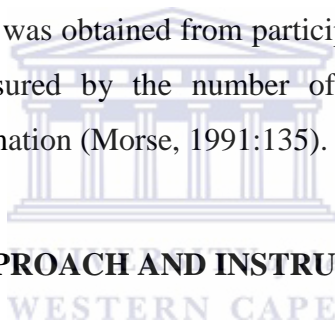
Inclusion criteria for this study were:

- All students registered in the Nursing Foundation Programme at the University of the Western Cape during 2012, which had completed the first year of the Nursing Foundation Programme.

Exclusion criteria for this study were:

- Students registered for the Nursing Foundation Programme that were starting their first year of study during 2012.
- Students who were unwilling to partake in the study.

The adequacy of the sample refers to information adequacy, which means that data were collected until no new information was obtained from participants. This is called data saturation. Information adequacy is not ensured by the number of participants interviewed, but by completeness and amount of information (Morse, 1991:135).



2.6 DATA COLLECTION APPROACH AND INSTRUMENT

Data collection, as described by Burns and Grove (2015:535), refers to the identification of the subjects and the precise, systematic collection of data or information that are applicable to the research purpose, specific objectives or the questions of the study.

2.6.1 Instrument

Data were collected by means of semi-structured, in-depth interviews with open-ended questions (see Annexure E) to ensure full and free sharing of information on the support of students by lecturers in the Nursing Foundation Programme (Polit & Beck, 2010:341). In a semi-structured interview, the researcher sets the agenda in terms of the topics covered, but the interviewee's responses determine the type of information produced about those topics, and the relative importance of each of them (Green & Thorogood, 2014:96). Green and Thorogood (2014:96) further describe an in-depth interview as one that allows the interviewee enough time to develop their own accounts of the issues important to them. According to Green and Thorogood

(2014:96), in-depth and semi-structured interviews give the interviewer flexibility in how to ask questions, but very careful planning is needed to think about what questions to ask, and how to ask them in order to generate the most useful information.

In this study, the semi-structured interviews worked well because, although the researcher made use of an interview guide, she did not follow structured questions but rather posed probing questions at stages of the interviews at which they appeared to be appropriate. Semi-structured interviews were also regarded as appropriate because both the researcher and the participants had the opportunity in the interviews to ask for clarification, while the researcher had the freedom to explore and probe for more detail when she deemed it necessary. In addition, the outline of the probing questions, e.g. “Tell me more...” helped the researcher to ensure that the interview stayed focused (Annexure E).

2.6.2 Preparation for the interview

Permission to conduct the study was obtained from the School of Nursing where the Nursing Foundation Programme was offered. The researcher contacted all participants to set up an available time and venue to conduct the interviews. The researcher met the participants; the purpose of the contact session was to introduce the research topic to all participants and to build a trusting relationship between the researcher and the participants. It was also to obtain permission to record the interview sessions and to take field notes.

According to Flick (2007:72), in order to obtain informed written consent, a mutual contract should be prepared, which explains the purpose of the research, the expectations from the participant, (e.g. to give an interview), the procedure with the data (how long it is to be stored, who will have access, how is anonymity guaranteed). This should be signed by the participants and should include the possibility of withdrawing consent. In the context of this study, all the participants were asked to sign an informed letter of consent (Annexure C), which satisfied all the above criteria recommended by Flick (2007:68). The researcher was prepared with a writing pad, pen and audio recorder in advance of the interviews.

2.6.3 Interview process

When conducting an interview the researcher enters into a dialogue with the participant. This dialogue, in turn, involves asking for access to the participant's space and information. It was, therefore, important that the researcher respected the participant's space and did not probe for information if it appeared that the participant in question was not comfortable (Flick, 2007:73).

While conducting the interviews for the purposes of this study, the researcher made sure that she respected her participants at all times and that she did not overstep boundaries or probe if it appeared that the participants were not comfortable.

The purpose of the study was explained at the beginning of every interview; written consent was obtained from each participant to continue while privacy and confidentiality was ensured.

To start, all the participants were posed with one open-ended question:

- *“How did you experience the support of lecturers in the foundation programme?”*

The researcher used probing questions to gain more information and clarity on the phenomenon being studied (discussed under Point 2.6.1). The researcher practised good communication skills by maintaining eye contact, nodding when appropriate and clarification was used to encourage the participants to talk. Field notes were taken during the interviews. All the data from the interviews were captured using an audio recorder and later transcribed. According to Green and Thorogood (2014:120), an accurately transcribed recording is the most reliable record of an interview – it can be easily reproduced if there are several researchers involved in the project and it can be archived for future analysis in other studies. The researcher requested permission from the participants before the audio recorder was switched on.

2.6.4 Audio recorder

According to Turner (2010:321), in qualitative research, interviews are usually audio-recorded. This process of audio-recording and verbatim transcription is important for detailed analysis of data and to ensure that the interviewees' answers are captured in precisely the way in which they are expressed. It is easy to lose terms, phrases and language that are used during the interviews, if one is relying solely on the capturing of field notes, without recordings. Making use of an

audio-recorder enabled the researcher to capture notes while simultaneously observing the participants during the interviews.

The researcher was reassured in advance that the audio-recorder was one of the best in quality on the market; it was in working condition and assured good sound quality. The setting was a quiet place without disruptions to ensure that there was no or little noise that might have affected the quality of the audio-recordings. Privacy was ensured at all times to allow the participants the opportunity to speak freely without fear of being overheard. Each interview was transcribed immediately after the interview to gain a sense of the emerging themes.

2.7 DATA ANALYSIS

Creswell (2007:147) explains data analysis as a process where three general approaches can be used, by saying that qualitative data analysis "... falls back on insight, intuition and impression" and, furthermore, that data analysis is a process where researchers often learn as they are doing.

For the purposes of this study, the data were analysed using the process of inductive analysis. In terms of inductive analysis, categories and themes emerge from the data rather than being imposed on the data beforehand (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006:364). After the interviews had been transcribed, the researcher had to analyse the data and answer the research questions, based on the themes that had emerged from the data. In keeping with the process of inductive analysis, the researcher did not have any preconceived ideas about the data but, instead, approached the data with an open mind.

To assist the process of data analysis, the researcher used the eight steps proposed by Tesch (1990), as set out in Creswell (1994:155). Following these steps, data were analysed, and themes and sub-themes were identified for the purpose of providing a written report. The eight steps involved the following actions:

1. Reading transcribed interviews in order to gain a sense of the research phenomenon.
2. Choosing one interview which seems to be rich with information, reading it again, asking what it was all about, while writing thoughts in the margin.
3. Reading through each and every interview again, while any significant features are noted and similar ideas are grouped into categories.

4. The various categories are then given codes.
5. The researcher then groups together the most relevant categories and themes.
6. The codes allocated to each category are listed alphabetically.
7. The data pertaining to each category are cut and pasted together where needed.
8. Recoding of the existing data then takes place. An independent coder has copies of the transcripts to assist with verifying the coding and categorising the data.

The researcher consulted with an independent coder, who had extensive experience in qualitative data analysis. Transcripts of the interviews were sent to the independent coder to be co-analysed.

2.8 TRUSTWORTHINESS

Rubin and Babbie (2007:101) define trustworthiness as "... the degree of consistency in measurement". In this research, trustworthiness was established by comparing responses to see whether there was agreement between participants' views and experiences. To enhance trustworthiness, participants were asked the same questions in the interviews.

2.8.1 Credibility

According to Rubin and Babbie (2007:103) credibility can be defined as "... the extent to which an empirical measure adequately reflects the real meaning of the concept under consideration". Credibility also refers to the extent in which the study is an actual presentation of the participants who participated in the study. Reflexive thought, as described by Burns and Grove (2015:95), was consciously noted so that decisions of coding would not be influenced by the researcher's personal feelings and judgments. The contextual determinants were described in detail and field notes provided additional contextual information. The researcher made use of member checks to verify data that had been analysed adequately. By doing member checks, the researcher derived insight into the phenomenon from the participant perspective (Brink, 2006:160).

Shenton (2004:68) suggests that both conducting member checks and providing a thick description of the phenomenon under scrutiny helps to achieve credibility in a study. In the context of this study, the researcher conducted member checks during the interviews herself to

confirm and clarify the participants' responses. In terms of providing a thick description, Moule and Goodman (2014:215) mention that the researcher should describe, amongst others, the participants and the themes of the qualitative study in rich detail. In the context of this study, the researcher has provided a description of the participants and the themes in Chapter 3 of this study.

2.8.2 Dependability

According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), cited in Schwandt (2007:299), dependability focuses on the process of the inquiry. They furthermore argue that it is the enquirer's responsibility to ensure that the process is documented, logical and traceable (Schwandt, 2007:299). In the context of this study the researcher documented the process of this study in a report. It is, therefore, traceable by anyone who should deem this necessary.

2.8.3 Confirmability

According to Trochim (2006:1), confirmability refers to the degree to which the results could be confirmed or corroborated by others. In the context of this study, the researcher made provision for checking the data by conducting member checks during the interviews themselves. In addition, the researcher audio-recorded the interviews with the permission of the participants, where after the data were transcribed verbatim, analysed, coded and forwarded to an independent coder for co-coding. Verbatim quotations from the participants are included in the report and the data analysis process is presented in a reasonable amount of detail. Streubert and Carpenter (2007:27) suggest that once the researcher has explicated his or her thoughts, feelings, and perceptions about phenomena, it is recommended that the researcher bracket those thoughts, feelings, and perceptions. Streubert and Carpenter (2007:27) then further defines bracketing as "... the cognitive process of putting aside one's own beliefs, not making judgments about what one has observed or heard, and remaining open to data as they are revealed".

2.8.4 Transferability

Polit and Beck (2008:539) describe transferability as being feasible if the findings of the research data obtained can be transferred to other settings or groups. In order to achieve transferability in a study, it is essential that sufficient contextual information about the fieldwork sites be provided

to enable the reader to make a transfer (Shenton, 2004:70). For the purposes of the study, the researcher ensured that thick descriptions of the data were given, and that all findings were well explained.

2.9 CONCLUSION

This chapter outlined the research design and methodology utilised in this research study, namely, a qualitative study using an exploratory, descriptive and contextual design. Population and sampling, ethical considerations, data collection approach and instrument, data analysis and demonstration of trustworthiness of the research data were described. The findings emanating from the study will be discussed in Chapter 3 and verified against existing literature to ensure trustworthiness of the study.



■ CHAPTER 3

FINDINGS OF THE RESULTS

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter focuses on the findings of the semi-structured individual interviews and field notes to address the first objective:

- To explore and describe the experiences of students about the support from lecturers in the Nursing Foundation Programme.

Analysis of the data generated from the qualitative research resulted in two themes and four sub-themes (Table 3.2). Each theme and subtheme will be discussed in this chapter in detail. The identification of themes was an activity undertaken by the researcher and an independent coder.

3.2 DESCRIPTION OF THE DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF THE TARGET POPULATION AND SAMPLE

The target population included male (n=2) and female (n=6) students registered for the five-year Nursing Foundation Programme at the University of the Western Cape (Table 3.1). All participants had completed the first year of the Nursing Foundation Programme. The participants were interviewed at the School of Nursing. Ages of the participants ranged from 20 to 51 years. Three of the participants were Coloured and five were African. Three participants' home language was isiXhosa, two spoke seTswana as their mother tongue, two participants were Afrikaans-speaking and there was one English-speaking participant.

Data were obtained by conducting individual semi-structured interviews. Interviews were conducted in English, as all participants were fluent in English. Interviews did not take longer than 30 minutes to conduct and were recorded with the participants' full written consent. Eight participants were interviewed after which data saturation occurred.

Table 3.1: Demographic information

PARTICIPANT	AGE	GENDER	HOME LANGUAGE	POPULATION GROUP	COMMENCEMENT OF FOUNDATION PROGRAMME	YEARS IN PROGRAMME	CURRENT YEAR LEVEL AT TIME OF INTERVIEW
1	26	Male	seTswana	African	2008	5	B.Nur IV
2	51	Female	English	Coloured	2008	5	B.Nur IV
3	22	Female	isiXhosa	African	2008	5	B.Nur IV
4	41	Female	Afrikaans	Coloured	2010	4	B. Nur II
5	20	Female	seTswana	African	2011	3	B. Nur II
6	22	Female	isiXhosa	African	2011	3	B. Nur II
7	21	Male	isiXhosa	African	2010	4	B. Nur II
8	24	Female	Afrikaans	Coloured	2008	5	B. Nur II

3.3 CENTRAL THEME OR STORY LINE

The central theme of this research project was identified as the participants' experiences of the Nursing Foundation Programme. This varied between being perceived as a positive process resulting in multiple levels of growth, to a negative experience perceived as a 'waste of time'. The general learning environment was, however, experienced as supportive.

The data indicated two main themes.

Theme 1, focused on varied experiences of the Nursing Foundation Programme, with two categories: (1) a positive process resulting in multiple levels of growth, and (2) a negative process experienced as a waste of time. These two categories were further divided into sub-categories. The category on a positive process resulting in multiple levels of growth had two sub-categories, namely, personal growth and academic growth. The category on the negative process and a waste of time had three sub-categories, namely, alienation from nursing and health sciences, under-preparedness for the nursing mainstream programme, and no link between the Nursing Foundation Programme and the first year of nursing studies.

Theme 2, revealed a generally supportive learning environment, focusing on two categories, namely, support from lecturers and support from fellow colleagues/students. The category, support from lecturers had four sub-categories, namely: a) open and approachable; b) caring and nurturing; c) advisors; and d) persistent and patient. Category 2 focused on support from colleagues and had two sub-categories, namely: a) support extending beyond the programme, and b) providing a sense of camaraderie.

3.4 THEME 1: VARIED EXPERIENCES OF THE NURSING FOUNDATION PROGRAMME

The findings regarding the experiences of students in the Nursing Foundation Programme at the University of the Western Cape varied between positive experiences which resulted in multiple levels of growth, both personally and professionally, and negative experiences which portrayed the Nursing Foundation Programme as a waste of time.

3.4.1 Experiences of the nursing foundation programme as a positive process resulting in multiple levels of growth

Some participants experienced the Nursing Foundation Programme as a positive process that resulted in multiple levels of growth, both on a personal and professional level. It was found that it was mostly the older participants who experienced the Nursing Foundation Programme as a positive experience.

Table 3.2: Themes and sub-themes of the experiences of students in the Nursing Foundation Programme

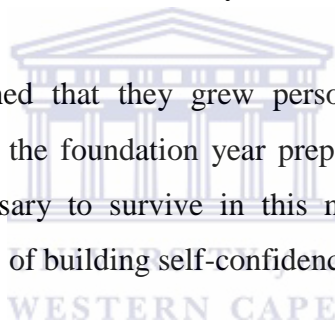
Theme	Category	Sub-category
Varied experience of the programme	Positive process resulting in multiple levels of growth	Personal growth (Built self-confidence and self-motivation)
		Academic growth – ‘helpful’ (computer literacy, basic sciences, gathering information, campus orientation. Smaller classes provided a more intimate and participative teaching and learning experience)
	Negative and a ‘waste of time’	Alienation from nursing and health sciences
		Underprepared for nursing programme – ‘hectic’ (especially Human Biology and Pharmacology)

		No link between the Nursing Foundation Programme and the first year of nursing studies
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3.4.1.1 Personal growth

According to Corey and Schneider-Corey (2010:8), personal growth can be described as when the individual defines and assesses his or her own growth in a lifelong process while dealing with numerous crises at various stages of life. These crises can be seen as challenges to change, giving life new meaning. Growth also encompasses a relationship with significant others, the community, and the world (Corey & Schneider-Corey, 2010:8).

Some of the participants explained that they grew personally as a result of the Nursing Foundation Programme. For them the foundation year prepared them for university life itself, and they gained life skills necessary to survive in this new environment. The participants expressed personal growth in terms of building self-confidence and self-motivation.



i. Self-Confidence

According to Kukulu, Korukcu, Ozdemir, Bezci and Calik (2013:330), self-confidence can be defined as an individual's recognition of his or her own abilities, the love of him or herself, and being aware of his or her own emotions. Self-confidence can also be described as feelings of good fortune as a result of deepening positive emotions (Kukulu, et al., 2013:330).

Participants stated that the year of the Nursing Foundation Programme helped them to build their self-confidence, which contributed to them succeeding at university. A male participant described how the Nursing Foundation Programme helped him to cope with the pressures and stresses associated with university life:

“ . . . In first year that is all I learned of these stuff . . . how to cope with the pressure of academics and stuff”. (P1)

This male participant further explained how the foundation year groomed him in such a way that, when he got to the first mainstream year, he had the knowledge and skills to overcome obstacles and succeed:

“ . . . It really groomed me . . . well in the foundation year, you had a very limited knowledge . . . you don't get to understand things quickly . . . and . . . and some of your modules . . . but as time went on . . . you got to learn to cope ”. (P1)

A female participant, who was previously a nursing assistant and who wanted to better herself and her circumstances by furthering her studies, expressed that she thought of coming to university as a step up, feeling proud of her achievement in succeeding:

. . . “so I am going to university and just as an achievement, maybe I am not even going to nurse with my degree . . . just go to my friends and say ‘Hi’ you know . . . and see my shoulders a bit heavy . . . just to show them that it can be done you know . . . I have been a runner all these years but now I am also in a managerial position. So there was some grey matter after all ”. (P2)

Stoeber, Kobori and Tanno (2013:60) describe pride as a positive, self-conscious emotion that is associated with feelings of accomplishment and satisfaction. It can further be said that pride is associated with positive self-evaluations that contribute to a person's self-esteem and subjective well-being (Stoeber, et al., 2013:60). It seemed as if the mentioned participant had a sense of self-pride because she felt proficient, being so close to her goal of completing her studies.

A participant explained that, by continuing her studies, it broadened her knowledge; that she gained insight into the anatomy, physiology and pathophysiology; and that this has helped her to grow personally and professionally:

. . . “But now you do the degree, you got to know the insight; you know the anatomy, physiology, patho, why certain things take place . . . ja I have grown tremendously. Honestly ”. (P2)

ii. Self-motivation

According to Liao, Cuttita and Edlin (2012:11), the intrinsic motivation to know is the construct that is most often studied in the field of education. It can further be said that when students act out of a motivation to know, it is what makes students want to explore; to understand; to learn something new; and to search for meanings that would include pleasure, satisfaction, and a sense of fulfilment.

A participant expressed that the foundation year was an opportunity to prove that she could be academically excellent, so she saw the foundation year as a source of motivation to excel in her studies and do better than she had done in Grade 12:

“In matric I was not serious. But in foundation I had to pass. I did not do well at matric, so now I had to do good”. (P3)

Motivation for accomplishments relates to individuals interacting with the environment in order to create accomplishments, feel competent, and enjoy the pleasure and satisfaction from creating something. So when students extend their work beyond the requirements, they are ultimately displaying a motivation to succeed (Liao, Cuttita & Edlin, 2012:11).

3.4.1.2 Academic growth

According to Van Schalkwyk, Bitzer and Van der Walt (2009:189), the way in which academic literacy is acquired can be described in the work of many researchers, some of whom speak of students in higher education serving an apprenticeship during which they become acculturated into the discourse of the discipline.

i. Helpful

Participants experienced the foundation year as helpful, especially the computer literacy and basic sciences modules. The Nursing Foundation Programme was experienced as academically beneficial to the participants, and the modules they did in this year assisted them with some of the modules they did in their following year of study (first year mainstream). A participant mentioned that the skills gained from the foundation year science modules such as physics and chemistry assisted them to adapt more easily to the mainstream first year:

“ . . . in all foundation phase helped me . . . so in getting my basic skills as for as science and physics is concern . . . and for me in terms of getting into the system of the university. . . ”. (P1)

Martin, Nejad, Colmar and Liem (2013:728) define adaptability as appropriate cognitive, behavioural, and/or affective adjustment in the face of uncertainty and novelty. Participants were very adaptable during their foundation year while academically growing.

A male participant explained that he did not have science subjects at high school level, and thus had no foundation of science when he got to university. He acknowledged the need for physics in the foundation year that prepared him for the first mainstream year physics:

“ . . . the first year, learning physics, but then I did not do physics in high school, so I could learn most of the things I learned in foundation programme, now I could be able to apply it in my first year ”. (P1)

Adaptability could also be viewed as the capacity to make suitable reactions to changing circumstances and the capability to adjust one's conduct in meeting different circumstances or different people (VandenBos, 2007:17).

The Nursing Foundation Programme was helpful because it prepared students for the rest of the nursing mainstream programme and it broadened their general knowledge:

“It (foundation year) is helpful because it prepares you and it also broadens your knowledge ”. (P3)

A preparation phase is needed to explain a situation and what can be expected during a certain process (Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing Network, 2014:1). A female participant expressed that the foundation-year science modules prepared her for the first-year mainstream science modules, which were more in-depth than the foundation modules:

“ . . . now (first-year mainstream) went into a deeper theoretical of physics and chemistry and you already had your basics in foundation ”. (P2)

The students in the Nursing Foundation Programme had the advantage of attending the computer literacy module that prepared them for the programme, and it especially assisted those students who were not computer literate:

“ . . . and I still thought what is this foundation phase, there is nothing regarding nursing. This is like all like you are coming from school . . . but the basis was good, because we actually . . . we had the advantage to these children that started mainstream first year . . . because we had the computer literacy . . . uhm . . . you know where we had it as a subject ”. (P2)

Computer literacy of students and their ability to quickly access resources helped improve the quality of academic growth as well as assisting in intellectual growth (Majid & Abazova, 1999:100).

Participants who were not computer literate before coming to university found the computer literacy module extremely helpful, because it helped them to acquire the necessary skills to become computer literate:

“ . . . but it was very helpful, we were doing computer literacy because for me I was computer illiterate . . . so I was able to learn the basic stuff of computer – very helpful ”. (P3)

“ . . .when I got here at UWC, I knew nothing of computers. But in foundation year we did computer literacy and that really helped me a lot. I don't know what I would have done if I just had to start first year without knowing anything of computers ”. (P7)

“It also helped me with my computer skills, because, before I came to UWC, I didn't know a thing about computers. I could not even type. So really, the computer literacy subject we did in foundation really helped me in this matter ”. (P8)

According to Webster (2004:1), research reveals that prior computer classes and computer usage positively influence literacy scores and confidence.

The English for educational development was seen by students as a useful module because it assisted them with mastering English, which was not their mother tongue:

“The EED (English for Educational Development) was quite good, that I learned the English that we did. English is not my first language, and EED really helped me with my writing and my assignments”. (P5)

According to Kitao (1996:1), English is widely accepted as the most widespread language in the world. Riemer (2002:91) states that the English language can be seen as the prime means for communication, and it can often serve as the global language between two people from two different cultures, when English is not their native tongue.

The incorporation of language and communication improvement courses is an important element of continuous learning, and will ultimately contribute to the process of life-long learning (Riemer, 2002:91).

A participant verbalised that she was surprised by the fact that it was the Nursing Foundation Programme students who persevered and made it to the final year, and that, although many of the mainstream students failed or left the programme, the mainstream students had been perceived as the intellectual ones:

“But if I have to look back now, how many of these foundation kids are finishing with us . . . you know . . . but if you look at the first year mainstream that I came into, not many of us has come through, so I mean if they are so intellectual, that they have started mainstream, that have completed, and not all of them have redirected into other avenues of fields of study, have just drop out”. (P2)

This finding confirms the low student success and throughput rates, leading to low final numbers of graduates, as outlined in a proposal for undergraduate curriculum reform in South Africa (Council on Higher Education, 2013:35).

ii. *Gathering information*

The American Library Association (ALA) Presidential Committee on Information Literacy states that “information literate people are those who have learned how to learn” (Association of

College and Research Libraries (ACRL), 2013:1). According to Ojedokun (2007:43), tertiary students know how to learn because they know how knowledge is organised, and how to find and use information in such a way that others are able to learn from them. They are prepared for lifelong learning, because they can always find the information needed, for any task or decision, readily available at hand (Ojedokun, 2007:43).

A participant mentioned that she gained important skills, in the Nursing Foundation Programme, on acquiring knowledge that assisted her in the first mainstream year:

“Here (university) you are just given the basics knowledge and you go and find . . . or study more on that . . . so it (first-year mainstream) was not bad because from foundation we were collected, we learned how to get knowledge. So it was not bad because I had the skills I learned from Foundation and I used that skills in the first year”. (P3)

iii. Campus orientation

Mullendore and Banahan (2005:393) sum up orientation as the need for students to know academic requirements, course offerings, registration procedures and it assists students in their adjustment to and involvement with the college. According to Mullendore and Banahan (2005:393), orientation can be the defining moment in the transition to college for the student; it is a time in which basic habits are formed that will influence students’ academic success and personal growth; and it marks the beginning of a new educational experience. Research has indicated that first-year experience programmes are relevant and necessary for students’ retention in higher education (Mullendore & Banahan, 2005:393).

New student orientation programmes are critical to this experience and these programmes make a substantial impact on welcoming and connecting students as they transition to university. These orientations are vital as they introduce students to the individual tutors and resources they will need when they are in personal or academic difficulty; it is these resources that many students often overlook or forget are available to assist with their success at university. Ultimately, orientation programmes are the bridge, the keystone, between the last stages of recruitment and the first stages of retention (Shupp, 2014:1).

Participants thought that orientation to the campus grounds and processes were very helpful, because these made it easier for them to adjust when they entered the mainstream. They could now show the new first-years around, and explain certain processes to them. Exploring the university was good for social and overall student life:

“I was able to explore the university . . . it was very helpful socially”. (P3)

“When I was in Nursing Foundation Programme year, I learned where everything on campus were, like the student centre, the admin building, library, all the lecture venues and all of that. So when I started first year I already knew where everything was, and I didn’t struggle like the new first years”. (P8)

A participant expressed that knowing where to go and what to do was beneficial and helped her:

“The orientation was a good thing, because in the end you know exactly where to go and what to do . . .”. (P4)

The foundation year gave students the time and space to get acquainted with the campus itself and campus life:

“. . . and I knew my way around campus and the library because I had the time during foundation year to get used to the campus”. (P6)

The Nursing Foundation Programme allowed for more time to adjust and adapt to the new environment as this programme was not as full as the first-year mainstream programme:

“I also learned a lot about the campus and campus life, because in foundation year we are not that busy. Our programme is not that full. We had a lot of time to get to know the campus and how things are done on campus”. (P7)

Very little research has been conducted to show the effects of first year student orientation programmes on student success as defined by academic performance and student retention, and even fewer studies have examined the impact of these programmes on the success of students at university. However, Busby, Gammel and Jeffcoat (2002:45) found that students who participated in the first year student orientation programmes generally performed better academically than students who did not. Perhaps this conclusion could be explained by the notion that students who participate in orientation programs are more likely to miss fewer classes, participate in more extracurricular activities, talk with faculty and staff about personal

concerns, become friends with those whose interests were different from their own, and attend lectures or panel discussions (Gentry, Kuhnert, Johnson, & Cox, 2006:26).

iv. Class size: Smaller classes provided a more intimate and participative teaching and learning experience

The classes in the Nursing Foundation Programme were significantly smaller with 51 students in a class, compared to the mainstream course that had a total of 300 students per year level, in the School of Nursing.

According to Brühwiler and Blatchford (2011:95), a smaller class leads to higher academic learning progress, a better knowledge of students and better classroom processes. Smaller classes lead to pupils receiving more individual attention from teachers, and having more active interactions with them (Blatchford, Bassett & Brown, 2011:715).

Participants were of the opinion that the smaller classes were very beneficial, in the sense that the lecturer could pay more attention to the students because there were fewer students:

“We were a small class, so the lecturers could give attention to everyone”. (P6)

“We were a small class so it was easier I think for the lecturer to give us more attention you know”. (P7)

According to a study conducted by Galton and Pell (2012:22) in Hong Kong, teachers claimed that smaller classes increased the amount of individual attention that students received. Students in the Nursing Foundation Programme confirmed this notion and expressed that lecturers were able to focus on and narrow down on problems that the class experienced as a whole, because the class was smaller, and as a result interaction was more intimate:

“Lecturers could focus on problems due to our intimate group”. (P1)

According to students, there was a difference in the support they received from lecturers in the foundation year compared to the support they received in the mainstream years. Students attributed this to the fact that classes were smaller in the Nursing Foundation Programme and the lecturers could give individual attention to those who needed it:

“It (the support of lecturers in first-year mainstream) was okay, obviously not the same as in foundation, because in foundation we were a small class, and in first year much much bigger. It was okay, it was enough. But foundation was better. . . . We were a small class, only 50 students, so we all knew each other and the lecturers knew all of our names and where we struggled. In which subjects we had problems with. It was much better than the big classes we are in now”. (P7)

3.4.2 Experiences as negative processes and them being a waste of time

There were also students who experienced the Nursing Foundation Programme as a waste of time and they felt that it did not really help them during the rest of the programme. This was more common amongst the younger students who had matriculated more recently.

A participant experienced the Nursing Foundation Programme as being easy, mainly because she had just completed her Grade 12 the previous year, and she felt well prepared for university:

“Academically . . . I think it was easy for me because I came from matric, and was studying very hard, and then when I come to university, and we were doing literacy all the basic stuff, for me it was easy . . .”. (P3)

A participant felt that the Nursing Foundation Programme was merely a way in which to access the mainstream nursing programme, and that in a sense it was a waste of time. This was because some students had to enter through the Nursing Foundation Programme, because they lacked a certain subject, or their marks were not good enough in a certain subject:

“. . . some of us thought it was a waste of time; some only did it because of only one subject and they wanted to enter the nursing programme. For me it was Maths. I wasn't that good at Maths, so I had to now do it in the foundation year”. (P5)

The foundation year was experienced as a repeat of the matric year and this made it boring, because the same things were done over and over again, and it was seen as too easy:

“It was boring (laugh). Almost like repeating matric, but just easier. Uhm . . . the subjects we did seemed so pointless, you know. Like numeracy like I had to do, it was so

so easy. I got in the 80% for it! Definitely easier than the school maths . . . so don't know why I had to do it . . . but yeah . . .". (P5)

A participant mentioned that the Nursing Foundation Programme was a very relaxing year, and they had a lot of time on their hands. This made it feel like they were wasting time, as if some of the time could have been utilised to cover more of the work that they would have to do in the mainstream first year. In this sense, the Nursing Foundation Programme did not prepare them for the mainstream first year; instead it made them lazy in a sense, and they struggled somewhat in coping with the first-year mainstream as a result:

"We were very relaxed in foundation year. We had long weekends every week, every Monday and Friday we were off. Then when we get to first and second year, we have such a full programme, and we have to spark you know...No more relaxing. That's also why I said it was a waste of time. If they could at least give us some of first year subject to do in foundation, we wouldn't feel so left behind". (P5)

According to Barbatis (2010:14), students can feel discouraged by remedial or academic development courses because of the extended time they subsequently have to spend in college. A participant felt that the Nursing Foundation Programme simply prolonged their studies because, although they had been in the nursing programme for three years, without failing a year, they were still seen as a second-year student, not a third-year student. This left no space for failing a year level, because that would only prolong their studies further:

"I mean, I have been in this programme for 3 years, now, but I am only second year now, and I didn't even fail. It is now just because of foundation year. So I can't even afford to fail, because I really can't waste another year". (P5)

"If I think back, I don't know if it was maybe a waste of time, you know, I could have been in my third year now, but now because of foundation I am only in my second year". (P6)

3.4.2.1 Alienation from nursing and health sciences

Alienation can be described as a sense of homelessness; a feeling of uneasiness or discomfort; which signifies the person's exclusion from social or cultural participation. Alienation can

adversely affect healthy functioning of nursing students (Bekhet, Elguenidi & Zauszniewski, 2011:35). Alienation is related to the extent to which one's values, beliefs, and norms do not articulate with those of the particular group with which one is associated (Levette-Jones, Lathlean, McMillan & Higgins, 2007:163).

Negative effects of alienation may be related to the fact that, when adolescents do not have a sense of belonging to family, school, and society, this might contribute to more negative thinking and vice versa (Bekhet, et al., 2011:35). According to Bekhet, et al. (2011:35), it is important to identify and reduce alienation encountered by nursing students, and to focus on developing and testing interventions to strengthen positive cognitions in order to promote optimal resourcefulness.

Students in the Nursing Foundation Programme felt that they did not belong to the nursing department, because they did not have much contact with this department. The fact that they were registered as nursing students but that they did not do any nursing subjects or go to clinical placement, made them feel isolated and made them regret being in the foundation year. Most of the students felt unhappy being in the Nursing Foundation Programme, because they had not applied to be in the Nursing Foundation Programme, and thus had no choice in the matter. This was evident in their responses as a negative experience:

"Okay you felt at the beginning but you are a nurse, you are going into the nursing degree, why must I go still do foundation phase, and you have to pay thirteen thousand odd, for that year. And why did the others just go into the mainstream, what is the criteria"? (P2)

Some students in the Nursing Foundation Programme felt ashamed and unhappy and did not want to tell anyone that they were in the Nursing Foundation Programme, because the perception was that students in the Nursing Foundation Programme were not as clever as students in mainstream. Students in the Nursing Foundation Programme did not feel like they were part of the School of Nursing, and they felt isolated from the Community Health Science (CHS) faculty as a whole:

"I did not like it at all, you know, you don't feel like you are a part of the university when you in foundation. And you don't wanna tell people you are in foundation, because you know, they think foundation students are dumb children, and you are dumb that's why you are in foundation . . . We did not feel like we were part of the School of Nursing, or even the CHS faculty, because we did not even do any nursing subject, you know. Or clinical. So, we were like outcasts. No one believed us if we said we're nursing students. And if you told them you are in foundation, they thought you were dumb children". (P5)

A participant felt isolated from the School of Nursing because in the Nursing Foundation Programme they were not exposed to clinical nursing practice; this was perceived as a problem because nursing should be practical in nature. Nursing Foundation Programme students also felt that they did not belong to the School of Nursing, because they had little contact with the School of Nursing:

"People didn't believe me when I said that I am studying nursing, because I never went to clinical placement. We as foundation students didn't work at hospital in the foundation year ... We never even had contact with the School of Nursing. It didn't feel like we were part of the School of Nursing". (P6)

A participant felt like an outsider during the Nursing Foundation Programme, because there was no contact with the School of Nursing, and they did not do any subjects offered by the School of Nursing. Others perceived themselves as being stupid, and not good enough to get into the mainstream programme:

"I personally never felt like a nursing student during foundation year, because we had nothing to do with the School of Nursing. No subjects, lectures or skills, nothing. We were just on the outside. And it sometimes made me feel ashamed to be a foundation student ... People think you are stupid if you are in the foundation year. Almost like you were not good enough to get into the real nursing programme, you know, like get into the first year. They think you are too stupid to get straight into first year, so you first need to do foundation year". (P7)

3.4.2.2 Underprepared and no link to nursing mainstream programme

An increasing number of students enter college underprepared (National Centre for Education Statistics, 2010), and most of them lack the academic skills to take college-level courses, so they are placed in remedial courses.

Participants were of the opinion that the Nursing Foundation Programme did not prepare them for the first-year mainstream, because they did not do any nursing modules in the foundation year:

“The foundation was not actually nursing perse; when we came into mainstream then we started our GNS (General Nursing Science). This was just mathematics, numeracy. And a bit of physics . . .”. (P2)

“I wouldn’t really say that it (the Nursing Foundation Programme) prepared me for nursing . . . we didn’t do any nursing subjects in the foundation year that could have prepared us for the first year”. (P7)

A participant further experienced the subjects done in the Nursing Foundation Programme as not being sufficient in aiding them during the mainstream programme. The subjects done in the Nursing Foundation Programme had no connection per se with the subjects done in the nursing mainstream first year, and thus they felt it was not adequate preparation for the nursing mainstream first year subjects such as Human Biology and Pharmacology, that the students were struggling with:

“For me foundation was . . . it wasn’t sufficiently . . . in terms of . . . it didn’t prepare you actually well for the years ahead . . . said the subjects we had in foundation, it wasn’t sufficient; it didn’t help with the rest of the programme . . . we didn’t do subjects in foundation to prepare us for HUB (Human Biology) and Pharmacology and all those heavy subjects, we struggled. I especially struggled with HUB and Pharmacology”. (P4)

“. . . we did not even do any nursing subject, you know. Or clinical”. (P5)

“We didn’t have nursing in foundation year, only other subjects”. (P6)

The Human Biology module was seen as being a challenge, and a participant commented that it would have been beneficial if there had been some preparation for this module in the foundation year. According to the participant, there was enough time in the foundation year to offer students some preparation classes for modules like Human Biology and Pharmacology, considering that they had every Monday and Friday free:

“ . . . HUB . . . It was a challenge for me, I actually wish there could have been some preparation in the foundation level, to prepare us for this HUB . . . I just mean that foundation year did not prepare us for the rest of the programme. We were very relaxed in foundation year. We had long weekends every week, every Monday and Friday we were off. Then when we get to first and second year, we have such a full programme, and we have to spark you know... No more relaxing”. (P5)

The foundation year and the mainstream first year were very different from each other and there was no link between them. A participant mentioned that they thought the foundation year would have some of the first-year subjects; and that being selected for the foundation programme merely meant doing the first year over two years, but this was not the case.

“The subjects we did in foundation year, was totally different from the ones we did in the first year. There wasn't really a link between the two years. I thought at first when I got selected for the foundation year, that I would do some of the first year subjects, you know? And that the foundation programme meant that the first year was done over two years, but it was not like that. ..We as foundation students didn't work at hospital in the foundation year”. (P6)

“ . . . It did not really prepare me for the subjects we did in first year. Because you know, we didn't do nursing subjects at all in foundation year. We just did basic subjects, like English, computer, IPOC (Introduction to Philosophy of Care)and PHC (Primary Health care),etc. So no nursing subjects . . . the first year was much harder than the (nursing) foundation year, yes, definitely harder”. (P8)

The purpose of the Nursing Foundation Programme was to prepare disadvantage students for the mainstream nursing programme at the university, and also to prepare this group of students for university life itself. As it was a preparation or remedial year, to strengthen the academic literacy of the students, the focus was more on general subjects that would form a basis for future years of studies. According to Kreysa (2007:251) the purpose of remedial education programmes is to help improve the academic performance of students who would not otherwise persist. Kreysa (2007:251) further contends that if these under-prepared students enrol in remedial courses and then improve academically overall, then remedial education courses may be effective.

3.5 THEME 2: GENERALLY SUPPORTIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

3.5.1 The supportive role of lecturers in the Nursing Foundation Programme

All students experienced a generally supportive environment during the foundation year. Support from lecturers was good, and peer support was also good.

3.5.1.1 Open and approachable attitude

According to Hagenauer and Volet (2014:377), approachability is difficult to place in either the affective or the supportive dimension, as approachability itself can be regarded as a multi-dimensional construct requiring conceptual clarification. Denzine and Pulos (2000:56) found that highly approachable teachers were characterised by behaviour such as knowing students' names, staying in class to meet students, saying 'hi' to students on campus, smiling often, and exhibiting warm and caring behaviour.

The lecturers in the Nursing Foundation Programme were experienced as being open and approachable and students felt comfortable with them; they could ask the lecturer anything:

"I always felt at ease and like I could ask the lecturer for anything". (P7)

"I felt at ease with the lecturer and I felt like I could approach the lecturer about anything . . .". (P6)

According to Komarraju, Musulkin and Bhattacharya (2010:339), students who perceive their lecturers as being approachable, respectful and available for frequent interactions outside the

classroom, are more likely to report being confident of their academic skills and of being motivated to succeed. Students see teachers or lecturers as approachable when they support students in their study progress, by being available for students who seek assistance, and when students feel that teachers can be trusted and are willing to listen to their problems (Hagenauer & Volet, 2014:378).

A trusting relationship existed with the lecturers, to such an extent that the students felt comfortable disclosing private information from their past to the lecturers:

“ . . . you did not feel scared talking about your past . . . you actually went deep into your past ”. (P2)

The lecturers were supportive and always willing to assist and share their knowledge with the students:

“ . . . they were very helpful and supportive . . . they were like open. We could come to the offices and then they would share their knowledges and experience ”. (P3)

Komaraju et al. (2010:339) note that students also value the time that lecturers may spend with them outside the classroom, as well as any career development advice they may provide.

The lecturers were always available to assist the students, and they were never too busy to attend to them:

“ . . . always available when we needed to ask something, and he also gave a little bit extra, you know, like when he explained stuff, and with feedback on assignments and tests ”. (P5)

3.5.1.2 Caring and nurturing characteristics

According to Baumeister and Leary (1995:497), a need for belonging, for frequent positive interactions and to feel cared for by others, is a fundamental human need. Gholami and Tirri (2012:1) describe caring teaching as a conceptual framework that is used to gain an insight into the moral aspects of teaching. Caring teaching can be reflected in the teachers' activities; firstly,

where the teachers help the students to enhance their moral competency by nurturing the character of the students and, secondly, when teachers care about students' basic social and personal skills for life outside the school community (Gholami, 2011:133).

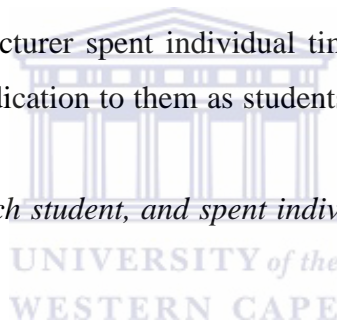
A participant explained that they experienced the support of the lecturers in a nurturing manner:

“ . . . the lecturers were very supportive . . . that was the . . . the . . . one of the support that we got. They will tell you . . . they introduced us to the problem . . . They will sort of nurture you. . . ”. (P1)

According to Gholami and Tirri (2012:1), caring teachers are expected to listen and understand; to assist students with their personal and interpersonal problems that they may encounter inside or outside of school; and to be empathetic and patient while dealing with these problems.

A participant mentioned how a lecturer spent individual time with students who needed extra assistance, and that this was an indication to them as students that this lecturer truly cared about them:

“He really cared about each student, and spent individual time with us when we needed help”. (P6)



3.5.1.3 Advisors

Advising is one of the lecturers' core responsibilities. According to Anantadjaya and Nawangwulan (2008:11), an advising session is crucial to grasp and/or otherwise update information on each of the students to provide the most suitable research potentials and career paths. Through effective advising sessions, lecturers can note potential problems, difficulties, complaints or suggestions from the students. This information will be relayed into the academic service department for immediate follow-ups. When follow-ups are performed, it is expected that students will be more satisfied (Anantadjaya & Nawangwulan, 2008:11).

A participant experienced the lecturers as advisors who assisted students with problems and concepts that were unfamiliar to them and, in a sense, guided the students through their studies:

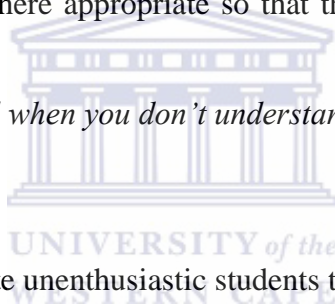
“ . . . having to solve problem, understand concept that you were unfamiliar to, sort of groom you . . . advising you ”. (P1)

3.5.1.4 Persistent and patient

According to Hiew (2012:16), lecturers should be more patient in guiding and teaching, especially the lower and average proficiency students, as this would ensure that students are more motivated and responsive towards the lecturers and the lectures.

In this study, the lecturers were always persistent and patient when assisting the students with concepts, and they added detail where appropriate so that the students could better understand the concepts:

“ . . . they will go into detail when you don't understand a concept . . . and teach you until you get the concept ”. (P1)



An empathetic lecturer can motivate unenthusiastic students to discover their maximum potential through consistent encouragement and self-assurance (Hiew, 2012:16).

Lecturers were always willing to do extra work to assist the students in the foundation year, and spend extra time with them where necessary. Students appreciated this aspect of the lecturers' characteristics:

“ . . . they were brilliant, in the sense that . . . uhm . . . they were always willing to go the extra mile (uhm) especially when there was certain uncertainties . . . ”. (P2)

Students were supported and assisted when they had difficulty with the course work; the lecturers were patient and meticulous in explaining the work to the students in detail until they had grasped the work. A participant mentioned that the lecturers' support meant a lot to them and that it assisted them in understanding the subject matter:

”They did support us if we struggled . . . (uhm) . . . and they had a lot of time for us . . . they will take you step by step if you didn’t understand, like really have a lot of patience with you . . . explain it over and over . . .”. (P4)

Lecturers were willing to spend extra time with students in order to assist them with work that they did not grasp fully, as well as assisting with problems with which they were struggling. A participant mentioned that the additional time that the lecturer spent with them to explain work or to assist with problems, further supported them:

“. . . spent extra time with us, like to explain things and so on, and made sure that we understand things... He was patient and he listened when we had questions, and he always had time for our problems”. (P7)

3.5.2 The supportive role of colleagues and peers in the Nursing Foundation Programme

The support of colleagues and peers also played a major role in the Nursing Foundation Programme for some students. As the foundation year consisted of 51 students, they were a small, intimate group, who shared a lot of similarities and experiences and were thus closely knit.

Wilcox, Winn and Fyvie-Gauld (2005:707) argue that making compatible friends at university is essential to retention, and that such friends provide direct emotional support which is equivalent to family relationships, as well as buffering support in stressful situations.

3.5.2.1 Support extended beyond the programme

Emotional support from friends and peers provides students with a sense of belonging, and this can also help students when they face difficulties (Wilcox, et al., 2005:707).

A participant mentioned that her peers assisted her to succeed in her studies. Without them she might have not come so far:

“. . . anyway with persistence . . . they were actually helping me to push through to . . .”. (P2)

A participant felt that having a study partner in the same group assisted him during the Nursing Foundation Programme, because they were faced with the same problems and obstacles and they could help each other:

“ . . . like my colleague that was studying with . . . We were able to help each other with . . . (uhm) . . . problems . . . my friend and I would sit and work and solve problems and do the work that we were told to do. We practice and commitment so we manage to flow through the foundation year... We were a very intimate group. Support system was very good, we have done things quicker”. (P1)

A participant who was older than her class mates felt that she had a lot of support from the group; the students were open and approachable and they made time to listen to her and assisted her where needed:

“ . . . but I latched on with the younger ones you know and you think for yourself, this is for your own gain, this child getting 80/90% in the class, you go just to say ‘Hi what is your name?’ and you know . . . and hug them and everyone addresses me as ‘aunty’. So you know Aunty Joey, no man . . . I said come and show me now this . . . they said no, not like that . . . they actually made time for me . . . and I could say that actually applauded them . . .”. (P2)

A participant felt that the group was like a family and they were closely connected to each other and able to share intimate details:

“ . . . we were very connected . . . like a family... We were a small group, but we are connected to one another. We are able to shared things . . . and I was able to connect to them”. (P3)

3.5.2.2 Provided a sense of camaradie

According to Wilcox et al. (2005:707), students’ support needs are met increasingly by friends they live with, and less from home contacts, the longer they are at university. The friends they meet at university become like surrogate family members; they are a constant source of social

support which both enhances the students' general sense of well-being and belonging, and it also provides a cushioning effect when students experience problems (Wilcox, et al., 2005:707).

A participant mentioned that the students in the foundation year were able to build lasting relationships and friendships with each other, because they could identify with each other and they had a sense of belonging. Most important, they shared a history, especially those students who were in their final year:

“ . . . so we started building you know a good relationship with each other . . . that is still lasting . . . we identified a lot with each other even now in our final year and just . . . you know . . . remind each other . . . remember where we come from, how we revel, how we . . . you know, that ‘kamaradeskap’, and everyone was looking out for each other”. (P2)

3.6 CONCLUSION

In this chapter the findings and discussion of the individual semi-structured interviews and field notes were explained as the students described their experiences of the Nursing Foundation Programme at the University of the Western Cape. The findings and discussion confirmed that this Nursing Foundation Programme offers a generally supportive learning environment, where lecturers and colleagues/peers play an important supportive role, but that the experience of the overall foundation programme had both positive and negative aspects. The structure of the Nursing Foundation Programme and the spreading of modules over the foundation and first (mainstream) year should be re-evaluated. This should be done so as not to overburden certain academic years and also to link the Nursing Foundation Programme to the mainstream nursing programme, both clinically and theoretically, to include the Nursing Foundation Programme students in the Nursing Foundation Programme and make them feel part of the School of Nursing.

CHAPTER 4

CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND LIMITATIONS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter addresses an overview of the findings of the study, and recommendations for the implementation of support by lecturers to students in the foundation year.

4.2 OVERALL CONCLUSION

This study concluded that the true value of the Nursing Foundation Programme was mainly appreciated by the participants in retrospect. The study concluded that although initially all the learners interviewed were not happy at being placed, or did not fully understand why they were placed in the Nursing Foundation Programme, most students were, albeit with time, able to appreciate why they had been included in the programme. Wood and Lithauer (2005:1008), similarly, found that some students "... did not understand why they were not admitted directly to mainstream studies". Nevertheless, more importantly, most of the students, especially the older students, eventually positively accepted their placement in the Nursing Foundation Programme.

The results of this study indicate that there were a variety of experiences of the programme, and these experiences varied between positive and negative. On the positive side, students experienced that the Nursing Foundation Programme resulted in multiple levels of growth, both personally and academically – this was more amongst the students who were generally older and more mature. On the other hand, other students viewed the foundation year as a waste of time, and this was more amongst the younger students.

The positive process was viewed as very helpful and intimate, and created an environment of positive teaching and learning.

There were some who viewed the experience negatively. This was usually due to under-preparedness for the mainstream nursing programme, and they did not see a specific link

between the foundation year and the first year of the mainstream nursing programme.

Overall the experiences were viewed as there being a generally supportive environment of lecturers and colleagues interacting. The lecturers were viewed as open and approachable, caring advisors, while colleagues or peers were viewed as supportive and giving a sense of camaraderie.

4.3 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR NURSING PRACTICE

The positive process of personal growth should continue; this could be achieved by continuing with various practices, as will be described further.

Building self-confidence of students during the Nursing Foundation Programme could be enhanced by, for example, praising students for work well done. Sæverot (2011:455) contends that, the word 'praise' stems from the Latin *pretium*, meaning 'price', and to praise is to appreciate something that one applauds and admires. Sæverot (2011:455) further describes praise as being able to be used to motivate someone to perform at a continuously higher level of learning. It can also be used to promote desired behaviour or positive values, as well as being applied to strengthen an individual's self-image. According to Sæverot (2011:455), the teacher traditionally praises the students when their work is considered to be praiseworthy, and the rationale for this is that the students will then be motivated to continue in the same positive direction.

Academics should assist students by providing computer literacy and basic sciences classes, and encouraging students to attend all tutorials and the campus orientation, as it will be of great benefit to them. According to Nathan (2015:162), academic support is vital in higher education and tutorials are a form of such academic support. Although adult-centred learning can be considered as self-directed, guidance is required to meet the academic achievement of higher education students (Gopee, 2011:11). Academics are in a position to provide opportunities to encourage student development, and they need to consider the best means to ensure efficient and effective student support (Nathan, 2015:162).

Lecturers could possibly arrange an extra tour for students to better familiarise themselves with the campus and student life. They could incorporate tutorials in all subjects, as this would form the basis of their academic support. This process can be enhanced by having smaller group activities within the class, to practise participative teaching and make use of student presentations. According to Onishi (2008:356), student presentations are a useful and enjoyable learning activity that exposes the student to the skills of communication, presentation, as well as to content understanding. This forms part of the student-centred learning techniques which motivate students to become critical thinkers, problem solvers and life-long learners (Onishi, 2008:356).

One should combat negative experiences, to prevent students from feeling that they are wasting their time in the Nursing Foundation Programme. An informative session on how the Nursing Foundation Programme fits into the B. Nursing (mainstream) Programme and what the purpose and benefits of the Nursing Foundation Programme are, could be arranged for the students, to give them a better understanding of the purpose of the Nursing Foundation Programme. As first-year nursing students, their sense of belonging can be enhanced by receiving the help and guidance needed to find their way in the new environment (Bekhet, et al., 2011:35). According to Levette-Jones et al. (2007:162), mentors should play a major role in supporting students and acting as champions or sponsors to students. Individual counseling or group discussions can identify and reduce potential worries and stresses that the students may have (Bekhet, et al., 2011:35). According to Bekhet et al. (2011:35), intervention programmes should include helping students to use positive self-talk; reframe situations positively; change from their usual reactions; and explore new ideas.

Introductory lectures on basic science and pharmacology during the Nursing Foundation Programme could benefit students in preparation for when they move on to the mainstream first-year course. Students could also be introduced to the textbooks that they will use in the first-year mainstream course during the Nursing Foundation Programme.

Nursing Foundation Programme students could be included in the wellness day of the Faculty of Community and Health Science, as this would give them a sense of belonging. Nursing

Foundation Programme students could also attend the nursing simulation laboratory one day per week or month, to observe the skills that they will need in the first-year mainstream course. Every foundation-year student could be appointed a first-year student mentor, thus forming a buddy system which will be of benefit to both students. According to Phillips (2013:1), senior students have direct and recent experience of the circumstances with which new students may be struggling with. The general supportive environment should continue, by lecturers having an open and approachable attitude.

4.4 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR NURSING RESEARCH

Future research can be done on the Nursing Foundation Programme to evaluate the programme as a whole and measure how effective it is in preparing students for the mainstream programme. Quantitative research can also be done to determine the attrition rates of students who enter the nursing mainstream programme through the foundation programme and how it compares to those that entered straight into mainstream.

Research can be done on this topic at other universities in South Africa which then could be compared with the findings of this research.

4.5 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

This study is limited to students in the Nursing Foundation Programme who have completed the first year of this programme at the University of the Western Cape. The relatively small sample of the study population also affected the transferability of the findings. However, the field notes and data from the interviews provided an in-depth understanding of experiences of students in the Nursing Foundation Programme.

4.6 CONCLUSION

The study sheds light on the experiences of students in the Nursing Foundation Programme regarding the support of lecturers during the programme. It demonstrates that support is a crucial matter for the successful completion of the year of the Nursing Foundation Programme and

success in the following year mainstream programme. This study also highlights that the curriculum of the one-year Nursing Foundation Programme needs to be reviewed to ensure a more positive experience and to create a hassle-free progression to the mainstream programme. It also highlights the experiences of alienation from the mainstream programme and Community Health Faculty that students encounter in the one-year Nursing Foundation Programme and that this can be rectified by including these Nursing Foundation Programme students in various activities at the School of Nursing in the Faculty of Community and Health Science at UWC.



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**ANNEXURE A: APPROVAL
DOCUMENT**



**OFFICE OF THE DEAN
DEPARTMENT OF RESEARCH DEVELOPMENT**

20 September 2012

To Whom It May Concern

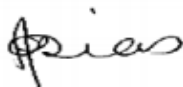
I hereby certify that the Senate Research Committee of the University of the Western Cape has approved the methodology and ethics of the following research project by:
Ms A Daniels (School of Nursing)

Research Project: The support of students by lecturers in the Nursing Foundation Programme at a University in the Western Cape.

Registration no: 12/6/32

Any amendments, extension or other modifications to the protocol must be submitted to the Ethics Committee for approval.

The Committee must be informed of any serious adverse event and/or termination of the study.



*Ms Patricia Josias
Research Ethics Committee Officer
University of the Western Cape*

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A place of quality,
a place to grow, from hope
to action through knowledge

ANNEXURE B: INFORMATION SHEET



UNIVERSITY OF THE WESTERN CAPE

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May 2012

INFORMATION SHEET

Project Title: The support of students by lecturers in the Nursing Foundation Programme at a university in the Western Cape

What is this study about?

This is a research project conducted by Annelize Daniels, a master's student at the University of the Western Cape. We are inviting you to participate in this research because you will be given the opportunity to describe your experiences of being a student registered in the B. Nursing Foundation Programme. The purpose of this study is to explore and describe students' experiences and the support of lecturers to students who are registered for the B. Nursing Foundation Programme.

You will be asked to complete a consent form to participate in the project.

What will I be asked to do if I agree to participate?

You will be asked to share your experiences as a student registered for the B. Nursing Foundation Programme. The researcher will schedule an interview with you in a private and quiet room at the university. A one-on-one interview will be conducted with you by the researcher and it will take not more than 45 minutes. The interviews will be audio-taped with a digital recording device and field notes will also be taken so that the researcher can go back and verify what you will share. You will be asked open ended questions regarding your experiences as a student registered for the B. Nursing Foundation Programme. This will be followed by further questions depending on the answers that you give. There will be no right or wrong answer.

Written consent for the interviews to be voice recorded will also be needed. Voice recordings of the interviews will be stored under lock and key for five years after the results of the project has been published before it will be destroyed. Only the supervisor, an independent coder and the researcher will have access to these recordings.

The researcher will take written field notes during the interviews. However, the participants' names will not be recorded in these notes.

Would my participation in this study be kept confidential?

We will do our best to keep your personal information confidential. The interview will take place in a private room and will not last longer than 30 to 45 minutes. To help protect your confidentiality, the audio-taped interviews will be stored in a compact disc which will be stored in a locked and safe cabinet where no one will be able to access it except the researcher. Your name will not be mentioned or identified in the report. Identification codes will be used instead of names, e.g. participate 1 or participant A. If we write a report or article about this research project, your identity will be protected to the maximum extent possible.

The publication of the results of the project will not mention any names of participants.

What are the risks of this research?

There are no known risks associated with participating in this research project. However, the researcher understands that during the course of the interview, you may recall experiences that may have disturbed you while being a student in the Nursing Foundation Programme. Should this be the case, you will be referred to the appropriate counselling services.

What are the benefits of this research?

This research is not designed to help you personally, but the results may help the researcher to learn more about your experiences as a student registered for the B. Nursing Foundation Programme. We hope that, in future, other people might benefit from this study through improved understanding of your experiences and recommendations can be made of ways that lecturers can support students in the programme.

Am I obliged to take part in this research project and can I stop participating at any time?

Your participation in this research project is completely free and voluntary. You may choose not to take part at all. If you decide to participate in this research, you may withdraw at any time during the study. If you decide to withdraw from the study, you will not be penalised in any way, neither will you forfeit any benefits to which you otherwise qualify.

How do I get my questions answered?

This research is being conducted by Ms. Annelize Daniels from the School of Nursing (SoN) at the University of the Western Cape. If you have any questions about the research study itself, please contact her at: 078 840 0910.

Address 4 Arthur Street, Worcester, 6850

Email: annelizedaniels@gmail.com or andaniels@uwc.ac.za

Should you have any questions regarding this study and your rights as a research participant or if you wish to report any problems you have experienced related to the study, please contact:

University of the Western Cape:

Dean of the Faculty of Community and Health Sciences:

Prof. Hester Klopper

021 959 2631

Email: hklopper@uwc.ac.za

Head of Department

Prof OliyinkaAdejumo

021 959 3024

Email: oadejumo@uwc.ac.za

Private Bag X 17

Bellville 7535

This research has been approved by the University of the Western Cape's Senate Research Committee and Ethics Committee.



ANNEXURE C: WRITTEN INFORMED CONSENT



UNIVERSITY OF THE WESTERN CAPE

PRIVATE BAG X 17, BELLVILLE 7535, SOUTH AFRICA

TEL: +27 21-9592274, FAX: 27 21-9592271

E-mail: andaniels@uwc.ac.za

WRITTEN INFORMED CONSENT

Letter of request to participate in the study

Title of Research Project: The support of students by lecturers in the Nursing Foundation Programme at a university in the Western Cape

The study has been described to me in language that I understand and I freely and voluntarily agree to participate. My questions about the study have been answered. I understand that my identity will not be disclosed and that I may withdraw from the study without giving a reason at any time and this will not negatively affect me in any way.

PARTICIPANT'S NAME.....

PARTICIPANT'S SIGNATURE..... DATE.....

I further agree that the interview be voice recorded.

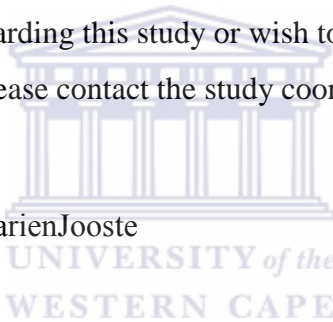
PARTICIPANT’S SIGNATURE..... DATE.....

I further agree that the researcher takes field notes.

PARTICIPANT’S SIGNATURE..... DATE.....

WITNESS..... DATE.....

Should you have any questions regarding this study or wish to report any problems you have experienced related to the study, please contact the study coordinator:



Study Coordinator’s Name: Prof Karien Jooste

University of the Western Cape

Private Bag X17, Bellville 7535

Telephone: (021)959-2274

Cell: 0828972228

Fax: (021)959-2271

Email: kjooste@uwc.ac.za

**ANNEXURE D: LETTER OF REQUEST TO UNIVERSITY OF THE WESTERN CAPE,
SCHOOL OF NURSING TO CONDUCT THE RESEARCH**



UNIVERSITY OF THE WESTERN CAPE

PRIVATE BAG X 17, BELLVILLE 7535, SOUTH AFRICA

Tel: +27 21-9592274, Fax: 27 21-9592679

E-MAIL: andaniels@uwc.ac.za



4 Arthur Street

Worcester

6850

May 2012

The Head of Department

School of Nursing

University of the Western Cape

Dear Sir,

Consent to Conduct Research Investigation

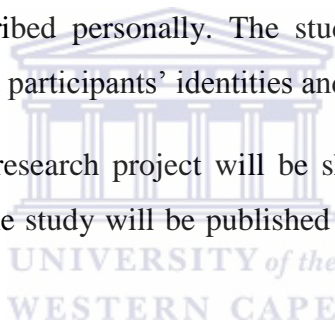
I am a post-graduate student at the University of the Western Cape, and am studying to fulfil the requirements for a Master's Degree in Nursing. My research topic is: The support of students by lecturers in the B. Nursing Foundation Programme at a university in the Western Cape.

I am interested in the views and experiences of students registered in the B. Nursing Foundation Programme on support by lecturers in the programme. The results of the study may assist students by providing guidelines to support students registered in the B. Nursing Foundation Programme.

In order to conduct this study, with your permission, students will be selected by means of purposive sampling and informed consent obtained from them to participate in an individual interview. Students will be interviewed one on one. Having access to the students registered in the B. Nursing Foundation Programme will be very much appreciated.

I hereby request your permission to conduct my research investigation at the School of Nursing. Attached is a copy of the student consent form. Students will participate voluntarily and may withdraw, without fear or favour, from the study at any time. All information will be handled confidentially and will be transcribed personally. The students will remain anonymous and pseudonyms will be used to protect participants' identities and the name of the institution.

Information acquired during this research project will be shared with all participants prior to public dissemination. Results of the study will be published in an accredited journal and a peer review journal.



Yours sincerely,

Annelize Daphne Daniels

Student No: 2440179

078 840 0910

Prof KarienJooste

Supervisor

0219592274

ANNEXURE E: DATA COLLECTION TOOL



UNIVERSITY OF THE WESTERN CAPE

Private Bag X 17, Bellville 7535, South Africa

Tel: +27 21-959, Fax: 27 21-959

E-mail: annelizedaniels@gmail.com

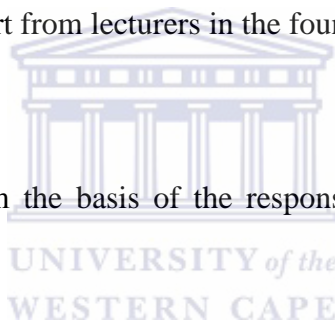
DATA COLLECTION TOOL

Open-ended interview question:

How did you experience the support from lecturers in the foundation year programme?

Probing Question:

The following questions will form the basis of the responses that will be expected from the participants during the interview:



What was it like being a learner in the B. Nursing Foundation Programme?

What support do you need during the B. Nursing Foundation Programme?

Tell me more...

What do you mean...?