

**A FRAMEWORK TO STRENGTHEN LEADERSHIP
AT A SOUTH AFRICAN PUBLIC NURSING
COLLEGE**

By

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respect of the Doctoral Degree in Nursing in the
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Promoter: Dr DE Van Jaarsveldt

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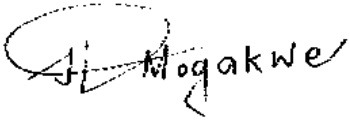
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Declaration

"I, **Lebuile John Mogakwe** declare that the thesis that I herewith submit for the Doctoral Degree at the University of the Free State, is my independent work, and that I have not previously submitted this work for a qualification at another institution of higher education."

Signature: 

Date: 19 March 2021

Dedication

I wish to dedicate this study to myself for always striving instead of giving up, even when there were times when I felt like I couldn't take another step on this journey. Losing Papa at 14 and Tanta at 20, and having to support my siblings and their children in various ways, challenged me to work even harder so that I could succeed in life. I did this knowing that my success would become their success. Although this was immensely gratifying, carrying them with me was not always easy, but rather challenging and demanding. In spite of all this, I kept my eyes on the goal post. Even though my academic journey that began with a bachelor's degree has not been an easy one, I am proud of myself, as I managed to work very hard against all odds to be where I am today. Pursuing postgraduate studies while working is extremely demanding, especially in occupational environments that can be very draining. However, through self-discipline, dedication, determination, and resilience, my dream of completing a PhD in nursing has been accomplished, and for that I am so proud of myself.

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List of Acronyms

AI – Appreciative Inquiry

CBE – Community Based Education

CBR – Community Based Research

CE – Community Engagement

CH(s) – Campus Head(s)

CHE – Council on Higher Education

CNO – Chief Nursing Officer

COVID-19 – Coronavirus

CPD – Continuous Professional Development

DoHET – Department of Higher Education and Training

DP – Deputy Principal

EBP – Evidence Based Practice

HAD – Head of Academic Department

HE – Higher Education

HEI(s) – Higher Education Institution(s)

HESA – Higher Education South Africa

HSREC – Health Sciences Research Ethics Committee

IT – Information Technology

M&E – Monitoring and Evaluation

NDoH – National Department of Health

NE(s) – Nurse Educator(s)

NEI(s) – Nursing Education Institution(s)

NELEs – Nursing Education Leadership Experts

PDoH – Provincial Department of Health

R - Regulation

RSA – Republic of South Africa

SANC – South African Nursing Council

SAQA – South African Qualifications Authority

SDGs – Sustainable Development Goals

SI – Supplemental Instruction

SL(s) – Student Leader(s)

UFS – University of the Free State

WHO – World Health Organisation

WIL – Work Integrated Learning

Wits – University of the Witwatersrand

4IR – 4th Industrial Revolution

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Clarification and Operationalisation of Key Concepts

Key concepts are clarified to facilitate an understanding of the context in which they are used to avoid ambiguity (Wallen & Fraenkel, 2011:16). Mertens (2015:386) asserts that conceptual definitions are those that use other constructs to explain meaning, whereas operational definitions are those that specify how the construct will be applied.

Conceptual definitions of words used in the title and considered foundational to this research are as follows:

FRAMEWORK

Polit and Beck (2017:723) describe a conceptual framework as a network of interrelated notions that collectively offer a broad understanding of a phenomenon. The concepts that constitute a framework support each other, articulate their respective phenomena, and establish a framework-specific philosophy. Quantitative researchers commence research with a conceptual framework, which through deductive reasoning develops and tests a specific hypothesis (Grove & Gray, 2019:231). However, in qualitative research, conceptual frameworks are typically products of inductive theoretical processes (Trafford & Leshem, 2008:44; Jabareen, 2009:50; Grove & Gray, 2019:194). Furthermore, a framework could be viewed as the product or end result, bringing together a number of interconnected notions to explicate or predict a given event, or offer an extensive understanding of the phenomenon of interest (Tamene, 2016:53; Polit & Beck, 2017:48).

Van Dijk (2008:88-89), supported by Biesta (2010:45), aptly states that a framework, as a research outcome, should be an inter-subjective space, in which participants' diverse perspectives on a particular phenomenon, such as leadership strengthening in this research, are equitably considered and depicted. To successfully develop a framework that is rooted in the participants' perspectives, data obtained from participants were applied inductively (Creswell & Creswell, 2018:36; Polit & Beck, 2017:48).

The end product of this research is a framework to strengthen leadership at a specific South African public nursing college, and was constructed from various college leaders and South African nursing education leadership experts' (NELEs) perspectives.

STRENGTHEN

The term ‘strengthen’ is defined by the Cambridge Online Dictionary as “to make something stronger or effective” (Cambridge Dictionary, 2021). ‘Strong or effective’ institutions are concerned with output, quality, innovation, and cost reduction (Zheng *et al.*, 2010:764; Cornali, 2012:256). Strengthening of leadership determines the degree to which the institution accomplishes its goals or how its outputs interact with the economic and social environment (Hidayah *et al.*, 2015:1165). Leadership is a health system function, and its strengthening is considered to comprise an array of initiatives and strategies that develop it, leading to improved health through enhancements in access, coverage, quality, or efficiency [World Health Organisation (WHO), 2011]. Data obtained from participants were employed to develop a framework that sought to strengthen institutional leadership at the college so that it could achieve its mandate, i.e. education and training of a sufficient number of competent, quality nurses who are able meet society’s health needs.

LEADERSHIP

Leadership is described as a complex process through which an individual influences others to accomplish a mission, a task, or an objective in a given situation and directs the organisation more cohesively and coherently (Sharma & Jain, 2013:310; Huber, 2018:2; Northouse, 2017:7). Marquard (2016:22) regards leadership as the ability to inspire people to achieve an organisational vision or goal through the leader’s personal power in collaboration with their knowledge and skills. In higher education (HE), leadership is concerned with establishing and promoting the direction of systems or individual institutions, and the formulation of priorities, policies, and strategies in relation to the rules (Lange & Luescher-Mamashela, 2016:108). Leadership in this research denotes influence exerted by all different stakeholders who play a leadership role to achieve quality nursing education and training at the college. These persons include the college managers, i.e. principal, deputy principal (DP), campus heads (CHs), heads of academic departments (HADs), nurse educators (NEs), and student leaders (SLs).

PUBLIC NURSING COLLEGE

A public nursing college refers to a government-funded institution consisting of a building(s) and its associated resources for the specific purpose of offering nursing education and training programmes [South African Nursing Council (SANC), 2013]. The legacy programmes currently offered at this college include a four-year comprehensive nursing and midwifery diploma [Regulation (R) 425], and new nursing programme R171 (SANC, 2018). In the Republic of South Africa (RSA), nursing colleges (public or private) and university nursing schools or departments are clustered as nursing education institutions (NEIs), and nursing colleges in particular are affiliated with HEIs. However, unlike university nursing departments, which have to submit their curricula to both SANC and CHE for accreditation, SANC is the sole regulatory body for education and training offered by the nursing colleges in the country. With the implementation of the new programmes, the South African nursing colleges had to follow suit and have their curricula accredited by both SANC and CHE. The researcher thus refers either to HEIs, NEIs, or nursing college(s), depending on the context in which they are applied. The research in the form of an Appreciative Inquiry (AI) took place at a specific South African public nursing college, which has three campuses situated in different geographical areas. Each campus has its own infrastructure, resources, and management team that comprise a CH and HADs working with a team of NEs and SLs. This particular public nursing college will also be referred to as ‘the college’.

HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

In line with the words of Bowen (2000) in Guthrie (2019:2), the most important determinations of HE include:

“educating students broadly so that they may lead productive lives in a civilised society; serving as engines of opportunity and social mobility; creating new knowledge of every kind, including work that either has no immediate market value or may even threaten some commercial end; encouraging and protecting the thoughtful critic and the dissenting voice; and defending cultural, moral, and intellectual values that no one can ‘price’ very well.”

Essentially HE covers a wide range of HEIs, and is considered to empower those that have access to HE, providing them with significant opportunities and competencies. Higher Education denotes a more holistic resonance, as it encompasses all post-secondary or tertiary institutions (Alemu, 2018:210-211). Under the HE Act 101 of 1997, HEI means any institution that provides HE on a full-time, part-time, or distance basis, which is: established or deemed to be established as a public HEI; declared as a public HEI; or registered or conditionally registered as a private HEI. In the context of this research, HEIs refer to all institutions currently offering post-school education and training, i.e. universities and colleges.

Abstract

Leaders at higher education institutions around the globe face difficulties emanating from a myriad of challenges introduced by the 21st century. Nursing education is not exempt from these demands, especially considering expectations of nurses operating on the frontline with health conditions that continue to threaten human existence. Therefore, the dire need for quality nursing education and training in this era is indisputable. In the midst of these threats, South African public nursing colleges are transitioning from provincial departments of health to higher education to form part of a unified higher education system. The need for strong leadership was identified as a key determinant through which a specific public nursing college could survive these challenges. A lack of evidence regarding leadership strengthening at Nursing Education Institutions in the country prompted the following research question: “How can leadership at a South African public nursing college be strengthened?”

Rooted in the social constructionism paradigm, a qualitative, exploratory, descriptive, contextual, and collaborative research design was deemed the most appropriate to answer the research question. Having taken a strengths-based approach and assuming a dialectic stance, perspectives were obtained from the college leadership via an Appreciative Inquiry and from South African nursing education leadership experts by means of a modified Delphi. The data sets were separately analysed from which various themes and subthemes emerged. The findings were then synthesised and integrated to create a whole picture, which culminated in a framework that was validated by college stakeholders.

The framework to strengthen leadership at a South African public nursing college offers transformational leadership approaches, leadership competency, and capacity development as its foundational aspects. Technology, research, and community engagement are supportive constructs, whilst governance, legislation, leadership, and policy together form the overarching element. With implementation and continuous research, each construct should be further developed. Although contextual, the findings could resonate with nursing education leadership elsewhere and be explored further by replicating the research. As the research product, the framework is considered to be a modest contribution to knowledge, and is presented in the belief that it could enable the college to successfully navigate its challenges and its transition into higher education.

Chapter 1 Overview of the research

“Challenges are what make life interesting; overcoming them is what makes life meaningful”

(Joshua J. Marine¹).

1.1 INTRODUCTION, BACKGROUND, AND RATIONALE

Leadership at higher education institutions (HEIs), both nationally and internationally, need to respond to the trends and constraints that ostensibly threaten their existence. All 21st century HEIs are faced with a transition period that has had a domino effect on the leadership functions at every level. Various authors portray this rapidly unfolding set of sustainability developments and challenges facing the leadership at HEIs as intricate, intertwined, and inter-reliant (Scott, 2013:275; Gigliotti & Reuben, 2017:97). As a result of this phenomenon, leaders around the globe find themselves in the position of having to operate in an increasingly changing multifaceted HE environment, placing them under significant stress and pressure (Ramdass, 2015:1112; Jones & Harvey, 2017:126). The widely published current trends and challenges are briefly presented in Table 1.1 and are expounded in Section 2.2.

¹Professional Educators of Tennessee (2018)

Table 1.1 Description of broad-based challenges facing HEIs globally

a. Globalisation of higher education (Otara, 2014:134; Altbach, 2015:6; Libhaber & Greene, 2015:18; Ho Mok, 2016:51; Marshall, 2018:1).
b. Internationalisation trends in higher education (Altbach, 2015:290; DoHET, 2017:9; Libhaber & Greene, 2015:18).
c. Rapid expansion or massification of higher education [Mohamedbhai, 2014:59; Hornsby & Osman, 2014:711; Mabelebele, 2015:6; Ho Mok, 2016:51; Council on HE (CHE), 2016:11; Allais, 2017:147; Abugre, 2018:328; Marshall, 2018:2].
d. Decreased public funding or shrinking of public subsidies (Ramdass, 2015:1112; Libhaber & Greene, 2015:17; CHE, 2016:XI; Gigliotti & Reuben, 2017:97; Allais, 2017:147; Abugre, 2018:328).
e. Critical infrastructural restraints, including Information and Communication Technology (Reisberg, 2011:1; Mabelebele, 2015:6; Ramdass, 2015:1112; Rivers <i>et al.</i>, 2015:15; Abugre, 2018:328).

Despite the challenges encountered by HEIs, the wider global community has expectations and demands of HE in terms of strengthening organisational effectiveness. These expectations are often unreasonably high, and HEIs' leaders find it difficult to meet them (Otara, 2014:143; CHE, 2016:48; Department of Presidency, 2012:315-328). Refer to Table 2.1 for an explication of the expectations.

Nursing education institutions (NEIs) in particular are not immune to the broad-based challenges experienced by HEIs in general. The challenges that NEIs continue to experience globally are classified as human resources, teaching and learning, financial and resources materials, and leadership and management, and these issues are outlined in Table 2.2. In the midst of the numerous constrictions impacting NEIs globally, South African nursing education and training is undergoing major transformation, which comes in response to the South African National Strategic Plan for Nurse Education, Training

and Practice 2012/13-2016/17 that recommends that nursing education and training be moved to HE, to comply with the provisions of the HE Amendment Act 39 of 2008 (NDoH 2013:10).

Furthermore, the existing nursing education programmes referred to in Table 2.2 are considered unresponsive to societal health needs (Armstrong & Rispel, 2015). The unresponsiveness of these nursing education programmes, resulted in a review of these programmes, especially R425. This course afforded graduates an opportunity to register with the SANC in the categories of Nurse (General, Psychiatric & Community) and Accoucher/Midwife, and has been widely criticised. Such criticism deals mainly with excessive training in all four areas of care and inadequate preparation of graduates for competent practice in all of these areas, predominantly midwifery (Blaauw, *et al.*, 2014:3). The revised nursing programmes were due for implementation in 2020 (Armstrong & Rispel, 2015). The desired outcomes of these revised nursing programmes aimed to tackle insufficient distinctions in the different nursing categories' roles, to address changing disease patterns and health system priorities, and to consider more independent practice of contemporary nurses (Blaauw *et al.*, 2014:3).

For a successful transition to HE, the South African NEIs particularly the nursing colleges, were expected to meet the HE Quality Committee's set Programme Criteria in order to be accredited by the Department of Higher Education and Training [DoHET] (Mulder & Uys, 2013:1). Due to some of the challenges stipulated in Table 2.2, Mulder and Uys (2013:1) reported that initially most of the NEIs did not comply with the set criteria and consequently failed to be accredited. This resulted in a delay in the NEIs' transition to HE, even though this was not the only factor causing delay. The SANC was criticised for delaying implementation of the revised scopes of practice for the different proposed new nursing categories and related training regulations that guide NEIs in effective nurse preparation (Armstrong & Rispel, 2015). Furthermore, the South African NEIs also experienced a deferment in the accreditation of the revised basic nursing education and training programmes due to complex and tedious processes within the DoHET.

The delay in transitioning NEIs to HE is considered to have limited the transformation of nursing education, which in turn, is deemed essential in the education and training of nurses and midwives who can competently deliver safe, quality, patient-centred care (NDoH, 2013:1). Failure to accredit the new nursing education and training programmes

threatened nursing education's sustainability in the country and could have had serious implications for the country, i.e. an exacerbated shortage of nurses that would severely affect patient care. Despite the delays experienced in accrediting NEIs, the robust measures and influence from the various stakeholders, including nurse education leaders at some NEIs led to the approval of the implementation of the new revised basic nursing education and training programmes. The new programmes were implemented in 2020 (SANC, 2020c).

Based on the current state of South African nursing education, the researcher is in accord with suggestions made by Armstrong and Rispel (2015) that nursing education in South Africa is struggling to get the basics right in many of the foundational elements considered essential for transformative education. The WHO (2007:3), of which South Africa is an affiliate, stipulates that for countries to respond to their health challenges, health system strengthening is vital. One of the building blocks of health systems strengthening is a health workforce that performs well (WHO, 2007:3).

This statement has serious implications for South African NEIs, because nurses are internationally and locally considered the health services' backbone and play a pivotal role in promoting health and the quality of life (Ditlopo *et al.*, 2016:2; Al Mutair & Redwan, 2016:1). A consistent impediment to training and educating nurses at the required level is considered the non-compliance with WHO standards and prevailing nurse shortages subsequently compromising the quality of healthcare and reducing access to health services (Eygelaar & Stellenberg, 2012:6; Bimray *et al.*, 2013:116). This is likely to result in costly legal actions and sub-optimal care with poor health outcomes, high morbidity, and mortality rates (Oosthuizen & van Deventer, 2010:1; Kruk *et al.*, 2018:1201).

The leadership at the college under study is faced with diverse challenges. Some of the difficulties identified are: education and training quality issues; poor internal communication practices; challenges in student monitoring and supervision; human and physical resource management concerns; a shortage of NEs; IT challenges; and insufficient clinical training facilities. The college campuses are located in three geographical locations, each with their own management team, adding to leadership challenges. The researcher, who was a senate member and an external moderator at the college before and during the research, believes that such leadership challenges hamper

the college in delivering its mandate. More information on the researcher's role is provided in Section 3.5.

Adding to the above-mentioned challenges, the college and other South African nursing colleges were not yet considered compliant with HE Quality Committee's requirements. This situation prevailed in 2018 at the time of the research conceptualisation, and despite the fact that the new programmes were due to be implemented in 2020. Although the college contributed significantly to the South African health workforce – a building block in health systems strengthening (WHO, 2007:3), the non-accreditation or the delay threatened its ability to deliver its mandate to continue educating and training nurses and midwives.

In the light of the aforementioned challenges and new developments in HE, the critical question asked is, "What should HEIs including the NEIs accomplish in order to efficaciously navigate these challenges?" Charles Darwin's statement is pertinent to consider in terms of this thesis:

"It is not the strongest of the species that survives, nor the most intelligent that survives; it is the one that is most adaptable to change" (Dunnick, 2020:908).

Mthethwa (2012:108) and Al Khajeh (2018:1) assert that leadership is a key determinant of organisations' success, hence the focus of this research. In such a transforming and tempestuous HE environment where the area of leadership encounters threats and hardships, HEIs' leadership needs to adapt, set attainable goals, and become effective to sustain and advance HEIs in the 21st century (Trivellas *et al.*, 2012:114; Higher Education South Africa (HESA), 2013:2; Black, 2015:54; Keet, 2015; Ramdass, 2015:1112; Jones & Harvey, 2017:126). This predicament requires leaders who are able to navigate the constant, turbulent, and complex change factors (Ramdass, 2015:1112; Aspen Institute, 2017:3; Jones & Harvey, 2017:126). Albertyn and Frick (2016:13) suggest that HEIs approach leadership differently, i.e. via shared and collaborative leadership in order to adapt and cope better with the emerging environment.

Ramsey and Wesley (2015) assert that trials facing HEI leadership offer opportunities for HEIs, hence the need for leadership that perceives HE challenges as instrumental to identifying strategies and tactics that will render these establishments HEIs of the 21st

century (Ramsey & Wesley, 2015). Koen and Bitzer (2010) propose that strong leadership's inspiration, direction, and guidance, will replace obstacles of change with opportunities of change and deliberate action, thereby enhancing HE's quality. Therefore the researcher strongly believes that the abovementioned authors' propositions hold true for South African HEIs, particularly NEIs, hence the relevance of this research.

Literature indicates that strong and effective leadership is of paramount importance for NEIs, however, there no information has been located in empirical studies regarding leadership strengthening of NEIs, specifically in the RSA. Accordingly, this research becomes significant in closing the existing knowledge gap and addressing the lack of scientific research on leadership strengthening in South African NEIs. The scenarios of ineffective or weak leadership HE have been widely reported on as a significant peril to ensuring HEIs' survival. Some of these are tyranny, unfair labour practices, poor decision-making, and the lack of moral character (Asiyai, 2013:168; Agnew, 2014:99). These are further detailed in Table 2.3. Some of these situations could be applicable to the college, hence the relevance of the research.

Thus, this research was conducted in the hope that it could lead to developing a framework to strengthen leadership at a specific nursing college. Considered to be a contribution to existing knowledge, it is anticipated that this framework could close the identified knowledge gap and facilitate accomplishing the desired reality, i.e. strong and effective institutional leadership. It is hoped that through such leadership the college could effectively navigate its challenges and transition to HE, and therefore continue to deliver on its mandate of educating and training nurses who are competent enough to meet the country's health demands.

1.2 STATEMENT OF THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

As part of HE globally and locally, nursing education faces major challenges that require strong and effective leadership, and this situation has received significant attention. In the RSA, the nature, procedures, and execution of revised nursing programmes present immense challenges for nursing education leadership. These challenges and the imminent transition, threaten the country's responsiveness to its societal changes and population health needs and expectations. Failure to respond could also jeopardise the country's position as an affiliate of WHO, which expects participating nations to ensure a

well-performing health workforce that caters for its population's needs and demands. This situation requires leadership that will identify strategies and tactics to ensure that NEIs become HEIs of the 21st century. The researcher, as a NE and member of the senate at a South African public nursing college, has experienced these existing leadership challenges as well as those emanating from the transformation. Evidence regarding leadership strengthening at NEIs in the RSA is lacking. An exploration of leadership strengths existing within this challenged and transforming context could provide evidence to address this knowledge gap. Moreover, in appreciating the leadership strengths at the college, a firm foundation for strong leadership required by this institution could be established. As a result, the researcher believes that developing a framework to strengthen institutional leadership would enable effective and collective navigation of the challenges faced by the college as well as its transition to HE.

1.3 RESEARCH QUESTION

Resulting from the description of the background, rationale, and the research problem, the following research question emerged:

How can leadership at a South African public nursing college be strengthened?

1.4 RESEARCH PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES

The purpose of the research was to develop a framework to strengthen leadership at a South African public nursing college.

To fulfil the purpose, the research endeavoured to:

- i. employ AI for collaborative leadership strengthening at a South African public nursing college;
- ii. explore and describe the existing leadership strengths within a challenged and transforming South African nursing education context from the perspectives of experienced NELEs by means of a modified Delphi;
- iii. analyse and synthesise the research findings obtained from the AI sessions and a modified Delphi to develop a framework to strengthen leadership at a South African public nursing college; and

- iv. validate the developed framework by involving key stakeholders.

1.5 ESTABLISHING THE RESEARCH FIELD AND SCOPE

Identifying the research problem and defining the research scope and boundaries are important in providing focus and direction to any proposed research activity (Vincent-Lambert, 2011:13). Research pertaining to leadership-strengthening took place within the landscape of South African HE, particularly nursing education. The college was identified as facing numerous challenges as well as transitioning to HE, and this observed predicament prompted this research. The same problem could, for example, be approached from a professional practice, governance/management, or educational perspective. However, the researcher took an informed decision and embarked on research that focused mainly on the college's leadership. This choice was prompted by the researcher's intense interest in leadership but also because leadership is considered to be an organisational element significant to exert necessary influence required by HEIs, including NEIs to navigate their demands.

The scope of this research is contextual and therefore limited only to the development of a framework to strengthen leadership at the college. Research pertaining to the implementation and evaluation of the framework lies beyond the scope of this specific research and may provide an excellent opportunity for further exploration in this area.

1.6 PARADIGMATIC PERSPECTIVE

This research was undertaken from a social constructionism paradigm within the interpretivist tradition (Creswell & Creswell, 2018:38; Creswell & Poth, 2018). The underlying set beliefs about how elements of the research fit together, how the researcher can inquire into and make meaning of the research process and findings are described as the research paradigm (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017:26). Furthermore, a research paradigm is understood to be a worldview that is intensely rooted in the researcher's socialisation in terms of their thoughts and basic beliefs about the world, including the way in which the researcher views the research (Polit & Beck, 2017:37; Denzin & Lincoln, 2018:14, 45). In essence, a paradigm is the way one looks at or thinks about something. This implies that a paradigm serves as a lens through which their reality is interpreted. Paradigms should be deliberated in terms of four basic underlying beliefs or philosophical assumptions: ontology; epistemology; methodology; and axiology (Mertens, 2015:11-16;

Denzin & Lincoln, 2018:195). The research's philosophical underpinnings are summarised in Table 1.2 and are detailed in Section 3.2.

Table 1.2 Summary of the research's philosophical underpinnings

Philosophical Assumptions	Social Constructionism	Application in the Research
Ontology: (Assumptions about the nature of being and reality).	(Relative) Reality is a socially constructed human product, as human beings engage with the world and make sense of it based on their historical and social perspectives. Social constructionism repels the existence of a single reality and accepts the idea of multiple realities.	Participants collaboratively constructed the reality of leadership strengthening at a public South African nursing college. Experienced South African NELEs' voices were included to add to multiple realities.
Epistemology: (Assumptions about the nature of knowledge and knowing).	(Transactional) People socially construct meanings as they interact with the world they are interpreting. The researcher and participants work together in the creation of various meanings. Data, interpretations, and outcomes are rooted in contexts.	During the AI, the participants interacted with one another to construct knowledge about leadership strengthening within a shared context, i.e. a public nursing college. Experienced South African NELEs' perspectives on existing leadership strengths on the national level were added to further enrich the AI data. A framework relating to the specific context was developed through inductive reasoning.
Methodology: (Assumptions about "how things are done").	(Hermeneutic, contextual, and dialectic) Researchers seek to understand the complexity of the diverse participants' perspectives by using multiple data sources and multiple methods of data collection.	Multiple meanings were identified from different data sources and methods within a particular context. All different perspectives were taken into account to develop the framework.

	• The methodology is emergent and facilitates the creation of multiple meanings. • Researchers: ○ ask broad, general, open-ended questions; ○ focus on the ‘processes’ of interaction; ○ focus on participants’ historical and cultural settings; ○ strive for data confirmability rather than objectivity; and ○ interpret others’ meanings about the world.	
Axiology: (Assumptions about ethics and values).	(Subjective) Researchers: • clarify values; • build a sense of community and rapport; • raise participants’ awareness of the multiplicity of meanings; • present a balanced representation of views; and • acknowledge that participants’ backgrounds shape interpretation.	The values and principles to ensure research integrity, as well as measures to ensure trustworthiness of the research were clearly defined and adhered to throughout the research.

Source: Lincoln and Guba (2013:59,65), Mertens (2015:18-20), Savin-Baden and Major (2013:23,29,56,63), and Creswell and Creswell (2018:38-39).

Through social constructionism's ontological stance, which is relative in nature, multiple realities in this research were created that related to strengthening college leadership, and arose from the various participants' views. Within a transactional epistemology, diverse meanings were derived from the data yielded from the collaboration between various college members and inputs from experienced South African NELEs. From this knowledge construction, a framework to strengthen leadership was developed through inductive reasoning. In line with hermeneutic, contextual, and dialectic methodology, multiple sources of data and two methods, i.e. AI and a modified Delphi involving various participants from a specific context, provided rich data from various perspectives. The axiology, characterised by subjectivity and meaning-making was influenced by the values of individuals involved in this research. Research integrity was achieved by applying principle-based ethics and trustworthiness.

1.7 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHOD

In response to the research's paradigmatic perspective and in answer to the research question, a qualitative approach was employed. Qualitative research is a methodical approach that describes experiences and circumstances from the view of persons in the situation (Grove & Gray, 2019:89). The researcher explored the participants' words, discovered meaning in words, and offered descriptions of the experiences to promote deeper understanding of the experience (Creswell & Poth, 2018)

The chosen research design was exploratory, descriptive, contextual, and collaborative. In general a design is considered to be a specific plan or direction for guiding the research, in which explicit research approaches are decided upon (Creswell & Creswell, 2018:41; Grove & Gray, 2019:588). This plan was structured in a practical way to satisfactorily answer the research question (Kumar, 2011:94; Bhattacharjee, 2012:22).

A research method is a set of logistical procedures and techniques, which are applied to create evidence, consider research data sources, obtain data from these sources, and to process, analyse, and interpret this data into useful research findings (Polit & Beck, 2017:33; Creswell & Poth, 2018). The specific research methods applied to collect data within this research include AI and a modified Delphi. As a way or structure for conducting research, these methods became logistical processes and specific steps or interventions

to collect and analyse data methodically, which the researcher followed to implement research (De Vos *et al.*, 2011; Polit & Beck, 2017:389).

Development of a framework to strengthen leadership at the college involves social science research, therefore its execution had to be planned to follow a systematically structured method (Polit & Beck, 2017:389). The framework was validated for refinement purposes. The two methods of data collection employed in this qualitative research, namely AI and a modified Delphi, are depicted in Figure 1.1.

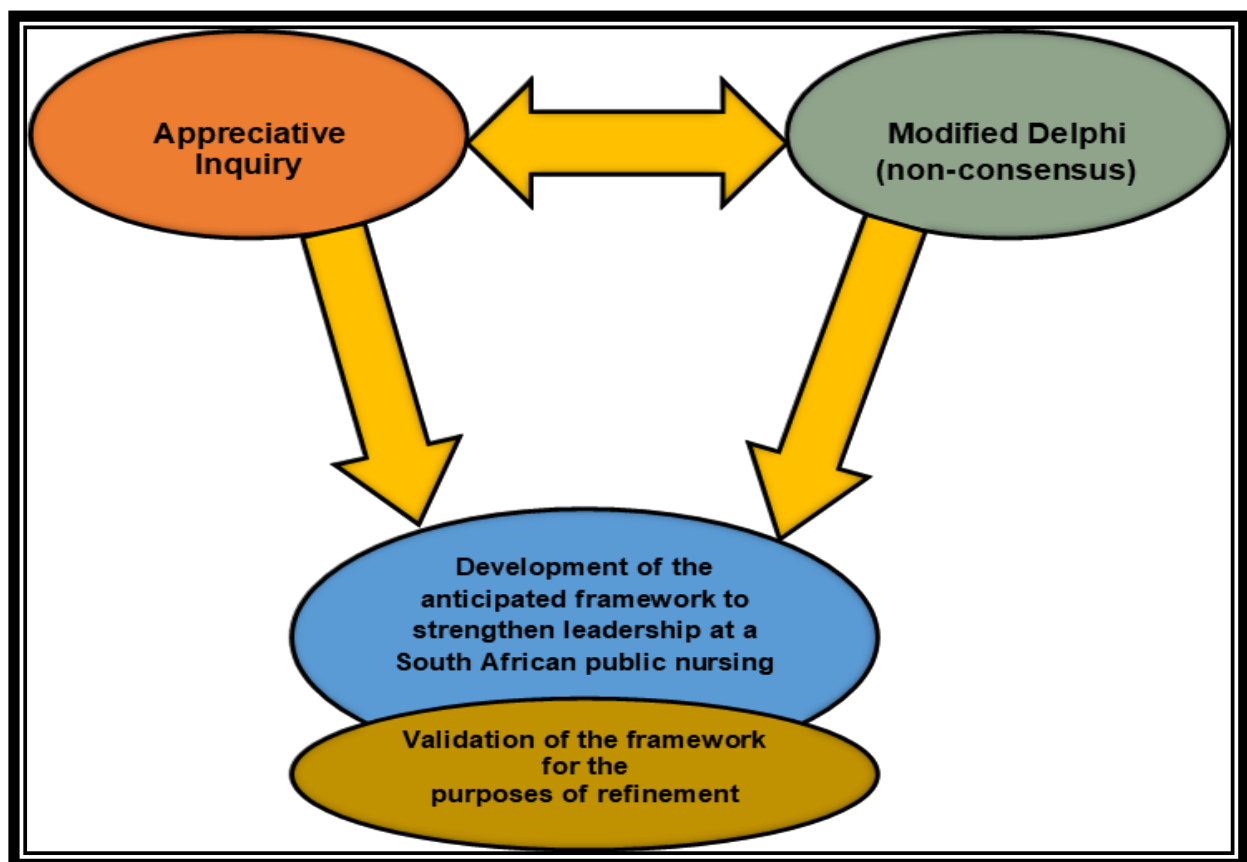


Figure 1.1 The research methods employed in the development of a framework to strengthen leadership at a South African public nursing college

The two data collection methods used in this research yielded significant information that formed the basis for development of the envisioned framework and are further detailed hereunder.

1.7.1 Appreciative Inquiry

The AI process was used to meet the first objective of the study, i.e. collaborative leadership strengthening at the college. The choice of AI was motivated by the following quotation:

“... there is no power for change greater than that of a community discovering what it cares about” (Wheatley, 2002:55).

In line with the author’s words, the researcher used the AI approach to collaborate with the participants at the college to appreciate their leadership strengths and to think creatively about the future with the intention of enabling the institution to navigate its challenges, as well as transition to HE.

In this research, AI was not solely applied as a research tool, but also as an innovative directorial philosophy that took a positive approach to leadership strengthening (Jordan & Thatchenkery, 2011:179; Priest *et al.*, 2013:18). The cooperative, co-evolutionary nature of AI involves an exploration of the best in people, their organisations, and the world around them (Cooperrider, *et al.*, 2008:3; Stratton-Berkessel, 2020). A strengths-based exploration of this nature was considered appropriate because the researcher and the participants could collaborate to elicit the multiple perspectives on the phenomena under study.

Although the research problem was briefly described for the purpose of the research process, this research was mainly conducted within the framework of AI that focuses on organisational strengths rather than problems. Therefore, an affirmative topic instead of a problem statement was formulated to direct using AI as positive approach to generate data that were integrated into the framework to strengthen college leadership (Cooperrider *et al.* 2008:3,103; Whitney *et al.* 2019:165).

The affirmative topic that guided the AI process in this research was:

“Appreciative Inquiry as a collaborative tool in strengthening leadership at a South African public nursing college.”

As one of the research methods for this research, AI employs social construction philosophy to build on and reframe the organisation's foundational reality as it capitalises on existing strengths (Jordan & Thatchenkery, 2011:179; Priest *et al.*, 2013:20). As illustrated in Figure 1.2, AI is a stage-based cycle, usually involving the following stages: i. Discovering phase; ii. Dreaming phase; iii. Designing phase; and iv. Delivering phase (Cooperrider *et al.*, 2008:5; Whitney *et al.*, 2019:164).

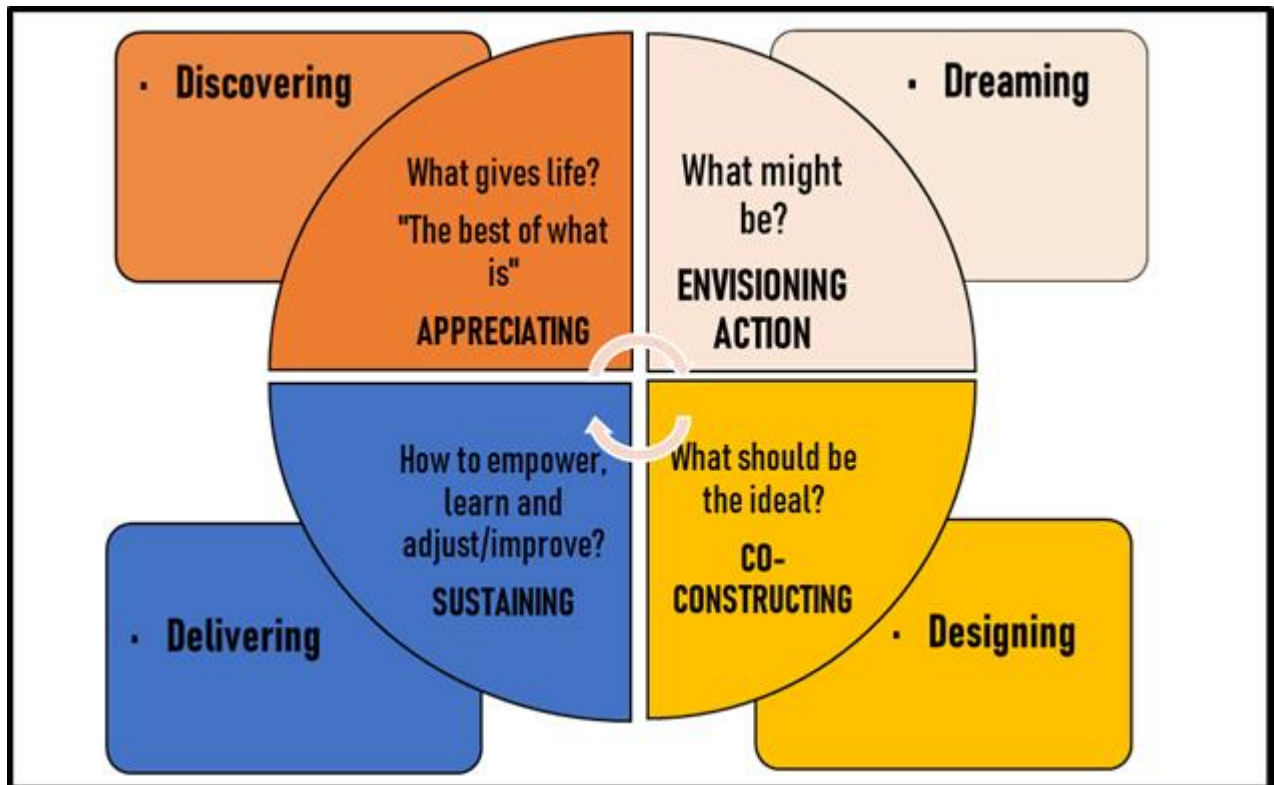


Figure 1.2 Appreciative Inquiry 4D-Cycle. Adapted from Shuayb *et al.* (2009:4) and Whitney *et al.*, 2019:164)

Based on Figure 1.2 depicted above the DP, CHs, HADs, NEs, and SLs were prompted to collectively appreciate the existing institutional leadership strengths (*Discovering phase*). Thereafter, the participants were stimulated to envision what needed to be achieved to enable the college to navigate its own challenges (*Dreaming phase*). The participants' ideas were then conveyed in the form of mind map exercise that was then regarded as the preliminary framework co-created by the participants and the researcher (*Designing phase*). Having achieved this, the participants were prompted to think about the elements that they considered crucial in attaining the co-constructed ideal, i.e. strong or effective institutional leadership (*Delivering phase*). The details of the AI process executed in this research are presented in Chapter 3.

1.7.2 Modified Delphi method (without statistical consensus)

A Delphi method is generally described as both a group communication tool and a highly organised multi-staged means to attain unanimity amongst experts on a given subject (Grime & Wright, 2016:1). However, in this study, a modified Delphi was employed to explore and describe the existing leadership strengths within in a challenged and transforming nursing education context. Modifying the Delphi entailed a qualitative application aimed at an in-depth exploration of NELEs' views on the topic under discussion, rather than reaching statistical consensus (Fletcher & Marchildon, 2014:1-2; Brady, 2015:1).

During the research conceptualisation it was acknowledged that public nursing colleges do not operate in silos, but instead form part of the greater South African nursing education fraternity, thus, making it significantly necessary to establish the nursing education leadership strengths that existed in the country. Little information was found in literature regarding leadership strengths in South African nursing education and therefore it was decided to elicit foundational knowledge on the subject that is deeply rooted in the participants' perspectives. A modified Delphi was selected due to its suitability to elicit thoughts and ideas from experts, who in this case were the experienced NELEs (McPherson *et al.*, 2018:404). An additional consideration was that the experienced South African NELEs are spread out across multiple geographical areas and are busy professionals who require flexibility during participation (Brady, 2015:3). This author further asserts that in-person interviews would subsequently not have been cost-effective.

However, due to the qualitative, exploratory, and descriptive nature of this research, multiple perspectives on leadership strengths in South Africa's nursing education milieu were sought from experienced NELEs without statistical consensus (Habibi *et al.*, 2014:11; Fletcher & Marchildon, 2014:1). These diverse multiple perspectives are viewed from the impression that shared wisdom reduces ambiguity and increases precision (Ronald, 2017:11-12).

A modified Delphi without statistical consensus commenced with an exploratory open-ended question (Davidson, 2013:56; Habibi *et al.*, 2014:10) that were devised together with the research supervisor and prior to the actual implementation, was piloted with an expert who met the inclusion criteria (Creswell & Creswell, 2018:174).

The open-ended exploratory question posed to the NELEs was:

“What are the existing leadership strengths in a challenged and transforming South African nursing education context, which you regard to be necessary and appropriate to enable South African NEIs to navigate higher education challenges of the 21st century?”

A modified Delphi method as one of the research techniques employed in this research is further detailed in Chapter 3.

1.7.3 Developing a framework to strengthen leadership at a South African public nursing college

Data from the three AI sessions and a modified Delphi were analysed and synthesised to co-create the desired framework to strengthen leadership at a South African public nursing college. The developed framework is presented in Section 6.2.

1.7.4 Validating a framework

A group of stakeholders, i.e. the research’s participants, including the college managers, NEs, and the SLs, were involved in validating the developed framework. In alignment with the nature of this research, the purpose of the group session was not to find consensus, but rather to ensure incorporation of the views shared by the participants. Because a participatory method was applied, the participants were required for validation purposes. Savin-Baden and Major’s (2013:466-467) guidelines were applied.

The cohort was asked to validate the framework based on the following criteria:

- its reasonableness;
- its ability to lead to understanding; and
- its utility.

The group of stakeholders’ motivations were considered for possible amendments of the framework and to confirm the framework. Further details of the framework’s validation report are included in Section 6.4.

A summary of the application of the two research methods, the AI and a modified Delphi, is presented in Table 1.3. The population, unit of analysis, pilot study, and the processes

of data collection and analysis of each method are briefly described. A short outline of the framework's development and validation is also included.

Table 1.3 Summary of the research methods applied in this research

Research Methods	Method 1: Appreciative Inquiry	Method 2: Modified Delphi
Population	College management, including NEs and SLs (approximately 80).	Experienced NELEs within the South African nursing education context (approximately 30).
Unit of analysis	AI sessions were conducted at the college's three campuses, with each interview including participation from the DP, CHs, HADs, NEs, and SLs. Purposive sampling was applied to obtain a unit of analysis for the AI sessions. The details of inclusion criteria for AI sessions are presented in Section 3.3.2.1. The unit of analysis for the three AI sessions consisted of 48 participants and more detailed information is included in Section 3.3.2.1.	Ten experienced South African NELEs as per inclusion criteria presented in Section 3.3.2.2 participated in a modified Delphi.
Pilot study	The questions for the AI session sessions as outlined in the AI workbook (Annexure F) were pretested with a group comprising managers, NEs, and SLs at another NEI close to the research site Refer to Annexure C for approval granted to conduct a pilot study.	An open-ended exploratory question for the modified Delphi as stipulated in Section 1.7.2 was explored with the head of the NEI nearby the research site prior to the actual data collection. No information was received from the candidate suggesting revisions of the posed question. The question was therefore accepted to be appropriate, and due to the anticipated shortage and scarcity of experienced NELEs, responses of the pilot study were included in the main findings of the research.
Data collection	Three AI sessions were conducted at the respective college campuses and the participants' responses were captured in the AI workbook.	A single qualitative exploratory open-ended question was communicated via an email to 30 experienced NELEs who were purposefully selected and ten of these experts replied to the question and emailed their responses back to the researcher.
Data analysis	Content and thematic analysis were applied to make sense of the AI and modified data. Three data sets from the AI sessions were separately analysed to identify categories (Annexure M) and ultimately merged to present the integrated AI findings. Thought-provoking and pertinent categories were also identified from the modified Delphi data. (Annexure O). From the identified categories, various themes emerged.	

Framework development	The integrated AI findings and the modified Delphi findings were included into the development of a framework to strengthen leadership at a South African public nursing college.
Validation of a framework	Findings from the modified Delphi and AI were integrated into the developed framework that was then validated through a panel of key stakeholders by means Savin-Baden and Major's (2013:466-467) suggested guidelines.

A discussion of the elements described in the table above follows in Chapter 3. More specifically, the two research methods employed in the research, AI and a modified Delphi, are discussed extensively in Section 3.3.2 to justify their choice and to demonstrate their application in this research.

1.8 TRUSTWORTHINESS

Grove and Gray (2019:449) state that research results are trustworthy when there has been some rigour in performing the research and thus it is critical that rigour is ensured in qualitative research studies. Lincoln and Guba (1985:290) propose the term 'trustworthiness' as a method to ensure qualitative research's rigour without sacrificing its relevance. Polit and Beck (2017:747) further describe trustworthiness as the degree of confidence that qualitative researchers have in their data and analyses. In this research, the researcher adopted the criteria originally set out by Lincoln and Guba (1985:294-316), namely credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability, and Guba and Lincoln's (1994:105-107) additional criterion, authenticity, as cited in Polit and Beck (2017:559-560).

a. Credibility (*truth value*)

Credibility refers to confidence in the truth of the data, and is the principle applied to evaluate a qualitative study's integrity and quality (Polit & Beck, 2017:559). By enhancing the study's credibility, the researcher ascertains the degree to which the research results truly reflect of the participants' perspectives of the research phenomenon (De Vos *et al.*, 2011:272; Polit & Beck, 2017:161). In this research, credibility was ensured through prolonged engagement, persistent observation, triangulation, peer review, and the researcher and the AI facilitator's proficiency.

b. Transferability (*applicability*)

Transferability is concerned with the extent to which the results of a qualitative research are not exclusively dependent upon the original research setting, groups, or circumstances but its applicability in other contexts or to other groups (Polit & Beck, 2017:246; Grove & Gray, 2019:593). In research, transferability is established by asking whether the research findings can be transferred from one specific situation or case to another (Mertens, 2015:333; Leavy, 2017:128). Other researchers can replicate the

research in their contexts, and they can also sense whether the research has applicable value in their setting. The sufficient thick description of the unit of analysis and the research context influences the transferability of the research results (Polit & Beck, 2017:711; Grove & Gray, 2019:450). Therefore, the researcher needs to present adequate descriptive data that allow the readers of the research to assess the applicability of the data in other milieus (Polit & Beck, 2017:711). The above-mentioned authors believe that the decision to transfer lies entirely with the person who wants to transfer the findings to other settings. In this research, transferability was achieved by a dense or thick description of the methodology, data, and the nominated unit of analysis. Hence, the findings of the modified Delphi are applicable to South Africa only, while those of the AI cannot be generalised to other NEIs, or more specifically the public nursing colleges.

c. Dependability (*consistency*)

Dependability refers to data's stability (reliability) over time and across conditions, and is equivalent to reliability in quantitative research (Polit & Beck, 2017:787). Grove and Gray (2019:449) describe dependability as the documentation of steps taken and decisions made during analysis. The availability of such evidence would ensure similar results if the research was duplicated with the same participants in the same context (Polit & Beck, 2017:787). In this research, dependability was achieved through by describing the research method and performing audit trails. Furthermore, data collection was consistent, because at all three campuses, a consistent AI process was followed, using the same workbooks in all three settings. A common open-ended exploratory question was posed to the experienced South African NELEs for the modified Delphi. Similar guidelines were employed by the various college stakeholders to validate the framework.

d. Confirmability (*neutrality*)

Confirmability refers to the data's objectivity or neutrality, which is evident when two or more independent persons evaluate the data's accuracy, relevance, or meaning and in the findings that must reflect the inquiry's focus (Lincoln & Guba, 1985:299; Polit & Beck, 2017:788). In other words, the research data emerged from the experienced South African NELEs, the college managers, NEs, and the SLs, rather than from the researcher's predisposition. This principle applies to the feedback data received from the various stakeholders during the framework validation. This criterion, against which

neutrality is measured, could be achieved by a confirmability audit, triangulation, and reflexivity (Polit & Beck, 2017:805). In this research, confirmability was ensured by a confirmability audit and triangulation of literature resources, a consensus discussion between the researcher and independent coder, and data acquired during the framework validation.

e. Authenticity

Authenticity refers to the extent to which the researcher fairly and faithfully shows qualities of a range of realities (Elo *et al.*, 2014:2; Polit & Beck, 2017:788). These include the authenticity criteria of fairness, ontological authenticity, educative authenticity, catalytic authenticity, and tactical authenticity (Collins *et al.*, 2013:274). To ensure fairness in this research, all relevant participants were invited to participate, but only those who were willing and consented to participate were included. In line with Collins *et al.* (2013:274), the participants' perspectives, whether agreeable or conflicting, were fairly represented and unequivocally indicated in the research. Prolonged engagement, a comprehensive and vivid recording of the information collected through AI and a modified Delphi, reflexivity, and the data presentation achieved authenticity.

The measures taken to ensure trustworthiness in this research are described in Section 3.6.

1.9 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

As an expectation for all research, ethical principles that protect the rights of the participants were observed and adhered to during the course of this research (Polit & Beck, 2017:137). The study was conducted after ethics clearance and permission were obtained from the relevant authorities (Annexures A & B). A principle-based approach to ethics was pursued throughout the research process by adhering to the Belmont principles of respect for human dignity, beneficence, and justice (Dhai & McQuoid-Mason; 2011:14-15; Polit & Beck, 2017:210; Grove & Gray, 2019:134). This research is considered to be a low risk because it posed no physical harm, emotional distress, or social risk to participants, but due to the extended period of time required for the AI, mental fatigue and loss of time could have had a negative effect on participants. Including various categories of college members ranging from SLs to the DP introduced the

possibility of power imbalance. A more elaborate discussion of the ethical considerations is presented in Section 3.7.

1.10 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Certain shortcomings emerged during the research process. Even though measures were taken to address these issues, it is acknowledged that these might have negatively impacted on the outcome of the study. One of the issues that arose included reaching the entire population of South African NELEs for the modified Delphi and receiving timeous feedback from those contacted. Although data collection and analysis were completed when the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic were felt in the country, there is no doubt that multiple challenges were introduced. This crisis had an adverse effect on the research process, such that changes had to be made, for example, to conduct the framework validation electronically. Interaction between the researcher and supervisor completely shifted to a remote mode, thus introducing unforeseen problems. In addition to the research-related limitations, the pandemic added to unforeseen challenges having to be navigated by the HEIs' leaders. The limitations are further discussed in Section 7.9.

1.11 OUTLINE OF THE CHAPTERS

The division of the chapters of this research is presented in Figure 1.3.

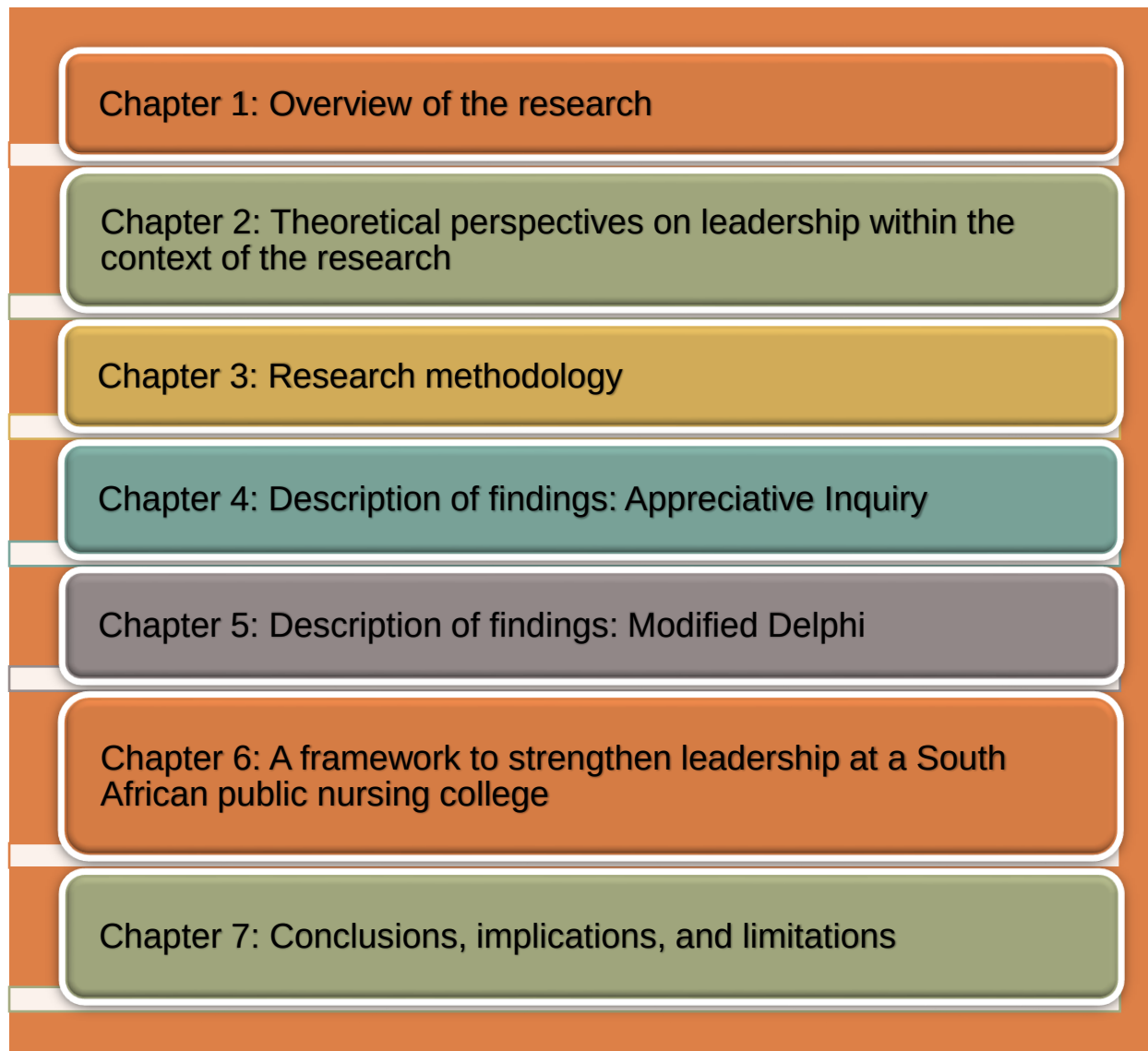


Figure 1.3 Overview of the research chapters

Commencing with an overview of the research, brief contextual theoretical perspectives in leadership were presented followed by a detailed discussion on the research methodology. Subsequent to the outline on the research implementation, both the AI and modified Delphi's findings were described. With these descriptions at the researcher's disposal, the framework to strengthen leadership at the college was developed and presented to the relevant stakeholders for validation. The research process concluded with a description of the researcher's claimed contribution to knowledge and an illustration of the research's implications for consideration.

1.12 SUMMARY

The broad-based challenges and expectations facing HEIs in general, and NEIs in particular, were briefly mentioned in this chapter. Effective leadership was deemed necessary to successfully navigate the 21st century's turbulent times. South African NEIs are not excluded from the predicament, and thus requires strong leadership to meet the obligation of educating and training nurses and midwives whilst simultaneously responding to societal health demands. Together with other NEIs in the country, a specific South African public nursing college was challenged with a pending transition to HE. However, evidence was lacking in terms of how to strengthen the college's leadership to steer it through the portal as it were, and meet the challenges they faced. Therefore the following question was posed, "How can leadership at a South African public nursing college be strengthened?"

Guided by social constructionism, a qualitative, exploratory, descriptive, contextual, and collaborative design was believed to achieve the research purpose, i.e. to develop a framework to strengthen leadership at a South African public nursing college. An AI was chosen to facilitate collaborative leadership strengthening at the college, whilst a modified Delphi was employed to explore and describe the existing leadership strengths in South African nursing education. It was explained that the data sets were individually analysed via a thematic content analysis and the findings were integrated to develop a framework. In conclusion, measures taken to address trustworthiness and the principles followed to ensure integrity of the research were presented. As indicated in the chapter outline, theoretical perspectives on leadership within the context of the research are presented in the next chapter.

Chapter 2 Theoretical Perspectives on Leadership within the Context of the Research

“Leadership appears to be a critical determinant of organisational effectiveness, whether we are discussing an army, an orchestra, a hockey team, a street gang, a political party, a group of mountaineers or a multinational cooperation. It is not surprising to find, therefore, that leadership has been the subject of intense academic investigation and journalistic commentary....” (Huczynski & Buchanan, 2001).

2.1 INTRODUCTION

As with any other organisation, effectively navigating the challenges facing HEIs, and NEIs in particular, is critically dependent on leadership (Huczynski & Buchanan, 2001). Realising that it is impossible to delve deep into the literature on each of the problematic situations mentioned in the previous chapter, the researcher decided to focus on the topics deemed most relevant within the context of this research. Having discovered the dilemma facing South African NEIs, this chapter provides an overview of the literature that casts light on the ensuing issues. Leadership at HEIs, current developments and challenges at HEIs, expectations and demands in HE from the wider global community, leadership challenges at NEIs, leadership approaches for HEIs of the 21st century, and critical deliberations on HEIs’ leadership realities are explored.

2.2 LEADERSHIP AT HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

Without exception, leadership is crucial for the survival of HE. Leadership at HEIs institutes and fosters the organisation’s direction as well as its formulation of priorities, policies, and strategies guided by legislative framework (CHE, 2016:108). However, the global HE context has changed significantly and the related complexities have had significant repercussions for leadership practice at HEIs (Beattie *et al.*, 2013:62). In view of the impact that change has had on HEIs’ operations, it is highly probable that leadership would be prompted to respond effectively to the HEIs’ reality in order for them to remain relevant and meet societal demands. Change for HEIs requires agile, adept, and effective leadership (Fahimirad *et al.*, 2016:71). These authors agree that leadership with the above-mentioned characteristics should be able to navigate the constant, turbulent, and

complex factors attached to transformation for the survival, sustainability, and success of HEIs. Unpacking the complexities that continue to affect HEIs' operations favourably and unfavourably is deemed vital to construct an improved understanding of how these challenges impact on institutional leadership.

2.3 CURRENT DEVELOPMENTS AND CHALLENGES AT HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

Globalisation, internationalisation, and massification of HE, shrinking subsidies, and infrastructure constraints are purportedly some of the challenges currently being experienced by HEIs. These realities are explored to achieve a deeper understanding of how they impact on HE leadership.

2.3.1 Globalisation of higher education

Citizens, companies, and national governments globally progressively interrelate and integrate with one another, entering relationships that are of cultural, economic, political, and social significance (Rifai, 2013:89; Banda, 2019:2). Through globalisation, cross-cultural understanding and collaboration has improved (Rifai, 2013:89) and political interrelations globally have intensified and expanded (Steger, 2017). Additionally, barriers to international trade have been removed, thus strengthening and deepening inequalities between rich and poor countries (Dzvimbo & Moloi, 2013). Researchers understand globalisation as expansion, concentration, and acceleration of international relations (Steger, 2017).

Dzvimbo and Moloi (2013:2) argue that sub-Saharan Africa has historically and typically been coerced by neo-liberal market economics and government policies into fulfilling their interests before its own. These authors further propose that the delivery of HE has been manipulated indirectly to advancing the process of globalisation. Globalisation has been enabled by the advanced technological infrastructure ensuring that various global key stakeholders remain connected (Bosamia, 2013:4; Rifai, 2013:88). To a certain degree, HEIs are affected by globalisation. In academia, globalisation is viewed as the trends with cross-national implications (Altbach, 2015:6) that affect and trigger change in HE systems (Sifuna, 2012:121; Prahalladappa, 2014:24; Popescu, 2015a:412). Globalisation's

influence on educational motives and strategic management decisions significantly motivates the necessity for transformation in HEIs (Popescu, 2015a:412). Globalisation trends include mass HE, a global marketplace for students, lecturers, and highly educated staff, as well as the global reach of incomes. The realities of globalisation for HEIs include pressure to compete for better students, educators, funding, and research opportunities, as well as the demand to meet the criteria set by international competitiveness and related efficiency (Libhaber & Green, 2015:7).

Popescu (2015a:413) shares similar sentiments and upholds that African HEIs need to engage with globalisation in a manner that reinforces internal institutional and intellectual capacities, qualities, reputations, and competitiveness, and they should be realistic and ambitious in doing so. It appears as if South African HEIs have also had to devise strategies to respond well to globalisation, and has established relationships with countries beyond its border, with an emphasis on health professions education (HPE). Through this global connectivity, the RSA participates in student and academic exchange programmes, and through government initiatives, students experience international research opportunities.

With regard to nursing education in particular the South African HEIs performed so well that their output, i.e. production of safe and competent nurses, has resulted in them being able to practice abroad. Although losing nurses to other countries exacerbates the existing shortage of nurses, it is assumed that it is the quality and standard of South African nursing education and training that appeals to the global market. Libhaber and Green (2015:7) emphasise that in striving for global competitiveness and operating in the context of globalisation characterised by different and overlapping economic and social forces, South African HEIs should attempt to retain their local identity. Even though critical issues involving globalisation have been highlighted, complexities and repercussions of this phenomenon are so immense that it is impossible to delineate them in the limited space of this text.

Reverting to the focus of the study, effective leadership has been promoted as a key element in responding appropriately to globalisation and its associated challenges. Committed and proficient leadership is key to navigate globalisation successfully (Sifuna,

2012:121), resulting in HEIs' leaders being tasked with responding effectively as front-runners to globalisation and ensuring that it contributes positively to HE.

Popescu (2015b:992) suggests that the response to globalisation needs to be consistent with HEIs' needs, priorities, and circumstances. This author further asserts that being able to globalise serves both the national needs and challenges for HEIs to become world players capable of meeting global needs. In trying to respond to globalisation, Kapur (2018a:4) suggests academic relevance and quality, curriculum development, and mobility of programmes.

What the researcher could gather from the mentioned perspectives is that many sectors, including HEIs, are affected by globalisation that continues to shape HEIs' operations, and they must be addressed. Furthermore, these views suggest that HEIs' effective response to globalisation is vital in preparing students and equipping them with the necessary skills that enable them to participate actively in global activities. In essence, this is how the researcher understands globalisation, i.e. that no HEI could exist in isolation in an interconnected world that shares valuable ideas for survival and sustainability. The value of quality HE on building skills required to build economies around the world is inestimable. The current question for HEIs to address should not be about whether or not to globalise but rather it should focus on how to globalise most efficiently.

While HEIs have been encouraged to approach globalisation such that it benefits them, i.e. recognising and utilising opportunities, it is important to highlight that the current circumstances surrounding African HEIs, including the RSA, do not facilitate an easy response to globalisation. However, despite current conditions, the leaders at these institutions have made strides in actively engaging with the rest of the world on issues that affect HE. Most importantly, from the discussion it is apparent that other continents have shown an interest in connecting and establishing global relationships with the African HE context and this has resulted in various prospects for HEIs on the continent.

2.3.2 Internationalisation trends in higher education

Countries and individual academic institutions or systems worldwide have reacted to globalisation and implemented measures such as drafting policies and initiating

programmes to deal with the global trends (Altbach, 2015:290; Libhaber & Greene, 2015:18; Tight, 2019:55). Central to the countries' responses is the buzzword 'internationalisation'. This term appeals to the researcher as international agreements and agreements between organisations across national borders to enhance relations and have subsequent positive benefits. Internationalisation is described as a relationship between countries, people, systems, and cultures (DoHET, 2017:9; Tight, 2019:60). Similar to globalisation, this worldwide phenomenon has become a major trend in HE (Altbach, 2015:6; Libhaber & Greene, 2015:18).

While the DoHET (2017:9) maintains that the processes of internationalisation and those of globalisation are closely related, De Wit (2011:241) and Tight (2019:59) contend that globalisation and internationalisation are multifaceted trends with various components. These phenomena coincide and are connected in different ways. Sharipov (2020:131) illustrates the relationship between globalisation and internationalisation with reference to HEIs implementing a variety of international policies, programmes, and in response to globalisation.

For internationalisation to be realised in HE, commitment through infusion of international and comparative perspectives throughout teaching, research, and community service is vital (Hudzik, 2011:5). For South Africa, internationalisation has been adopted as a deliberate course to infuse intercultural, international, and global dimensions in HE in order to advance the goals, functions, and delivery of HE and thus to enhance the quality of education (Urbanovic & Wilkins, 2013; Jibeen & Khan, 2015:196).

Examples of internationalisation include introducing policies related to recruiting foreign students, sending students abroad, collaborating with academic institutions or systems in other countries, or engaging in some type of inter-institutional partnership, and establishing branch campuses abroad (Altbach, 2015:6; Libhaber & Greene, 2015:18). Although the South African government has not developed a clear policy framework for internationalising HE, Libhaber and Green (2015:18) state that the significance of achieving rich diversity on its campuses and, more importantly, establishing better partnerships and collaborations to improve research outputs, infrastructure, and industry, has been promoted in this country.

The aforementioned internationalisation trends pose serious leadership challenges for HEIs. These include the commercialisation and commodification of education programmes, increasing the number of foreign “degree mills” and low-quality providers, the brain drain, the loss of cultural or national identity, jeopardy of poor HE quality, and homogenisation of the curriculum (Knight, 2007:8). Over and above the challenges related to internationalisation, the benefits of internationalisation for HE have also been communicated. For the African continent, internationalisation is considered as potentially offering immense opportunities to develop and revitalise HE (Sehoole & Knight 2013:1), especially considering that most of African countries have substantially reduced public spending for HE due to decades of widespread macroeconomic and fiscal instability (Aina, 2010:27). Knight (2007:8) reports on benefits such as academic quality, research, and curriculum development, which are significant elements in any HEI.

Based on the aforementioned benefits, the researcher believes that South African HEIs can continue to benefit from this phenomenon, however, as with any other initiative or programme implemented in HE, internationalisation needs to be directed. Various authors support managing internationalisation, claiming that efforts to monitor internationalisation initiatives and ensure quality are fundamental to the international HE environment (Jibeen & Khan, 2015:198; DoHET, 2017:20). Monitoring and evaluation (M&E) is an essential leadership function in HEIs, and thus, for intercultural, international collaborations to succeed, a stronger voice in terms of effective, competent, and strong global leadership is considered crucial (Perez, 2017:50). This statement places leadership at HEIs at the core of the internationalisation. Witthuhn and Le Roux (2017:210) add that leadership’s commitment to an international vision could contribute towards establishing policy and research and training initiatives for curricula internationalisation.

Lessons derived from discussions on internationalisation are similar to those of globalisation, as internationalisation has been generally placed as a constructive and vital element in developing HE. The discussion on internationalisation demonstrates how HEIs could benefit significantly from this current trend. Some of the benefits include successful research funding, international staff and student conscription, and authoring with international research partners, which assists in determining HE institutions’ positions in influential global university rankings. The challenges that emanate from internationalisation cannot be disregarded. Hence the onus is on HEIs leadership to

respond effectively to HE's international trends so that these benefit their institutions instead of driving them to failure or collapse.

2.3.3 Rapid expansion or massification of higher education

In response to globalisation and internationalisation most public HEIs around the world enrol students in excess of their capacity, and rapid expansion occasioned by this trend has had both positive and negative consequences (Hornsby & Osman, 2014:711; Mohamedbhai, 2014:59; Sader & Gabela, 2017:230). Kimathi and Henry (2014:345) assert that a steady increase in student enrolment occurs without concomitant increases in budgetary allocations and investment on facilities and academic staff, leading to a mismatch between quality and quantity. Even though funding is not the only factor that plays a role in the success of HEIs, the fact that student demands exceed what most institutions can offer communities is real. Therefore, the inability to accomplish quality tuition within inadequate resources frustrates and demotivates both students and employees, and this demoralising situation could pose a threat for organisational effectiveness.

Rapid expansion of HE has become a universal trend and the “unquestionable and irrevocable law” of 21st century (Palfreyman *et al.*, 2011:xiii; Altbach, 2013:1). Increased student enrolments attest to the potential to improve quality of the population and enhance competitiveness in globalising world (Mok & Jiang, 2016:2). Similarly, Hornsby and Osman (2014:713) view massification as a potential resolution to socio-economic inequalities. This leads to enhancing productivity, since HE is attached to better health and increased life expectancies.

Massification at HEIs has led to developing large-scale programmes, such as bridging, student support, different pedagogies, obvious and transparent standards for evaluation, and a much broader series of delivery modes aided by improvements in information and communications technology (CHE, 2016:11; Sader & Gabela, 2017:232). These initiatives collectively resonate with Fidan and Balci (2017:12) who claim that educational institutions have, like all other human organisations, become large, complex, and adaptive social systems.

Mohamedbhai (2014:59) and Akalu (2016:262) propose that increased enrolments at HEIs have addressed issues of equity and access for students from African countries. This expansion is considered significant, as it has presented opportunities for many previously disregarded groups who could not have otherwise experienced HE. The CHE (2016:10) outlined the changes brought by massification to South African HEIs. These include changes to institutional structures, the size and shape of systems, and changing the curriculum from specific canons of knowledge to curricula deemed appropriate and beneficial for economic reasons. Other changes are knowledge transmission, adopting competency-centred methodologies, generic skills transfer, and outcome-based approaches, as well as the shift from classroom-based modes of delivery to open learning or blended methods (CHE, 2016:10). Furthermore, HEIs have changed from valuing pure research to applied research and their liaison with the public has changed from 'town-and-gown' methodologies to community engagement (CE) [CHE, 2016:10]. Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) is another strategy that has been adopted to provide open education (Liyanagunawardena, 2015:35). Al-Rahmi *et al.* (2018:2197) assert that this educational trend (MOOCs) has expanded access to and availability of education for all and an unlimited number of students.

Although increased student enrolments have addressed equity issues and access to HE, admitting numbers of students higher than the HEI's capacity has serious implications for the HE environment and the leadership. Various challenges relating to increased admissions at HEIs were raised, such as low student performance due to large classes, inadequate infrastructure and facilities, with its resultant overcrowding, inadequate competent staff to deal with huge numbers of students, and quality issues (Kimathi & Henry, 2013:45; Hornsby & Osman, 2014:713). Large classes present psychological, mental, and emotional challenges for both students and lecturers, and for students these include physical discomfort due to congested classrooms, feeling unseen, and feeling intimidated and disenfranchised in a large class. (Pillay, 2020:14784). This author asserts that the main problems facing lecturers are: the loss of lecture time, as it takes longer for students to enter the lecture venue and to settle down; an inability to relate to students and to determine their flaws and strengths; exasperation experienced in terms of assessment requirements, i.e. pressure to set assessments that are marker-friendly rather than of good quality; and finally experiencing a general feeling of not being in control of the class.

Given the increase in the number of HE students, quality control and regulation, benchmarking practises, external assessments or reviews, accreditation processes, and qualification frameworks to complement qualifications obtained in diverse settings to enable student movement have become more crucial (CHE, 2016:11). This has resulted in conflicting forces affecting HE, pulling it in different directions simultaneously and placing institutions in a serious predicament.

Although it is a political directive in the RSA that all students have access to HE and are not academically excluded due to financial circumstances, there are often times in which HEIs are unable to meet the HE's demands due to financial constraints (Aleixo *et al.*, 2018:1664). Failure to meet these demands results in pandemonium with the public exerting increasing pressure on government and HEIs to meet their needs. These uproars have negative effects on both students and HEIs, i.e. disruptions to student learning and violent behaviour and its related effects, such as destruction of campus property (Mutekwe, 2017:148,150). The #FeesMustFall student protests is one example of chaotic situations that have resulted from the demand for free HE in the country (Mavunga, 2019:83). This mayhem has had significant physical and psychological effects on all parties involved (Greeff, 2020:68). Consequently, the government committed to providing additional financial aid to students through the National Student Financial Aid Scheme. In 2017, the then President of the RSA, Mr Jacob Zuma announced that HE would be free for poor and working-class students—those with a combined family income of less than R350 000 per year (Davis, 2017). However, the delayed payment of the money places students in a predicament in terms of registration requirements and consequently access to university facilities and services.

With the efforts to increase access to HE, Adetiba (2019:1) argues that contrary to the expectations of received HE, the massification of HE in South Africa, is unlikely to improve South Africans' upward social mobility, due in part to poor planning and execution. Because of such deficits, this author believes that graduates may end up joining the line of unsuccessful job applicants who do not understand why they have a degree. Considering the high unemployment rate in the country, this argument seems to be valid.

Considering HE's multifaceted nature, a greater need to manage complicated systems and a larger group of diverse people has surfaced, as well as demands for more reporting and greater public accountability (CHE, 2016:11). Furthermore, the CHE (2016:11)

maintains that the importance of effective or strong leadership at HEIs that is able to effect robust evidence-based management systems cannot be overemphasised. Although massification has not been explicitly stated as a current challenge for the college under study, the CHE's views add to this research's relevance as it seeks to strengthen leadership at the college to deal with its specific demands. The college has allowed two student intakes per year, and with the increasing demand of nurses in the current health climate as well as the transition to HE, such a trend may change, requiring the college's leadership to respond accordingly.

2.3.4 Decreased public funding or shrinking of public subsidies

Inadequate funding has been one of the major constraints to HE growth globally (HESA, 2014; Phungo, 2015; National Treasury, 2016:6). Wangenge-Ouma (2012:835) attributes this challenge to many other critical needs that compete with public HE for a share of limited public incomes, which have amplified financial pressure on HE, particularly in low and middle-income countries. According to Tilak (2015:5) and Dunga and Mncayi (2016:163), a few years ago the global economic crisis further placed pressure on government spending to the degree that fewer public resources were allocated to education. However, the South African education sector purportedly gets a bigger slice of the available pie, although it is still not considered sufficient to address the past inequalities or meet current demands.

Higher Education Institutions worldwide have stretched their budgets to the limit to meet the demands and pressures they face, reaching beyond their means to deliver quality education and increase access to HE, indicating their determination to meet societal demands and to correct the world's existing disparities occasioned by inaccessibility to HE. While student numbers have increased significantly, government funding, which is the largest source of funding at HEIs, has decreased (Makhanya, 2016:8; Browne & Shen, 2017:176; Sader & Gabela, 2017:230). It is evident that HEIs are not coping with increasing student enrolments due to shrinking subsidies and the World Bank (2010) attests to this. Without adequate public funding, provision of quality education is compromised and achievement of equity and redress in HE remains unlikely (Gabela & Sader, 2017:231). Altbach (2012) reminds us that, "without a stable funding base, neither access nor excellence can be achieved".

To cope with this financial inadequacy, various practical innovative and context-specific strategies had to be applied [Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2014:72-73]. The OECD (2014:13) reported that most developed countries managed to innovate funding models to satisfy both equity supporters and efficiency contenders' needs. Other countries, including South Africa, opted for cost-sharing due to government revenues failing to match escalating enrolments and rising HE costs (Dunga & Mncayi, 2016:163). Other strategies include maximising the use of existing facilities and capacities, multi-stakeholder engagement, agreements and partnerships in both the public and private sectors, with education and non-educational entities, as well as competition for students (Makhanya, 2016:4). These approaches echo Ernst and Young's (2012:4) assertion that HEIs require significantly deeper relationships with industry in the decade ahead, particularly in terms of funding purposes.

The #FeesMustFall Campaign gave rise a new funding system in the RSA, and HEIs had to adapt from the traditional funding model to the change process. To respond to the campaign, in which support from government was limited, leaders at HEIs had to offer the necessary support to staff to adjust budgets to ensure continuation of HE's activities (Moolman & Jacobs, 2018:187-188). This instance as it relates to institutional financial management during a crisis espouses the important role that leaders can play in supporting people during significant change.

Based on the extent of shrinking subsidies that continue to negatively impact delivery of the HEIs' mandate, the researcher recognises that perspectives presented in relation to this subject are limited as they just scratch the surface. From these perspectives the reality of financial resource constraints at HEIs has been a subject of interest for many years, most especially in countries like the RSA where resource competition continues to shape operations in various sectors. It seems as if this dilemma may continue in years to come. In the meantime, it is evident that HEIs need to remain viable and deliver positive outputs, hence the required effective leadership, i.e. those individuals and teams who can attract funders and manage limited resources are vital for HEIs' continued survival.

2.3.5 Critical restraints in infrastructure, including IT

Lack of proper infrastructure is common in HE (Mohamedbhai, 2014:72; Woldegiorgis & Doeverspeck, 2015:105; Abugre, 2018:332; Sheikh, 2017:40). Mlambo *et al.* (2017:59)

connect the issue of infrastructure availability and quality at HEIs to funding. Deficient infrastructure poses a challenge for leaders in HEIs as it impedes their mandate to deliver quality education. Infrastructure in HE includes physical spaces, i.e. offices, lecture halls, libraries, laboratories, and IT facilities like computers, internet connection, and telecommunication (Abugre, 2017:332). These infrastructural deficits pose serious challenges, including the inability to keep up with online learning activities, which became key in the recent COVID-19 pandemic that changed the face of educational delivery.

Lecture venues are overcrowded and there are inadequate library and laboratory facilities at HEIs (Sifuna, 2012:125; Mohamedbhai, 2014:72; Abugre, 2018:330). These authors assert that infrastructural constraints negatively affect HEIs and impede the realisation of educational objectives. Overcrowding at HEIs has unpleasant effects for both students and lecturers. In worst-case scenarios, students at some HEIs in the RSA have reportedly had to attend lectures outdoors as they could not be adequately accommodated in small venues. Lecturers have been observed to be overstrained and exploited to serve significantly high student numbers, and they are constantly challenged to think of creative ways to manage large classes and in most cases, they are not even recognised for that. This situation requires ethical leadership that promotes the student and lecturer wellbeing.

As major objectives of HEIs, both teaching effectiveness and research capacity are affected and limited by inadequate facilities, laboratory equipment, and computing infrastructure (Sifuna, 2012:125). This situation could contribute to the brain drain of researchers to industrialised countries. Woldegiorgis and Doevenspeck (2015:106) affirm that inadequate infrastructure prevents HEIs from meeting demands of both local and international students, which is an obstacle to internationalisation. It is extrapolated that some of the HEIs' infrastructural shortcomings negatively impact on education quality and student engagement. Deep learning helps students to gain competency their field of expertise. Considering that students from HEIs with infrastructural issues could be at risk of poor quality tuition, it could be interesting to ascertain whether or not these candidates would be considered employable or even worthy of high paying jobs, as this is an expectation for those in possession of a degree. The argument presented by Adetiba (2019:1) in Section 2.3.4 again becomes applicable in this regard. Lack of Work Integrated Learning (WIL) is one of the factors contributing to high unemployment immediately post-graduation. However, in nursing education WIL is considered a strength

as it is embedded in the curriculum of NEIs including the college under study, as a requirement (SANC, 2020a:104).

With globalisation and internationalisation being considered possible through advanced technological infrastructure, HEIs' leaders as strategists for the future need to ensure that their plans include the means to obtain adequate and quality infrastructure and ensure that these resources are efficiently and effectively used (Teferra & Greijn, 2010:5). These authors are confident that reliable and up-to-date IT infrastructure will connect researchers to the global knowledge community. Due to the shrinking subsidies referred to in Section 2.3.4 as well as what the researcher considers to be governance-related shortcomings, the significant requirement of access to digital infrastructure has not been realised by all. The researcher is also of the view that the COVID-19 pandemic brought these realities to light and acted as a wake-up call for HEIs' leadership.

A brief discussion in Section 1.1 indicates that challenges of the 21st century faced by HEIs are definitely complex, intertwined, and inter-reliant, and without adequate infrastructure, globalisation and internationalisation remain a dream for most HEIs. Whilst trying to address the equity issue through massification, funding remains a constraint and consequently quality and the adequacy of the infrastructure deteriorates. This threatens quality of HE and eventually nations' abilities to meet its socioeconomic demands through knowledge production.

2.4 THE WIDER GLOBAL COMMUNITY'S EXPECTATIONS AND DEMANDS ON HIGHER EDUCATION

Decision-making requires transparency and greater accountability to a new range of education clienteles (Reisberg, 2011:2; Gigliotti & Reuben 2017:97). Nadaf and Siddiqui (2016) indicates an expectation to promote excellence and quality in all spheres of HE and academic excellence. To address HE challenges, innovative organisational and leadership approaches are required to tap into individual and collective stakeholder creativity and competencies in pursuit of university functions. Increased democratisation and participatory decision-making that is based on mutual gains among university system components require research and utilisation (Sifuna, 2012:121). Various leadership styles are exerted at HEIs and such approaches influence people differently to contribute to the institutions' mandates. Moreover, all leaders need to show the necessary competencies

to motivate people and promote organisational effectiveness. Democratic leadership and participative management ought to be a platform through which others' inputs are sought to move HEIs forward, and this is viewed as positive leadership.

Van Deuren (2012:17) established that society expects improved HEIs' performance in the HE system's various interconnected parts. This means creating a vision for the HEIs' future direction as they relate to these external demands and build, enable, lead, and manage the organisation in line with this vision. The CHE (2016:304) refers to other demands placed on HEIs in terms of performance, which are in the form of quantifiable research outputs that coincide with higher numbers of more diverse students, employing teaching methods that require increasingly specialist skills as well as more complex and transparent assessment processes. Furthermore, HEIs are expected to focus more on developing responsive and suitable curricula and additional administration and compliance with reporting and accountability demands (CHE, 2016:13).

Leaders with negotiation and prioritisation skills and those who lead towards a clear vision for the future of the HE system are essential (CHE, 2016:48). It is inferred that those who can to negotiate and prioritise will successfully collaborate and form valuable partnerships with key stakeholders and potential funders for resources and still be in a position to determine what is more important for the institution. Supposedly, leaders who pay attention to quality in teaching, intensifying knowledge production, and increasing relevance to the developing African country, can manage the demands of different stakeholders and still foster an independent healthy HE sector (CHE, 2016:48).

Furthermore, Røsdal (2015:3) claims that there is the external expectation that academic leaders practice leadership that places quality of teaching and research at the fore. This supports Druguş and Landoy's (2014:125) perspective, as these authors hold the view that the external pressures have forced HEIs' leaders to focus more on teaching and learning quality. In a developing country like the RSA, HEIs are faced with the dilemma of ensuring a suitable equilibrium between their academic priorities and the pressures placed on them by the expectations of policy-makers and other external stakeholders. Leadership at local HEIs is expected to determine and lead institutional strategies for change, viability, and excellence, while responding in a committed way to local and national needs (HESA, 2013). This entails ensuring aligning the institution's vision and aspirations with the public and policy-makers' interests, as well as building an

understanding both within and outside the institution and aligning the interests of all participants (HESA, 2013). The National Development Plan 2030 (2012:315-328) outlines a number of other expected deliverables, which are presented in Table 2.1.

Table 2.1 Description of broad-based expectations the wider global community places on HEIs

a.	ensuring an exceptional admittance increase to HEIs in a comparatively short time period;
b.	stimulating and supporting research production to react to knowledge economy demands;
c.	increasing student numbers whilst many need financial aid;
d.	developing an incoming academic cohort while attending to transformation goals;
e.	dealing with governance, management, and funding catastrophes;
f.	solving issues of redress funding for disadvantaged institutions;
g.	articulating students across the post-school terrain and revitalising the entire HE sector;
h.	rationalising the teaching atmosphere in terms of offerings and significant expansion in terms of increased student numbers;
i.	improving the quality of student life and student residences; and
j.	attending to student demonstrations and organisational cultural matters.

Source: RSA (2012:315-328)

It is evident that broad-based demands and expectations faced by HEIs worldwide, i.e. access to HE, students' demands, institutional governance, and transformation influence institutional leadership. These challenges continue to pressurise institutional leadership to adopt approaches that support and promote organisational effectiveness that could place these establishments in position that enables them to deliver their mandates.

2.5 LEADERSHIP CHALLENGES AT NURSING EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

As part of HEIs, nursing education leaders' roles worldwide have changed significantly over the last two decades and are extremely complex (Giddens, 2018:117). The transformation and complexities referred to above also apply to South African nursing

education. Heydari *et al.* (2013:125) describe nursing today as being significantly diverse in comparison to the past and they further express how nursing in the future will be different to nursing experienced today. These authors declare that uncertainty about the nursing profession's future is challenging and requires planning to translate threats into prospects. Khodaveisi *et al.* (2012:710) maintain that due to its close ties with people's health, nursing education is demanding and faces abundant challenges, some of which are described in Table 2.2. This is a global phenomenon.

Table 2.2 Challenges faced by NEIs, globally and in South Africa

a. Human Resources Challenges	• high workloads leading to low staff morale (Rich & Nugent, 2010:229; National Department of Health (NDoH), 2013:23), • inadequate NEs (NDoH, 2013:23; Armstrong & Rispel, 2015; Fawaz <i>et al.</i>, 2018:106); • insufficient continuing professional development, resulting in insufficient or out-dated knowledge and skills (NDoH, 2013:23; Armstrong & Rispel, 2015); and • an exodus from NEIs due to the Occupation-Specific Dispensation, a public-sector financial incentive (NDoH, 2013:23).
b. Teaching and Learning Challenges	• increasing student enrolment (Rich & Nugent, 2010:229); • education resource shortages resulting in training institutions having an inadequate productive capacity (Bvumbwe & Mtshali, 2018); • static and rigid curricula that are unresponsive to meeting the population or health system's needs (Armstrong & Rispel, 2015; Bvumbwe & Mtshali, 2018); • skill gaps or mismatch of competencies to patient and population health priorities (Armstrong & Rispel, 2015); • poor nursing education quality improvement initiatives (Rich & Nugent, 2010:228); and

	• an insufficient number of good-quality practical training facilities and poor coordination of practical placements, as well as insufficient resources (Armstrong & Rispel, 2015).
c. Financial and Material Resources Challenges	• inadequate funding (Mulder & Uys, 2013:1; Marchi-Alves <i>et al.</i>, 2013:4; NDoH, 2013:21,24; Armstrong & Rispel, 2015; Bvumbwe & Mtshali, 2018); and • inadequate IT infrastructure and physical facilities are serious limitations to meeting the quality standards at NEIs (Mulder & Uys, 2013:1; Marchi-Alves <i>et al.</i>, 2013:4; Armstrong & Rispel, 2015).
d. Leadership and Management Challenges	• lack of coordinated collaboration and support from stakeholders (Bvumbwe & Mtshali, 2018); • weak leadership unequipped to improve health system performance (Lancet Commission, 2010:1926); • sub-optimal leadership provided by SANC as the regulator of nursing education and training in the RSA (Armstrong & Rispel, 2015); and • lack of planning and coordination, as well as slow implementation from NDoH that impedes nursing education from moving forward (Armstrong & Rispel, 2015)

It is inferred that multifaceted nursing education challenges have contributed to the drastic changes in nursing academic leaders' functions. Many authors attest to nurse education leaders' key roles in effectively managing NEIs. From a South African perspective, Matlakala (2016:1) describes NEIs as being democratic dispensation's transformation agenda. This author's view supports the notion that a transformed South African nursing education is necessary to ensure that current and future nurse and midwife cohorts are competent to deliver safe, quality, patient-centeredness across primary health and hospital contexts (NDoH, 2013:17).

Bouws *et al.* (2016:43) propose that changes within the academic setting, i.e. the future of nursing students, modern nursing practices, and advancement of the profession, are strongly influenced NEIs' leaders. Not only are NEI leaders tasked with supervising daily

institutional operations in terms of finances, infrastructure, and people management, University nursing academic leaders are also tasked with maintaining NEIs' domains relating to teaching, research, practice, and community service (Giddens, 2018:117). As those individuals who are at the heart of change in academic leadership, Bouws *et al.* (2016:43) and Giddens (2018:117) describe leaders at NEIs' as representatives of establishments within the HE community, and as such, they work with stakeholders and have to provide a new vision and focus for their NEIs. At times, these stakeholders have opposing demands and this often involves complex circumstances (Giddens, 2018:117).

In the Strategic Plan for Nurse Education, Training and Practice 2012/13-2016/17, the NDoH (2013:21) claimed that there was inadequate student supervision and management, a general lack of good clinical role models, and a disconnect between the skills and competencies of NEs and nurses in clinical practice. Although this sentiment is not recent, the researcher considers it to be relevant currently. This is aggravated by a lack of communication between nursing education and practice and an inadequate number of educators to facilitate students (NDoH, 2013:21). According to the NDoH (2013:18), existing NEIs' outputs already do not match health and service demands for nurses and midwives. There is nurse and midwife shortage across all South African healthcare services and meeting the demand for more, differently skilled nurses is the responsibility and challenge of NEIs, nursing education leaders, and NEs, all of whom are essential for revitalising the profession.

In any country, nursing education's main role is to produce a critical mass of nursing workforce (Matlakala, 2016:1). Health workforce researchers agree that transformation of nursing education is an important strategy for improving health workforce supply (Blaauw *et al.*, 2014:1). In addition, the significance of a workforce that ensures the functioning of health systems and health outcomes was exemplified in the Global Health Workforce Alliance and WHO's publication entitled "A Universal truth: No health without a workforce" (Campbell *et al.*, 2013:2,39). These authors assert that the critical issue of a health workforce improving health services and population health outcomes is well established, considering that this element has contributed to achieving the Millennium Development Goals. As a former health care manager, the researcher concurs and supports the idea of an enhanced health workforce moving forward in striving towards the attainment of Sustainable Development Goals.

In light of South African healthcare reforms to achieve universal coverage, the significance of nursing education in preparing nurses for their roles in leading and implementing these reforms cannot be overemphasised (Blaauw *et al.*, 2014:2). More than a decade ago, all the South African nurses and other key stakeholders were called together to the National Nursing Summit with the aim to reconstruct and revitalise the nursing profession for a “Long and Healthy Life for All South Africans” (NDoH, 2013:4). The country has since been working towards attaining the set goal. To achieve this vision, Jooste and Jasper (2012:57) responded that nursing education leaders would need to influence service delivery that addresses the community needs and influences NEs to ensure that these requirements are addressed in the nursing curricula. This would require nurse education leaders with a sound understanding of SA’s healthcare needs in its current context, the needs of the community that they serve, and the educational and managerial principles to drive development of the service itself (Jooste & Jasper, 2012:57). A strong and functioning collaboration between nursing education and nursing services is seen to be the way forward to ensure that the NEIs’ curricula meet the country’s health care services demands. However, this is still seen to be lacking, especially at a strategic level where the curricula decisions are made. Perhaps with establishment of the Chief Nursing Officer (CNO)’s office in the RSA, an improvement in terms of collaborative relations between nurse practitioners and academics will be realised.

The effective execution of a nursing education strategy requires determined leadership, pragmatic implementation plans, and continued M&E. (NDoH, 2013:38). If the vision of transforming healthcare is ever to be achieved, Porter-O’Grady (2011:33) recommends strong and capable leadership. The fundamentals required to transform and implement health reform requires comprehensive demonstration of leadership capacity and high-level collaborative skills that advances the potential for contemporary high-quality patient care (Porter-O’Grady, 2011:33).

The need for collaborative engagement strategies is now essential for good practice at every level of leadership (Mohanty, 2018:367). In adjusting the historic culture represented by silo behaviours, developing collaborative management structures and strategies is a priority (Casciaro *et al.*, 2019; Sobande, 2020). Leadership competencies that emphasise the development of collaborative skills in the leadership of diverse teams

from different disciplines are emphasised as essential skill sets for future nursing leaders (Porter-O'Grady, 2011:35).

Perspectives on the state of nursing education worldwide affirm that nurse training faces the same challenges as HE in general. The need for nurses and midwives to provide competent patient care and meet the health needs of its citizens cannot be overemphasised. Thus, it is imperative for nursing education directors to engage in leadership activities that appropriately address demands placed on HEIs as a matter of urgency.

2.6 LEADERSHIP APPROACHES FOR HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS OF THE 21ST CENTURY

Scott *et al.* (2012:15) are of the view that for change to be effected successfully, it should be led with skill. As a result, these authors assert that successfully negotiating and reforming existing organisational contexts executing HE's challenging transformation agenda requires a distinctive set of leadership capabilities. To emphasise these authors' assertion, Adams *et al.* (2017:2) posit that the leadership competencies required to address 21st century HE challenges are also crucial for teaching and learning. However, one needs to consider that 21st century difficulties cannot be resolved unless educational leaders' thought and operative processes are challenged to achieve new heights. As Albert Einstein stated:

“No problem can be solved from the same level of consciousness that created it”
(BrainyQuote, 2020).

Leaders at HEIs are encouraged to think differently in steering these institutions to address the substantial socioeconomic disproportionateness to promote sustainable competitive advantages and to react to environmental, technological, and political transformation (Bisaso *et al.*, 2015:40; Swanger, 2016:4). New developments in HE, such as digitisation, globalisation, and demographic changes are considered to be good reasons for HEIs to change continually and to foster this transformation to remain competitive and determine their continued existence (Pucciarelli & Kaplan, 2016:312; Pincus *et al.*, 2017:3-5; Castro Benavides *et al.*, 2020:1). Change in HEIs demand leadership that can review its current leadership structures or models as a strategy for a

transformation agenda for HEIs (Scott *et al.*, 2012:5). This statement echoes Lerra (2015:18), who asserts that to initiate change processes, HEIs need to construct, articulate, and embrace new strategies and decision-making practices, amend structures, and apply new or more flexible forms of engagement for HEIs' endurance and prosperity.

'Good or effective leadership' that is strong, visionary, capable, and responsive is required in the HE context, which is currently characterised by massification, rapid technological advances and deficient funding, to improve the quality of HE (Bisaso *et al.*, 2015:40; Ramdass, 2015:1112; Zahran *et al.*, 2016:6). This good leadership, is critical to resolve the challenges of promoting high quality tuition and research in the 21st century (Adams *et al.*, 2017:2; Scott *et al.*, 2012:5). It is also crucial to engage actively with the business sector and community as important stakeholders in HE operations, culture, governance, and positioning of HEIs and their support for staff and students (Scott *et al.*, 2012:5).

The CHE (2016:115) views effective leadership in HEIs as envisaging and responding to changing milieus, responding to policy initiatives, and reducing unintentional policy results or a lack thereof, and negotiating and responding to demands arising from various stakeholders. Supporting the aforementioned author, Beattie *et al.* (2013:70) states that HEIs require current and future HE leaders who are able to address the unintended outcomes associated with stakeholders expectations and future demands associated with the 21st century. DeCelles *et al.* (2013:157) assert that change in HEIs requires leaders who are able to reduce their cynicism about change and manage resistance to new developments, such as those alluded to earlier by the CHE, by embracing a positive approach.

In supporting the ability to respond to the swiftly changing research and education environment like HEIs, which are characterised by amplification of environmental pressures, Collins (2014:561) emphasises the importance of swift adaptation facilitated by leaders equipped with the requisite understanding, skills, and resilience to sustain their institutions. The insightful and visionary leadership described above enabled HEIs to effect transformation, such as reputable academic identities from apartheid-engineered roots (CHE, 2016:9). Furthermore, through such leadership, HEIs effectively navigated merger demands to become more responsive, vibrant, and accustomed to the real needs of a developing South Africa (CHE, 2016:9). The researcher believes that with the same leadership approaches that proved to be effective in achieving the HE mandates then,

and by embracing opportunities, HEIs can still overcome the challenges of the 21st century.

Effective HEI leaders need to be their institution's cultural representatives, good communicators, skilled managers, forward-looking planners, advocates for their institutions, and manage change (Thrash, 2012:2). To meet current HE changes, the importance of leadership as a strategic and operational imperative in this sector is stressed (Røsdal, 2015:4). Reporting on the research findings, Male and Palaiologou (2015:227) concluded that to lead HEIs effectively, it is necessary to have a highly developed aptitude to "hear" events, social circumstances, comprehend distinct subjectivities, and react flexibly to unpredictable events.

Gigliotti and Ruben (2017:97) uphold that today's leaders need a broad understanding of the HE landscape, a range of organisational and leadership concepts and tools, and the professional and personal competencies that are necessary to routinely translate these capabilities into practice. However, Scott *et al.* (2012:4) hold the view that what is needed is not only HE leaders for today, but for tomorrow – people with a vision for HE capable of tackling the challenges of the 21st century and of producing graduates with the capacity to make it happen, occupying a key role in an evolving healthcare system. The NDoH (2013:38) proclaims that to execute the nursing education strategy effectively, a determined leadership to implement plans practically and to maintain M&E is vital. An effective, indomitable leadership is a custodian for implementing a responsive, relevant, quality, cost-effective nursing education and training (Armstrong & Rispel, 2015). Thus, it is unsurprising that effective leadership is gradually embraced as a strategic and operational imperative within the HE sector.

Zvavahera (2013:2) specifies that HEIs' leaders should maintain autonomy, consultation, foster principles of collegiality, and ensure that their followers are confident in and satisfied with them and perform satisfactorily against set standards. Additionally, team empowerment, supportive vertical or hierarchical leaders, autonomy, shared purposes or goals, external coaching, accountability structures, interdependence, fairness of rewards, and shared cognition are conditions that are considered to promote and sustain the good leadership required at HEIs (Kezar & Holcombe, 2017:v). With regard to NEIs specifically, Giddens (2018:117) proposes that leaders need to have a solid understanding of the

various components of their role, as well as the multidimensional contexts in which they operate, such as the rapidly changing healthcare and HE landscape.

Against the widely publicised need for strong and effective leadership at HEIs, the question arises: Which leadership approaches or strategies are obligatory for HEIs to navigate the unceasing and tempestuous challenges with which they are faced?

2.6.1 Transformational leadership

Transformation is generally understood to be a marked change in something's nature, form, or appearance. In the context of leadership, a transformational leader is the person who makes changes in the nature, form, appearance of work, and people in an organisation (Asaari *et al.*, 2016:335). Burns (1978), as the first person to introduce the concept of Transformational Leadership Theory, describes transformational leadership as a type of leadership that effects appreciated and constructive changes in people and societal systems, focusing mainly on enhancing institutional traits, dimensions, and efficiency. This change is only achieved by leaders engaging one or more individuals such that these leaders and followers advance one another to higher levels of motivation and morality. Furthermore, transformational leadership focuses on "the interactions between leaders and followers, an emerging idea significant in the university context" (Koen & Bitzer, 2010:3). Transformational leadership is associated with effective leadership (Smith, 2015:18-19).

The theory of transformational leadership rests on motivational leaders who articulate a vision for the future and set their followers' direction (Shah, 2017:9-10). Giesenbauer Müller-Christ (2020:1-2) aver that HEIs find themselves at a crossroads where they need to redefine their strategies on how to deal with the complex 21st century challenges. To initiate this, HEIs leaders need to be transformational in comprehending the situation and in providing visions of the changes and directions that will be essential to accomplish such a desired milieu.

A transformational leader: raises followers' levels of consciousness regarding the significance of chosen outcomes as well as the means to attain them; makes them transcend their own self-interests for the sake of the team; raises their lower level of needs on Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs to higher level needs for achievement and self-

actualisation (Burns, 1978; Mora, 2012:187). Transformational leaders appreciate and cherish their followers, thus influencing their behaviour, with an assumption to generate commitment and reinforce culture, thereby enhancing organisational performance (Susilo, 2018:126). Transformational leaders encourage employees, build trust, and gain subordinates' admiration, loyalty and respect (Mauludin & Sulistyorini, 2018:119).

As the founder of Path-Goal Theory of Leadership, House (1971:321-322) maintains that effective transformational leaders provide individualised support, foster acceptance of group goals, and provide and change followers' fundamental values, beliefs, and attitudes, to motivate them to perform beyond the minimum levels required by the institution.

Transformational leaders, who are known to be visionary, respond to a crisis with great vision and great ideas, and are willing to apply various excellent methods to solve problems (Mthethwa, 2012:108). These charismatic, passionate, enthusiastic, and energetic leaders, as further described by Mthethwa (2012:108), see a problem as an opportunity to convert society and leave their legacies behind. Simply stated, as the architects of an organisation's future, transformational leaders can transform themselves and their followers, and lead their organisations to greater heights (Noor, 2011:19). Through their positive influence, transformational leaders have been proven to positively affect employees' attitudes towards to change and their readiness to effect such change and to increase their motivation and work engagement. This makes transformational leadership crucial in affecting the result of an organisational change (Ghadi *et al.*, 2013:545; Faupel & Süß, 2019:145).

Jali and Lekhanya (2017:159) assert that the power of transformational leaders to influence their HEIs' employees and get input from them to transform these institutions through team performance cannot be overstressed. Therefore, in order to lead change at HEIs and to navigate associated challenges, transformational leaders are required to inspire employees and to strategise and stimulate resources to navigate and give effect to the changes needed. Mthethwa (2012:112) concludes that bold, decisive, and transformational leaders are essential to meet the complex current and future challenges.

HEIs generally set goals they intend to achieve, and Ofoegbu and Alonge (2017:111) state that to achieve these goals, academic excellence must be achieved in terms of

effective teaching and learning, developmental research, and high impact community service. The aforementioned authors also consider creativity, innovation, and the acquisition of independent economic skills by graduates as fundamental, hence the view that HEIs' leaders need to guarantee their supply. These authors state that academic excellence is likely through proactive, pragmatic, and transformational leadership.

In response to the reported changes facing South African HEIs, Boberg (2013:17) posits that transformational leadership is capable of fostering a high level of follower commitment in relation to the complex and uncertain nature of the education reform agenda. However, to foster these capacities it is necessary for followers to positively respond to this agenda. From the above discussion, transformational leadership is reiterated as a suitable leadership model for use in times of transformation in HE because it acts as a bridge between old and new leadership insights. Furthermore, it focuses on the interactions between leaders and followers, an emerging idea significant in the HE context.

As emphasised by Nurtjahjani (2020:96), transformational leadership's key factor is considered appropriate to motivate the academic community to react effectively to responses to globalisation as well as those driven by users' demands. Garwe (2014:3) describes transformational leadership as a leadership approach that dissociates itself from the concept of having one super leader and embraces delegation of responsibilities and constant monitoring and dialogue. Through transformational leadership, the leader sets high standards and purposes for followers, involving them through motivation, leading by example, facilitating co-operation, and inspiring trust (Basham, 2010:144-145).

With regard to change or transformation as a challenge faced by HEIs, Basham (2010:145) states that transformational leaders aim to react swiftly to transition and bring out the best in people. Furthermore, these leaders are change-oriented and central to organisations' development and survival in times of environmental turmoil, when it is necessary to make strategic changes to deal with both major threats and opportunities. Transformation derives its power from shared principles, norms, and values, and is more efficient, fruitful, innovative, and satisfying to followers, since both parties work towards the good of the establishment and are driven by shared visions and values and mutual trust and respect (Lo *et al.*, 2009:134).

There is a strong emphasis on transformational leadership across multiple fields and volumes of literature have been published on the topic (Broome, 2013:328; Wilkes *et al.*, 2015:281-282). Yet, Giddens (2018:117) reports that in nursing, the majority of transformational literature is in the context of clinical practice leadership with minimal representation from academic nursing leadership.

The multiple perspectives relating to the significance of transformational leadership in organisational effectiveness and performance support transformational leadership as an approach that academic leaders could benefit from if they intend to navigate their institutional challenges. It is generally and widely agreed that effective leaders are those individuals who are visionary, motivational, and trustworthy, and who cooperate with other followers and are able to respond and adapt to change. Such leadership is considered ideal for survival and success of HEIs. Having described transformational leadership and its implications for HEIs, the researcher considers this type of leadership approach as a strategy that will enable academic leaders to succeed in their mandates.

Other leadership approaches deemed necessary and relevant to navigate changes and constraints facing HEIs include visionary leadership, distributed leadership, and collegial leadership.

2.6.2 Visionary leadership

Visionary leadership has been described as a key element of institutional endurance, achievement, and development in today's tempestuous environment (Nwachukwu *et al.*, 2017:1306). Leadership is about leading the organisations and organisational teams to go somewhere. If leaders and their people aren't certain of the direction in which they're heading, then leadership means nothing. Therefore, it is important for leaders to have a clear vision (Ndalamba *et al.* 2018:316). Mupa (2015:44) confirms the need for stronger and visionary leaders in the midst of several challenges facing HEIs. Zvavahera (2013:2) posits that visionary leaders can steer an organisation to great success. Asaari *et al.* (2016:334) indicate that in the context of globalisation, these leaders need to predict future challenges that will need to be minimised, as well as opportunities, which need to be exploited.

Zvavahera (2013:2) describes the ideal characteristics of a visionary leader as the abilities to introduce structure and order into an organisation. With regard to visionary leaders' interaction with their followers they should be able to: direct and coordinate their followers work, build interpersonal relationships with them; and influence them by indicating the significance of achieving the results. Muzzy (2014:58) appreciate that while there are many barriers to leading reform that challenge educational traditional practices and structures, visionary leaders see these barriers as areas of opportunity rather than obstacles. They imagine the possibilities and have the skills needed to move individuals forward. This leadership appreciation echoes a widespread notion that HEIs leaders should not only view their challenges negatively, but also exploit the opportunities that come with these.

The University of Venda (2018:5) attests to visionary leadership as a necessity for HEIs. Although the details were not specified, the Chairperson of the University Council said that through its visionary Vice Chancellor and Principal at that time, they as an institution witnessed tranquillity and stability during the #FeesMustFall Campaign, a period during which many South African universities experienced violent protests.

Adding to the perspectives about visionary leadership, Asaari *et al.* (2016:334) assert that visionary leadership entails effectiveness in possessing a clear and ultimate vision pertaining to what performance should be, as well as strategizing for improvement to reach the target. However, in order to realise the vision, it ought to be communicated to the people to create awareness and help them achieve success (Isaacs, 2015:65). Similarly, HEIs' leaders are considered visionary when they promote the organisation's vision by inspiring their followers and developing a shared vision with them (Taylor *et al.*, 2014:567; Berson *et al.*, 2015:175). By placing an emphasis on overcoming 21st century challenges and producing graduates whose capacity can be realised. Scott, *et al.* (2012:9) reveal that HEIs do not only need a leader for today, but one for tomorrow – a person with a vision. Most importantly, these leaders should be able to turn their visions into reality (Garwe, 2014:2).

Higher Education Institutions continue to strategise for their survival, sustainability, and success. It is interesting to note that in the midst of their strategic positioning, both local and international HEIs adopt the need for committed, passionate, and visionary leadership in addressing 21st century challenges (Stellenbosch University, 2013:6;

Garwe, 2014:2). Dibessa and Bekele (2017:42) and SU (2013:6) uphold that through such leadership, HEIs could become more functional, human, and ethical, consequently influencing society and demonstrating their relevance. Marlia *et al.* (2020:33) believe that visionary leadership is essential in a swiftly changing organisational climate, such as HEIs in the context of this study.

Visionary leadership is deemed effective in HE in a variety of ways. Since HEIs are currently undergoing performance ratings they are unable to afford non-visionary leaders who will not lead their institutions to meet the required standards (Mupa, 2015:43). Furthermore, this author asserts that competition to attract new students, effective policy execution, quality assurance, curriculum change and innovation, and establish new market driven programmes has increased. There are also evolving challenges, such as the decline of available resources, the move from traditional teaching to learner-focused pedagogy, and the need for e-learning (Mupa, 2015:43). These could be effectively addressed through visionary leadership.

While taking cognisance of society's expectations placed on HEIs' leaders, it is crucial to note that leadership should not have a single focus. For instance, not only should they be concerned with curricula or lecturers, but they should also consider students, communities, and stakeholders and how to involve them. There is a need for HEIs to: present a bright vision of the future; develop a plan for achieving goals set by the organisation; and motivate institutional members to realise such vision (Mupa, 2015:47).

The University of the Witwatersrand's (Wits) (2010:3) Vision 2022 Strategic Framework refers to the direct link that exists between the ability to action goals and objectives effectively and efficiently as an organisation, and its alignment with the people, processes, and the organisation's purposes. The result of a carefully considered process of strategy formulation and planning is experienced through effective strategy execution, and Wits asserts that without visionary and determined leadership, strategic planning becomes a meaningless exercise. Hence, visionary leadership is declared a requirement to ensure that by 2022 Wits will have attained top 100 status and positioned itself as a research-intensive university.

Mupa (2015:44) offers another expectation of visionary leaders, i.e. that HEIs' survival and growth is largely dependent upon visionary leadership and its ability to predict the

future or place emphasis on issues that matter, and take practical decisions. This should enable them to foresee customers' requirements, particularly student needs, and the kind of market-driven programmes they require, and then prepare students to meet future needs. Drake and Sparks's (2012:12) research findings suggest that the strategy of focused, visionary leadership is essential during transformation. Here the HEIs leaders' ability to balance their vision and execution thereof is emphasised. The views shared on leading HEIs in the midst of today's challenges, are that transformational change might well occur due to visionary leaders' efforts (Sarwono *et al.*, 2019:195). Taylor *et al.* (2014:567) assert that effective leadership behaviours include being visionary, being able to articulate that vision, as well as being directional and goal-driven. This assertion supports Robertson's (2015:143) study findings that propose that leaders at HEIs need to: be visionary; able to identify benefits and opportunities for the institution; and to make things happen. The various impact of leadership styles on staff commitment has been well established (Sahin *et al.*, 2014:303), and visionary leadership in particular leads to employee commitment (Dhammika, 2016:7; Ateş, *et al.*, 2020:640). This could be attributed to the fact that visionary leaders are known to create inspiring visions and communicate their visions to their followers, thus stimulating them to commit to their visions.

In this research, the researcher commenced by outlining challenges facing HEIs of the 21st century and the need for leadership that perceives these challenges as a significant opportunity to identify strategies and tactics to address these constraints (Section 1.1). Emerging from the various viewpoints on visionary leadership are propositions that attribute this leadership approach to possibly enabling HEIs to survive their demands and successfully achieve their goals. It is evident that in leading these institutions in a particular direction, HEIs leaders cannot do that without a clear vision. They need to have a clear plan, must be able to predict what the future holds, and still manage to turn challenges into opportunities. Subsequently, it could be deduced that in order for HEIs to succeed in the 21st century, leaders ought to create the vision of "HEIs of the 21st Century", and communicate it to others so as to work collaboratively to translate it into reality.

Nursing education shares the same sentiments as the HE community at large. Based on the widely supported need for visionary leadership at HEIs, there is a need for visionary

leadership at NEIs that embodies expertise, commitment, and creativity, and mobilises the commitment of others to realise the vision. Morton (2014:279) claims that with visionary leaders at the helm of nursing education, it is likely to achieve its set goals in the middle of hard economic situations such as severe budget reductions, declines in external funding sources, academic staff shortages, and tough competition for limited resources. The vision of NEIs is to educate and train competent nurses to render quality and safe nursing care (NLN, 2016:2). However, nursing academia has become more and more complex in trying to respond to the healthcare demands and ever-changing disease patterns, as was recently experienced during the COVID-19 pandemic (Dewart *et al.*, 2020), thus making visionary leadership even more relevant for NEIs. With the evidence that NEIs are not exempt from the challenging HE environment, the need for visionary leadership as a leadership approach that could enthuse NEIs towards realising their vision cannot be overemphasised.

2.6.3 Distributed leadership

Although this leadership approach is mainly denoted as distributed leadership in this research, it is also identified as shared (Kezar and Holcombe, 2017:6), collective leadership (Contractor *et al.*, 2012:995), or collaborative leadership (Maalouf, 2018:138). For the purpose of consistency the term ‘distributed leadership’ will be used throughout this discussion as an umbrella term that encompasses all other similar terms/concepts.

Among the first authors to present this concept, Pearce and Conger (2003:1) define ‘distributed leadership’ as a dynamic, interactive process with influence among individuals in groups with the purpose of leading one another to reach group or institutional goals or both. These authors further describe the structural nature of distributed leadership as being broadly distributed rather than being centralised in the hands of a single individual. Kezar and Holcombe (2017:v) agree and describe ‘distributed leadership’ as a transition from a leader/follower relationship. Furthermore, it serves to explore the importance of leaders throughout the organisation, not just those in positions of authority, thereby setting up an organisation to benefit from the leadership of multiple people (Kezar & Holcombe, 2017:v).

Ospina and Foldy (2016:1) view leadership as the property of the collective instead of an individual. Within distributed leadership, leadership is organisationally disseminated via

structures, activities, practices, and relationships. Leadership does not reside within traits, actions, and/or capabilities of leaders in formal positions (Denis, *et al.* 2012:259; Bolden *et al.*, 2015:4).

Collaborative leadership theories belong to studies of relational or horizontal leadership (Van Wart, 2013:558). Relational leadership promotes the importance of leadership that enhances interactions among individuals or organisations (Fletcher, 2012:83), and power-sharing among groups, units, and organisations (Van Wart, 2013:559). There is a shift in the leadership studies field that decentralises leadership from the individual-only perspective where the leader is equated to leadership, to one that also embraces a more distributed, shared, and collaborative approach beyond these individuals (Bolden, 2011:252; Wassenaar *et al.* 2012:421). Scott *et al.* (2018:465) and Tower (2019) assert that central to distributed leadership is the interaction between team members who lead the team by sharing the leadership responsibilities. Common to these alternative approaches, is the acknowledgement that leadership occurs beyond positions that have an institution-wide or institutional subunit responsibility, namely senior leader and middle leader positions.

Peter Gronn (2002:425), one of the founders of distributed leadership theory, identified three discrete ways in which leadership might be distributed across two or more people.

1. firstly, leadership is distributed through spontaneous collaboration that groups of individuals with different skills, knowledge, and/or capabilities unite to complete a particular task/project and then disband;
2. secondly, leadership is distributed through intuitive working relationships in which two or more individuals foster close working interactions over time until leadership is manifested in the shared role space encompassed by their relationship; and
3. finally, leadership can be distributed through institutionalised practice in which enduring organisational structures such as committees and teams are put in place to facilitate collaboration between individuals.

From the described means of leadership distribution, the researcher believes that collaboration among team members is the distinct characteristic that supports organisational effectiveness. Over time the researcher has observed that people in a working environment are gifted differently, and therefore collaborating and sharing

leadership responsibilities is vital. This practice fosters idea sharing and enables others to contribute positively to the organisation, thus optimising institutional performance.

In the HE arena, distributed leadership is a strategy proposed to approach HE's leadership challenges (Kezar & Holcombe, 2017:1). Levin and Kater (2013:139-140) opine that the changing settings confronting HEIs suggests that leadership should consider new leadership theories. Although these theories' origins may vary, they present different options for leadership orientation and practice that may be more appropriate to the complex contemporary HEIs, as opposed to merely relying on traditional bureaucratic theories grounded in the mid-1900s and earlier theories. For leaders in HE to address, adapt, and identify solutions to all aforementioned challenges, Nogan (n.d.:3) asserts that more participative and distributed leadership is the appropriate leadership type that is needed now more than ever. Furthermore, while this is not the only type of leadership needed, it plays a disproportionately more significant role than the other types of leadership. This leadership strategy that acknowledges individual autonomy and supports creative and innovative thinking, is imperative for HEIs to implement in order to develop sustainable leadership (Jones *et al.*, 2012:68).

To maintain relevance, Pretorius *et al.* (2018:161) support organisation transition, i.e. HEIs in the context of this study, from systems with leaders at the top to living, dynamic structures of interrelated relationships. Fernandez and Shaw (2020:39) support this relational process and confirms that leaders can no longer afford to operate in isolation. These authors highlight leadership best practices for navigating unpredictable changes affecting HEIs, such as COVID-19, which include collaboration and distribution of leadership responsibilities throughout the organisation.

Hence, the art of distributed leadership must now be considered. Developing an evolutionary understanding of leadership in the present and future reflects the notion that leadership is based on mutual interaction rather than merely exercising structural authority and influence (Pretorius *et al.*, 2018:163). The advocated distributed leadership has been viewed as embracing all institutional employees, academics, designers of new learning and teaching environments, student support staff, and specialist and professional service providers that reinforce current HEIs (Jones *et al.*, 2012:68). Similarly, while Nogan (n.d:4) agrees that distributed leadership embraces entrepreneurial thinking, collaboration, and participative and empowering leadership practices.

Randall (2012:3) indicates how difficult it can be for members of any organisation to accept change. When directly affected by change, resistance and even obstruction may result. Furthermore, this author places distributed leadership in HE at the centre of effective change. Higher Education Institutions' leaders need to ensure that staff and students as key constituents are offered opportunities to voice their views during decision-making. Although achieving unanimity requires much time and may ultimately not result in the required change, taking final major decisions without various key stakeholders' buy-in, successful execution or sustainability might not be achieved (Randall, 2012:3).

To this end, the distributed leadership style has been proposed as the means through academics can develop shared responsibility in changing HE cultures (Davis & Jones, 2014:367; Jones, 2014:138). The focus of distributive leadership is on "collective collaboration rather than individual power and control" to build leadership capacity in learning and teaching (Jones *et al.*, 2012:67). Therefore, it is fitting to consider the means to implement distributive models of leadership to promote learning and teaching, and to clearly articulate incentives, rewards, and performance-based expectations for promotion.

This perception relates to calls in the consulted literature for less hierarchical models of leadership in HE, such as distributed models. Hofmeyer's (2015:189) research findings in HE recommends adoption of distributed leadership characteristics. This is because these characteristics are primed to generate different practices to support quality leadership in learning and teaching scholarship. Different from the hierarchical model of leadership where only a few individuals at the top of the hierarchy make all the decisions, distributive leadership strives to collectively engage its members in their organisation's business.

Thus, distributed leadership has been proposed as a viable option to increasingly predominant 'managerialism' within HE, as well as a measure to reconnect academics to a sense of collegiality, citizenship, and community (Crevani *et al.*, 2015:152). A leader has conventionally been understood as being greater, more intelligent, and more influential than others (Ngambi & Bozalek, 2013:940-950; Odiahambo, 2014:191). However, in accordance with Odiahambo (2014:191), since the beginning of the 21st century there has been a marked shift in exploring of what represents effectual leadership. Heroic leaders are no longer deemed the magic bullets that HEIs need.

Instead, the idea of distributed leadership is perceived as a more apt way to effect and maintain transformational and enduring change (Odiahambo, 2014:191; Jones & Harvey, 2017:126). Exploring effectual leadership strategies resulted in a shift from individual-centred leadership, power, and hierarchy to mutual power and influence. This further highlights distributed leadership being orientated towards followers' perspectives as an imperative for the success of HEIs (Middlehurst, 2012:5).

Bolden *et al.* (2015:10) point out the design and delivery of learning environments that engage students in truly authentic learning activities (assisted by rapid advances in digital technology) as an example of the need for distributed leadership, including academics, professional experts, students, and other stakeholders. In other words, there needs to be a top-down/bottom-up or distributed approach for the cross-pollination of ideas to occur, and for emerging technologies to be perceived as relevant. These formal leaders then need to take a collaborative, participatory approach to encourage the wider diffusions of innovative pedagogical practice (Bates & Sangrà, 2011:79). Jones *et al.* (2012:68) agree that these institutions are more likely to effectively create changes to educational practices by engaging both academic and administrative staff with a broad range of expertise.

Kezar and Holcombe's (2017:13) research revealed that where distributed leadership was practiced, it nurtured improved teamwork and communication, greater responsiveness to student concerns, and increased incentives for innovation – the same outcomes found across other types of organisations using shared forms of leadership. Central to these findings, these researchers concluded that distributed leadership is capable of improving execution of organisational decisions, as colleagues devote the time and energy necessary to fostering a shared vision and collective ownership in organisational actions. Furthermore, it: creates greater cognitive complexity, innovation, and peer support in times of challenge and crisis; increases accountability within organisations; improves the implementation of organisational decisions; and leads to diversity (Kezar & Holcombe, 2017:13). Perhaps it could be inferred that with distributed leadership, significant contributions of ideas could result during collective strategic discussions, considering that each member is an expert in their field due to their grassroots involvement.

Whether collective or distributed, or collaborative or shared leadership, leaders that foster interaction between employees and work with others to execute organisational strategies

are considered to be individuals doing something great. Positive effects associated with distributed leadership, inter alia, innovative and creative thinking, recognition of individual autonomy, are the elements that should encourage HEIs leaders to involve others in institutional endeavours to navigate challenges and demands facing their organisations.

2.6.4 Collegial leadership

Similar to distributed leadership, it seems as if fostering collective working relationships between colleagues is as important as other certain leadership approaches in suitably responding to 21st century educational demands. Collegial leadership is understood to be the process whereby leaders systematically, but informally, relate to persons and groups of equivalent authority in a different area to improve the HEI, thereby aiding it to advance a mutual mission. Collegial leadership involves individuals who are skilled and able to relate effectively with colleagues in different areas at the same level across the college or university, and who have limited or indirect shared responsibilities, purposes, and supervision (Mooney *et al.*, 2012:145). Singh (2013b:332; 2013c:489) describes collegiality as a collaborative process that involves the devolution of power to employees in order for them to become an integral part of the leadership process of the organisation's shared vision. As a collaborative process, collegial leadership must also be viewed as encouraging and accommodating shared decision-making and distributed leadership in the spirit of enabling people to want to commit themselves positively to the organisation's vision (Singh, 2013b:333).

Hazlewood and Bosher (2008:xvii) describe the process of collegiality being about shared accountability and responsibility for those engaged in education; it positions leadership in a dissimilar conceptual place where the future rather than the present is predominant. The world is a swiftly changing environment, hence all institutions' ability to react rapidly and coherently to change is crucial. This implies that all staff within the organisation are fully aligned with institutional policy and thinking, feel involved in the direction the establishment is facing, and empowered to act in the interests of institutional success (Hazlewood & Bosher, 2008:xiv). Awbery (2014:23) views a shared and joint understanding and appreciation as an absolute requirement for the organisation's development and ultimate success.

Essentially collegiality acknowledges the significance of being involved in decisions pertaining to the HEIs' functioning and purpose (Sahlin & Eriksson-Zetterquist, 2016:2). Bryman (2007) asserts that excluding academic staff from involvement in such decisions results in increased isolation of staff in HEIs. This, in turn, is deemed detrimental to managers' attempts to realise the changes they need to make and to staff's motivation and job satisfaction (Kok *et al.*, 2014:429).

It is understood that failing to involve others in decision-making that affects them discourages staff and causes job dissatisfaction that threatens staff retention. It is the researcher's view that people are likely to support endeavours that they feel most connected to. Therefore, it is crucial to foster collective ownership for success of educational initiatives and for organisations to advance significantly towards retaining intellectual capital.

There is strong evidence to support the notion that participation in decision-making improves: trust and job satisfaction, the quality of the decision-making, and commitment to these decisions (Appelbaum *et al.*, 2013:226-227; Kumar & Saha, 2017:10). Consequently, in universities, as in most other organisations, involving staff in change is vital to gain the commitment required to make it work (Oreg *et al.*, 2011:491).

Burnes *et al.* (2013:907) indicate that: vice-chancellors are more like influential principal officials; collegial forms of control have reduced; and the academic workforce is gradually being instructed on what to teach, how to teach, what research to conduct, and where to publish. This can be detrimental not only to staff, but also to senior managers, as the latter may well have a free hand to make decisions, but they will not enjoy the willing co-operation of staff, and therefore the implementation of these decisions will be much more difficult (Elegbe, 2015:40).

Collegial leaders appreciate that their constituents hope to accomplish astounding things, not only when they feel strong, capable, and efficient, but also when they feel connected to one another (Singh, 2013b:333). This author further asserts that collegial leaders devote much of their time and effort to building sound relationships with their employees based on mutual respect and caring. In addition to having the prerequisite cognitive abilities (IQ) and technical skills required in their positions, collegial leaders are equally

required to demonstrate high levels of emotional intelligence (EQ) and a spirit of collegiality in their working environments (Singh, 2013a:1615).

Giddens (2018:118) asserts that in nursing academia the quality and success of the nursing workforce rests on nursing education programmes with healthy team cultures, as professional values and expectations are formulated from the onset of the educational process, thus implying that nurse training should involve socialising in terms of collegiality when nurses are still new to the profession so that they are able to practice teamwork even beyond their training. Teamwork is crucial in nursing practice as it is essential for healthcare quality, safety, patient outcomes, and job satisfaction (Souza *et al.*, 2016:641; Anderson, 2017:1,13).

Displaying collegiality in nursing education consequently strengthens developing students' value structures that incorporate collegiality and teamwork at their core. Moreover, nursing can realise its potential only when linking arms with inter- and intra-professional colleagues to tackle the challenges of today and tomorrow's healthcare environments (Giddens, 2018:108). These views challenge the nursing academic leaders in fostering collegiality when leading their NEIs.

The discussion on leadership approaches that are deemed necessary for HEIs of the 21st century is summarised in Figure 2.1.

Transformational leadership



Connectwithinfluencers (2019)

This type of leadership results in appreciated and constructive changes in persons and societal systems, and mainly focuses on enhancing institutional traits, dimensions, and efficiency (Burns, 1978)

Visionary leadership



Johannsen (2019)

A range of proficiencies and skills developed by the leader to influence and inspire their colleagues to accomplish innovation within the institution, and they are based on openness to change (Molina, 2018:115)

Distributed leadership



Yates (2012)

A form of shared leadership that is underpinned by a more collective and inclusive philosophy than traditional leadership theory that focuses on individual leaders' skills, traits and behaviours (Jones et al., 2012:71).

Collegial leadership



Ernste (2018)

Shared accountability and responsibility for those committed to education, positioning leadership in a dissimilar conceptual place, where the future rather than the present is predominant (Hazlewood and Bosher, 2008:xiv).

Figure 2.1: Leadership approaches considered necessary for HEIs of the 21st century

It is evident that the transformational, visionary, distributed and collegial leadership approaches are associated with organisational effectiveness and efficiency. While transformational and visionary leaders focus on exerting a positive influence that stimulates change, collaboration, and inclusion of others is an emphasis for collegial and distributive leadership, the focus for HEIs' leaders should not be on one approach over other available approaches. In the researcher's opinion, HEIs' leaders could adopt these leadership styles and apply them in a complementary manner to guide institutional success. Additionally, HEIs' leaders need to appreciate and manage successes and challenges emanating from various leadership approaches.

2.7 CRITICAL DELIBERATIONS ON THE REALITIES OF HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONAL LEADERSHIP

To critically deliberate on the realities of HEIs' leadership is a significant exercise, and this consideration is inspired by the following:

“Whether we are talking about leadership, teamwork, or client service, there is no more powerful attribute than the ability to be genuinely honest about one's weaknesses, mistakes, and needs for help” Patrick Lencioni (2010).

It is crucial to note that having described the leadership approaches deemed appropriate for HEIs to navigate their challenges, there is substantive evidence pointing to weak or ineffective leadership practices that have subsequently affected the quality of HE. Various authors affirm that these institutions' leadership needs to be strengthened. (Asiyai; 2013:168; Agnew, 2014:99; Bisaso *et al.*, 2015:40) Examples of weak or ineffective leadership are presented in Table 2.3.

Table 2.3 Examples of weak or ineffective leadership extracted from international literature

Asiyai (2013:168) reports the following scenarios to substantiate the statement on weak leadership that has been observed at HEIs:

- a. staff disputes attributed to the high-handedness and tyranny of some institutional leaders;
- b. non-involvement of staff members in decision-making;
- c. dismissal of some academics without following due process; and
- d. a series of strikes resulting in the closure of some institutions.

Additionally, the following scenarios were reported by Agnew (2014:99) in support of the above mentioned statements regarding ineffective leadership:

- a. delayed and poor decision-making;
- b. a personal response being disproportionate to the severity of the incident at hand;
- c. a lack of moral character;
- d. failure to listen to stakeholders' feedback;
- e. the inability to plan/forecast for the future;
- f. a lack of engagement with key stakeholders;
- g. prioritising self-interest over others/institution; and
- h. myopic focus and a lack of balance and fairness in responding to critical incidents.

It seems as if the realities of inefficient leadership will continue to plague the existence of HEIs as long as these deficiencies are not addressed. Tadgh (2020:iii) illustrates how those in leadership roles in HEIs experience significant difficulties and struggle to lead effectively. Furthermore, this author asserts that problems exist in a distinctive, complicated, and possibly hostile HE due to ineffective leadership. South African HEIs have had their fair share of failures associated with poor leadership, and some continue to experience these. However, it is encouraging that many HEIs have survived the effects of weak leadership, thereby gaining valuable lessons and continuing to deliver quality education.

Traditional principles of academic leadership and collegial forms of governance have rapidly been substituted by management principles adopted from the private sector

(Tsheola & Nembambula, 2015:24). Governance and management changes, often described as HEIs' 'new managerialism', and its effects have been the subject of much discourse over the last three decades and have created an interesting paradox (Jones, 2014:129). Managerialism prompted the introduction of more individual performance measures to encourage conformity to institutional values, quality control, and audits aimed at improving effectiveness and accountability (Jones & Harvey, 2017:127).

However, rather than addressing the complexities of HEIs, managerialism has created further problems, by contributing to further bureaucratic layers of control, which have often been experienced as inhibitors of organisational effectiveness and responsiveness (Davis *et al.*, 2016:1480; Jones & Harvey, 2017:127). By their nature and as a result of their structure, HEIs' are not generally well suited to top-down leadership or 'managerialism', and a deep-seated desire for collegiality, consultation, and academic freedom still exists. From the researcher's perspective, the approach remained top down, enforcing change, rather than facilitating true, authentic transformation in heart and deed. This resulted in pronounced differences that alienated groups and increased conflict, rather fostering collaboration result in the achievement of common goals.

Transformation is hampered because the top-down structure has remained intact, thus maintaining the status quo. Transformation cannot take place if leadership itself is not transformed. In NEIs this situation seems to be exacerbated due to the professional ranking system of nursing in practice, in which subordination is expected. Also in terms of nursing being subordinate to the medical profession, junior staff look up to their seniors as a form of respect, and in return they are treated as subjects rather than colleagues, and are not incorporated into leadership positions, resulting in aging leadership and poor succession planning.

Higher Education Institutions must follow an uncertain path experiencing competing and conflicting demands and expectations. The researcher believes that offering a sense of continuity, motivating staff to work towards shared goals, and mobilising leadership throughout the organisation cannot only be leaderships' responsibility of the senior figures alone. This view is supported by Pasmore (2014:2) who asserts that an organisation's ability to achieve its objectives does not depend solely on a single great leader's force, or even upon the effectiveness of the organisation's chain of command.

Beattie *et al.* (2013:67) report that some HEIs' leadership mostly lack training in organisational leadership, and these leaders are being promoted into leadership roles lacking the experience and training necessary to empower them to anticipate and tackle the unplanned effects of their decision-making.

Braun *et al.* (2009:196) reported that leaders within HEIs a decade ago were appointed not on the basis of their leadership skills but because of their deep subject knowledge, experience, and scientific achievements, such as publication in international journals. Collins (2014:561) later confirmed this practice, and specified that the appointment of leaders in HEIs' was based on a good record of research scholarship rather than their achievements as leaders or administrators. Parrish (2015:822) confirms that academic staff appointed to leadership positions at HEIs have limited experience in formal management or leadership roles and responsibilities. In South African universities this situation has not yet changed, with appointments and promotions into positions of leadership remaining focused on excellence in scholarship, as evidenced by the requirements stated in advertisements for vacant positions.

These assertions imply that leaders at HEIs hold leadership positions without sufficient preparation. This culture of HEIs appointing insufficiently equipped leaders perpetuates the status quo (Beattie *et al.*, 2013:67). Jooste *et al.*, (2018:692,696) assert that these leaders are more likely to experience challenges such as poor interpersonal, unsatisfactory problem-solving, and conflict resolution skills. To substantiate these assertions, Beattie *et al.* (2013:62) states that many planned organisations have fallen short of their intended goals, as HE leaders have been unable to promote sustained improvements.

Although demands and the expectations placed on the HEIs are generally explicit, the CHE (2016:5) has reported that reduced authority in academic decision-making and a more submissive role in the leadership of institutions sometimes accompany these pressures.

Workman and Cleveland-Innes (2012:320) also identified serious difficulties that exist within legacy education models and structures, which prevent transformation into contemporary learning models and organisations. This is attributed to the lack of

necessary visionary leadership required to produce disruptive, transformative, and tenacious change.

Manning and Curtis (2014:4) state that observed leadership failure rates in organisations range from 40-60 % and this represents significant cost to organisations. Jones (2014:129) raises the concern that less attention has been given to the HEIs to discuss the new forms of institutional leadership that is needed to effectively respond to associated challenges. Although the aforementioned high leadership failure rates were not specifically connected to HE leadership, this is an alarming sentiment, especially in light of the view that not much focus has been placed on adapting leadership at HEIs to meet the current demands. Such cost-ineffective organisational leadership is supported by the stance that currently the weakest link in business, industry, and government is not technology, tools or equipment, facilities, systems or procedures, but leadership (Manning & Curtis, 2014:4). This statement appears to support this research's focus, i.e. leadership strengthening.

2.8 SUMMARY

The presented perspectives of leadership within the context of the study demonstrated how challenging and demanding it is for HEIs around the world to maintain their existence and fulfil their obligations. It is evident that the issues confronting HEIs presented in this research do not require super heroes but collective leaders with the necessary competencies to respond to challenges. Although the world requires a viable socio-economic status to pressurise HEIs to deliver their mandates to produce quality, skilled graduates, HEIs are encouraged not to compromise on standards but to remain relevant and globally competitive. Equally and specifically so, NEIs are challenged to respond appropriately to their challenges and demands in order to train and educate competent nurses who are able to render quality and safe healthcare. Moreover, certain leadership approaches that are deemed effective for HEIs in the 21st century were discussed, i.e. transformational, visionary, distributed, and collegial leadership. Examples of leadership weaknesses in HE that could be addressed through the aforementioned leadership styles were also presented.

Emerging from the discussions in this chapter is the notion that the effective navigation of challenges of the 21st century and transformation are reliant upon the implementation

of transformative approaches to leadership. Focusing on institutional strengths is seen as transformative leadership behaviour, and therefore a strengths-based approach was found to be more suitable for this research. The researcher assumed that by valuing the existing leadership strengths at the college, the leaders might be motivated to aspire to advancement. Subsequently, both the AI and the modified Delphi were employed for leadership strengthening at the college. Embedded within a specific research paradigm, approach and design, these research methods were employed to respond to the research question, as well as the objectives elaborated on in the following chapter.

Chapter 3 Research methodology

“Although individuals need not be well-rounded, teams should be.”

“What great leaders have in common is that each truly knows his or her strengths - and can call on the right strength at the right time.”

“If you focus on people's weaknesses, they lose confidence” (Tom Rath²).

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Considering the complexities presented by the challenges of the 21st century and the transition to HE facing leadership at a specific South African public nursing college, it was vital to strengthen their endeavours to navigate these demands, Tom Rath proposed the notion that great leaders draw from their strengths, and his words quoted above confirm a strengths-based approach to this research. Consequently the following research question arose:

How can leadership at a South African public nursing college be strengthened?

Collaborative approaches have been found to enhance transformation and it was believed that appreciating existing leadership strengths would provide the impetus and aspiration for advancement. In taking a positive stance to leadership strengthening at the college, the research approach, design, and methods emanating from social constructionism are discussed in this chapter. In concluding the discussions, the measures implemented to enhance trustworthiness and ensure research integrity are presented.

3.2 PARADIGMATIC PERSPECTIVE OF THE RESEARCH

Social constructionism is the philosophical foundation of this research. Qualitative research can be guided by different philosophical approaches and in the case of this research, social constructionism was deemed appropriate due to the notion that “a great deal of human life exists as it does due to social and interpersonal influences” (Gergen, 1985 cited in Galbin, 2014:82).

² Rath and Conchie (2008:13,14 & 23)

Contrary to positivists, social constructionists assert that there is no truth 'out there', but rather a narrative reality that changes continuously, which emanates from shared meaning-making and negotiation among various social actors (De Vos *et al.*, 2011:310; Savin-Baden & Major, 2013:62; Zhao, 2020:99-100). Therefore, reality can only be constructed by means of "negotiated social processes and interactions" of diverse participants (Zhao, 2020:100). Additionally, Denzin and Lincoln (2018:56) claim that social constructionists take a relativist position rather than a realist position influenced by their conviction that the outside world does not survive independently of our perceptions, thoughts, language, beliefs, and desires. Hence, the decision to adopt social constructionism as a paradigm that enabled an in-depth exploration of the participants' perspectives and dreams regarding leadership within a challenged and transforming nursing education arena and at a particular nursing college.

Thomas *et al.* (2014:2) assert that social constructionism is a worldview that considers the origin of knowledge and meaning and the nature of reality as processes generated within human relationships. With the emphasis placed on knowledge creation through collaborative interactions, the chosen paradigm facilitated participants collaborating to construct a collective reality, i.e. leadership strengthening at a particular nursing college.

Because different interpretations of the paradigms guide qualitative research, terms such as social constructivism and social constructionism are often used interchangeably in literature. Constructivism is understood to be embedded in the reality being an individuals' mental construction, whereas social constructionism upholds the notion that reality is socially constructed, which was the focus of this research (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013:28-29; Polit & Beck, 2017:33).

The researcher recognises that approaching the research from a different paradigm (e.g. positivism) that claims to take an objective stance, or a transformative paradigm informed by specific theories (e.g. feminism or critical theory), would have yielded different results. In this way, a different light is cast on the research issue. However, a strengths-based approach is guided by social constructionism. Hence, other paradigms were disregarded during the research conceptualisation, as incorporating multiple realities on leadership strengthening at the college gained through social interaction was desirable.

In elaborating on the summary presented in Table 1.2, a discussion of the philosophical underpinnings of social constructionism follows.

3.2.1 Ontology (belief system about the nature of reality)

Ontology answers questions about the nature and characteristics of the phenomenon under research. It also determines the way forward and influences researchers' decisions. Ontologically, social constructionism's view is that reality is unknowable and has external validity (Penny, 2013). Social constructionism assumes that human communication is the central process that generates, sustains, and alters realities (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013:29; Zhao, 2020:100). Denzin and Lincoln (2018:56) posit that social constructionism gravitates towards a relativist ontology, meaning that multiple realities are possible through intangible mental constructions that are both socially and experientially based (Zhao, 2020:100). This is a reflection of the interpretivist tradition, in which the social constructionism paradigm is situated. In an ontological approach, Levers (2013:2) points out that it is accepted that the individual's subjective understanding of the social world exists independently and it is only accessible via the participant's interpretation, which the researcher may interpret further.

College participants and experienced South African NELEs were involved to relate their own perceived reality about leadership strengthening within a specific context. Qualitative methods were employed to collect and analyse participants' shared multiple realities through an AI and a modified Delphi, as well as to create meaning for these inputs. Based on the participants' perspectives and the deeper connotations, the framework developed as a reality for leadership strengthening is considered to be the human product that was socially constructed.

3.2.2 Epistemology (the relationship between the knower and the known)

Epistemology seeks to answer specific questions, i.e. "What is knowledge?" and "How is knowledge acquired. This confirms Kham (2013:31) and Rees *et al.*'s (2020:846) descriptions of epistemology as a theory of knowledge rooted in the theoretical perspective and thereby in the methodology, as a way of understanding and explaining how we know what we know. Social constructionists suggest that all knowledge, including

the most basic, everyday knowledge, is derived from and maintained by social interactions (Rees *et al.*, 2020:846).

Furthermore, knowledge is seen as social and experimental, implying that a trial-and-error approach uncovers new knowledge that is relative and subjective (Penny, 2013). This way of creating knowledge is recognised as the basis for choosing theoretical, methodology and approaches for social research (Kham, 2013:30-31). Social constructionism aided the exploration of constructed and interpreted factors that formed the participants' multiple realities concerning leadership within the South African nursing education context and at a specific nursing college.

In this study, the nature of knowledge involved eliciting the participants' perspectives on leadership strengthening. Perspectives on leadership strengthening through an AI and leadership strengths by means of a modified Delphi method were acknowledged and equally considered to develop provocative propositions in the form of a framework. Through the selected research methods, participants and the researcher became knowledge-makers instead of knowledge-users, and through a process of continuous critical reflection and collaboration, they developed knowledge in the form of the framework.

3.2.3 Methodology (inquiry approach)

Creswell and Creswell (2018:34) assert that a philosophical perspective directs data collection methods and data interpretation. Methodology refers to the approach to problem-solving or the inquiry strategy flowing from the epistemology (Mertens, 2015:11; Zuber-Skerritt *et al.*, 2015:3). More simply stated, methodology is how research activities are executed during the research process. Social constructionists conduct research through interactions between the researcher and participants. Mertens (2015:16) explains that this interactive approach to research is hermeneutical and interactive in that efforts are made to obtain multiple perspectives that yield better interpretations of meanings (hermeneutics). These hermeneutics are compared and contrasted through a dialectic interchange involving the juxtaposition of conflicting ideas and forcing reconsideration of previous positions (Mertens, 2015:16). Consequently, the researcher strove to achieve confirmability rather than data objectivity of data.

In this research, both an AI and a modified Delphi were employed for data collection purposes. There has been significant debate regarding the nature of a Delphi. Sekayi and Kennedy (2017:2754) posit that the Delphi method has been described as a qualitative, quantitative, and mixed-methods approach. These authors assert that the anonymous gathering of descriptive group opinion coupled with the highly structured nature of the process and quantitatively described results, makes it difficult to place classical Delphi in a methodological category. Brady (2015:3) considers a classical Delphi to be a pragmatic approach, perhaps due to its mixed methodology nature. The classical Delphi method was modified in this research, because the researcher did not seek statistical consensus. Rather, by asking experienced South African NELEs to share their multiple views on the existing leadership strengths that they consider necessary for the country's challenged and transforming nursing education, a dialectic stance was assumed.

The AI method is deeply embedded within the social constructionist paradigm and was applied to reframe and develop the college's leadership reality by capitalising on the institution's existing leadership strengths. A dialectic stance was assumed by involving various groups of participants using two different methods. In striving to reach a deeper understanding of the research phenomenon, by exploring perspectives of the various participants, hermeneutics was applied. The study was conducted within a specific context. Although the main focus was on a specific public nursing college, using a modified Delphi broadened the context to include views on leadership strengths in South African nursing education. The methodological standpoint of this research is clarified concisely in Sections 1.6 and 3.2 to facilitate a deeper understanding of the research's methodological assumptions.

3.2.4 Axiology (value-system)

Borys (2012:339) defines axiology as a non-explicit and rarely disclosed system of values that generates and directs orders, including social order. In accordance with Rees *et al.*, (2020:848), social constructionists value inter alia:

- the research milieu, language, and social collaborations;
- individual cases (idiographic) rather than the rules, patterns, and consistencies typified by the natural sciences;

- whether or not the research was carried out justly and in a confirmable way, the research interpretations are dependable, the researcher offers a detailed description of their personal relationship to the research, the researcher has pondered on their impact on the research process, and the research findings are transferrable to other settings;
- the researcher's impact on the questions asked, as well as the researcher's influence on the data interpretation; and
- adherence to the ethical boundaries during data collection.

Although meaning-making between the researcher and the participants is key in social constructionism, the research context has to be clearly defined in line with axiological integrity. This research took place in a specific South African public nursing college and sought to explore leadership as specifically perceived by the participants.

The fundamental principle of the social constructionist approach posits that how we understand and even perceive the world and the objects (including people) and events within it does not necessarily reflect the nature of that world, but is rather a product of how the world is represented or produced through language (Burr & Dick, 2017). Appreciative Inquiry incorporates constructive language, i.e. positive words, such as 'alive', 'engaged', 'proud', 'achieve', and 'realise', and other words similar to these were employed in appreciation of leadership strengths at the college. A collaborative approach was taken to create meaning on leadership strengthening as a possible positive reality.

The necessary measures to ensure trustworthiness of research, i.e. credibility, confirmability, dependability, transferability, and authenticity were followed, and a summary pertaining to the application of these measures in this research is presented in Table 3.6. Belmont's ethical principles as described in Section 3.7.2 were adhered to throughout the research.

The questions posed to the participants for both AI and a modified Delphi were formulated in consultation with the research supervisor and in the case of the AI, with the AI facilitator. The questions for the AI sessions and a modified Delphi were explored prior to the actual research to ensure their appropriateness and to enable the social construction of reality as intended, as well as knowledge creation (Sections 3.3.2.1 & 3.3.2.2).

Adherence to the ethical principles ensured that the researcher took cognisance of power relations between himself and the participants. Although the researcher was a senate member at the public nursing college under study prior to and during data collection, no power was exerted over the defined population and the principle of respect for persons was adhered to as no potential participants were coerced into participating the research and informed consent was obtained prior to conducting the research. An expert facilitator was also recruited for the AI sessions to address the possible power balance issue. A deeper discussion of the principles followed to address any ethical concerns is presented in Section 3.7. In accordance with Mertens (2015:18), the researcher took steps to form a relationship with the participants, to respect the multiplicity of their perspectives, to present a balanced representation of views, and to remain mindful of the researcher's advantaged status in relation to the various participants' positions and standings.

3.3 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHOD

In terms of how the researcher intends to conduct research, a research design is often considered to be the blueprint that prescribes the process and addresses factors that are likely to affect the study outcome (Mouton, 2012:55; Grove & Gray, 2019:68). However, in qualitative research an emergent design applies, where a researcher is often confronted with unforeseen circumstances in which ethical decisions need to be made. (Polit & Beck, 2017:463; Creswell & Creswell, 2018:208). Furthermore, the initial research plan cannot be strictly fixed and all process phases are likely to alter after the researchers' entry into the field and the commencement of data collection (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Depending on a specific research design, appropriate methods of data collection are decided upon. In order to describe the research design and methods, a methodology summary is presented in Table 3.1

Table 3.1 Summary of the research methodology

Research question	How can leadership at a South African public nursing college be strengthened?	
Research purpose	The purpose of the research was to develop a framework to strengthen leadership at a South African public nursing college.	
Research objectives	i. employ AI for collaborative leadership strengthening at a South African public nursing college; ii. explore and describe the existing leadership strengths within a challenged and transforming South African nursing education context from the NELEs by means of a modified Delphi; iii. analyse and synthesise the research findings from the AI sessions and a modified Delphi to develop a framework to strengthen leadership at a South African public nursing college; and iv. validate the developed framework by involving key stakeholders.	
Research design	Qualitative, exploratory, descriptive, contextual, and collaborative.	
Research methods	AI	Modified Delphi
Population	College managers, i.e. principal, DP, CHs, HADs, NEs, and SLs.	Experienced South African NELEs.
Sampling	Purposive	Purposive
Units of analysis	3 x units of analysis with each comprising 21, 15, and 12 participants respectively.	Ten experienced NELEs formed part of the analysis unit.
Data analysis method	Thematic content analysis.	Thematic content analysis.

The design and methods believed to answer the research question and accomplish the study purpose and objectives are subsequently discussed. Following the delineation of the research design, the methods employed in this study are unpacked separately.

3.3.1 Research design

Flowing from social constructionism, and in order to best answer the research question and achieve the research purpose, a qualitative, exploratory, descriptive, contextual, and collaborative design was selected. Essentially, Creswell and Creswell (2018:34) propose that research design includes steps ranging from the broad assumptions to methods of data collection, analysis, and interpretation. The compatibility of the research approach with the specific methods of data collection, analysis, and interpretation is crucial (Kumar, 2011:94; Bhattacharjee, 2012:22; Creswell & Creswell, 2018:34). A critical stance was taken to avoid a mismatch between the chosen design and the research methods, i.e. the AI and a modified Delphi for data collection. According to Grove and Gray (2019:89), the

selected research design is the systematic approach that is applied to explore and describe the situation i.e. leadership strengthening at the college from the perspective of the college members and NELEs. Through the chosen design, the researcher analysed the participants' expressions, established sense from the comments, and offered a description of the situation that promoted a deeper understanding of the phenomenon.

3.3.1.1 *Qualitative approach*

A qualitative approach was taken through which the researcher collaborated with the participants to explore, describe, and construe their unquantifiable perspectives in order to understand them and ascribe meaning to them (Creswell & Creswell, 2018:35; Grove & Gray, 2019:89). Qualitative researchers analyses the words of the participants, finds meanings in the words, and provides a description of the experience that promotes deeper understanding of the experience (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Therefore the emphasis is on the individual meaning that participants assign to the phenomenon under study, and qualitative researchers build theory rooted in these meanings through inductive reasoning (Polit & Beck, 2017:86; Creswell & Creswell, 2018:208; Grove & Gray, 2019:93). Qualitative researchers try to develop a complex picture of the problem or issue under study by considering multiple perspectives, making interpretations through comparing and contrasting ideas (Mertens, 2015:20; Creswell & Creswell, 2018:209). Consequently, in qualitative research, rich narrative materials are accumulated in an in-depth and holistic fashion.

Based on these characteristics, qualitative research was considered most appropriate to elicit rich perspectives from multiple data sources via different methods. An AI, as a qualitative and interpretive research method, was employed for collaborative leadership strengthening at the college, through which multiple perspectives regarding the phenomenon under study were shared and from which meanings were derived. Modification of a classical Delphi method permitted a qualitative exploration of the “depth, richness and complexity” inherent in the experienced South African NELEs' perspectives regarding the research phenomenon. The complexity of meaning-making through a qualitative research approach culminated into developing the framework.

While benefitting from the characteristics of qualitative research, the approach also posed disadvantages. The qualitative approach is generally critiqued for its contextual and

subjective nature, the small units of analysis that do not allow generalisability and the involvement of the researcher that introduces the possibility of bias and coercion (Rahman, 2017:105; Creswell & Creswell, 2018:223-224). Furthermore, the complexity of data collection and analysis render it labour-intensive and time-consuming (Polit & Beck, 2017:530). The flexibility occasioned by the emergent design, although beneficial, inconvenienced the researcher who had to make adjustments, compromise, extend time periods, and exercise patience. More specifically, making appointments to suit the participants' schedules and receiving feedback from NELEs and the stakeholders who participated in the framework validation was tedious. Working through a copious amount of narrative material and the complexity of meaning-making was time-consuming and mentally exhausting. It was character building for the researcher to remain reflexive at all times to counteract bias and maintain research integrity.

3.3.1.2 *Exploratory design*

De Vos *et al.* (2011:95) state that exploratory research is applied to gain insight into a situation, phenomenon, community, or individual. Rather than simply describing the situation, Polit and Beck (2017:15) purport that exploratory research may be employed to research the “full nature of the phenomenon, the manner in which it is manifested, and the other factors to which it is related”. Exploratory research is more relevant and suitable in a topic of interest that is relatively new with little or no information about it (Leavy, 2017:20; Nieswiadomy & Bailey, 2018:138). Hence, an exploratory research approach is deemed appropriate when new knowledge is sought about a phenomenon that is poorly understood. From the beginning of this research, data pertaining to existing leadership strengths, which were regarded as necessary and appropriate within a transforming South African nursing education, were lacking. An AI had also not previously been implemented for purposes of leadership-strengthening at the specific nursing college.

In selecting an exploratory research design, new knowledge could be generated in areas where little or no previous research had been conducted, and thus a deeper understanding of the phenomenon was gained. Experienced nursing education leaders could contribute to constructing knowledge on leadership strengths existing within South African nursing education. By means of a collaborative approach, college leadership strengths could be discovered, college leadership's dreams could be captured, their

ideals could be co-constructed, and their destiny could be mapped. Data gained from the in-depth exploration were integrated into the framework development.

3.3.1.3 *Descriptive design*

A descriptive design was employed to allow participants to express their viewpoints related to the research topic. Descriptive research designs intend to illustrate people's characteristics or circumstances through which a certain phenomenon occurs (Polit & Beck, 2017:1014). Grove and Gray (2019:104) assert that the purpose of a descriptive research design is to delineate phenomena in real life situations, and this approach is used to generate knowledge about concepts or topics about which limited or no research has been conducted. A single open-ended exploratory question from the modified Delphi facilitated a thick description of the existing leadership strengths in a challenged and transforming South African nursing education context. Furthermore, the open-ended questions posed to the participants in accordance with the AI stages, enabled a collaborative and dense description of their views regarding leadership at the nursing college.

3.3.1.4 *Contextual design*

Contextual research the researcher being present in the participants' milieu and observing and/or posing questions to learn more about them in their natural setting (Malpass, 2018; Duda *et al.*, 2020:1). These authors further assert that contextual research places researchers in participants' environments, rather than bringing them into the researchers' environment. As a result, this alters the research dynamic to achieve more nuanced, natural insights (Malpass, 2018).

Polit and Beck (2017:1046) describe a context as the physical location and conditions in which research data collection takes place. In contextual studies, data are collected in real world, natural settings (Creswell & Creswell, 2018:208). Natural settings, also referred to as field settings, are the uncontrolled, real-life situations where research takes place, and conducting a research in a natural setting means that the researcher does not manipulate or change the research environment (Grove & Gray, 2019:324).

The research context was established during the conceptualisation phase. Led by a social constructionist paradigm, the reality of South African nursing education leadership could be created and understood from the perspectives of individuals directly involved with or affected by the phenomenon within the specific context.

Within this research, insight into the phenomena being explored was sought within the participants' natural environment to gain a broader understanding of the nature of their socially constructed reality. Hence, for the modified Delphi, only the experienced NELEs within the South African nursing education context were engaged. With regard to the AI, a specific public nursing college was engaged to co-create a desired reality. This institution is located in the RSA and has three campuses located in different geographical areas. Each campus has its own infrastructure, resources, and leadership team comprising a CH, HADs, NEs, and SLs.

Qualitative studies are always contextual, as data does not apply to other settings (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013:13; Polit & Beck, 2017:560; Creswell & Creswell, 2018:208). This qualitative research's findings are therefore context-bound and cannot be generalised, since every research project is conducted by a specific researcher working in specific interactions or relationships with specific participants (Polit & Beck, 2017:246).

3.3.2 Research Method

The research methods used to construct knowledge pertaining to leadership strengthening at the college were AI and a modified Delphi. The choice was based on the researcher's worldview and philosophy, i.e. social constructionism that is characterised by subjectivity and collaborative knowledge construction. The methods employed in this research focused on the following domains:

- population and sampling;
- data collection; and
- data analysis;

For clarity purposes, the population and sampling information and data collection is delineated separately for each specific method, commencing with the AI. Thematic

content analysis was used to reduce the data from the AI sessions and modified Delphi into meaningful components, hence the information on this aspect is presented as one.

3.3.2.1 Appreciative Inquiry (AI)

“Appreciative Inquiry begins an adventure. The urge and call to adventure has been sounded by many people and many organisations, and it will take many more to fully explore the vast vistas that are now appearing on the horizon. But even in the first steps, what is being sensed is an exciting direction in our language and theories of change—an invitation, as some have declared, to “a positive revolution” (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005:1).

The researcher and the participants boldly engaged in the AI in the hope that it would yield the necessary information that could positively influence the college leadership in navigating its challenges, including the college’s transition to HE. In this research, an AI was employed for collaborative leadership-strengthening with the participants by affording them an opportunity them to: discover what gives them life; envision their future; co-construct their ideal future; and identify what is necessary to sustain this envisioned reality. Their inputs were integrated into the co-creation of knowledge in the form of the framework. To orientate the reader in the AI, the background information on this method that facilitated a shift from deficit-based change to positive change is presented, and its mechanism of action and the principles in which it is embedded are discussed.

a. What is Appreciative Inquiry?

Cooperrider and Srivastva (1987) first defined “appreciative” as a state of being mindful of both one’s own and others’ experiences, ideas, and reflections. Gordon (2008:19) describes appreciation as the act of recognising the best in people or the world around us, asserting previous and current strengths, as well as attainments and possibilities. Thus, Cooperrider *et al.* (2008:43) posit that during the AI process there is an expression of appreciation for self and others. Concomitantly, the accompanying concept, ‘inquire’ is considered the act of exploration and discovery, where questions are asked and researchers open to seeing new opportunities (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005:7). Through

a positive inquiry process, it is possible to value and recognise the best in the world around us (Moore, 2008:216; Selcer *et al.*, 2012:11).

An AI is deemed a ground-breaking, influential, and significantly fruitful process for change and development, focusing on individuals and organisations' affirmative core (Jordan & Thatchenkery, 2011:179; Orem *et al.*, 2011:12). An AI is grounded on the supposition that questions and dialogue about strengths, successes, values, hopes, and dreams are themselves transformational (Cooperrider *et al.*, 2008:xi; Whitney & Trosten-Bloom, 2010:1). Gordon (2008:19) views AI as a process that focuses on leveraging an organisation's core strengths, rather than seeking to overcome or minimise its weakness as an approach to personal and organisational change,

David Cooperrider and Suresh Srivasta, who were both engaged in organisational change as their main project at the Case Western Reserve University's Weatherhead School of Management, first conceptualised AI as an organisational development tool in 1980 (Watkins *et al.*, 2011:23). These two ground-breaking AI originators experienced traditional organisation development methodologies of problem analysis and criticism as "sucking the energy for change right out of the system" (Gordon, 2008:19). Furthermore, through an organisational practice that exposed further problems in an institution, people became discouraged, and the more disheartened they became the more they blamed each other for their challenges (Gordon, 2008:20). Organisations mostly used intervention as a strategy to address their challenges.

However, Cooperrider and Srivasta realised that inquiry was key, and that it was more effective to act than intervene. As a result, these AI originators became students of organisational life – where one learns, discovers, and appreciates everything that gives life to an organisation when it is most vibrant and effective. Therefore, AI strives to determine or explore what gives life to organisations, communities, and human systems when they are most alive, effective, creative, and healthy in their interconnected ecology of relationships (Moore, 2008:216; Selcer *et al.*, 2012:11). Subsequently, AI inspired individuals to inquire about, learn from, and build on what worked when conditions were considered optimal, and discouraged individuals from focusing on fixing problems (Judy & Hammond, 2006:1). Thus, AI purportedly proposes that optimal human organising and change is a social process of inquiry, grounded in affirmation and appreciation. It is for this reason that AI is aligned with the paradigm of social constructionism.

The collaborative nature of AI together with its potential to inspire participants by means of a strengths-based approach rendered it ideal to respond to the research question. Considering that AI is embedded in questions and dialogues about strengths and dreams, AI was found to be transformational. Having noted that transformational leadership was widely advocated in the midst of challenges facing HEIs, this notion further justified the choice of AI as one of this study's research methods.

The participants collaboratively engaged in AI as a knowledge construction process by recognising the best in each other, asserting their own strengths and those of others. Through their interaction and interconnectedness, participants could share those moments during which they felt alive or proud of their own and other leaders' leadership. This appreciation resulted in what has been termed 'appreciated leadership strengths' in this study, information that has been deemed vital for shaping the college's ideal future, i.e. effective or strong leadership.

The college was established many years ago and a number of nurses who form part of the country's vital health workforce were trained there. The college's survival and success could be attributed to those who actively and collectively participated to steer the institution towards a certain goal. Just like any other institution, the college relies on its workforce to achieve its mandates. It is evident from the AI perspectives that these obligations cannot be met if a culture that promotes negativity, fault-finding, and problem-solving, or intervention is cultivated. Moreover, the researcher's own work-life philosophy is that "a happy employee is a productive employee". Therefore, it was determined that in order for organisations to survive, cherishing organisational life-giving moments and positive thinking is key.

b. The shift from deficit-based change to positive change

Appreciative Inquiry is seen as a bold shift in how people think about and deal with organisational change (Whitney & Trosten-Bloom, 2010:80). An AI's intention is not to alter anything, but rather to reveal and bring current strengths, hopes, and dreams to the fore, and to reinforce institutions and structures' positive cores. During this process, people and organisations are transformed. An AI's emphasis is on positive potential – the best of what has been, what is, and what might be (Cooperrider *et al.*, 2008:43-44; Seniwoliba, 2014:186; Hung, 2017:3).

In contrast to AI there are other approaches that are shortfall-based – concentrating on the detection of problems or challenges within organisations and constructing a fix-it approach and interventions. Thus, AI presents an alternative to the problem-solving approach underpinning action research and offers an affirmative approach for evaluating and envisioning future initiatives based on best practice (Seniwoliba, 2014:190-191). The differences between traditional problem-solving process and AI are presented in Table 3.2.

Table 3.2 Differences between problem-solving and AI process

Problem-solving	Appreciative Inquiry
Finding the problem ↓ Examining the causes of the problem ↓ Reflecting on possible solutions ↓ Developing a plan to tackle the problem ↓ Basic assumption: An organisation is a problem to be solved	Discovering the best of what exists ↓ Predicting what might be ↓ Establishing what could be ↓ Maintaining the ideal ↓ Basic assumption: An organisation is a mystery to be embraced

Source: Adapted from Watkins and Kelly (2010:21)

c. Why does Appreciative Inquiry work?

A number of explanations have been offered for AI's success. An AI builds relationships and enables people to be known in relationships rather than in roles; creates an opportunity for people to be heard; generates opportunities for people to dream and to share their dreams; creates an environment in which people can choose how they would like to contribute and be supported to act; and encourages people to be positive (Cooperrider *et al.*, 2008:43-46; Whitney & Trosten-Bloom, 2010:19). An AI provides a positive and new way of participating in healthcare and health research, which is often described as engagement, involvement, and inclusion (Trajkovski *et al.*, 2013:1224), and is tied to open and trusting relationships that contribute to continuous changes (Priest *et al.*, 2013:28; Buchanan, 2014:41). Furthermore, the inclusive nature of AI contributes to

collaboration and facilitates workforce engagement that promotes changes in a healthcare context from a ground-up perspective (Trajkovski *et al.*, 2013:1231).

d. Appreciative Inquiry principles

As an underlying guide to practice, AI uses a set of five original principles identified by Cooperrider (Macpherson, 2015:3), as well as an overall guiding principle of wholeness (Stavros *et al.*, 2016:104). The principles of AI are distinctive and are derived from three generalised streams of thought, i.e. Social Constructionism, Image Theory, and Grounded Theory Research, which are presented in Figure 3.1

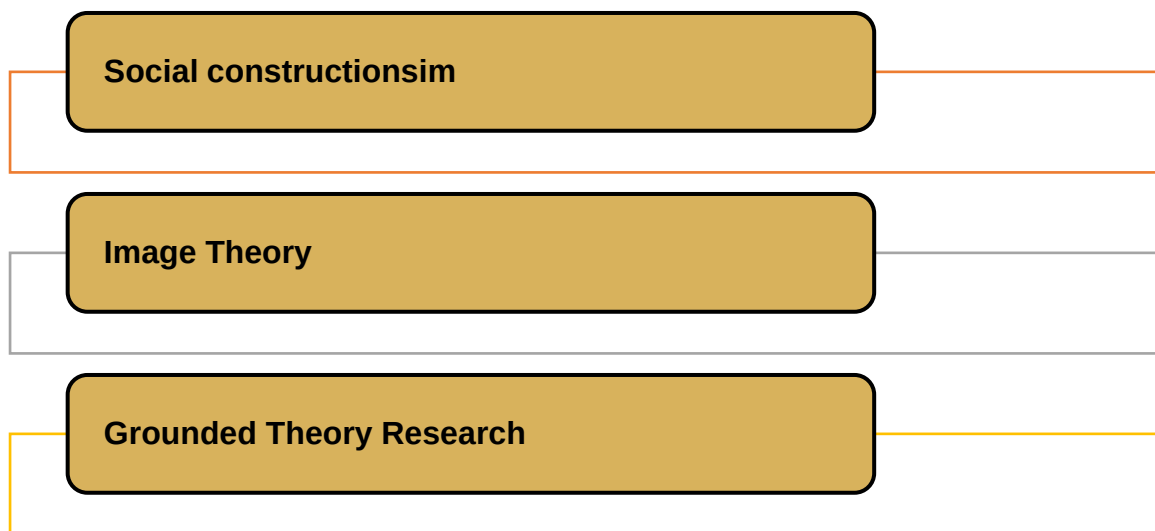


Figure 3.1 Three general streams of thought from which AI principles are derived (Whitney & Trosten Bloom, 2010:49).

These principles propose that human organisations and change are positive, socially shared processes of discovering and constructing life-affirming, guiding images of the future (Whitney & Trosten-Bloom, 2010:49). Steered by these values, the researcher endeavoured to engage college members in knowledge construction. By means of AI, the participants collaboratively discovered their best leadership moments, and through this process participants were additionally enabled to present their visions of what they perceived their ideal future to look like.

Watkins and Mohr (2011:68) specified that AI consists of five core principles and five core generic processes. Adding to the five core principles, i.e. the constructionist, poetic, simultaneity, anticipatory, and the positive principle, Stavros *et al.* (2016:104) refer to five

additional emergent principles. The details of these principles that are embedded in the AI philosophy are presented in Table 3.3.

Table 3.3 Summary of AI's core and emergent principles and assumptions

FIVE CORE PRINCIPLES	DEFINITION
The Constructionist Principle	Words create words Reality as we know it is subjective rather than objective, and is socially constructed through language and conversations. Knowledge of the world grows from relationships and is embedded not within individual minds, but within interpretive communal traditions.
The Poetic Principle	Whatever we focus on, grows - If we focus on success, we create more success. - If we focus on problems, we create more problems. - What we focus on becomes our reality.
The Simultaneity Principle	Change begins the moment we ask questions - Inquiry is intervention. - The moment questions are asked, ideas and innovations are stimulated, and this creates change. - All questions are leading questions and no questions are neutral – all inquiry questions take people somewhere. - The act of asking questions of an organisation, group, or individual influences them in one way or another.
The Anticipatory Principle	Images inspire action - Human systems move in the direction of their visions of the future. - The more positive and hopeful the images are, the more positive current action will be. - Images of the future are created and exist in conversations and inner dialogue. - In every society, organisations, groups, or individuals, something works.
The Positive Principle	The Positive Core - Consists of strengths, achievements, unexplored potentials, and assets. - Building strengths is more effective than correcting weaknesses. - People are more confident and comfortable embarking on a journey to the future (the unknown) when they carry forward parts of the past (the known).
FIVE EMERGENT PRINCIPLES	DEFINITION
The Wholeness Principle	Wholeness brings out the best - We are part of a bigger 'whole' or interconnected web of relationships. - Bringing all stakeholders together (all parts of the system) stimulates creativity and builds collective capacity. People transcend the "I" to become a "We". - What is common becomes apparent.
The Enactment Principle	Just try it We must "be the change we want to see".

	• <i>Just try a new behaviour that aligns with what you want, and build from there.</i> • <i>If we carry parts of the past forward, they should be the best parts.</i>
The Free Choice Principle	<i>Free choice liberates power</i> • <i>People perform better and are more committed when they have freedom to choose how and what they contribute.</i> • <i>Free choice stimulates organisational excellence and positive change.</i>
The Awareness Principle	<i>Social and self-awareness</i> • <i>Understanding and integrating the AI principles.</i> • <i>Reflection on “automatic thinking” is important.</i> • <i>It is important to value differences.</i>
The Narrative Principle	<i>We construct stories about our lives</i> • <i>Stories are transformative.</i> • <i>We can change stories to help bring us more of what we want.</i> • <i>The language we use creates our realities.</i>

Source: Orem et al. (2011:26); Watkins & Mohr (2011:16); Hammond (2013:2-3) and Stavros et al. (2016:104).

In this research, these principles were found suitable in relation to the selected paradigm, as well as in addressing the research question, and were therefore upheld. With the implication that reality is created through social interactions by asking positive, and constructive questions and building on strengths, the principles and assumptions were shared with the participants prior to the AI sessions. This was done to create a better understanding of what AI is about and to lay the foundation for appreciative and positive thinking.

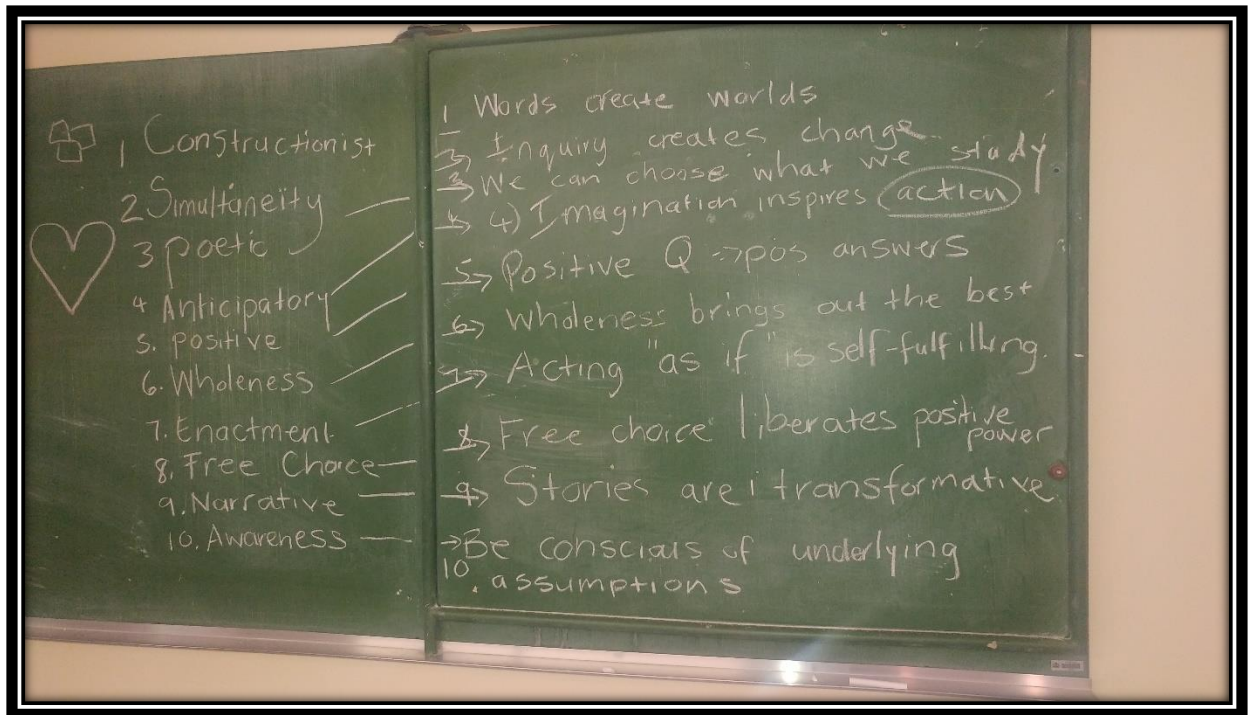


Image 3.1 AI's core and emergent principles depicted by the facilitator during AI sessions

In considering the principle that words create worlds, the AI participants' perspectives were elicited to construct a certain reality, i.e. leadership strengthening within their context. By asking positive questions, this reality could be explored in terms of the simultaneity principle, anticipating that such exploration would ignite change. Focusing on the leadership strengths implied that these could be reinforced and sustained in terms of the poetic principle, and consequently enable the college to successfully continue to deliver on its mandate. In terms of the anticipatory principle, the participants were able to collectively dream about their perceived ideal futures, which was specifically alluded to as their desired leadership milestones. By striving to discover the participants' leadership strengths, it was believed that the positive core could enable the college to navigate its challenges presently and moving into the future. Different college leaders partook in the AI sessions, i.e. the DP, CHs, HADs, NEs, and SLs, together making an interconnected bigger entity, and such collective effort in respect of the wholeness principle stimulated creativity relating to constructing a desired reality. Through the enactment principle, the participants were empowered to ensure that they carry only the best parts of the current college leadership into the future. It was also anticipated by allowing the leaders to contribute what they thought was crucial for their institution to navigate its demands, rather than imposing ideas on them, would stimulate organisational excellence and

positive change in accordance with the free choice principle. By using language specifically related to leadership, the participants shared their perspectives and referred to stories as per the narrative principle, and these formed the basis in developing the anticipated framework. Although the participants' narratives were integrated to create a coherent picture, subtle differences were noted in their views, and these were valued in terms of the social and self-awareness principle. Also, the briefing provided during the introduction to the AI sessions facilitated understanding and integration of the principles.

A discussion of the three domains, i.e. population, unit of analysis, data collection and analysis that were employed in the AI methods follows.

e. Population

The population for the AI sessions included the leadership at the three campuses of the identified public nursing college in South Africa (Table 3.1). These individuals who possessed the same specific characteristics needed to answer the set research questions (Polit & Beck, 2017:739; LoBiondo-Wood & Haber, 2018:47). The college management, namely the principal, DP, CHs, HADs, SLs, and NEs were the most information-rich data sources. A total of approximately 80 individuals could potentially participate in the three AI sessions that were conducted at the three respective campuses.

f. Unit of analysis

The entire population was deemed relevant to participate in co-constructing reality of strong or effective leadership by sharing their perspectives on the posed positive questions and thereby formed the three units of analysis for the AI sessions (Botma *et al.*, 2010:291). In this research, the units of analysis employed in the AI sessions came from the three college campuses. Purposive sampling was applied to select the richest data sources to form part of the unit of analysis of the three AI sessions (De Vos *et al.*, 2011:232; Grove & Gray, 2019). The inclusion criteria for the unit of analysis were as follows:

- the staff members, i.e. principal and the deputy, CHs, HADs, and NEs should preferably have been employed at the institution for at least five years; and
- SLs should have been in at least their third year of study.

Aiming for maximum variation during collaborative leadership strengthening at the college, the researcher ensured that a variety of leadership positions were included in the AI sessions (Polit & Beck, 2017:493). An AI is not prescriptive about the number of participants. Three AI group sessions comprising 21 (C1), 15 (C2), and 12 (C3) participants took place. Table 4.1 presents the AI's participants' contextual information. The total number of participants for the three AI sessions was 48 and details of the contextual information are presented in Table 4.1.

g. Pilot study

The strength of the AI process rests on the quality of the questions asked, which should be a guide in life-giving directions (Watkins & Stavros, 2010). Van der Westhuizen (2016:10) asserts that since AI is grounded on valuing the best in people and the world around them, asking questions and being open to see new potentials and possibilities is vital. Four sets of general questions provided the basic foundation of AI and these are outlined in Table 3.4.

Table 3.4 Four general questions that characterise the AI sessions and their application in this research

Questions	Application in this research
Best experience questions: Tell me about the best times that you have experienced in your community, group, and organisation. Looking at the entire experience, recall a time when you felt most alive, most involved, or most excited about your involvement. What made it an exciting experience? Who was involved? Describe the event.	Participants were asked to share a time when they felt positive, most alive, engaged, or proud of themselves and others as leaders at their institution. They were prompted to motivate their answers.
Values questions: What are the things you value deeply – specifically the things you value about yourself, your family, or your work?	The best experience question posed to the participants covered the value question as it implied the participants' appreciated leadership strengths.
Core life-giving factor or value: What do you think is the core life-giving factor of value of your community/group? What is it that, if it did not exist, would make your community/group totally different than it currently is?	From their descriptions regarding the best experience and value question, participants were requested to identify their personal and others' leadership strengths that they valued most as factors that contribute to the productivity and success of the institution.
Three best wishes: If you had three wishes for your community/group what would they be?	In this regard, the participants had to share their dreams in relation to what they regarded as the enablers of the college to navigate its challenges.

Source: Priest *et al.* (2013:25), Knox *et al.* (2015:10), and Stratton-Berkessel (2020).

Prior to the actual execution of the AI sessions at the respective college campuses, the AI workbook was compiled with a set of questions that were to be asked during the four phases of AI sessions. The AI workbook comprised of the research title, an affirmative topic guiding the AI, both the researcher and facilitator's names, and different questions, which were formulated in accordance with the AI process. The Discovering phase comprised six questions, the Dreaming phase was made up of two, and the Design phase consisted of two, while the Delivering phase posed only one question. More information on the structure of the AI workbook is provided in Annexure F. The AI workbook was presented to the research supervisor for review, comments, and finalisation.

After the ethics clearance was granted by the HSREC at the South African University of the Free State (UFS) and permission was obtained from the Provincial Department of Health (PDoH) to implement the study, a pilot study was held with a group that comprised two managers, two SLs, and four NEs at a NEI in close proximity to the subject campus to seek their views on the clarity of the positive questions that would guide the actual AI sessions. Minor comments were received from the group, which were incorporated by making amendments to the AI workbook. The overall feedback received from the group indicated that the questions to be posed during the AI sessions were clear and understandable without ambiguity. This activity led to finalising the AI workbook for implementation.

h. Data collection

i. Entering the research site and recruiting participants

The principal and CHs at the three campuses were approached for recruitment of persons who met the inclusion criteria to participate in the research, to schedule dates for data collection, and to make the necessary logistical arrangements (Annexure D). At the first two campuses, the researcher made a presentation to a group of potential participants who could avail themselves at that time. Following the presentation, copies of the invitation to participate in the AI sessions (Annexure E) and informed consent forms (Annexure K) were handed out to the target population. Some of the attendees immediately signed consent forms and handed them back. At the third campus, one of the HADs completed the informed consent form after the research was explained to her. Due to some logistical technicalities of such a vast campus, the researcher left several

copies of the research information sheets and informed consent forms with the HAD who was then asked to distribute these documents to the target population.

ii. Planning for the AI sessions

During the research conceptualisation it was decided that an expert AI facilitator would be recruited for data collection purposes. This was due to the fact that AI sessions required someone well-versed with the AI process. Also, the researcher, as a partial insider, felt it important to assume the role of observer during data collection. The recruited expert facilitator was considered suitable as she was completing her PhD, which included AI as research method, and had conducted several AI sessions. The researcher contacted the facilitator to secure possible dates to hold the AI sessions. Three dates were provided based entirely on the facilitator's availability. These dates were then communicated to the respective campuses to establish which dates suited them the best. Once the dates were settled, the researcher confirmed them with AI facilitator and proceeded with the necessary logistical arrangements. A data collection sheet, together with the PowerPoint presentation on the introduction of AI for the participants were shared with the AI facilitator to familiarise herself with the two documents and ask the necessary questions prior to the implementation of the actual AI sessions.

Closer to the agreed upon dates, the gatekeepers were reminded about the AI sessions and informed about what was expected of them. The starting times for the AI sessions were communicated in advance, and the agenda for AI sessions (Annexure G) was drawn up and attached to the AI workbook. The AI sessions were held on the three campus premises in venues (boardrooms) provided by the gatekeepers. These venues were easily accessible to participants, and it was ensured that they were comfortable, non-threatening, and had adequate lighting and ventilation. Audio-visual equipment, i.e. projector and a screen were provided for the PowerPoint presentation. Seating arrangements facilitated paired interactions. Most importantly, the researcher ensured that the SLs were not isolated from the entire group but rather integrated into the entire team where they also formed pairs with college managers and the NEs.

iii. The actual AI sessions

The researcher introduced the AI facilitator to the AI sessions' groups. The AI workbooks were then handed out to participants. The facilitator started the session by engaging the participants in an ice-breaker exercise to set the scene and build rapport, and the same ice-breaker was applied in all three campuses. Participants were prompted to introduce themselves by stating their names and contributing one positive attribute or quality starting with the same letter as their name. To ensure that relevant, informed, and optimal data was shared during the AI sessions, an orientation on AI sessions was conducted (Annexure H). The recruited AI expert facilitated the process with each of the three groups of participants using the 4-D cycle (discovering, dreaming, designing, and delivering) outlined in the AI workbook. An affirmative topic choice was at the heart of the 4-D cycle. As the most intentional aspect of any AI based approach, the following affirmative topic, became a starting point of the 4-D cycle in this research and represented something worth investigating (Priest *et al.*, 2013:21):

AI as a collaborative tool in strengthening leadership at a South African public nursing college

The researcher carefully decided on this neutral affirmative topic to ensure that it would not be associated with failure or effort, as with 'goal', but rather encouraged an individual to see possibilities and move their life in a preferred direction (Orem *et al.*, 2011:93).

Using an AI as a collaborative and participative approach relied on interactive methods such as group discussions and interviews to identify good practice, consider change, and introduce it to a system. Interviewing is an AI's most crucial aspect, and in accordance with the social constructionist paradigm, language and words form the basic building blocks of social reality in an AI. In AI interviewing differs from traditional interviews because rather than soliciting facts and opinions, AI sessions seek examples, stories, and metaphors, and aims to find the best moments, events, and stories. It is for this reason that an expert facilitator that was well versed in AI was involved to ensure that during the interviews, participants were prompted by the questions asked to indicate which category of college leadership they belonged to on page 2 of the AI workbook (Annexure F). Such information enabled the researcher to compile codes that could be used during the findings discussion to keep the participants' responses anonymous. The

AI sessions yielded rich and relevant data that enabled development of the anticipated framework. Questions that strengthened the system's capacity to identify, anticipate, and heighten positive potential were asked. The AI sessions were conducted in pairs (Macpherson, 2015:10).

The participants were guided through each process of the 4-D cycle as presented in Figure 1.2 and Section 1.7.1.

- a. During the Discovering phase, the participants were given sufficient time to question each other about existing leadership-related strengths, as stated in the AI workbook, and they captured the others' responses in writing. The participants were then given an opportunity to share their responses in an open platform, and the researcher noted these on a flip chart.
- b. For the Dreaming phase, the participants captured their own dreams – envisioning the preferred leadership for their institution.
- c. In the Designing phase, a mind-mapping exercise was conducted. Each participant was given two pieces of coloured paper; one piece was used to denote one existing leadership strength they identified during the discovering phase. On the other piece of paper participants indicated the ideal leadership strength they identified during the dreaming phase. The two pieces of paper were then pasted on a flip chart to create a mind map (Image 4.1). The mind map portrayed bold propositions that could be used as a preliminary framework for the designing phase – what the ideal should be.
- d. In the Delivering phase, participants were given the opportunity to identify the critical elements that they deemed vital to sustain effective leadership at their institution.

Once the sessions were concluded, the researcher thanked the participants for their time and input and informed them about the framework that would be developed from their participation at each of the three campuses and then presented to them for validation.

iv. Field notes

The researcher made observations during the AI sessions, and in research terms, qualitative observation is described as taking field notes. In accordance with Lune and Berg (2017:119), the written accounts of what was heard or seen during the course of

data collection were kept. These two research authors define field notes as vocal exchanges (between others or the researcher and others), practices (various routines, actions, and interactions among and between participants), and connections between and among observed exchanges and practices. Other authors add that researchers take field notes to document the unstructured observations made in the field and the interpretation of those observations (Polit & Beck, 2017:1019; LoBiondo-Wood & Haber, 2018:263). LoBiondo-Wood and Haber (2018:263) assert that keeping a short summary of these observations is usually not restricted to any particular type of action or behaviour. Rather, they represent a narrative set of written notes intended to paint a picture of a social situation in a more general sense.

At the beginning of each of the AI sessions, the participants seemed to be despondent and not as eager as anticipated. This was most evident when the researcher introduced the study and the AI. The observed behaviour could perhaps be attributed to previous experiences where participation was not approached in as positive a manner. The participants might have expected “witch-hunting” or an exercise to identify people’s weaknesses. Alternatively, some people might view research as time-consuming and as something unlikely to yield direct benefits for participants. However, the ice-breaker conducted prior to actual interviews changed the mood altogether. Due to its positive nature, this activity, as described in Section 3.3.2.1, changed the mood and ignited positivity among participants. This exhilaration set the tone for the positive interview questions.

As soon as the participants asked each other the appreciative questions, the researcher could see and hear the participants’ excitement and their active engagement while sharing their views. Some participants could not wait to share their views with the larger group. Getting to that moment of revealing their perceived appreciated leadership strengths, the participants appeared even more alive and excited, thus validating the AI’s ability to create change by posing positive questions.

At one campus, after pasting their colour stickers for the Designing phase, the participants agreed to a proposed gesture. The researcher suggested that the participants place their palms on the created mind-map as a gesture of acknowledgement that their collective inputs would lead to knowledge construction needed to accomplish their desired reality (Image 4.1). This was an important moment that could not go unnoticed.

Although such positive ambiances dominated the AI sessions, some irritability was observed, especially among the participants who were chasing deadlines and had other responsibilities to attend to. Considering that all the participants are busy individuals with many commitments, the researcher had to be flexible and permitted some of the requests that presented, e.g. attending to urgent matters such as emails and taking a phone call.

3.3.2.2 *Modified Delphi*

For the purposes of this research, illumination will be mostly on both Classical Delphi and Modified Delphi to demonstrate modification of the original Delphi to suit the research paradigm and approach.

Dalkey (1969:15-16) first described a Delphi as a set of procedures for eliciting and refining a group of people's opinion. A Delphi seeks to elicit the most reliable consensus of a group of experts by employing a series of questionnaires interspersed with controlled opinion feedback (Dalkey & Helmer, 1963:458). Brady (2015:1) adds that the Delphi method is extensively utilised and known for collecting data from participants within their respective fields of expertise. Furthermore, these authors view the Delphi method as a group communication process that aims to accomplish a convergence of opinions on a specific real-world issue. Expert knowledge elicited through the Delphi method is needed for decision-making or to gain deeper understanding of a phenomenon (Brady, 2015:2; Skinner *et al.*, 2015:4; Crawford & Wright, 2016:2). The method works particularly well when there is incomplete knowledge about a problem or phenomenon, thus it was considered suitable to construct knowledge that was found to be lacking during the conceptual phase of the research (Brady, 2015:2; Skinner *et al.*, 2015:2; Rai *et al.*, 2017:3229).

Different types of Delphi methods exist, and include the Classical (Original), Modified, Policy, Real Time, e-Delphi, Technological, and Disaggregative Delphi methods (Davidson, 2013:55-56). As a consensus method, the most important characteristic of a Classical Delphi, is anonymity amongst the expert panellists (Davidson, 2013:55). When experts on the Delphi panel are unknown to one another, Rowe and Wright (1999:353) assert that they feel free to express their opinions instead of feeling pressurised to conform to others' ideas. Davidson (2013:55) supports the notion and states that when anonymity is ensured, modification or alteration of opinions due to professional

agreements or differences is prevented. Brady (2015:1) indicates that the Delphi method is extensively utilised and known for collecting data from participants within their respective fields of expertise. As far as the involvement of experts in a Delphi is concerned, Skulmoski *et al.* (2007:1) assert that there are four requirements for expertise, as indicated in the following questions:

- Do the participants have adequate knowledge and experience regarding the questions asked?
- Do the participants' capacity and willingness permit them to participate in the research?
- Do the participants have sufficient time to participate in the Delphi?
- Are there efficient communication skills at play?

According to Rowe and Wright (1999:353) cited in Davidson (2013:55), the other key factors that characterise the classical Delphi method are:

- iteration, which permits panellists to refine their views in light of the progress made between different interactions;
- controlled feedback that allows panel experts to see each other's responses and provides them with an opportunity to reflect on these, and to change or clarify their views; and
- statistical aggregation of responses, which allows for quantitative analysis and data interpretation until consensus is reached.

These characteristics have made a Classical Delphi more applicable in quantitative research, however the method has also been modified and applied in other approaches. Such evolution allows a degree of flexibility that enables implementation of the original Delphi method without statistical consensus, being one of its distinct features. Evidence has been presented on modifying a Delphi approach for use in a significantly more open-ended and qualitative fashion than has previously been the case (Fletcher & Marchildon, 2014:14). These authors successfully employed the Delphi method in Participatory Action Research and affirmed that this method is not only suited to quantitative and consensus-building research. However, it could also be applied in qualitative, PAR, and in studies related to change initiatives occurring in real time.

Brady (2015:3) points out that the question of whether or not consensus should be sought, depends on the research purpose and the decision should be made before the research commences. Davidson (2013:56) adds that engaging an expert panel and the anonymity of panel members are crucial elements when using a Delphi method.

Based on this research's qualitative nature, a modified Delphi method (without statistical consensus) was employed. In developing a framework to strengthen leadership at a South African public nursing college, a modified Delphi was used to explore and describe existing leadership strengths in the country from the NELEs' perspectives.

Considering, the experts' busy schedules and that they were resident in different geographical locations, the researcher considered a modified Delphi suitable to achieve this objective. Due to the non-unanimity nature of the modified Delphi as employed in this research, no communication occurred between participants to re-evaluate their responses until consensus was reached. Although they responded individually, the NELEs inputs were combined and in accordance with this study's collaborative nature, knowledge was constructed. The NELEs perspectives were not reduced by means of iteration, controlled feedback, or by obtaining statistical consensus. Rather, all inputs were equally considered and incorporated to develop the framework, thus assuming a dialectic stance.

An outline on the application a modified Delphi method in this research is summarised in the Table 3.5.

Table 3.5 Summary of the application of the Delphi's key elements in this research

Key elements of a Delphi method	Quantitative studies using the Classical Delphi method:	Applicability of key elements of Delphi method in this research:
Anonymity amongst the expert panel members	✓	✓
Controlled feedback	✓	Not applicable
Iteration	✓	Not applicable
Statistical aggregation of responses for consensus purposes	✓	Not applicable
Use of an expert panel	✓	✓

The two characteristics, which among others, enabled the researcher to employ a modified Delphi for the purposes of qualitative exploration of the research phenomenon involving NELEs. This is in accordance with Davidson (2013:56), as mentioned earlier. Rich data was elicited through a modified Delphi, which formed the basis for the framework development.

The perspectives on the Delphi method in general as well as its application in this study demonstrated how long researchers have been able to use this method for knowledge creation. Although previously Delphi was strictly used in a quantitative form, qualitative researchers also proved that it could be applied to collect qualitative data that might be fundamental in addressing certain issues. Consequently, a modified Delphi was employed in this qualitative research, which took a strength-based approach to socially construct knowledge.

A discussion of the three domains, i.e. population, unit of analysis, data collection and analysis that were employed within the modified Delphi methods follows.

a. Population

The modified Delphi population comprised NELEs within the South African nursing education context. These candidates were expected to occupy or to have held a leadership position relating to nursing education, such as top and/or senior management, i.e. directors and managers in both government and private nursing education, as well as heads of the public NEIs. By virtue of their experience and expertise, these members were regarded to be information-rich, thus making them suitable to share their rich perspectives regarding the subject under discussion (Polit & Beck, 2017:739). Due to the vastness of the South African nursing context, the researcher found it difficult to establish the exact number of NELEs. In this research, approximately 30 NELEs were purposefully invited to participate in the modified Delphi to accommodate the possibility of some of them being unable or unwilling to participate in the research.

b. Unit of analysis

It seems as if no clear consensus has been reached in literature about the ideal number of participants for successful Delphi research. Forsyth (2010:197) recommends five to 20,

and Hsu (2010) advocates for 15 to 20 participants. Gray (2016:92) and Santaguida *et al.* (2018:9), recommend 10 to 18 panellists. A higher number of participants could also ensure that the varying opinions of the phenomena under research were adequately represented. The participants were purposefully selected to ensure that they had the requisite experience, knowledge, and expertise related to the research topic. This unit of analysis was determined by applying specific inclusion criteria that considered experienced nurse education leadership experts who met the following requirements:

- possessed a nursing administration qualification – R1501 (SANC, 2021); and
- had at least five years' experience in South African nursing education leadership, whether at a public or private organisation or NEI.

The invitation extended to the experts required that they declare that they possessed a nursing administration qualification, and also had at least had five-year experience as nurse leaders in the South African context. With the described set criteria, it was believed that relevant people with the necessary experience and expertise in nursing education leadership would be included in the research, and their responses would generate rich data to satisfy the research purpose and objectives (Davidson, 2013:63; Brady 2015:2; LoBiondo-Wood & Haber, 2018:108).

Ten of the experienced nurse education leadership experts participated in the modified Delphi by responding to the open-ended question and communicating their responses to the researcher. The respondents' contextual information is presented in Table 5.1. To obtain maximum variation, the researcher took a dialectic stance by integrating different and sometimes conflicting views aligned to the research paradigm as opposed to obtaining expert consensus (Brady, 2015:3).

c. Pilot study

Prior to the actual research, the researcher conducted a pilot study to establish whether the question formulated to guide the modified Delphi would yield relevant data or responses to satisfy the second research objective. Although pilot research is typically associated with quantitative methods to test the research instrument, pilot work is as important in a qualitative approach to prepare for major research (Masjid *et al.*, 2017:1074). Polit and Beck (2017:601) assert that pilot research improves the main

research quality and efficiency and ensures high-quality outcomes. Before a pilot study could commence, the following open-ended exploratory question was considered and decided upon in collaboration with the research supervisor:

“What are the existing leadership strengths in a challenged and transforming South African nursing education context, which you regard to be necessary and appropriate to enable South African NEIs to navigate higher education challenges of the 21st century?”

The open-ended exploratory questions were transmitted electronically, allowing the chosen head of another NEI to respond to the question at her own convenience without feeling pressured. The same documentation that was to be sent out to the potential participants for a modified Delphi, was attached to an email about the pilot study, i.e. ethics clearance (Annexure A), invitation to participate in the modified Delphi (Annexure I), modified Delphi data collection form comprising the posed question with answering instructions (Annexure J), and informed consent form (Annexure K).

The responses obtained from the pilot research were included in the main research findings. On the basis of the depth, richness, and appropriateness of these responses, the researcher concluded that the question posed would yield the information deemed significant to construct the desired reality. If this were not the case, the question would have been adjusted and revised accordingly (LoBiondo-Wood & Haber, 2018:166).

d. Data collection

i. Participant recruitment

On receiving confirmation of ethics clearance from the UFS HSREC (Annexure A), participant recruitment for the modified Delphi commenced. The invitation to experienced South African NELEs' (Annexure I) participation was sent electronically via email and manually to those in closer vicinity. Approximately 30 invitations were sent out. The open-ended exploratory question in the modified Delphi data collection form (Annexure J) and the informed consent form (Annexure K) was also included in the communiqué sent to the 30 nurse education leadership experts in South Africa who formed part of the target population. Details of potential participants were obtained mainly from their organisational websites, i.e. colleges, universities, and provincial health departments.

ii. Receipt of experienced nursing education leadership experts responses

Although this was a laboured process, the researcher received responses from various participants in both soft and hard copies. The hard copies were fetched from two participants. Two other participants forwarded their audio recordings, which were then transcribed, and the remaining NELEs emailed their typed responses to the researcher. A total of 10 responses were collected and subsequently prepared for analysis. An example of the electronic modified Delphi data sheet is presented in Annexure N.

3.3.2.3 Data analysis for both the AI and the modified Delphi

Data were analysed by means of a thematic content analysis (Polit & Beck, 2017:59). Creswell and Creswell (2018:218-219) assert that making sense of text and images entails preparation of data, conducting different analyses, moving deeper and deeper into understanding the data, representing the data, and interpreting the deeper meaning of the data. In line with Mertens (2015:439) and Polit and Beck (2017:537) the objective of the analysis was to condense the voluminous narrative data from AI sessions and the modified Delphi into content categories. Once this milestone was achieved, identified categories could be sorted into meaningful conceptual patterns from which themes emerged (Polit & Beck, 2017:535; Brink *et al.*, 2018:181; Creswell & Creswell, 2018:218-219; Grove & Gray, 2019:103).

The data analysis process described in Creswell and Creswell (2018:218-219) was used to analyse data obtained from the AI phases as well as the modified Delphi. The data analysis process steps were executed as depicted in Figure 3.2.

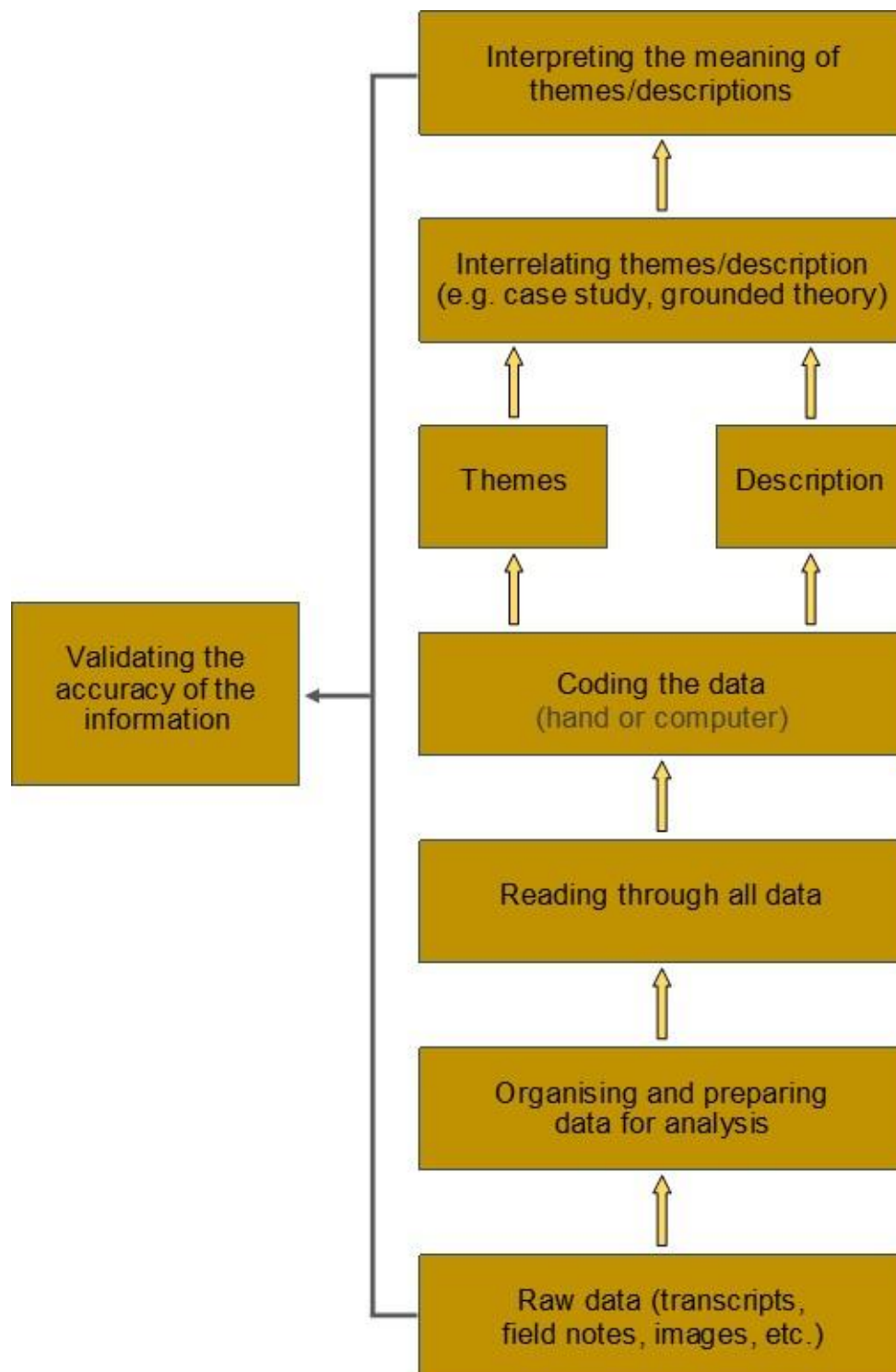


Figure 3.2 The process of qualitative data analysis. Adapted from Creswell and Creswell (2018:218-219).

a. Data preparation and organisation

Once the data collection was completed, the AI workbooks were gathered and arranged according to the participants' leadership roles, i.e. the SLs, NEs, etc. Through this exercise, the number of participants per rank were determined. Each workbook was numbered accordingly resulting in the participants' codes as described in Section 4.2.1 and presented in Section 4.1. Formulated codes were used in the AI data discussion. The statements recorded in the AI workbooks were transferred to electronic data sheets that were later used during the findings' discussion (Annexure L). The study promoter and the researcher co-checked the transferred information that was then stored in password encrypted electronic folders.

As discussed in Section 3.3.2.2, data obtained from the experienced South African NELEs was available in both hard and soft copy. Two participants sent audio recordings, which were transcribed. The soft copies and transcriptions were printed and the data set was analysed manually (Brink *et al.*, 2018:181). The researcher did not employ a software system, e.g. Atlas, ti for the data analysis but rather executed a manual analysis that was more convenient as the AI workbooks contained handwritten responses. Furthermore, the manual data analysis allowed the researcher to take a closer look at the data and to engage in an immersive rather than a mechanical exercise (Polit & Beck, 2017:535).

b. Developing a general sense of the data

The data from the respective AI sessions and modified Delphi were separately analysed. The researcher and co-coder read the participants' inputs in no particular order, reading one workbook or feedback sheet at a time to obtain a general sense of information and to reflect on its overall meaning (Creswell & Creswell, 2018:218). During this process, notes and general thoughts about the data were captured in the margins of the hard copies (Vaismoradi *et al.*, 2016:103; Creswell & Creswell, 2018:218).

c. Data coding

Once all the narratives from the AI sessions and modified Delphi were read, similar expressions were coded by making notes in the margins. The data were then organised into categories by grouping similar thoughts together before bringing meaning to the

information (Vaismoradi *et al.*, 2016:102 & Creswell & Creswell, 2018:218). The lists of emergent categories are presented in Annexures M and O.

d. Theme identification and description

A thematic analysis of the abstract entities was undertaken to add meaning to experiences and their variant manifestations emerged (Polit & Beck, 2017:535; Creswell & Creswell, 2018:219). These authors agree that data's emergent themes often develop within data categories but may also cut across them. Vaismoradi *et al.* (2016:102) assert that themes emerge from raising the participants' perspectives to an abstract level of conceptualisation and seeking out the underlying meaning in participants' words. Separate sets of themes were identified in different phases of the AI as well from the modified Delphi. The Discovering phase's two themes, the Dreaming phase's six themes and subthemes, and the Delivering phase's two themes are summarised in Table 4.1. The modified Delphi's synopsis of the four themes and subthemes is presented in Figure 5.1.

e. Representation of the findings

The identified themes from the AI data and modified Delphi that represented the participants' multiple perspectives, supported by various statements, are discussed separately (Creswell & Creswell, 2018:219). The AI interview findings are presented by means of a narrative approach.

f. Interpretation of data

Interpretation of the data's meaning was the final step of the data analysis process and took the form of the researcher's personal interpretations combined with literature or theories (Creswell & Creswell, 2018:219). In accordance with Polit and Beck (2017:774) the qualitative data interpretation and analysis occurred almost simultaneously through an iterative process. Vaismoradi *et al.* (2016:106) assert that although engagement with current literature before data collection is typical in most qualitative studies, it is proposed that an in-depth literature review is deferred until after data collection is concluded to avoid introducing prejudice and perceived notions. Foundational perspectives from literature have been presented in Chapter 2 to provide context for the research. However,

the data analysis included triangulation with literature to reach conceptual conclusions and make interpretations (Polit & Beck, 2017:959). Themes and subthemes were developed through inductive reasoning and were supported with recent literature to give them meaning and relevance (Creswell & Creswell, 2018:57).

3.4 FRAMEWORK DEVELOPMENT AND VALIDATION

After data analysis and the interpretation were performed on both the AI and the modified Delphi were concluded, the themes and subthemes were combined, as presented in Table 6.1, and then organised into three components, as shown in Table 6.2. The anticipated framework was developed in collaboration with the research supervisor, as discussed in Chapter 6.

To satisfy the last research objective, the researcher embarked on a collaborative validation of the developed framework by consulting the key stakeholders at the college where the research was conducted. A validation guide (Annexure P) was developed and implemented. The feedback regarding the validation of the framework is presented in Section 6.4.2.

3.5 THE RESEARCHER'S ROLE AND REFLEXIVITY

Reflexivity or critical reflection is generally regarded as the process of constant internal dialogue and critical self-appraisal of a researcher's positionality as well as an active acknowledgement and overt recognition that this status could affect the research process and outcome (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013:76; Berger, 2015:221). More specifically, the researchers need to remain cognisant of how their background, values, beliefs, and their social and professional identity may influence the research (Polit & Beck, 2017:561).

As demonstrated in the discussion of the research approach, qualitative research is interpretative research whereby the researcher is typically engaged in a continued and intensive experience with participants. Such involvement introduces an array of strategic, ethical, and personal issues into the qualitative research process (Locke *et al.*, 2013:117). With these concerns in mind, researchers reflexively identify their biases, values, and personal background, such as gender, history, culture, and socioeconomic status that shape their interpretations formed during research.

The purpose of reflecting on the researcher's role is to create awareness of connections that exist between the researcher and the participants or the research sites that could unjustifiably influence the researcher's interpretations (Creswell & Creswell, 2018:211).

The researcher has an invested interest and extensive experience in leadership and management, hence the study focus. Thus, it is worth noting that the researcher entered the research field with his own beliefs and views on what leadership is, what it could be, and how it should be fulfilled. These preconceived ideas presented the potential for bias, which could have a negative influence on the research process. Berger (2015:220) proposes that the researcher's own situatedness could have an effect on the data. To ensure data was collected consistently at the three campuses, the AI workbook (Annexure F) was compiled with a set of standard questions. Misinterpretation of data has also been mentioned as a shortcoming that could result from the researcher's positionality (Berger, 2015:220; Creswell & Creswell, 2018:211; Saidin & Yaacob, 2016:851). Creswell and Creswell (2018:211) affirm that due to their past experiences, the researcher could lean toward certain themes, actively look for evidence to support their positions, and create positive and inauspicious inferences about the sites or participants.

At the time of the research, the researcher who is also a NE at an NEI in a closer proximity, was a college senate member as well as an external moderator. Because of this association or connection with the research site, the researcher considered himself a partial insider. Partial insiders are researchers who share a single identity and/or have some impartiality from the research setting (Saidin & Yaacob, 2016:848-849; Ross, 2017:326). There are benefits and challenges associated with insider positionality. Some of the advantages include convenience in establishing relationships, expediency of access, and knowledge of the context of the field (Ross, 2017:328; Heslop *et al.*, 2018:13). Although the researcher had obtained official approval to conduct the study, familiarity with the research site and some of its members, made it much easier to gain entry into the research site and to access potential participants. Building a trusting and relationship with the three campuses was unproblematic, thus enabling the social construction knowledge.

On the contrary, one author stated, "the greater the intimacy, the apparent mutuality of the researcher/researched relationship, the greater is the danger" (Stacy, 1988:24). This

expression appears to imply that insider positionality is likely to present research challenges. The possible detriments involve issues of inherent unequal power relations, risks of blurring boundaries with colleagues and peers, feeling obliged to participate due to pre-existing relationships, the researcher imposing their own values, beliefs, and perceptions, and bias projection (Berger, 2015:224; Heslop *et al.*, 2018:20-21).

The researcher took cognisance of these possibilities and therefore executed the research such that the chances of these factors of influencing the research were counteracted. Participation in this research was voluntary as informed consent was obtained from the participants and coercion was avoided. Pertaining to the issues of possible power imbalances, the researcher's roles as a Senate member and an external moderator resulted in him considering himself a colleague to other nurse academics, irrespective of their work location. However, to address the possibility of inherent unequal power relations, an AI facilitator was involved and the researcher assumed the position of observer during the AI sessions.

Looking at the college leadership strengthening from different perspectives, i.e. taking a dialectic approach and employing two methods, i.e. the AI and a modified Delphi, minimised the bias possibility. The NELEs' inputs confirmed and enriched the AI findings. Engaging a co-coder during the data analysis process also assisted in this regard, and no undue influence was exerted when the data was interpreted. By involving the stakeholders to validate the developed framework, this measure contributed to ensuring that the created reality represented the participants' as opposed to the researcher's views.

It is evident that previous leadership and management experience and being a college senate member and external moderator posed serious challenges that may have influenced the research outcomes. Stances on reflexivity emphasise the significance of continuously having to turn the researcher lens back onto oneself and take responsibility for one's own position in the research (Berger, 2015:220). In so doing, the researcher endeavoured to address any potential shortcomings that may have arisen due to his positionality.

3.6 MEASURES TO ENSURE RESEARCH TRUSTWORTHINESS

In line with integrity being a critical issue in qualitative research (Polit & Beck, 2017:98), this qualitative research's trustworthiness standards were observed. A framework of quality criteria originally developed and described by Lincoln and Guba (1985:294-316) and Guba and Lincoln (1994:105-117) were applied.

Following the descriptions provided in Section 1.8 on the criteria of trustworthiness, specific strategies were applied to ensure research integrity and quality and are presented in Table 3.6.

Table 3.6 Application of strategies to ensure research trustworthiness

Criteria	Strategy	Application
Credibility (Confidence in the truth of the data)	Prolonged engagement (Adequate time investment to develop in-depth understanding)	- As a partial insider, the researcher was familiar with the context and the participants. - The AI process afforded sufficient time during data collection to develop an in-depth understanding of the AI participants. An approximate five-hour period was planned for three AI sessions respectively (Annexure G). - Good rapport and a trust relationship was developed with the participants to obtain useful and rich information; - The participants' vivid recordings in the AI workbooks afforded the researcher an opportunity to read the provided data over and over until saturation with data occurred; and - The promoter's continuous and long-term engagement in the research added to the research credibility.
	Persistent observation (Intense focus on relevant aspects)	Field notes were kept on the activities and behaviours during the AI sessions.
	Triangulation (Incorporation of multiple referents)	<i>Method:</i> Two different research methods, i.e. an AI and a modified Delphi were employed to explore the complexity of leadership strengthening from the diverse participants' perspectives. <i>Data:</i> The two main data sources were the college leaders and South African NELEs and both sets were integrated to construct a consistent and coherent picture of the phenomena. <i>Space:</i> The same AI process was conducted at the different campuses of the NEI, using a similar workbook comprising the same questions. <i>Person:</i> Different categories of college membership were involved in the AI sessions, i.e. the DP, CHs, HADs, NES, and SLs, who offered multiple perspectives of the phenomenon.
	Peer review	The involvement of the promoter throughout the study, i.e. during data conceptualisation and co-coding enhanced the research findings' credibility.

	Proficiency and expertise of the researcher and the AI facilitator	The researcher was involved throughout the entire research process and utilised the expertise gained from a qualitative research engaged in during previous postgraduate studies. An AI facilitator well-versed with the AI process conducted the AI sessions, adding to the credibility of the findings.
Transferability (Potential for extrapolation)	Dense description	- The researcher provided a thick, rich description of the design and the research methods applied to collect and analyse data that was used in developing the framework to enable stepwise replication. - The research findings were described, substantiated by the participants' direct statements, and contextualised in the literature.
	Sampling and nominated units of analysis	The sampling method description, i.e. purposive, and the analysis units obtained for both AI sessions and the modified Delphi was provided in Sections 3.3.2.1 and 3.3.2.2.
Dependability (Stability of data over time and conditions)	Similarity of process	- The AI sessions were conducted in the same way at all three campuses. - There was consistency in both the questions posed to the various participants of the modified Delphi and guidelines provided to the stakeholders for framework validation.
	Description of the research method	The research method used was extensively and fully described to ensure dependability.
	Inquiry audit	The researcher retained the AI workbooks and the transcripts and the field notes for verification by an external auditor.
Confirmability (Objectivity of the data)	Confirmability audit	- Audit trails were done on all documentation emanating from the AI sessions and the modified Delphi, AI workbooks, responses from the experts, and the field notes. - The promoter monitored the entire research process to ensure accuracy and relevancy.
	Member-checking	Validation of the developed framework was based on the various college stakeholders' findings.
	Triangulation	- Data, method, person, and space triangulation. - Using different literature sources for triangulation enabled the researcher to conceptualise the findings for the purpose of the research.
Authenticity (Fair and faithful presentation of a range of realities)	Prolonged engagement	Written records from the AI sessions workbooks and the written and transcribed responses from the modified Delphi facilitated the researcher engaging with the data for a longer period.
	Mindful construction	The AI workbook and guidelines provided for participants of both the modified Delphi and framework validation were thoroughly considered.
	Comprehensive and vivid recording of information	Field notes describing the participants' demeanour and behaviours during the AI sessions were prepared.
	Reflexivity	The researcher was critically self-reflective throughout the research process.
	Presentation of the data	The findings discussion includes verbatim statements that convey the participants' feelings and tone.

Compiled from Savin-Baden and Major (2013:474-480); Polit and Beck (2017:559-570) and Grove and Gray (2019:119).

Strategies outlined in Table 3.6 demonstrate the attainment of credibility, transferability, dependability, confirmability, and authenticity as the dimensions that ensure rigour and trustworthiness. Credibility was pursued by investing time to develop a deeper understanding of the participants' perspectives, focusing intensely on activities and behaviours during the AI data collection, incorporating multiple referents, and involving a peer reviewer and an experienced AI facilitator. By providing a dense description of the research methodology and findings, researchers in other settings are able to find application for and/or replicate the study in other contexts, thus enhancing transferability. Dependability was addressed by ensuring similarity of processes, providing a thick description of the research method and findings, and keeping a trail of evidence for verification purposes. Similar to dependability, objectivity of the data, i.e. confirmability, was ensured via an audit trail. Additionally, member-checking and various forms of triangulation were employed. In terms of authenticity, the researcher endeavoured to offer a fair and faithful presentation of a range of realities by using prolonged engagement, mindful construction, comprehensive and vivid recordings of information, reflexivity, and an accurate portrayal of the data.

3.7 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

In this research, a principle-based approach to ethics was pursued. Morris and Morris (2016:202) affirm that principle-based ethical theories direct action to address ethical problems that are often multifaceted and novel, presenting themselves in distinctive contexts in which conflicting principles are at stake. Ethical considerations are described in accordance with the principles that respect and protect human rights to ensure that the researcher is at all times engaged in a principled pursuit characterised by a sense of professional responsibility (Dhai & McQuoid-Mason, 2011:14-15; Grove & Gray, 2019; Polit & Beck, 2017:139).

3.7.1 Study approval

To comply with the ethical requirements for conducting research, a detailed research proposal was submitted to the Health Sciences Research Ethics Committee (HSREC) at

the UFS. Subsequently, a letter requesting permission to conduct the study together with the research proposal was sent to the PDoH.

Ethics clearance was obtained (Annexure A) as well as the permission to conduct the research (Annexure B), and these permitted the researcher to continue with the research. The CHs were then approached to introduce the study, to recruit the participants, and to make prior logistical arrangements for collection of data.

3.7.2 Principle-based research ethics

In line with human research ethical requirements, the Belmont principles of respect for human dignity, beneficence, and justice were adhered to (Dhai & McQuoid-Mason, 2011:14-15; Polit & Beck, 2017:210; Grove & Gray, 2019:134).

3.7.2.1 *The principle of respect for human dignity (the right to autonomy and privacy and confidentiality)*

The following measures were adhered to at all times to show respect for the participants, keep their' identities and/or their responses anonymous, private, and confidential as well as to treat them fairly:

a. Right to autonomy:

The researcher respected the participants and treated them as autonomous agents who are capable of self-determination (Polit & Beck, 2017:212; Grove & Gray, 2019:134). This was demonstrated through the following:

- Invitations outlining the details of the research was emailed and hand delivered to potential participants to orientate them in the research and simultaneously invite them to participate (Annexures E & I);
- the information provided was considered to sufficiently adequate to enable potential participants to make informed decisions regarding research participation, without risk or prejudicial treatment;
- written informed consent was obtained from the participants who met the inclusion criteria and were willing to participate in the research (Annexure K);

- although their participation was deemed essential in achieving the research purpose that had a societal significance, the participants were informed that participation was voluntary and they could withdraw from participating in the research without losing any due benefits or experiencing any negative consequences (Polit & Beck, 2017:212); and
- responding to the validation questions and sending the responses to the researcher was taken as implied consent (Polit & Beck, 2017:146).

b. Right to anonymity and confidentiality

On the basis of their right to privacy, participants have the right to anonymity and to believe that the data collected will be kept confidential (Polit & Beck, 2017:222-223; Grove & Gray, 2019:138). In qualitative research, the researcher is usually aware of who the participants are due to actively engaging with them. Complete anonymity exists when the researcher cannot link a participant's identity with their individual responses. In this research:

- the AI participants were informed that their responses would remain anonymous since no identifying information was indicated in the workbooks, and instead codes outlined under Section 4.2.1 were assigned to the participants to conceal their identity and protect them;
- confidentiality was maintained by protecting the identities of the NELEs, and codes were assigned to serve as reference to the statements presented in the discussion of findings;
- furthermore, the data shared by the participants during the data collection process was kept safe and access to this information was limited to the researcher and the research supervisor; and
- the raw data were kept safe in a locked cupboard and the information was transferred to electronic data sheets saved in password encrypted files.

3.7.2.2 *The principle of beneficence (freedom from harm and discomfort and protection from exploitation)*

To uphold this principle, the researcher acted in the participants' best interests and aimed to promote their wellbeing. This endeavour is in accordance with the notion that beneficence is about doing good to others and promoting their interests and their welfare (Dhai & McQuoid-Mason, 2011:14; Polit & Beck, 2017:111; Grove & Gray, 2019:139). The principle of beneficence was upheld in this research by:

- making the researcher and the HSREC chairperson's contact details available to participants so that they could contact them should they have required further information relating to the research or should it have been necessary to lodge a complaint about any discomfort that may have been experienced during the research;
- the participants were duly informed that there were no envisaged risks associated with participating in the research;
- the framework was envisioned to be beneficial to the college with the intention of strengthening leadership; and
- applying this framework to strengthen the leadership required for the college to effectually navigate its existing challenges and transition to HE.

The issue of risk-benefit ratio as interpreted in this study is demonstrated in Figure 3.3.

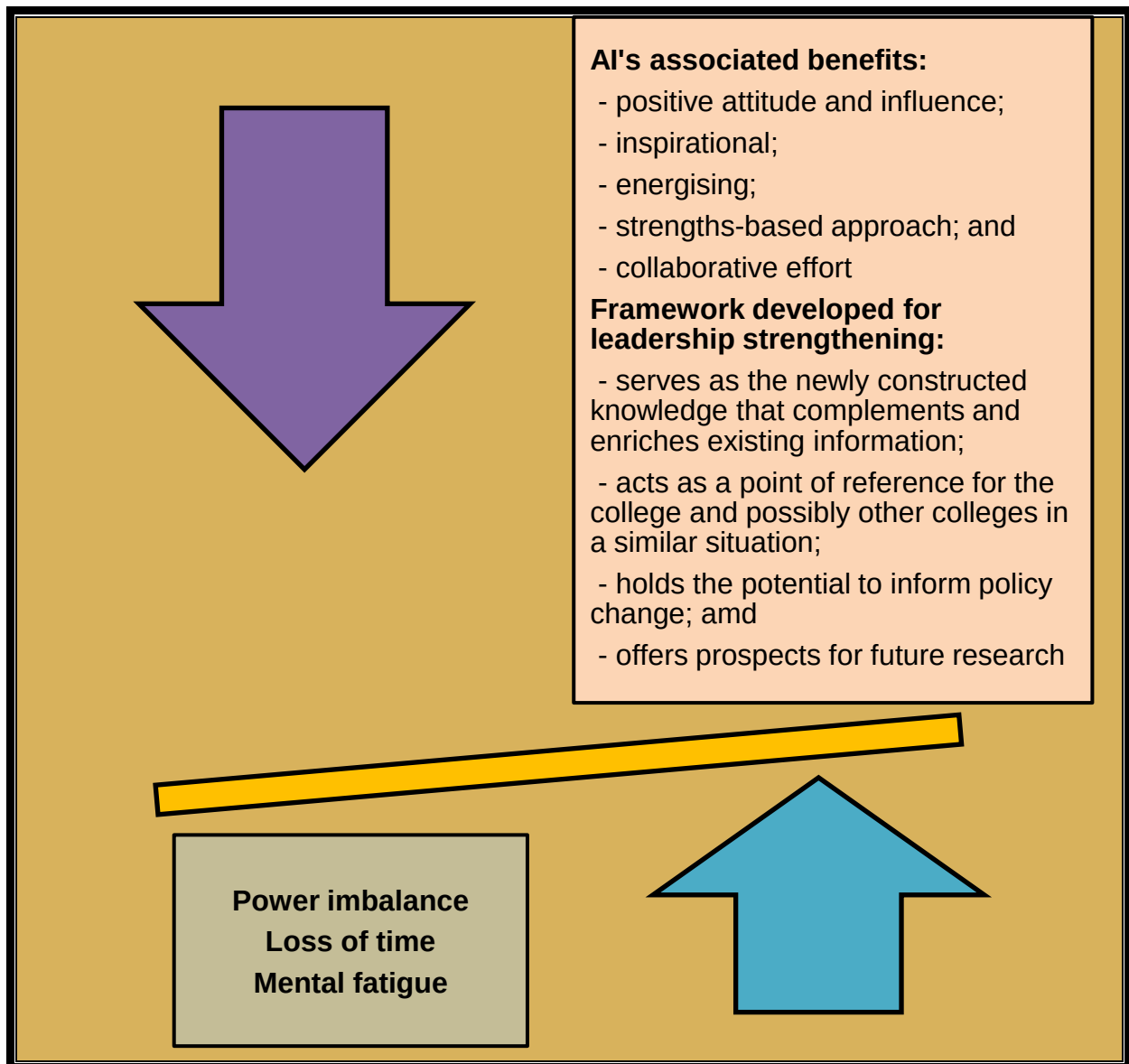


Figure 3.3 The research risk-benefit analysis

The information presented in Figure 3.3 confirms that the anticipated benefits presented in this study outweigh the risks. Polit and Beck (2017:216) posit that research could hold personal benefits for participants, i.e. access to a means of fortifying existing strengths, navigating their challenges, and deepening insight about themselves, their colleagues, and the college. In its positive nature it is believed that AI potentially fosters a positive attitude and exerts a positive influence in terms of achieving both personal and organisational goals. Consequently, such positive efforts are likely to become the source of energy and revitalisation necessary to optimise performance and organisational success. Moving forward into the future, the researcher is hopeful that the college leadership will be inspired and inspire others to inquire about, learn from, and build on

what works when things are perceived to be at their best, rather than always trying to fix problems. With the focus placed mainly on discovering the best in people, AI could, if adopted by the college, become a powerful tool to utilise for further development of the NEI. The researcher anticipates that AI, as a collaborative means for leadership-strengthening could ignite, if not reinforce the need to tackle institutional issues as a collective. Additionally, he developed framework presents many multifaceted potential benefits for the college, nursing education in its entirety, and for the research community.

With the benefits of the research presented for contemplation, it is significant that the study's risks are also presented. Polit and Beck (2017:142) suggest that the emergent nature of qualitative research requires researchers to remain perceptive to potential research risks throughout the process. The researcher took cognisance of the potential risks that might have resulted in unfavourable effects on the study outcomes, was sensitive to any factors that might have inhibited active participation, and was prepared to address these issues accordingly.

Due to including different categories of leaders ranging from SLs to DP, the issue of power imbalance was identified as a potential study risk. Consideration was given to the fact that the SLs might feel intimidated in the company of their seniors, i.e. college managers and NEs, thus negatively affecting the SLs' participation. To guard against this, a variety of measures were taken to equalise positions of power. During the AI sessions the SLs were coupled with their seniors rather than being grouped on their own, which might have made them feel isolated from the entire team. Additionally, the fact that the SLs form part of the management meetings at times (i.e. Senate and Council) positively contributed to these individuals' comfort in actively participating in the AI sessions. Most importantly, using a strengths-based approach where SLs posed affirming questions to their seniors in relation to their leadership strengths and wishes further assisted in this regard. The AI facilitator commenced the sessions with an ice-breaker exercise that included all the participants and no distinctions were made between the SLs, NEs, and college managers. This activity seemed to relax students and help them to feel part of the team that was embarking on a positive journey, seeking to strengthen the college's leadership.

In consideration of the other two risks, i.e. loss of time and mental fatigue, the AI sessions were conducted during office hours and scheduled on a day that was convenient and best suited to the campuses. The researcher was flexible in accommodating participants who

were compelled to attend to other urgent matters, e.g. a telephone call. Considering that the AI sessions could take long, the researcher arranged for a working tea and free movement so that participants could feel refreshed and energised. However, true to the nature of AI, the participants were mentally revitalised.

3.7.2.3 *The principle of justice (fair treatment of participants)*

This principle was upheld by ensuring that all participants were fairly selected and equally treated (Dhai & McQuoid-Mason, 2011:15; Polit & Beck, 2017:214; Grove & Gray, 2019). In accordance with this principle:

- the researcher refrained from coercion and presented all members of the target population with an equal opportunity to participate in the research;
- all participants were given a fair chance to express their inputs, irrespective of their positions or roles at the college;
- the framework was also shared with the rest of the population, including those who did not participate in the research. In rationalising this, the researcher believes that all college members were entitled to participate in the framework refinement and share in this resource that seeks to strengthen institutional leadership that is deemed key in navigating the challenges and transition facing the college; and
- the developed framework has been made available to all college managers, NEs, as well as the SLs.

The researcher adhered to the Belmont principles, in an attempt to protect the participants' human rights and enhance the research integrity. Emergent issues were addressed accordingly.

3.8 SUMMARY

In considering the idea that leaders draw inspiration for advancement by focusing on the positive attributes of leadership, a strengths-based approach was taken to this research. Embedded in social constructionism and in answer to the research question, a qualitative approach was deemed most appropriate. An exploratory, descriptive, contextual, and collaborative design was employed. An AI was applied due to its collaborative nature and transformative potential. The open-endedness of the modified Delphi invited a richness of perspectives from a variety of NELEs regarding the existing leadership strengths in the

South African nursing education context, which were all integrated into the framework. In so doing, a dialectic stance was assumed. Clarification of the research process followed, together with the measures implemented to ensure rigour and research integrity. Detailed discussions of the AI and modified Delphi findings as well as the framework development and validation follows in the subsequent chapters.

Chapter 4 Appreciative Inquiry Findings

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The discussion of the AI findings emanates from the sessions held at the three respective campuses of a South African public nursing college to address the first objective of the study. The three AI meetings yielded the perspectives of the DP, CHs, HADs, NEs and SLs who were directed by the following affirmative topic:

AI as a collaborative tool in strengthening leadership at a South African public nursing college

A total number of 48 participants participated in the three AI sessions that were held to accomplish the second objective of the study described in Section 1.4. The contextual information about these participants is presented in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1 Contextual information about the participants of the AI

Campus 1	Campus 2	Campus 3
1 x CH	1 x CH	1 x DP
2 x HADs	1 x HAD	2 x HADs
13 x NEs	11 x NEs	6 x NEs
5 x SLs	2 x SLs	3 x SLs
Total = 21	Total = 15	Total = 12

The researcher together with the co-coder, who has a PhD in Higher Education Studies and extensive experience in qualitative research, employed thematic content analysis guidelines to analyse the AI data (Creswell & Creswell, 2018:218-219; Creswell & Poth, 2018; Vaismoradi *et al.*, 2016:100; Neuendorf, 2019:212). The process employed in analysing AI data was outlined in Section 3.3.2.3. The integrated findings of the three respective campuses are discussed in terms of the four phases of the AI process, namely: discovering; dreaming; designing; and delivering, as depicted in Figure 4.1.

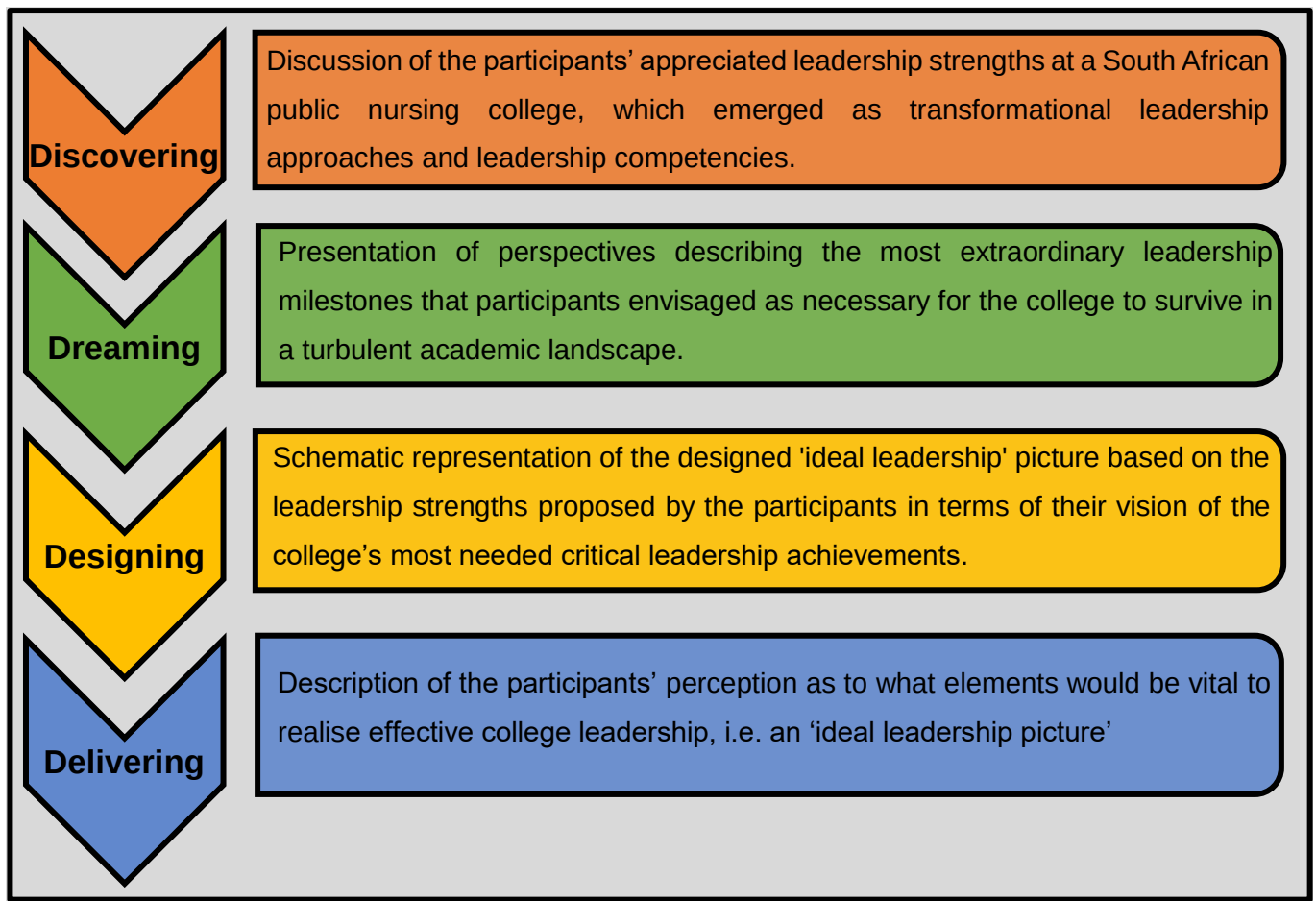


Figure 4.1: The AI phases as applied in this study.
Adapted from Shuayb *et al.* (2009:4) and Macpherson (2015:6).

Although the findings have been synthesised and integrated in order to present a holistic leadership impression of the participants as a collective, it is worth noting that subtle differences were observed, and emphasised in the discussion. To validate the participants' direct statements, each one is coded with the participant's number, their leadership role and campus, e.g. 04/SL/C3, and these codes can be interpreted as follows:

• Participant number: 01
• Leadership role: NE, SL, HAD, CH, DP
• Campus (C): 1,2,3

The AI findings' discussion is divided into four parts (A, B, C & D) in accordance with the respective phases of the AI process. The parts have been clearly demarcated for the reader's convenience. Relevant literature is integrated as a measure of triangulation to add to the data's richness and to develop a deeper understanding of the participants' contributions (Polit & Beck, 2017:566; Creswell & Poth, 2018; Grove & Gray, 2019:102).

APPRECIATIVE INQUIRY FINDINGS

PART A

DISCOVERING – THE COLLEGE'S APPRECIATED LEADERSHIP STRENGTHS



4.2 DESCRIPTION OF THE AI FINDINGS AND TRIANGULATION WITH LITERATURE

The deliberations on the AI findings were held according to the four phases of the AI process, i.e. Discovering, Dreaming, Designing and Delivering. Each phase is shaded in a different colour to orientate the reader.

4.2.1 Discovering Phase

In this phase, the emphasis is on the discovered appreciated leadership strengths as highlighted in Figure 4.2.

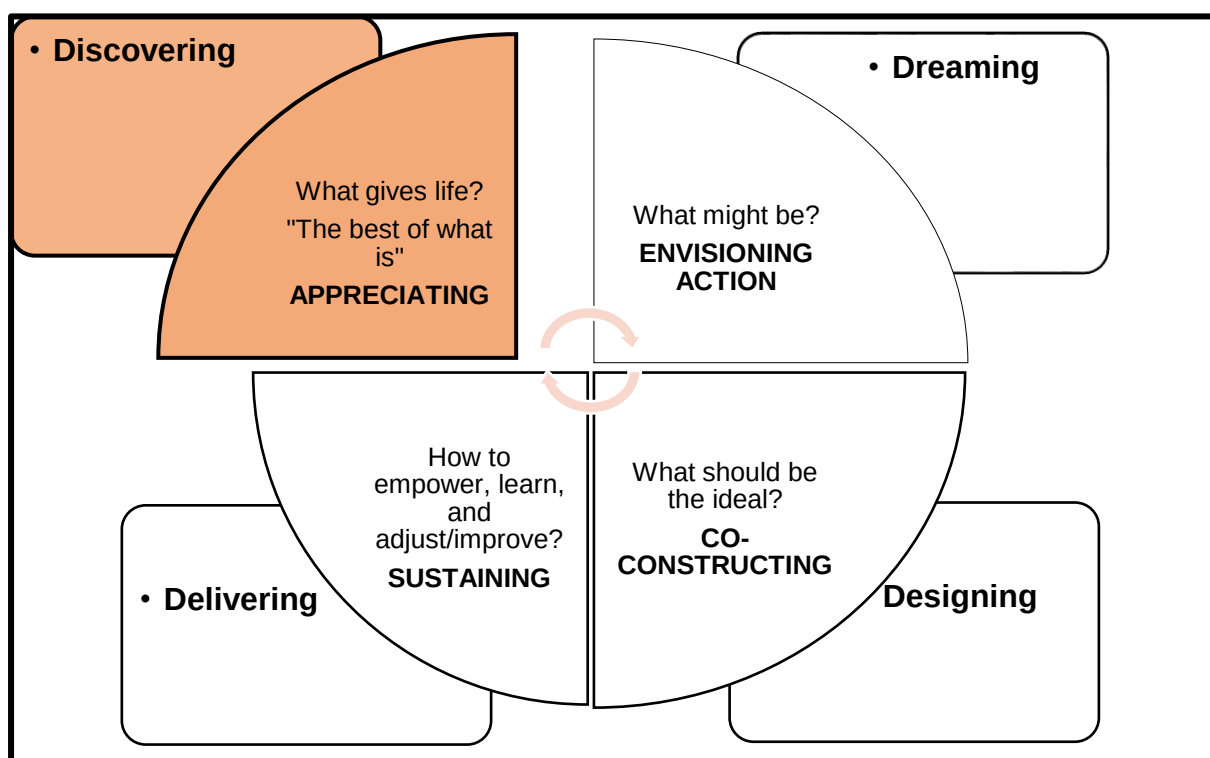


Figure 4.2 AI's 4D phases with an emphasis on the Discovering phase
Adapted from Shuayb *et al.* (2009:4) and Whitney *et al.* (2019:164).

Embedded in the AI process is the discovery of what is viewed as invigorating or the best of what is (Shuayb *et al.*, 2009:7-11; Kessler, 2013:3). To maintain relevance and adhere to this research method, participants were prompted to appreciate the best moments of institutional leadership, and these were recorded as their 'life-giving' experiences. The following questions guided the participants' replies.

- Share an experience about a time when you felt positive, most alive, engaged, or proud of your leadership role at your institution, i.e. your own leadership strengths and also, what was it about your leadership role that led to these positive experiences?
- Share an experience about a time when you felt positive, most alive, engaged, or proud of the leader(s) at your institution, i.e. leadership strengths of others, and what was it about their leadership that led to these positive experiences?

Data from the AI's Discovering phase were organised into various categories from which two main themes with subthemes emerged.

Theme 1 - transformational leadership approaches, comprising three subthemes, i.e. supportive, empowering and motivational leadership.

Theme 2 - leadership competencies comprising two subthemes, namely knowledge and skills and attitudes and behaviour.

The outcomes of the data analysis are described in Table 4.2. Although findings of the AI's Discovering phase, i.e. the appreciated leadership strengths have been organised into categories, themes and subthemes, the discussion focuses on the themes and subthemes, rather on categories. The categories are integrated into the discussion.

TABLE 4.2 Appreciated leadership strengths at a South African public nursing college

Categories	Subthemes	Theme	Categories	Subthemes	Theme
Academic support through extra tuition: · Extra classes · Supplemental instruction	Supportive leadership	Theme 1: Transformational leadership approaches	Active involvement of others	Knowledge and skills	Theme 2: Leadership Competencies
Non-academic support by means of: · Psychological care · Financial assistance			Assertiveness		
Management support in terms of: · Problem-solving · Resources allocation			Attentiveness		
· Encouragement · Guidance and mentoring · Personal support			Conflict management		
Student empowerment by means of: · Knowledge and skills development · Behavioural modification · Positive role-modelling			Problem-solving		
Staff development through: · Continuous Professional Development · Support for postgraduate studies · Information sharing			Acknowledgement & recognition	Attitudes and behaviour	
Motivation of students by means of: · Positive role-modelling · Motivational talk			Caring		
Staff motivation in the form of: · Motivational speeches · Positive feedback · Creation of positive practice environment			Commitment		
			Results orientation		
			Teamwork		

The emergent transformational leadership approaches and leadership competencies appreciated by the participants as the best of what their institutional leadership represents are currently practiced and widely accepted to ensure organisational survival and success (Section 2.6.1). These two emerging themes together with their subthemes are discussed and supported by participants' verbatim statements that are boxed and colour highlighted for a reader's ease of reference.

4.2.1.1 *Theme 1: Transformational leadership approaches*

Transformational leadership is widely accepted as one of the most effective leadership styles in the HE arena. This leadership approach has been observed to: bring positive change in people and societal systems; improve institutional traits and efficiency; foster engagement with others; and advance others to higher levels of motivation and morality (Tafvelin, 2013:12; Korejan & Shahbazi, 2016:452). The rationale for the need to adopt transformational leadership for HEIs was discussed in-depth in Section 2.6.1. Supportive, empowering and motivational leadership are the three transformational leadership approaches that emerged as consistent patterns of specific behaviours that characterise leadership, as reported and appreciated by the participants.

a. Subtheme 1: Supportive leadership

Supportive leadership emerged as the participants' own leadership strength and the leadership strength of others. In their comments, participants referred to academic, non-academic, and management support, which are further outlined in Figure 4.3.

Academic support through:	
• Extra classes • Supplemental instruction (SI)	
Non-academic support by means of:	
• Psychological care • Financial assistance	
Management support in terms of:	
• Problem-solving • Resource allocation • Encouragement • Guidance and mentoring • Personal support	

Figure 4.3 Categories and subcategories of supportive leadership

i. Supportive leadership as the participants' own leadership strength

Academic and non-academic support for students reportedly contributed to the success of the institution. Three NEs from a specific campus stated that they offered additional academic support by providing extra classes and supplemental instruction (SI) for the subjects that the students struggled with and found difficult to pass. The NEs perceived these actions to have contributed to students' success, as evidenced in the following statements.

"Before I commenced my duties as a lecturer at this college, there was one particular module that most of the students were struggling with and failing. I therefore arranged for the students to stay behind after classes for additional academic support, and this improved the pass rate [for] that particular module" (04/NE/C2).

"When I was allocated to teach [the] Biological Nursing Sciences module, which was failed by [a] high number of students. I offered them additional academic support by means [of] extra classes on Tuesdays and Thursdays with permission from the institutional management and their clinical placement areas" (08/NE/C2).

“When I started teaching [the] Ethos and Professional Practice module at this institution, it was the most feared subject [at] fourth year level. Also, the failure rate for this subject was very high. Through the continuing academic support I gave to the students through additional classes, a 100% pass rate was obtained” (09/NE/C2).

“One student was struggling academically. I had extra classes with her and eventually she passed” (22/NE/C1).

Academic support is considered to be a mechanism that assists students to complete mandatory tasks effectively, to meet the HE demands, and to prosper in their studies (Mashiyyi, 2016; Tinto, 2017:260). Rabitoy *et al.* (2015:241) propose that completing a college degree is challenging, and as a result, many students fail to earn their qualifications and reach their educational objectives. Subsequently, numerous programmes and services are put in place to support students, the aim being to enhance retention and enhance academic success (Rabitoy *et al.*, 2015:241; Sharp *et al.*, 2020:39).

Mudaly and Mtshali (2018:1) state that supportive leadership, in terms of comprehensive, holistic, and intentional student support, can produce favourable results in undergraduate nursing programmes. The three NEs stated that they provided extra classes for the students who struggle academically, and this is a common practice in HE. Supported by Walker (2016:82), these NEs further assert that implementing educational strategies, including subject-specific learning approaches, i.e. additional tuition, could enable students' academic success. While the researcher acknowledges that the extra classes offered by instructors outside the normal instruction time, which they believe results in improved academic performance (Shepherd, 2011:26), the researcher holds another view.

Although extra classes could benefit most students, this strategy could also overburden educators who are already overworked, and subsequently affect tuition negatively. Ashraf *et al.* (2015:32) support the possibility of extra classes overburdening educators and reducing their ability to work effectively. Extra classes could result in circumstances where students do not optimally use the time scheduled for regular classes to learn as much as they could, and instead opt for extra classes

as an alternative. To prevent this, students need to be adequately engaged and stimulated to take responsibility for their own learning (Ashwin & McVitty, 2015:343; Goss & Sonnemann, 2017:3). Hudson and Carrasco (2017:193) assert that nursing student engagement is critical for success in nursing education. These three levels of student engagement include student-educator engagement, students linking with their learning, and the student in relation to the learning environment (Bowcock & Peters, 2016:190-191). Aligned to this literature, it is hoped that effective student engagement averts what the researcher regards as “educator dependency syndrome”, and encourages students to accept responsibility for and self-direct their own learning.

In line with participants’ commencing extra classes as a form of academic support, Mukeshimana (2016:vi) proposes that arranging specific times to assist underperforming students in a particular subject is the most common practice for various educational institutions to improve success rate. Although some participants expressed that they considered academic support in a form of extra classes an appreciated leadership strength at the NEI concerned, it is critical to note that there are strategies other than extra classes that could be employed to support students with learning difficulties, and improve their performance. These strategies include tutoring and academic mentoring (Fluke *et al.*, 2014; Ruiz & Fandos, 2014:89).

In terms of academic support in the form of SI, one participant said:

“I felt so proud when I received the final results of the second year bridging course, in 2010. The pass rate in that year was 100%. When I arrived at the institution I learned that the pass rate was previously at 50% or less. This improvement in the pass rate was due to the supplemental instruction I introduced” (10/NE/C2).

Through SI, the participant assisted learners to develop key learning skills to improve content understanding and observed improvement in their pass rates (Bengesai, 2011:61; Dawson *et al.*, 2014:609; Naidoo & Paideya, 2015:1). Supplemental instruction is one such established programme. As academic support, implementing an SI program includes using successful advanced study tertiary students to facilitate peer-learning sessions, mostly those enrolled in high-risk courses (Dawson *et al.*, 2014:609).

One participant stated that the pass rate for second year bridging course students was low in previous years. However, SI was used as an innovative strategy to develop subject-specific learning skills. Khan (2018:35) and Arizona State University (2019) also support SI as a strategy to positively influence students' understanding and performance in courses with a low pass rates.

'Academic support' as described by some participants and confirmed by various authors has become a buzzword in the HE fraternity both globally and locally, resulting in participants' perspectives being relevant and current (Tinto, 2014:6; Mngomezulu & Ramrathan, 2015:117). Considering the challenges and shortcomings associated with academic support, i.e. resource constraints such as manpower, skills, and time, the NEs' attribution of academic support to student success is acknowledged and appreciated.

Although academic support leads every HEI's educational strategy, it is assumed that these institutions do not view students as machines programmed to read textbooks, write three-hour examination papers, and graduate. These institutions consider students to be human beings with intelligence and emotions, who proceed through academic life facing challenges and difficulties, and therefore require holistic support, including non-academic support. Tinto (2014:6) embraces student support programmes, as he understands that many students do not complete their programmes without academic, social, and financial support. Based on his observations, this author proposes that HEIs should be obliged, to the best of their abilities, to offer the support necessary to promote student' success.

Assisting students experiencing psychosocial challenges and financial difficulties was considered to be a form of non-academic support that emerged as supportive leadership. Observed improvement in students' coping mechanisms and their successful completion of studies has been ascribed to counselling and the appropriate referral of students that have psychosocial problems.

"There is one student who had psychosocial problems, which made her not to attend classes and I referred her to a psychologist. The referral to the psychologist

had positive results. The student's coping skills were enhanced and made her to succeed in her studies" (20/NE/C1).

"As a NE I felt more positive at the time when I managed to counsel the student who was experiencing certain academic challenges and was discouraged in a way that she even wanted to discontinue her studies. I somehow managed to influence her negative thinking and she completed the training" (25/NE/C1).

Psychosocial issues are one of the dominant factors ascribed to dropout in HE (Moore, 2017:58; Stăiculescu & Richițeanu-Năstase, 2018). Poor mental health has a negative impact on academic performance as affected students tend to experience demotivation, poor concentration, and low confidence, all of which have a negative effect on a student's ability to endure and succeed in a tertiary education environment (Simpson & Ferguson, 2014:1). Prompt and appropriate responses to students' psychosocial ailments are imperative for social success in both developing and underdeveloped nations. Thuryrajah *et al.* (2017:1) emphasise the importance of implementing measures such as counselling services to tackle psychosocial ailments among students at HEIs, and to prevent the risk of developing stress-related mental ailments.

Cases of depression and associated problems such as self-harm and suicide are rising significantly in the tertiary education student cohort. Mabasa (2018) reports on the growing rate of student suicide at a specific South African university. Universities have increased pressure to develop coherent institutional plans to attend to students' mental health needs (Watkins, 2012:1; Aldiabat *et al.*, 2014:212; Mabasa, 2018). In mid-2016, a Mental Health Task Team was launched at the University of Cape Town (2019:6) with the specific mandate to formulate a student mental health policy. With mental health concerns raised specifically by the health science students, some tertiary institutions implemented measures to address the students' distress. Interventions ranged from working groups or committees that were formed specifically to develop a deeper understanding of the students' mental health issues and how these matters could be addressed (UCT, 2019:9). The discussions concerning the students' mental hardships resulted in various campaigns being initiated to create awareness regarding the reality of mental illnesses related to health

professionals and their training, i.e. increased incidences of burnout, mood disorders, suicide, and substance abuse disorders (UCT, 2019:9; UFS, 2019).

Seemingly, students' increasing mental health issues, such as depression and other issues, have challenged HEIs globally to implement necessary preventative strategies to address these issues. Training nurses to ensure a healthy national workforce is considered to be a positive contribution to the institution's mandate, as it benefits students' families, society at large, and HEIs' survival, and two of study participants promoted psychosocial support of affected students.

The researcher's awareness of the possible consequences of HE students' poor mental state prompted the researcher to acknowledge that students' academic performance is affected by mental health ailments and that having mentally healthy students is necessary. However, the researcher proposes that educators' mental wellbeing should also be prioritised in order to protect them from the burnout associated with the extra responsibilities such as non-academic support for students (Bousquet, 2012:2; Olorunsola, 2013:134; Buonomo *et al.*, 2017:191). Shen *et al.* (2015:2) argue that educator burnout decreases students' intrinsic motivation, which may diminish learning and engagement, since not only are students deprived of an opportunity to develop characteristics necessary for a prosperous and optimistic future, society is also affected. Therefore, continued consideration of factors that are likely unfavourably influence educator competency is proposed, as is taking corrective measures to counteract these factors so as improve tuition at HEIs (Carson *et al.*, 2011; Schonfeld *et al.*, 2017:69).

It was established that psychosocial aid is not the only non-academic support provided to students, as confirmed by the two NEs. A student that encountered financial difficulties was assisted by the NE to register for tuition. Financial support increases student access to HE and enables them to successfully complete their studies (De Villiers, 2017:7)

“One student was unable to pay his tuition fees and I paid for him so that he could register as a student and attend classes” (20/NE/C1).

Inadequate financial resources are one of the most important reasons for students dropping out of HEIs (Tinto, 2014:6; Latif *et al.*, 2015:1515; Moore, 2017:14). Tuition and registration fees are the most prominent financial barriers that exclude students from HE altogether (Wilson-Strydom, 2012:174). De Villiers (2017:1) supports the substantial increase in registration and tuition costs for HEIs as a barrier to accessing HE, especially for poor students who cannot afford the costs. Fees for accommodation, learning materials, and meals, as well as students' poor financial management are the other financial constraints experienced by students at an HEI (Wilson-Strydom, 2012:174). Most countries' economies, including South Africa's, has depreciated significantly over the last few years. As stated in Section 2.3.3 and 2.3.4, massification and inadequate financial resources within HEIs, continue to pose financial inequity challenges for students. Hence, stakeholders consider students' diverse socioeconomic backgrounds as paramount for discussion in critical dialogues. The RSA's public nursing colleges rely heavily and solely on government subsidies, but funding is limited due to government's other priorities (Zwane & Mtshali, 2019). Although these institutions' financial issues seem different to those of universities, these institutions still experience financial resource-related challenges, which are detrimental to their operations.

The nature of both academic and non-academic support for the students that emerged as supportive leadership is described in respect of extra tuition, SI, counselling, and referral, as well as financial assistance for students in need of such interventions. Not only did supportive leadership surface as some participants' own leadership strength, but it also emerged as the leadership strength in others.

ii. Supportive leadership as a leadership strength in others

There are various instances in which other leaders in a work environment practiced supportive leadership. The nature of support was described as assistance to solve problems, provision of necessary resources, encouragement to reach goals, support to adapt to change, mentoring and guidance, and personal support.

As part of the identified leadership strengths of others, participants appreciated the management team's support to solve problems and to tackle the challenges they

faced. One SL reported on the management team promoting student leadership to address the students' high failure rate in a particular subject.

"In the year 2017 most students failed [the] community nursing science examination, and as the students' representative council, we had to come together to address and resolve this problem. The college management supported us so much in handling this issue, and we appreciated that. Eventually, the affected students were granted an opportunity to rewrite the examination" (02/SL/C2).

Support offered to the SLs purportedly empowered them to fulfil their roles and reach solutions favourable to their circumstances, i.e. another opportunity for examination. Considering the complexities of problem-solving, the management's support for SLs in tackling student-related problems is encouraging.

Leaders' supportive behaviours are key in fostering peoples' capacities to resolve work-related problems creatively (Carmeli *et al.*, 2013:101). Kelly and Azaola (2015) are of the view that the importance of leadership education for today's students cannot be underestimated. To succeed, students need to foster the following leadership aspects: the ability to find and synthesise various sources of information and to manage themselves while empowering others. However, developing a person's ability to solve predicaments creatively is a complex task and constitutes a major challenge for leadership in organisations (Carmeli *et al.*, 2014:118). The highly unstable and indeterminate milieus, such as HEIs, are even more challenging, as leaders are expected to nurture employees' capacity to think innovatively, to address and solve work-related complexities and difficulties (Nawaz *et al.*, 2011; Gichohi, 2014:17). Supporting SL to reach solutions in which the students were granted a supplementary examination emphasises how important it is for transformational leaders to develop creative problem-solving capacities among those they lead.

A NE also mentioned supportive leadership in terms of being assisted in difficult situations. Support offered at these times included provision of necessary resources, enabling employees to work effectively.

"The management team at this institution is available, approachable, and very supportive. They never leave one to deal with problematic situations alone. If one

runs short of resources, they would go out of their way to ensure that we receive what is required in order for us to do our work properly” (03/NE/C2).

In support of the participants’ appreciation of resource allocation as an enabler to perform their functions, Gonzalez and Sutton (2013:6) maintain that supportive leaders primarily oversee the resources entrusted to them to cater for the academic support needs of those they lead, in order for their talents to be nurtured, subsequently advancing excellent education as the institution’s mission.

In Table 2.2 of Chapter 2, it was indicated that a particular South African nursing college experienced resource constraints similar to other NEIs, both internationally and locally. However, the participant’s statement of resource support being provided to work effectively emerged not as an isolated incident, but rather emphasising that the management team generally makes efforts to acquire the resources that the staff requires. Such endeavours are line with SANC’s Nursing Education and Training Standards in which NEIs are expected at all times to make sufficient, appropriate, well maintained equipment and other resources available to both staff and students (SANC, 2020a:25). As non-availability of resources is often associated with non-performance, especially in the public sector, it is believed that sustainable resource support not only enhances work performance, but also gives hope to the needy and restores their confidence in the leadership.

At the same campus, supportive leadership did not only involve providing the necessary resources, it also included encouraging others to plan better, achieve their best, and respond appropriately to change.

“Also, when I felt overwhelmed and overworked by the practical component of the module, I [was] presenting, they supported me through encouragement and helping me to plan better. This improved my morale and gave me strength to persevere” (07/NE/C2).

Encouragement to overcome one’s difficulties is seen as transformational behaviour. As one of the first authors to write about transformational leadership, Tefera (2018) affirms that transformational leaders encourage creativity in individuals to explore new ways of doing things and new opportunities to learn. One NE attributed

enhanced self-confidence and strength to endure to the encouragement received from the principals. Encouragement's optimistic effects positively effect an individual's personal and professional development.

This NE stated that their positive adjustment to an altered curriculum was due to the institutional leadership's encouragement.

At some point one had to adapt to some changes in the curriculum and this was hard for me personally. I couldn't change the situation but to settle for what was on the table. However, the leadership at my institution supported me through this change by means of encouragement to deal these changes. As a result, I managed this change very well. I adjusted and I am now settled making the best out of the worst situation" (19/NE/C2).

Although change is inevitable, it is commonly considered difficult and painful. As echoed by Hao and Yazdanifard (2015:2) and Pincus *et al.* (2017:10), change is intricate, and coping with change is difficult to manage and sometimes painful. These authors affirm that due to the complex nature of change, institutional leaders, including those at HEIs, are likely to experience resistance when effecting changes in their environments. Such resistance may be due to fear of instability or uncertainty, loss of current status, or even effects on an individual's time and workload (Yılmaz & Kılıçoğlu, 2013:17; Blom, 2018). Chandler (2013:243) adds to these effects by alluding to the nature of faculty culture, a sense of territory, friction between functional divisions, resource allocation, traditions, leadership, communication, the power of unions, and individual idiosyncrasies as the possible reasons for resistance to change in HEIs. Although any of these factors could have negatively influenced the NE's response to the imposed change, the participant specifically referred to being adaptable to supportive institutional leadership.

Hao and Yazdanifard (2015:2) claim that in dealing with change, leadership should be a factor that urges people to change. Atkinson and Mackenzie (2015:43) also refers to supportive leadership for employees during any change as a factor that influences, encourages, and motivates change in organisations. Gayef (2014:929) and Burner (2018:123) consider the ability to handle change as fundamental to continued accomplishment. Having experienced effective leadership as a catalyst for

change, it is unsurprising that the NE responded positively to change. The NE's positive response to change could also be attributed to what Pincus *et al.* (2017:10) consider societal forces at work that eventually lead an individual to make efficient transformation, whether they like it or not.

Two other forms of supportive leadership that the participants reported on were the guidance and mentoring that they received from the HADs.

In terms of guidance as an identified strength of other leaders, specifically HADs at the college, the three NEs from the same campus stated that they received guidance from their HADs and described such guidance differently.

The first NE reported that the HAD concerned consistently offered guidance over the years, and the participant felt supported as a result of this guidance.

"Having such leaders who are very [...] supportive and always there to offer help when one needs it, feels good, especially my HAD, who has been guiding me throughout the years" (23/NE/C1).

Clarke (2016) affirms the NE's appreciation of guidance by their HAD throughout the years, stating that providing guidance, where necessary, is fundamental to be an effective and supportive leader and to guide individuals through the steps of expected behaviour. It is apparent that this HAD did exactly what a leader ought to do to provide the necessary guidance throughout the participant's career. Such behaviour could be attributed to the participant's pleasant feelings.

Guidance was also provided in an area where the NE was found to be deficient, i.e. promoting student engagement. While being directed, the participant also appreciated the HAD's positive feedback on their work as such responses boosted the participant's confidence. The participant further stated being more enthusiastic and committed to their job as a result of the HAD's actions.

"The head of my academic department (HAD) guided me where I was lacking. For [...], example, when she felt that I was spoon-feeding the students, she guided me on how to foster active participation of the students. She also gave me positive

feedback regarding my performance. This boosted my confidence a lot. I am now motivated and more passionate about my job” (10/NE/C2).

Kolzow (2014:124) maintains that even if organisations were able to employ individuals with excellent technical skills, e.g. the qualified NE in the statement above, a climate that fosters guidance and motivation must be created. Guidance appears to be a necessity for institutions to produce tangible results. Hence Robinson (2014:2) reported on a mentoring programme that sought to address the need for a cadre of high performance leaders who challenge and guide employees in their work. As employees’ development practice, Gehman *et al.* (2013:106) claim that managers should provide guidance to improve performance in ambiguous and uncertain environments, such as HE. With regard to the HAD’s guidance, the participant specified fostering student engagement as one of the emphasised factors. De Villiers and Werner (2018:36) suggest the degree of attention, curiosity, interest, optimism, and passion that students show when they are learning or being taught as some of the strategies that could enhance pass rates without incurring unnecessary and significant expenses in re-educating students.

The NEs’ stance was not only based on appreciation for guidance received from the HAD. From one participant’s statement it was noted that positive feedback based on the NE’s work was provided and this was considered beneficial. De Villiers (2013:66) consider feedback an essential and influential practice to improve knowledge and skills that managers can apply in educational situations. This author emphasises that feedback enhances performance. Whether positive or negative, continuous feedback is necessary to improve people’s efforts and to push them to become the best in their field.

Another NE referred to an HAD’s guidance provided after the NE resumed duty at the college. This guidance was described in terms of the participant’s orientation regarding learning and teaching, including assessment. The participant stated that the HAD’s guidance made adjustment to the new work milieu much easier.

“On arrival at the campus as a neophyte NE, I was supported by my HAD, who guided me and showed me the ropes of lecturing and assessment. Her support

during that difficult time of adapting to a new environment, made it easy for me workwise" (18/NE/C2).

Ibrahim *et al.* (2013:3) claim that novice educators generally face many challenges in their initial teaching years, especially in three areas relating to their roles and responsibilities, namely: teaching; research; and community service. As academic newcomers, these educators are considered to have the necessary content knowledge but they lack pedagogical skills (Ibrahim *et al.*, 2013:3). This statement is also relevant to nursing education. Having a clinical practice background, most NEs initially join academia possessing significant knowledge and clinical experience related to their field of expertise. Unfortunately, such clinical experience on its own is not enough to make them effective and competent in transferring their knowledge to the students. They still have to be familiarised with various teaching strategies.

As a new college appointee, one NE referred to receiving guidance from her HAD in terms of student teaching and assessment, and this made the work easy to adapt to. Radaković and Antonijević (2013) support informal or formal guidance of new employees, and claim that it could prove beneficial for organisations. The participant's statement also attests to how the educator competency development results in a newcomer developing a sense of belonging. Fernandez and Rajan (2015:629) claim that educators need to feel they belong in order to be intrinsically motivated and perform optimally.

Being too relaxed about guiding new employees could result in a new recruit's performance dropping below the expected standard. Even worse, the new employee could leave the organisation if they feel unsupported. Consequently, employers could find themselves having to re-advertise prematurely for the same position (Wallace, 2009:168). This has not been the case at the college whereby the HAD's guidance has been attributed to enabling a NE adapting to and remaining in the new work environment.

As a component of supportive leadership, guidance is also portrayed in a biblical context. The quote hereunder supports the participants' stances. In Isaiah 42:16 the duty of a leader is said to guide those who are uncertain.

“I will lead the blind by ways they have not known, along unfamiliar paths I will guide them; I will turn the darkness into light before them and make the rough places smooth” (Bible, 1978).

Whilst newcomers are by no means clean slates, an educational environment makes demands that could be interpreted as dark alleys or “rough places”. Guidance and appropriate assistance can create an enabling environment in which a newcomer can navigate uncertainty without fear of ridicule or failure. As an enabler for the new NE to smoothly adapt to her new environment; the cited scriptural stanza has affirmed the offered guidance. Guidance as an HADs’ leadership strength reiterates how the term ‘leadership’ is clarified in this study. It would appear that HADs’ direction influenced NEs as well as their attitude and teaching practices. Vann *et al.* (2014:31) regard guidance during times of change and uncertainty as transformational leadership.

Whilst the three NEs referred to guidance and its effects on them in a more overt way, three other NEs described how their principals provided them with information, advice, and emotional support in a relationship over an extended period of time. One of them reported on the consistent assistance provided in times of need, which inspired her to continue on her chosen career path.

“My leaders’ supportiveness through continuous mentoring and availing themselves to assist whenever necessary gives one the courage to go on” (23/NE/C1).

The following NE was mentored to develop the necessary skills required for her work.

“My leaders supported me by mentoring as a newly appointed lecturer” (20/NE/C2).

Mentoring is generally accepted as an essential function of nurse leaders (McCloughen *et al.*, 2013:302). Thompson *et al.* (2012:536) assert that mentorship is concerned with long-term acquisition of skills in a developing career, rather than an immediate improvement in performance and skills. In the context of this study, McCloughen, *et al.* (2013:309) assert that there is value in nurses consciously and

actively supporting and encouraging each other, as each single act of mentorship can collectively have an enduring impact on both individuals and the profession.

This participant referred to mentoring, both professionally and a non-professionally, as a particular HAD's leadership strength.

"My HAD has always supported me, through mentoring me both professionally and personally" (21/NE/C2).

Leavitt (2011:7) and Shek and Lin (2015:351) concur with the idea of effective leaders contributing to both personal and professional growth and developing their subordinates through mentorship.

Another participant referred to personal support received from her leaders during the death of her spouse and the subsequent bereavement she experienced, which enabled her to cope better during the distressing event.

"After the death of my husband, the principal and the HAD were very supportive because I was depressed. The support from management during this difficult time made it so easy for me to [...] continue working after such a traumatic experience" (27/NE/C2).

Allusion to painful events such as losing a loved one confirms the fact that staff in any workplace experience traumatic personal experiences, which may affect their work performance. Such negative and distressing experiences often leave affected individuals with psychological scars. This participant's statement attests to the Ubuntu principle that holds that individuals, like the bereaved NE, often navigate painful situations successfully by being supported (Tutu, 1999:34; Bolden, 2014:1; Kpanake, 2018:201). The support that the NE received from the institutional leaders while experiencing personal difficulties is considered supportive leadership (House, 1971:321) who is the founder of Path-Goal Theory of Leadership. Bereavement support involves sympathising with affected individuals, and being attentive and caring towards them within the context of emotional and social support (Mourão, 2018:130). Branson and Marra (2019:89,94) assert that when leaders personally facilitate and support mutually beneficial relationships, they create a "culture that brings the best out of others", and those they lead seek to perform at their best. The

NE's gratitude for bereavement support as something that assisted her to move on from a distressing ordeal, reiterates the researcher's belief that a happy employee is a productive employee; therefore, emotional support ought to be cherished and sustained to ensure employees' well-being.

In summary of supportive leadership, some participants' identified leadership strengths were highlighted as academic and non-academic support for students, and the leadership strengths of others have been described as guidance, mentoring, and personal support. The described appreciated leadership strengths emerged as supportive leadership. House (1971:322-323) asserts that supportive leadership focuses on the employees' welfare and is significantly concerned with the followers' needs, preferences, and satisfaction. Furthermore, leaders are expected to set the direction, provide emotional support to those they lead, and help them in reaching their goals (House, 1971:321). From an employee engagement perspective, Robison (2018) agrees that leaders need to "know their people as people", in fact even better than they know themselves, and simultaneously focus on "the finish line".

Numerous participants indicate how some institutional leaders' attitudes, behaviour, and actions made them feel supported, enabling them to work effectively and productively. Supportive leadership is seen in a positive light especially as it has been identified as one of the factors that contribute positively to organisational success (Khalid *et al.*, 2012:487; Dobre, 2013:53). Zehir *et al.* (2011:1471) espouses supportive leadership as the behaviour expected to increase organisational performance through challenging or uncertain circumstances.

With all its stated positive benefits, supportive leadership may not be easy as it seems. This researcher believes that challenges, such as employees who are impossible to support, either because they hardly ask for support or reject it when offered, are one of the dynamics likely to impede supportive leadership. Furthermore, leaders themselves may not be sufficiently motivated or supported to affect such leadership on others. Supportive leadership, as proposed by the participants, seems to have had a positive and valuable influence on organisational performance and success. Such great impact renders it possible for the associated NEI to achieve their

mandate to train and educate safe and competent nurses. In addition to supportive leadership, some participants appreciated empowerment as a life-giving experience.

b. Subtheme 2: Empowering leadership

Empowering leadership emerged as the participants' own leadership strength, as well as the leadership strength of others. The participants alluded to knowledge and skills development, peer assistance leadership, behavioural modification, positive role-modelling, continuous professional development (CPD), support for postgraduate studies, and information-sharing as presented in Figure 4.4.

Own leadership strengths: Empowerment of students by means of:
• Knowledge and skills development • Peer assistance leadership • Behavioural modification • Positive role modelling
Others' leadership strengths: Personnel development through:
• Continuous Professional Development • Support for postgraduate studies • Information sharing

Figure 4.4 Categories and subcategories of empowering leadership

i. Empowering leadership as the participants' own leadership strength

The participant NEs view using strategies to develop students' knowledge and skills as empowerment. These participants attributed the student's developed competency to their academic success, which as a result made the NEs feel proud and personally satisfied. Yuesti and Sumantra (2017:96) espouse the idea that the developing individuals to achieve organisational goals can be achieved by increasing their knowledge. An empowering leader needs to lead people to learn (Yuesti & Sumantra, 2017:96).

The following participant statement attests to how a specific strategy was used to enhance specific students' knowledge of a specific subject.

“When both first and second years were struggling with Biological Nursing Sciences, I arranged to work with them after classes to guide them. We used skeletons and other strategies, such as pictures, and this benefited them. Their pass rate for this particular subject improved. Empowering someone and impacting positively on their academic performance was a positive experience for me and gave me personal satisfaction” (02/SL/C2).

Application of creative teaching methods to share knowledge is encouraging. The HEIs embrace innovation and creativity as a strategy to improve and sustain organisational effectiveness. A nurse educator’s innovation is significantly related to transformational leadership and the positive impact it is likely to have on the work of those for whom these unconventional tactics are intended (Hu *et al.*, 2013:147-148). Jayalaxmi (2016:250) states that NEs ought to try their best to impart knowledge in a way that they themselves understand it.

Using innovative educational methods could potentially improve education, empower people, strengthen governance and stimulate the determination to realise the human development goal for the country (Jayalaxmi, 2016:250). Additionally, Nicolaides (2012:620) deems innovative approaches vital to motivate and stimulate a spirit of learning and enthusiasm among students, which is necessary for learning at HEIs, as well as lifelong learning. These benefits of innovative pedagogies cannot be overstressed, particularly in health science education where innovation is seen to sustain a quest of new professional knowledge.

In terms of psychomotor skills development, the following two statements made by NEs reflect what they consider to be their own leadership strengths.

“I felt proud after addressing a student who failed blood pressure measurement seven times and only passed it when doing it for the eighth time. Two weeks later, she approached me to thank me because she had managed to identify a patient with high blood pressure whom the registered nurse had missed” (02/NE/C2).

“My students made a diagnosis of the patient. They remembered what I had taught them in class. This made me proud as it means that I was successful in teaching the students to be able to correctly diagnose the patients” (05/NE/C2).

Transfer of learning is an acknowledged concept, and Bonnell (2016:2) defines transfer of learning “as the extent to which the knowledge, skills, and abilities acquired, applied, generalised, and maintained over time”. Imparting necessary clinical competencies to student nurses is key for patient safety (Chhugani & James, 2017:26). Having said that, these authors declare that nurses’ clinical training faces the major challenge of ensuring that students are trained to skilfully and confidently execute clinical procedures. Despite clinical teaching-related constraints, educator competency enables the transfer of learning.

Empowerment through clinical skills development is considered to be clinical leadership through which student nurses can develop professionally (Mannix *et al.*, 2013:17; Lau *et al.*, 2014:656). Joseph and Huber (2015:55) assert that it is crucial to prepare nurses for key roles in the healthcare delivery system, both for the sustenance of present jobs and for potential future opportunities. Furthermore, it is important to convey the knowledge, skills, and abilities required so that these nurses are positioned to step into necessary roles. The authors’ perspectives on the significance of clinical competency in healthcare is key for this study, as it reaffirms the relevance of the two NEs’ roles in empowering their students through psychomotor skills development, as they considered this to be their own leadership strength.

Similarly, one of the researcher’s colleague also expressed their opinion that psychomotor skills development are a form of empowerment.

“Teaching the content in class and seeing the students being able to integrate the theory they have learnt in into clinical practice made me happy because I could see that learning had occurred and I know that I had developed midwives who are safe and competent to practice” (07/NE/C2).

Theory-practice integration is a cornerstone of many professions as it improves students’ chances of employability after graduation (Jackson, 2013:113; Batholmeus & Pop, 2019:11). Within RSA’s R425 comprehensive nursing training programme, midwifery is one of the subjects that the students are taught and they are expected to apply their knowledge to skilful and confident execution of skills in rendering mother and child clinical care. The ability to develop students who not only integrate

midwifery theory into practice, but who are safe practitioners, as the participant indicated, affirms the transfer of competency from a competent midwifery educator to a student midwife (WHO, 2019:5). Furthermore, effective learning attests to quality education, which is essential in enhancing evidence-based practice (EBP) [Hornthvedt *et al.*, 2018:1 of 11].

Because nurses are considered globally to be the backbone of the health workforce, as a reported leadership strength, competency development is seen as contributing to health professionals' efficiency. However, the South African Strategic Plan for Nursing Education, Training and Practice (NDoH, 2013:19) refers to anecdotal evidence that suggests that many nurses are not suitably competent in a number of areas. Appreciating specified participants' roles in equipping students with the competencies necessary for rendering safe healthcare services not only addresses the competency gap mentioned by RSA's DoH. It also contributes to this country's vision of a "Long and Healthy Life for All South Africans" (NDoH, 2010:3). This vision cannot be achieved without availability of competent nurses.

Other leadership strengths including peer assistance leadership, behavioural modification, and positive role-modelling. As far as peer assistance leadership is concerned, one SL described their efforts to help a fellow student to cease risk behaviour. This SL believes that his actions positively influenced his peer's academic performance.

"It was when I was involved in helping a student to come out of risky behaviour through which he eventually changed and managed to progress to the next academic level. I was patient as I believed in him" (03/SL/C3).

Student leadership plays a vital role at HEIs in terms of adaptation and survival of fellow students. Tuition and accommodation fees, student debt, and infrastructure quality are issues SLs, justifiably and passionately engage in with relevant HE stakeholders on behalf of their constituencies (Cele, 2014:49; Moreku, 2014:6-7). These issues influence student retention and success, and if not effectively dealt with, they will continue to threaten student access and retention. Thus, it is not unusual for SLs to contest these issues. Getting involved with a fellow-students on a personal level, however, does exceed usual expectations of SLs. By offering peer support, this

SL succeeded in facilitating positive change that resulted in academic progress—one of the benefits of peer leadership (Keup, 2016:32).

As with peer assistance leadership, decentralisation was mentioned, and the case of a SL showing concern for the welfare of the fellow students was cited. This participant reported observing that students on campus were physically inactive. The SL indicated that due to what he had observed, he acted to change the situation, as he believes that physically activity is a facilitator of good health.

“There were a lot of challenges when I started my term as a student representative. The students were physically inactive and there was no gym equipment. I managed to get equipment and students are now keeping physically active and this is good for their health” (08/SL/C1).

Taking the initiative as a SL to turn physically inactive students into active individuals by providing gym facilities at a particular campus is admirable. Availability of sports or gym facilities is reported as one of the determinants for physical activity (Deliens *et al.*, 2015). The participant’s perceived effect of physical activity on the students’ health is affirmed by Forrester (2014:5), who pronounced increased retention rates and improved health and wellness in students who participate in recreational exercise. Unfortunately, physical inactivity affects not only the students’ physical wellbeing, and its impact on students’ mental performance cannot be overlooked (Demers, 2013:68). It is necessary for HE students to have a healthy mental state in order for them to cope with the cognitive demands placed on them.

Pascoe *et al.* (2020:104) claim that tertiary education students continuously face a variety of academic demands-related stressors. High incidences of academic-related stress is concerning because it contributes to reduced academic success, reduced motivation, and increased student dropout rates (Langtree, 2018:90; Pascoe *et al.*, 2020:104). Keong *et al.* (2015:755) affirm that mental health problems such as stress affect students’ academic performance. Since stress-related health issues are associated with mental decrements, i.e. depression and suicide. Sharon-David and Tenenbaum (2017:19) advice exercise as an intervention that may be useful to reduce stress. Similar to how supportive leadership has been appreciated in preventing possible catastrophes relating to mental health ailments, the empowering

behaviour of the SL in striving to promote the students' mental wellbeing is also acknowledged. Having noted the importance of both physical activity and a healthy mental state in relation to students' academic success, it is deduced that in order for HE students to succeed, an equilibrium between the two co-dependent factors, i.e. physical and psychological wellbeing, is vitally important.

In terms of positive role-modelling as an empowering behaviour, one NE claimed that nurturing their own professional character facilitated their own and their students' professional growth. The participant's actions have apparently been appreciated and acknowledged by the students as well as healthcare managers.

"Modelling the expected behaviour for the students has assisted them a lot. Things like practicing good work values and ethics as well as time management. When a student came to me after completion of training and acknowledged the part I have played in their development. Or even when the managers from various/outside institutions acknowledge a job well done with regard to the training of the nursing students" (13/NE/C3).

Through modelling the accepted behaviour relating to work values and ethics, and student time management, the NE seems to have unconsciously aligned her leadership abilities to one of the leadership traits of being a good leader, i.e. setting an example to those that they lead. Thatcher (2012:5) puts 'leading by example' into perspective by claiming that people are influenced by an example, whether good and bad. Therefore, a leader's example will have a significant effect on the team or organisation's long-term success. Both students and healthcare managers have appreciated setting a good example to facilitate students' professional development. The effects of the NE's behaviour are likely to positively influence the healthcare system.

Positive role-modelling as a teaching strategy is significantly important for the nursing profession (WHO, 2016:19; Jack *et al.*, 2017:4707). Jack *et al.*'s (2017:4707) research reveals that nursing students appreciate good role models; as they indicated that exposure to positive role models in both clinical and university settings was valuable and beneficial to their learning.

Although focus has been placed on the effects of positive role-modelling in nursing education, the existence of negative role models cannot be ignored. As a nurse practicing in the RSA, the researcher has witnessed the deteriorating status of the profession over the years, such that nurses continue to face numerous occupational challenges that interfere with the expectation to render safe and quality healthcare. In an attempt to address the declining status of the nursing profession. The NDoH (2013:19) indicated a lack of positive role models for nurse trainees as a factor contributing to occupational challenges. Thatcher (2012:9) challenges negative role-modelling by expressing that even though people can and should make independent choices instead of blindly following whatever their leader does, the leader's behaviour is still a significant reference point. This holds an important message not only for NEs, but for nurse practitioners as well, as they must be similarly conscious of their behaviour when executing their duties.

While numerous participants considered competency development, peer assistance leadership, behavioural modification, and positive role-modelling as their own leadership strengths, empowerment has also been described as a leadership strength of others.

ii. Empowering leadership as a leadership strength of others

Participants claimed that they had experienced moments where their leaders practiced staff or facilitated staff development. The latter was described in terms of opportunities that the participants said they had been afforded by the organisational leadership. The prospects include enabling staff to engage in postgraduate studies or CPD and providing information necessary to function effectively as employees.

Two of the NEs from a particular campus discussed how their leaders had supported professional development.

One NE said:

"When I enrolled for a master's degree in nursing education to further develop myself professionally, the managers supported me to finish this degree. They

assisted me to get a bursary so that I could finish my degree, which I could not finish earlier due to personal circumstances” (02/NE/C2).

Postgraduate education is essential for nurses, most especially for those in an academic environment. Nurses involved in an academic setting are required to participate in research, either by conducting research, and/or supervising novice nurse researchers (SANC, 2020a:78; WHO, 2013:16). The WHO (2016:13) asserts that with vigorous research participation, knowledge pertinent to nursing education and practice can be generated and applied. Research confirms that patient outcomes improve when nurses practice in an evidence-based manner (Black *et al.*, 2015:14). As an approach to clinical care that incorporates the application of contemporary best practices, clinicians’ expertise, and patient values and preferences; EBP has been proven to improve patient safety and outcomes and decrease healthcare costs (Stevens, 2013; Black *et al.*, 2015; Songur, *et al.*, 2017).

Booth *et al.* (2016:54) propose that academic NEs be equipped to serve as researchers; supplying such support to the NE as a master’s student is not interpreted as a personal achievement, but may empower the participant fulfil a research role, which is an academic expectation. Having supported an employee to obtain a master’s degree could benefit the institution as far as its research activities are concerned.

Continued professional development is a staff development practice imperative in most organisations, and must be prioritised. The Labour Relations Act No. 66 of 1995 provides for staff to be given time to attend professional development trainings. Through CPD, employees are able to obtain knowledge and/or learn new skills related to their professional lives, and to update and maintain professional competency that will impact on the quality of nursing education (McCarthy & Illiffe, 2013:6; Price & Reichert, 2017:13).

One NE said:

“Management at our institution supports one’s professional and personal development. They gave me an opportunity to attend short courses such as assessor

and moderator as well as preceptorship and as a result my self-confidence has really been enhanced” (10/NE/C2).

The NE stated that training opportunities were offered, including assessment, moderation, and preceptorship. Granting training prospects is considered supportive of professional and personal development. Interestingly, CPD opportunities extended to educators in their specific area of expertise is one of SANC’s (2020a:) prescribed nursing education and training standards, The Council stipulates that CPD’s aim is to ensure that nurse practitioners remain updated in terms of the necessary competencies required for specific areas of practice. Furthermore, it is seen as a mechanism that provides prospects for nurses to pursue and achieve professional growth throughout their careers and which benefit South Africans.

Nursing CPD is supported by the South African Qualifications Authority [SAQA] (2020) that asserts that all health professionals should continue to learn throughout their working experience, in order to maintain and improve personal competence. Panthi and Pant (2018:2) and Manley *et al.* (2018:134) claim that CPD in healthcare is necessary for healthcare workers to render safe and effective healthcare services. For healthcare practitioners to practice safely and effectively and to provide optimal, quality patient care, they are required to regularly update their competencies to match the changing complexities of healthcare provision (Price & Reichert, 2017:1; Manley *et al.* 2018:134). This requirement has a serious implication for the key role-players in HPE, including NEs. Nurses in practice are trained by NEs in academia, therefore it is deemed appropriate that after their qualification, nurse academics update their knowledge and skills to meet the current demands and expectations of both nursing practice and education (WHO, 2016:13).

Student monitoring, evaluation, and assessment to demonstrate evidence of learning and mastering of competencies is one of the NE’s core (WHO, 2016:22). The WHO, as an international body for health affairs further asserts that NEs should be competent in developing a range of evaluation tools and techniques to determine student competency in cognitive, affective, and psychomotor areas. It is believed that sending NEs on assessment courses would enhance their assessment skills.

Moderation of student assessment is widely accepted and practiced as a quality assuring tool in HEIs, including NEIs (McDonald, 2016:1). Naidoo (2016:16) is of the view that moderation ensures that learning outcome assessments are fair, valid, reliable, and unbiased. For NEIs particularly, SANC also require that all NEs be trained in assessment and moderation, and those who complete this type of training are offered an additional registration in this regard (SANC, 2020b). For a NE to be offered a chance to be trained in assessment and moderation indicates the institution's commitment to quality nursing education as well as compliance with the SANC's legislative imperative.

In addition to assessment and moderation as part of CPD, preceptorship is another development opportunity that the same participant referred to. NEs play an important role in developing students' clinical skills. As preceptors, they promote learning of clinical skills and simultaneously accompany students during work-integrated learning instances (Hugo & Botma, 2019:200). Although NEs are qualified professionals, preceptorship is a role that they need to execute with a better understanding to make it more beneficial for recipients.

Bengtsson and Carlson (2015:2) promote the need for preceptorship training, as preceptors are expected to have the skills necessary to create an effective learning environment and facilitate a constructive clinical learning experience for students and new employees. Similarly, preceptorship training is needed to equip preceptors with the necessary skills that will empower them to successfully facilitate students' learning through theory-practice integration (Hugo, 2018:111). Based on the presented rationale for preceptorship training, it is therefore deemed vital by the researcher, and it is anticipated that this NE would benefit from it.

The same NE reported on another opportunity to attend technology in pedagogy training, such as using the computer and interactive smart board.

"I was also sent to [train] on computer courses and [use] interactive smart boards. This also really boosted my self-confidence" (10/NE/C2).

In today's world, using technology in tuition is vital in meeting technologically-savvy students' demands and expectations (Ghavifekr & Wan Rosdy, 2015:175; Ghavifekr

et al., 2016:38). The world of digital interactivity, of computers, of cyberspace, and the 'e-revolution', has resulted in computer literacy being more indispensable than ever, hence the growing need for Information Technology (IT) skills (Mbanaso & Dandaura, 2015:17; Sherman, 2019). Kler (2014:260) and Spante *et al.* (2018:2) assert that computer training equips learners with basic IT skills, i.e. using computers to retrieve, assess, store, produce, present, and exchange information, and to communicate and participate in collaborative networks via the Internet. These basic IT skills underpin digital competency and these proficiencies are critical for work, leisure, and communication (Spante *et al.*, 2018:2).

The Coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic posed serious challenges in respect of continuity of academic activities during the 2020 academic year. Due to the academic disruptions imposed by the lockdown regulations to fight the spread of the virus, most HEIs globally migrated fully from classroom-based education to online teaching in an attempt to salvage the current academic year (Basilaia, & Kvavadze, 2020; Mpungose, 2020:1). With selected HEIs strictly offering online courses, other institutions began to interact with students via online platforms for both teaching and assessment purposes. Because the success of online teaching depends on educators' digital competencies, it is apparent that a number of the incumbents struggled to cope with new way of doing things. This called for everybody within the education sector to update their digital skills so as to keep up with the rapid developments of the 4th Industrial Revolution and its concomitant demands.

Wilkinson *et al.* (2013:112) state that nursing students are expected to become IT competent as future health service nurses. These nurse researchers challenge NEs to provide students with the IT skills relevant to academic study, and secondly, to introduce IT skills relevant to their nursing practice. Therefore, enhancing the NE's IT skills, such as computer literacy and technology use in teaching, such as interactive smart board use, would sharpen individual's skills enabling them to meet professional expectations. Competency also increases confidence (Sumantri & Wardhani, 2017), thereby validating the participant's view.

One participant suggested that knowledge of institutional policies also attests to knowledge enhancement being a leadership strength.

“Empowering me with necessary information on institution policies helped me to a greater extend to function within the institutional prescripts” (20/NE/C1).

Policies are essential tools that tackle pertinent organisational issues, such as what constitutes acceptable employee behaviour (Mackay & Shaxton, 2011; Cochran & Malone, 2014:3; Sanelli, 2018). However, policies are considered futile if managers neglect to effectively communicate them to employees (Sanelli, 2018). Non-communication of institutional strategic policies to employees is likely to limit their knowledge and expose them to work-related transgressions. This NE appreciated being familiarised with institutional policies, because it empowered them to adhere to institutional rules.

In brief, the findings of the AI's Discovering phase reveal that the participants' appreciated leadership strengths were competency development, peer assistance leadership, behavioural modification, positive role-modelling, and staff development. Apparently, all these leadership strengths reported by the participants resulted in the development of others, and hence emerged as empowering leadership. Empowering leadership involves a series of management practices, including decentralisation, participation, information-sharing, and training (Dennerlein, 2017:38-39). Amundsen and Martinsen (2014:489) add that empowering leaders motivate employees by distributing power and supporting their development.

c. Subtheme 3: Motivational leadership

Motivational leadership emerged as a leadership strength as several participants indicated that they felt positive, most alive, engaged, or proud of their own motivational roles, as well as of others' motivational roles. The participants' perspectives indicated motivation for both students and staff, and this is presented in Figure 4.5.

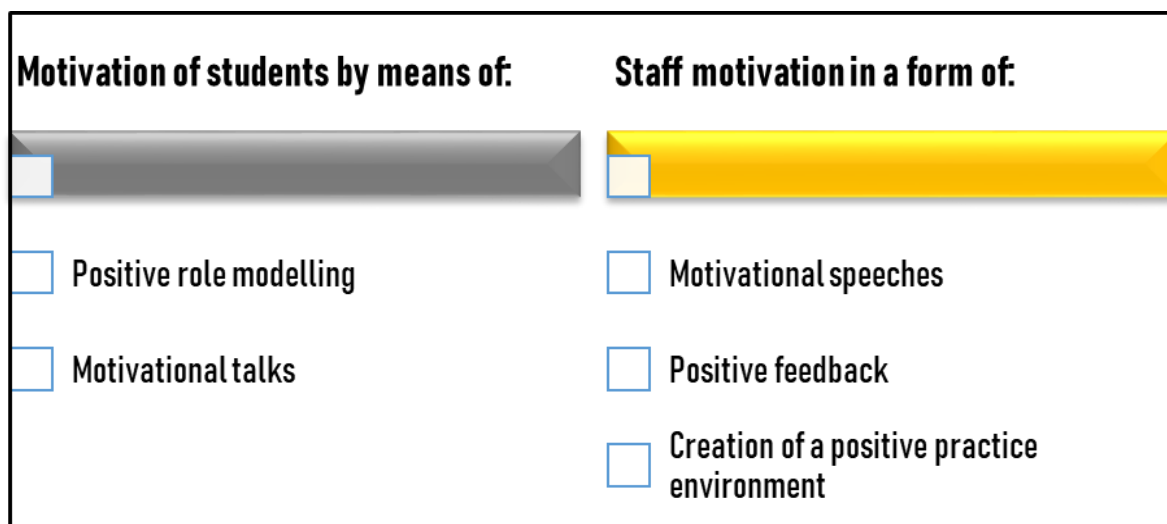


Figure 4.5 Categories and subcategories of motivational leadership

i. Motivational leadership as the participants' own leadership strength

Two NEs expressed motivational leadership as their own leadership strength. One of these participants regarded professional behaviour to be an important motivator, especially for novice nursing students.

"I think my professional behaviour of always being punctual for class so that learning can begin on time and being prepared for the lessons serves as a motivation for the students, more especially the novice students" (01/NE/C2).

Professional behaviour can be associated with positive role-modelling that is used as a teaching strategy in the nursing profession (WHO, 2016:19; Jack *et al.*, 2017). Baldwin *et al.* (2013:5) reported on the students' appreciated motivating behaviour of their role models in clinical nursing education. Although the NEs identified positive role-modelling as a motivator, the aforementioned authors' findings state that positive role-modelling is significant as inspiration for NEs, and for nursing students. Nouri *et al.* (2015) agree that motivating others in the role-modelling process is very important.

Another NE expressed the opinion that motivating students, especially those who are struggling academically, to believe in themselves enhances students' performance.

“I always motivate the students to believe in themselves, especially when failing a particular subject, by pointing out to them that this subject is manageable just like any other subject if they [work] hard, and this in my opinion, improved the subject pass rate” (04/NE/C2).

The researcher believes that motivating underachieving students shows a positive attitude towards one's work and the students. Demonstration of such an affirmative character by the NE is supported by Halawah (2011:379) study confirms this notion, and his study reveals educator personality as one of the factors identified by students at a certain HEI to have influenced their motivation to learn. Similarly, Nilsson (2016:13), and Mohamed and Jamal (2017:42-43) consider the NE's affirmative behaviour towards students as enhancing student self-efficacy, which could be associated with increasing student motivation.

Motivation of students has been suggested as an innovative approach to assist struggling or failing students in an era of rising academic standards, and to help them thrive (Usher & Kober, 2012:2; Toch & Headden, 2014). Toch and Headden (2014) reported on research findings in which students who doubt their academic abilities and who frequently fail, irrespective of their innate intelligence or the quality of the teaching they receive. Equally, Usher and Kober (2012:2) assert that if students are not driven, it is difficult, if not unattainable, to improve their academic success, no matter how good the educator, curriculum, or the learning institution is. Although the participant concerned believed that motivational behaviour contributed to the academic success of some students, Rizkallah and Seitz (2017:46) offer that factors impacting students' motivation change over the course of their academic careers, and propose that HEIs should consider creative motivational tactics for increased academic success rates.

ii. *Motivational leadership as a leadership strength of others*

Participants appreciated the role that leaders played in motivating both students and staff to realise their potential. Some participants reported on how other leaders had strived to encourage students to reach academic excellence and successfully complete their studies.

“The institutional management always motivates the students to excel in their studies, to avoid carrying subjects from previous years, and to finish their work-integrated learning hours on time for completion of their studies” (09/NE/C2).

Achievement motivation enhances and guides behaviour in the direction of accomplishment, and is therefore regarded as a significant factor contributing to academic success (Plante *et al.*, 2013:65). Öqvista and Malmströmb (2017) concur that motivation in an educational setting is the effort and the inner state that revitalises educational activities, accelerates learning, and directs behaviour towards reaching ones’ academic aspirations. Completing studies on time is beneficial for both HEIs and students. Aina *et al.* (2018:2) assert that taking longer than the minimum period to graduate poses a direct threat to the associated benefits of HE investment. Furthermore, obtaining qualifications beyond the legal duration could be considered a failure from the HEI, as they fail to supply the share of graduates available in an economic system. This implies that HEIs that make efforts to graduate their students are likely considered to be performing, and therefore have a greater chance of attracting more students and possibly additional funding. As previously mentioned, this particular college relies heavily on government funding. Therefore, not only could the institution’s reputation be tarnished by having a cohort of delayed graduates, the institution’s funding eligibility could also be jeopardised.

It is assumed that students seek to complete their studies timeously for many reasons, one of them being finances. Educational expenses, along with the rising cost of living, make HE affordability difficult for students (Letkiewicz, 2014:352). Another reason could be what is commonly termed ‘black tax’. This refers to an expectation of black South Africans from the emergent middle classes to take care of their families’ financial needs (Mangoma & Wilson-Prangle, 2019:456). Students

could feel obliged to complete their studies in the shortest time possible in order to provide financial support to their families.

The following participants indicated that it is not only students that experience motivational institutional leadership. Some NEs also reported their experiences of such inspiration. These participants declared that they felt inspired and reassured by the leadership's motivational speeches and the positive feedback received regarding their own job performance.

“During the official opening ceremony of the school, the principal welcomed all the students as well as the educators, and gave a motivational speech that really inspired me as an educator. The principal spoke with such great sincerity and passion, making me feel that she really valued the school and its future” (05/NE/C2).

Siddique *et al.* (2011:723) support effective leaders motivating their employees. Belias and Koustelios (2014:24) state that effective leaders regard their employees an important resource, and therefore strive to provide job satisfaction. Conversely, employee satisfaction and motivation denotes organisational effectiveness (Siddique *et al.*, 2011:735). Effective managers reportedly motivate their employees to attain institutional targets, making their organisations more effective (Dobre, 2013:58; Osborne & Hammoud, 2017:52).

Furthermore, the principal's passionate and sincere motivational talk conveyed a sense of worth to the audience. Siddique *et al.* (2011:735) affirm that when staff members feel that their work is deemed significant and that they are valued, their internal motivation to work increases. The researcher believes that the correlation of employee and organisational effectiveness to be vital in this study's context of leadership strengthening.

Furthermore, in terms of the reported leadership strengths of others, two NEs claimed that their HADs had consistently provided constructive feedback regarding the NEs' work performance. This positive feedback boosted their confidence and motivation.

“The head of my academic department encouraged me to pursue what I was doing as she felt that I was on the right track. Her actions reassured me when I was busy doubting myself, and now even my confidence is so high, and I am really motivated” (09/NE/C2).

“My leader, who is the head of my academic department, gave me positive feedback about my work performance, such as the manner in which I facilitated learning, and further encouraged me to foster student engagement through active participation of students in class. Through this encouragement, my self-confidence and motivation has improved and now I am even more passionate about my job” (10/NE/C2).

Positive employee feedback regarding their job performance is regarded as a form of motivation in educational contexts (Lai, 2011:24; Leheta, 2016:1; Marthouret & Sigvardsson, 2016:33). Using positive feedback to encourage NEs is supported by Marthouret and Sigvardsson’s (2016:33) study findings. These authors reported on participants’ views that indicated that they received positive feedback from their managers, and such feedback motivated them to maintain decent performance or improve such performance. Choi *et al.* (2018:97) reiterate this notion, claiming that whether negative or positive, feedback shapes employees’ performance. However, for it to have positive effects, such as those mentioned by the two NEs, i.e. boosted confidence and motivation, feedback should be constructed such that it motivates employees and improves their actions.

The HAD at one of the campuses also referred to motivation as a leadership strength of others. This participant felt motivated due to the positive practice environment that was cultivated by the principal despite institutional challenges.

“I am really motivated because of the positive working environment that the principal of our college fosters, despite the challenges we are faced with and that are actually beyond our control, ensuring [a] high student pass rate, against all odds” (04/HAD/C3).

Literature supports a positive practice environment as a source of motivation for employees. Day and Sammons (2013:2) state that promoting success in educational

institutions during difficult situations, requires leaders to establish a positive organisational culture that supports and improves staff motivation and commitment. Concurring with the abovementioned authors, Munyewende *et al.* (2014) report on the effect that positive practice environments have on job satisfaction. Job satisfaction is regarded as key to employee' motivation (Siddique *et al.*, 2011:735). Abu-Jarour (2014:215) encourages leader to address challenges within establishments adequately, especially challenges that lead to employee demotivation, as it has been established that a positive practice environment results in a motivating effect that enables optimal work performance.

Concisely, some participants referred to instances in which they considered their appreciated leadership moments and these emerged as motivational leadership. The participants referred to the times when both students and employees were inspired to strive to realise their own goals, as well as those of the institution. The participants' sentiments are widely supported, as motivational leadership is known to excite people's imaginations and inspire them to move in a desired direction (Indrawati, 2014:81; Ugoani, 2015:585).

d. Summary of the appreciated leadership strengths

The responses relating to the moments where participants felt positive, most alive, engaged, or proud of their own leadership roles and the leadership roles of others are encapsulated in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2 Summary of the participants' own appreciated leadership strengths and the appreciated leadership strengths of other – arranged per subtheme

	Supportive leadership	Empowering leadership	Motivational leadership
Own leadership strengths	Providing academic and non-academic support	Developing students' competency Encouraging behavioural modification Applying positive role-modelling	Practicing positive role-modelling Delivering motivational talks
Others' leadership strengths	Receiving support from the institutional management	Promoting staff development	Delivering motivational speeches Giving positive feedback Creating a positive practice environment

Supportive, empowering, and motivational leadership emerged as transformational leadership approaches that are considered obligatory for HEIs to navigate their continuing and difficult challenges, as described in Section 2.6.1.

e. Reflection on transformational leadership approaches

In interrogating the AI findings, particularly the emergent transformational leadership approaches, the participants' perspectives were found congruent with some descriptions on transformational leadership offered by Bass (1990:21), who was the first researcher to promote transformational leadership's four components, namely intellectual stimulation, individualised consideration, inspirational motivation, and idealised influence, as depicted in Figure 4.6.

Intellectual Stimulation	• leader challenges conventionality • leader inspires ingenuity amongst employees • leader encourages members to reconnoitre novel methods of doing things and new prospects to learn.
Individualised consideration	• leadership encompasses provision of support and encouragement to individuals. • leader nurtures supportive relationships, • leader keeps lines of communication open so that members feel free to share ideas • leader offers direct acknowledgement of the distinctive inputs
Inspirational motivation	• leader has a clear vision that they are able to communicate to members. • leader is able to assist subordinates to experience the same urge and drive to fulfil these goals
Idealised influence	• leader serves as a role model for employees. • based on the trust and respect for the leader, members imitate this individual and adopt his or her ideals.

Figure 4.6 Components of transformational leadership (Bass, 1990:21).

Several connections were made between the four elements described in Figure 4.6 and supportive, empowering, and motivational leadership that emerged as the participants' appreciated leadership strengths. Participants' views emerging as supportive leadership can be aligned to individualised consideration, which promotes leadership that embraces providing support and encouragement to individuals. In terms of empowering leadership, the participants referred to staff and student competency development. This resonates with intellectual stimulation where the leader challenges conventionality and encourages members to explore and acquire new knowledge and ways of doing things, as well as new opportunities to learn. Furthermore, in terms of empowering leadership, some participants mentioned positive role-modelling, which is regarded as idealised influence. Regarding motivational leadership, the participants' comments refer to inspirational motivation that refers to a leader's ability to assist others experience the same urge and drive to fulfil their goals. The link established between Bass's (1990:21) elements and the participants' contributions validates the emergence of transformational leadership approaches as the participants' appreciated leadership strengths.

These emergent transformational leadership approaches could be intentionally exerted to interact with staff and students to influence, direct, and motivate them to

reach mandated levels of performance (Khumalo, 2015:18). Furthermore, such leadership styles could be executed implicitly and explicitly to guide and inspire employees to implement organisational plans. As a result, the success of a particular RSA's NEI in attaining its mandate could easily be attributed to the emergent transformational leadership styles as a fundamental that affects employee motivation, performance, and productivity, and consequently successful nurse education and training. Therefore, the emergent transformational leadership approaches ought to be sustained as strategies that could assist this specific NEI to navigate its own challenges and those occasioned by transition into HE.

4.2.1.2 *Theme 2: Leadership Competencies*

The second theme that emerged as an appreciated leadership strength from AI's Discovering phase concerns leadership competencies. The participants' contributions in terms of this theme indicate their pride in the college leaders' knowledge, skills, attitudes, and behaviour. To be declared competent, leaders ought to behave in a specific manner that facilitates the accomplishment of the specified role's responsibilities and functions (Shafiei & Fard, 2015:143). Thus it is important for nurse education leaders, including SLs and NEs, to demonstrate distinctive traits by executing leadership roles and responsibilities successfully. There are many reasons why any organisation's survival is important for those who directly or indirectly benefit from it. To survive in a competitive HE environment and to meet the changing needs of the society, NEIs' leaders should possess the necessary knowledge, skills, and attitudes (Raguidin, 2015).

Coetzee *et al.* (2014:827) claim that competent leadership is required to understand, formulate, and implement suitable organisational change. Based on this notion, it is assumed that competent leadership could help the college to respond to its challenges, not only to smoothly and effectively transit into HE, but also to navigate the new environment's demands. It is encouraging that organisational leadership confirms the necessary leadership competencies stated by participants, and how these competencies are attributed to the college's productivity and success.

The second theme of the AI's Discovering phase that attests to leadership competencies include knowledge and skills (subtheme 1) as well attitudes and behaviour (subtheme 2) and these are described in Figure 4.7



Figure 4.7 Leadership competencies as appreciated leadership strengths at a South African public nursing college

The participants' assertions about the demonstration and observation of the necessary leadership knowledge and skills were in terms of involvement of others, being assertive and attentive, ability to manage conflict and solve problems. Their comments on appropriate leadership attitudes and behaviour focused on acknowledgement, caring, commitment, results orientation, and teamwork. The knowledge, skills, attitudes, and behaviour appreciated by particular participants are aligned to the literature to add to richness of these findings (Polit & Beck, 2017:566).

a. Subtheme 1: Knowledge and Skills

Some participants referred to their own affirming experiences in terms of demonstrating the necessary leadership knowledge and skills, which they appreciated these as their own leadership strengths and the leadership strengths of others. The knowledge and skills cited by the participants are the active involvement of others in the college matters, assertiveness, attentiveness, conflict management, and problem-solving.

i. Active involvement of others in institutional matters

Two participants reported on experiences in which college management involved them, as SLs, in college affairs, either to take decisions or resolve issues.

“As the mediators or mouthpieces between management and the students, and also as formal leadership structure in the institution, leadership involve us whenever there are issues that we need to resolve as a unit” (04/SL/C3).

“When the college management trusted me in executing certain roles. I was involved in taking decisions relating to matters that sought to move the institution forward” (08/SL/C1).

Irrespective of leadership approaches adopted in educational settings, involving students in leadership activities is acknowledged as having potential benefits for students (Kelly & Azaola, 2015). These advantages could be behavioural, cognitive, and affective (Trowler, 2013:91). By engaging in leadership, students develop confidence, become articulate and responsible (Thomson, 2012:97), and are exposed to leadership opportunities that prepare them for future leadership roles (Archard, 2013:172). Both the students and the college benefit from active participation in leadership affairs. Patterson (2012:7) asserts that encouraging students to participate in leadership enhances their results in many areas. This author’s viewpoint supports the two SLs’ optimism about being engaged in affairs and decision-making processes that led to their organisation’s progress, as confirmed by their statements above.

Similarly, a fellow SL valued how various members of the student board engaged with each another as a team to accomplish their objectives.

“Active participation of every member of the student representative structure, working as a team to accomplish the structure’s goals made me feel alive” (09/SL/C1).

Fung (2018:246) maintains that for any team to achieve its goals, collaboration among members is key, and each of them should participate actively in all tasks. The same author referred to consequences of a team-building exercise where a team failed to achieve its desired objectives because not all members actively participated

in an assignment. In support of the above, one of the SLs praised the fact that every student committee member was actively involved in tasks they had to complete, and were subsequently able to achieve their goals. This participant's response implies that an inactive leader, who relies on others to execute tasks that they were supposed to complete as a team, could cause other team members to become discouraged, which could result in their failure to meet their targets.

Four NEs appreciated those instances in which they could participate in the college's governance and where their input was sought out and highly regarded as contributing to the college's success.

"Being able to engage and be part of different committees within school which assist the college to achieve its vision and mission and contribute constructively to the community and society at large" (01/NE/C2).

"When the college management engaged us as lecturers in matters that involve the moving of the school forward or management of the institution" (01/NE/C2).

"My HAD always consult[s] and involve[s] me in matters that relate to me. She and other college managers are not autocratic leaders" (21/NE/C1).

"With us here in our campus, the management team and other colleagues enjoy executing the tasks together with our views being taken into consideration and being listened [to]" (24/NE/C1).

Surji (2015:161) views leadership as more than a solo activity, that is an activity requires involvement of those who seek to influence. Seeking others' input in terms of important issues that will affect them, e.g. the proposal or implementation of changes, indicates sincere commitment to what matters to another person. Through such involvement, greater influence could be developed as soon as other members realise that their leader's actions include being genuinely concerned about their interests (University of Florida, n.d.). Similar to the corporate sector where active employee engagement maximises profits from to the employee's existing capabilities, HEIs' leaders should also involve their members to minimise the effects of disengaged members, which could be detrimental to these institutions' longevity. (Kortmann *et al.*, 2014:60). Thus it is unsurprising that employee engagement as a factor that helps an NEI to progress, was valued by individual participants.

One NE referred to the HAD's participative leadership style that included others in decision-making

"An unauthoritative leadership keeps our institution going. My HAD always allow[s] me to be part of decision-making moments, and listens to what I have to say. I feel like this allows for shared ownership of the institution" (20/NE/C1).

Ejimabo (2015:3) proposes that every organisation's success relies on how leadership makes decisions that affect everyone involved. Leaders should actively involve employees and other stakeholders in decision-making as far as possible as they implement these decisions (Ojokuku & Sajuyigbe, 2014:93; Ejimabo, 2015:2; Elegbe & Ibikunle, 2015:39). Whitehurst (2016) purports that leaders need to involve more people from their network in the decision-making process in order to obtain information and advice. Such practise may have a beneficial effect on the quality of the decisions, i.e. ensure the highest possible decision quality, and most importantly, create a common vision and shared values (Parnell *et al.*, 2012:282). If leaders are not involved or perhaps doubt decisions made by others in the organisation, some team members' commitment will be negatively affected (Ejimabo, 2015:2). Quagraine and Asiedu-Appiah's (2019:37) findings suggest that involving other members in decision-making adds to effectual decision execution. The authors add that involvement creates an enabling environment for creativity and growth where employees see themselves as stakeholders and owners of the decision-making process, thus facilitating implementation.

In light of the positive benefits associated with inclusive decision-making, the reported HAD's actions are considered empowering and they promote a shared governance culture.

ii. Assertiveness

A SL and NE valued how each of them stood their ground when dealing with challenging or difficult circumstances. It appears as if both participants' actions had favourable outcomes for all parties involved.

This SL referred to the emphatic behaviour that was demonstrated during an incident in which mediation was required between college management and students.

“I had to put the interests of the students first when mediating between management and the students, and come out with a win/win resolution for both parties. Even though I felt like I was personally attacked, I was assertive and stood my ground while handling the matter” (04/SL/C3).

Firmness is characterised by the manner in which a person reacts to a situation where their position and interests do or may conflict with those of others (Ames *et al.*, 2017:1). Junior and Guonik (2018:113) propose that insistent leadership is beneficial to the team, because opinions can be expressed and there is a genuine desire to reach for solutions that meet the interests of all. Furthermore, an organisation could benefit from leaders who stand their ground, as it improves productivity, fast-tracks problem-solving, and reduces conflict (Junior & Guonik, 2018:114). Ames *et al.* (2017:2) support positive results relating to participant's firm behaviour and claim that insistent behaviour, whether in high-stake disputes, formal or informal negotiations, or everyday disagreements, affect outcomes. However, when conflicts are poorly managed damaging consequences can ensue, i.e. if a leader is too insistent, they may experience resistance and relationships could be impaired. However if the leader isn't sufficiently insistent, their needs may not be met and they risk undermining their own well-being (Ames *et al.*, 2017:2). Even though the SL reported feeling personally attacked, it appears as if the participant succeeded in exerting the required level of resoluteness to achieve a positive outcome.

Another NE also mentioned assertiveness by making reference to a specific classroom situation where firmness was necessary for a particular student to actively participate in learning.

“When I handled a bullying student that was uncooperative, failing to participate in class, undermining and refusing to take orders from the lecturers. Firmly so, I told the student participate and if not, to leave the lecture room. I had to be firm but fair, because if not, other students would take advantage of the situation and behave in

the same manner. The student's behaviour changed immediately and the situation sent a strong message to the other students" (03/NE/C2).

Disruptive student behaviour could render a classroom environment non-conducive to effective learning and teaching. Circumstances such as these, prompt educators to demonstrate effective classroom management skills. In accordance with Chandra (2015:13), classroom management has an impact on effective pedagogy, because a disorderly classroom reduces a learner's cognitive and overall development. The NE stated that through their assertiveness, student engagement was promoted, and possibly the student's performance. Aliakbari and Bozorgmanesh (2015) support a harmonious relationship between an educators' assertiveness and a student's performance. This participant's opinion finds support in Manoj and Anoop (2017:8092), who assert that an effective educator can create a pedagogical context conducive to learning by using assertive classroom management strategies. The assertive NE stated that the disruptive student needed to be managed effectively before other students behaved similarly. This is reasonable and considered an appropriate student behaviour management strategy in a classroom situation, especially considering that this was done for the student's benefit rather than to intimidate or threaten them.

While these two participants discussed their own behaviour, other participants referred to times where they observed other leaders show firmness when executing their duties.

Two SLs were satisfied with management's unwavering stance at their campus, as their assertiveness assisted the institution to attain one of its goals, i.e. high student throughput rate.

"When the college management stood firm on what is right, enforcing compliance with the institutional rules and regulations, this assisted us to achieve our goals in terms of high students' success rate" (08/SL/C1).

"They are a 'no-nonsense' taking management – they do everything according to the book, following all protocols. Disciplinary measures applied to those who do not comply with the rules and regulations" (07/SL/C1).

The SLs' perspectives reveal how they appreciated the way in which the college managers stood firm in their principles and ensured that the college members behaved and acted according to the institutional policies. Sitota (2018:40) confirms that for individuals to prosper in education, work, social life, and the like, they must be assertive. Assertiveness is widely accepted in diverse work situations, and for coping with the daily stress of functioning as part of team (Rasetsoke, 2012:ii). El-Bialy *et al.* (2013:3) claim that because nurses work in diverse circumstances, assertiveness is required to meet occupational challenges and gain collegial cooperation.

Challenging environments like HEIs, including NEIs in RSA, are highly regulated to ensure quality education and graduates. As discussed in Section 5.2.2.3, various educational bodies, i.e. the DoHET, CHE, and SAQA prescribe particular standards, protocols, and policies that all HE providers must comply with, and these could be some of the rules and regulations that the two participants referred to. Demonstration of assertive behaviour to enforce compliance with legal prescripts for academic settings is progressive for the college, enabling it to proceed with its mandate, i.e. nurse training and education to add to the country's health workforce.

It was not only the students who referred to college management's behaviour as their best leadership experience; two NEs also stated how the NEI management stood firm when critical decisions had to be taken to solve problems.

"Assertiveness of the head of campus during the involvement of other team-members in taking various decisions. This has reduced conflicts at the work place and has increased commitment and sense of responsibility by each member" (22/NE/C1).

"The college leadership's assertiveness when tasked to solve a problem. They look at the matter in a broader sense and this has assisted me as the lecturer to solve problems when they arise" (23/NE/C1).

The assertive leadership behaviour mentioned by the two NEs finds support in Junior and Guonik (2018:114) who claim that institutions are likely to benefit from assertive leadership, as it enhances productivity, accelerates problem-solving, and reduces

employee hostility. Ames *et al.* (2017:2) acknowledge that whether in high-stakes disagreements, formal or informal dialogues, or everyday disputes, assertiveness influences conclusions. In nursing education specifically, El-Bialy *et al.* (2013:1) maintain that professional nursing education needs assertive faculty members, and faculty members' ability to assert themselves renders them suitable to offer quality nursing education.

Having noted the significance of assertive leadership behaviour, leaders ought to maintain balanced levels of assertiveness that render them harmoniously assertive (Junior & Guonik, 2018:114; Lazenby, 2015). For example, an unduly assertive leader may be aggressive and unpleasant, and a leader who lacks assertiveness may encounter problems in circumstances that require confidence and conviction in exercising power. Being too assertive could be interpreted as micro-management and disempowering for the employee, and too little assertiveness has very little impact. However, the appropriate level of assertiveness promotes balance. Thus, leaders need to be harmoniously assertive (Junior & Guonik, 2018:114). Lazenby (2015) adds that leaders who are perceived as being too assertive may accomplish their short-term goals, but will be avoided or rejected, reducing the possibility of achieving their long-term goals. On the other hand, leaders with insufficient assertiveness may be liked, but they will be unlikely to realise their goals and considered instrumentally ineffective.

The apparent appreciation of assertive leadership behaviour as facilitating reduced conflicts in a workplace, increases employee commitment and problem-solving, and is considered as boding well for the college to survive and manage its current and future demands.

iii. Attentiveness

A few participants described attentiveness as a leadership skill that has been applied in situations about which the participants felt good.

The SLs reported having listened attentively to others to obtain the necessary information about a situation before reacting or responding appropriately. One of

these participants stated that not only did they listen to other people's opinions, but took them into consideration.

"Being an attentive listener with analytical skills. I am not a talkative person; I prefer to observe most of the time and analyse the situation intensely and consider [the] best possible solutions" (07/SL/C1).

"I am proud of my very good listening skill[s] as a leader, thus I became the secretary general of the SRC. I also like to interact with other people and listen to that so that I can collect as much information as I can get. And also being considerate to the others' point of view" (09/SL/C1).

Conversely, one SL valued attentiveness as the competency of others, stating how college managers were attentive when engaging with student complaints.

"When the college management listened to our grievances as students and try to attend to them accordingly. Being good listeners in simple terms" (05/SL/C3).

Listening is a skill to be acquired and practiced by any leader committed to their people and who is interested in the contributions they have to make to the organisation. In the Leadership Skills Guide, Fáilte Ireland (2013:8) asserts that listening should be viewed as a frame of mind and as a skill in its own right, and leaders should continuously be willing to listen to their members, individually and collectively. The participants' constructive views regarding the attentive leadership they experienced at their institution are substantiated by the responses of participants in another study who indicated good and attentive listening skills as the most important skills of effective leaders (De Lacerda, 2015:131). For example, one of the participants (09/SL/C1) considered a good leader as someone who is able to let the conversation flow for a longer duration without answering, just asking questions and genuinely listening. Two SL's statements about active listening echoes this sentiment.

It also seems like leaders who actively and attentively listen are perceived by their followers as competent communicators and this increases the likelihood of them achieving interpersonal objectives. Generally, effective listening includes paying careful attention to both the message and the way in which it is transmitted, and is

vital for managerial success (Mishra *et al.*, 2014:196). Furthermore, these authors assert that when managers listen attentively, followers are inclined to feel more supported, engaged, and devoted to them and the organisation. Mishra (2020:1410) support leaders engaging in several activities that require that they listen attentively to their team members to achieve a complete understanding of their issues.

Duwadi (2014:105) asserts that an attentive listener absorbs and internally processes information, encourages the other person to talk, and demonstrates attentive behaviour. As much good listening is endorsed as an important leadership skill, most especially for effective communication, Fáilte Ireland (2013:8) states that some people, even experienced managers, are “awful” at it. Such individuals labelled as “ineffective listeners” are more likely to commit errors, are generally less effectual at their managerial duties, and impede flow of information (Jahromi *et al.*, 2016:2124). Inadequate listening skills could result in managers ruining potentially beneficial prospects (French 2013; Johnson 2013).

Various authors’ views on active listening as a skill to be mastered by all those who are in positions of influence, attest to the reasons why several participants were appreciative of attentive leadership. Perhaps these motivations could be adopted to avoid potential communication mistakes and contribute to productivity in their organisations.

iv. Conflict Management

The following participants considered their most engaging moments as those incidents in which they successfully managed to resolve the conflict between various parties and find the best possible solutions for all involved.

“When there was a misunderstanding between two students pertaining to both academic and social issues. My intervention resulted in a positive outcome leaving all the involved parties satisfied I applied my conflict management skills, to effectively manage the situation” (30/NE/C1).

“It was at point whereby I had to mediate between college management and students. Even though I had to put the interests of students first, I interacted with both parties and found with a win/win solution for the situation” (04/SL/C3).

One SL also referred to conflict management as a skill demonstrated by other college leaders.

“When the management handled matters with calmness and effectively managed a conflict to maintain peace within the institution” (07/SL/C1).

Considering that students and employees are human beings, conflict is inevitable. Conflict is an inherent element of any occupational environment and can arise in any context (McClinton, 2014:3; Samanta & Lamprakis, 2018:32). Asawo (2011:79) views conflict management as a positive and effective way to manage disputes or disagreements, and considers the ability to manage conflict as vital to successful relationships, effective teams, and influential leadership. When guiding and transforming teams, leaders are confronted with handling differences in ideas or viewpoints that occur interpersonally and within groups (McClinton, 2014:3). These conflicts may result in a struggle for power or position. The researcher claims that the sooner the conflicts are resolved the better as it may not be easy to restore damaged relationships resulting from a delayed conflict-management response.

Specific documented approaches have been deemed appropriate when dealing with conflict. Samanta and Lamprakis (2018:32) claim that conflicts may productively add to organisational life if approached positively and collaboratively. Similarly, other authors propose that the effectiveness of employees, teams, and an organisation largely depends on how leaders deal with arising conflicts (Kiitam *et al.*, 2016:7; Samanta & Lamprakis, 2018:32). In their statements above, the three participants claimed that effective conflict-management skills led to satisfactory solutions for everyone, and created harmonious employment relationships.

v. *Problem-Solving*

When sharing their most engaging leadership experiences, two participants described how they were able to use their problem-solving skills to assist students face various situations. The first participant said the following.

“I felt alive when students approached me with their problems that I successfully solved following the correct channels. This made other students to believe in me” (06/SL/C1).

Many leaders face difficulties that continue to challenge their institutions. This is not unusual because although problems constitute daily life, organisational leadership also experience its fair share of problems. Perhaps all problematic situations faced by various establishments attest to problem solving as an important leadership skill. Problem solving is both central to effective leadership and an important competency for leaders who face challenging situations (Kerns, 2016:62). This author states that a leader’s problem-solving skills and capacity help drive leadership efficacy and organisational success. One SL admitted to feeling alive after effectively resolving other students’ problems, and this experience finds support in Johnson (2013) who also considers SLs as future leaders. This author maintains that investing in SLs’ qualities, values, and skills could determine their life’s success and society’s future success. Al-Jammal (2015:20) describes student leadership as an element that focuses on problem-solving and other skills. Additionally, the SL’s optimistic feelings were not just attributed to the ability to solve fellow students’ problems, but it also appears that the students started to trust the participant. Mineo (2014:1) upholds that trust in leadership is what connects the leader to their followers and facilitates organisational and leadership triumph.

Another participant appreciated problem-solving as an appreciated leadership skill as follows:

“I remember the time when five students were allocated at a certain clinic for clinical experiential learning. It was on [a] Friday when the driver did not collect [them] from the clinic and transport them to the nurse’s home. They called me because they could not get hold of the driver and the clinic was closed. I was able to communicate

with the transport officer and arranged that the students [were] safely transported back to the residence” (18/NE/C1).

Solving the students’ transport problem was not just seen as a problem-solving skill to admire, but as taking responsibility for the students’ protection. Student safety is a priority for educational institutions, including NEIs. Kerns (2016:62) concede that problem solving is a key area in which leaders can proficiently perform their action roles as influencers of people and situations. Although transport may not be the NE’s responsibility, the participant exerted influence to ensure safety of the students, thus validating the NE’s positive feelings.

b. Subtheme 2: Attitudes and behaviour

As part of leadership competencies, several participants were vocal about times when they and others displayed the leadership attitudes and behaviour that they felt proud of. These include acknowledgement, recognition, caring, commitment, results orientation, and teamwork.

i. Acknowledgment and recognition

Two of the SLs expressed that they felt alive when they were credited for attaining positive outcomes. The first participant commented on being acknowledged for maintaining discipline and concord among the students.

“Acknowledgement by management on how we managed to bring discipline at the school and unity among the students.” (07/SL/C1)

Appreciative behaviour is an important component of good and progressive leadership (Stocker *et al.*, 2014:74). While the concept ‘appreciative leadership’ is frequently used in management literature, Cooperrider (2008:433) refers to appreciative behaviours in the form of praise and recognition. A leader’s constructive response that considers not just performance, but also commitment and engagement, is seen as positive leadership (Osborne & Hammoud, 2017:60).

Kennedy (2018:1) proposes that SLs operate as an important link between organisational managers and their peers in organisational affairs management. In

recent years, South African HEIs have faced sporadic incidences of violent unrest that led to the suspension of lectures and examinations, damage to property, injuries, and student arrests (Phaladi & Salavu, 2016:4). In the researcher's opinion, the undesirable effects of #FeesMustFall Campaign will remain in the hearts and minds of many for years to come. During this movement, both student leadership and HE leaders engaged in intense conversations that might be attributed to positive outcomes of #FeesMustFall Campaign (Langa; 2017:9; Ndelu, 2017:15). Although students actively demonstrated dissatisfaction at that time, it is proposed that SLs vigorously engaged their constituencies to reach peaceful resolutions and to restore order at the various campuses. This is supported by Kennedy (2018:1) who also claims that SLs play a significant role in managing student discipline.

Similarly, the second participant reported lecturers acknowledging their students for achieving academic success.

"Acknowledgement from lecturers about our good academic performance, in both theory and practice" (07/SL/C1).

Andrews (2011:64) confirms that educators who acknowledge their student's good grades, offer verbal support, and reinforce their efforts are important. Acknowledgement and recognition are regarded as students' motivators (Williams & Williams, 2011:3).

Similar to the two SLs who reported acknowledgement and recognition as appreciated leadership strengths at the college, three NEs shared the same sentiments.

"When my personal contribution towards the resolution of a crisis was acknowledged. This contribution is acknowledged publicly in a meeting. I felt like they were acknowledging my skills and competence" (12/NE/C3).

"It was during that time when the new curriculum was being discussed. I was presented with an opportunity to share the knowledge that I had pertaining to the subject at hand. The college leaders acknowledged me for that" (17/NE/C3).

“Acknowledgement from my HAD for creativity in compiling tests and examination papers. This appreciation motivated me to do even better and improved my subject’s pass rate as well” (28/NE/C1).

The participants’ statements indicate that recognition for the contributions they make to the organisation is valuable to them and possibly motivates them to improve their performance. The three NEs experienced acknowledgement from their leaders as life-enhancing or positive behaviour, and this is supported by Antino *et al.* (2014:590) and Malinga *et al.* (2019:221), who describe positive leadership as a process that encourages and acknowledges good performance and could consequently increase employee productivity and engagement. Nel *et al.* (2015:10) concur with a positive leadership approach and claim that leaders who take a strengths-based approach and ensure that they recognise their employees, are likely to increase the employee’s feelings of empowerment, improve their attitude towards work, and enhances a positive perception of their life as a whole. Stander and Mostert (2013:11) state that it is key for management to focus on strengths as a way of achieving organisational goals. This implies that today’s leaders need to identify and recognise employees’ strengths to ensure organisational success.

Institutional leadership, including the HAD’s actions that the participants alluded to, is supported as positive leadership that generally recognises employees’ accomplishments, thereby promoting increased employee engagement and productivity (Antino *et al.*, 2014:590; Osborne & Hammoud, 2017:59). One of the three NEs who felt alive because of their HAD’s acknowledgement of their creativity, attested to the effects that positive leadership could have on work output, e.g. improved subject pass rate.

Two NEs specifically mentioned the recognition they received for executing their roles that brought change to the institution.

“Being acknowledged by college management, seeing that I was capable of making informed decisions as they had given me the autonomy to execute my responsibilities and manage situations within my sphere of influence. They appreciated the change that I had brought to the school” (03/NE/C2).

“I was consulted; module changes were discussed. HAD thanked me personally and acknowledged the positive changes that I had brought to the department. The entire team that I worked with was thanked by the HAD for the work well done” (13/NE/C3).

Regarding the first participant's claim, Vanlommel *et al.* (2017:75) affirm that educators' decisions can impact students' academic trajectories. However, pertinent information regarding problems is not always sought and available data is often not used make the necessary decisions, affecting the quality of decisions made. Thus, it is encouraging to note that a NE was acknowledged for taking informed decisions when necessary, thereby improving the quality of the decisions taken, as well as enhancing the impact of such decisions on those involved.

Both NEs mentioned the recognition they received for bringing positive change to the college. As HEIs are experiencing significant changes and discharging their responsibilities towards its multiple stakeholders, educators at the centre of this change cannot but evade the implications of these changes (Shamsher, 2013:1). This author asserts that as change agents, educators have to change or perish. The participants' comments on being acknowledged for effecting positive changes at the college are considered vital contributions to facilitate the college moving with the times.

ii. Caring

When prompted to share the leadership experiences that they felt most proud of, five participants mentioned their leaders' when engaging with others.

One NE discussed behaviour and attitude that recognised students' uniqueness.

“I always try to show my students compassion and empathy, considering personal circumstances of every student and try to be patient and understanding towards their issues or challenges” (12/NE/C3).

Being compassionate and empathetic towards students resonates the nursing profession's caring aspect. Noveno (2018:99) claims that caring is the founding principle of nursing and the legacy that each nurse seeks to carry forward. Gabriel

(2014:321) endorse the caring attitude referred to by the NE in stating that a considerate leader is generous and concerned about their team members' welfare, and is prepared to go the extra mile to meet their needs and ensure that they thrive. This author further states: "If power is the dominant feature of the heroic leader, love is the sine qua non of a concerned leader".

This statement implies that compassion is an essential leadership attribute, hence even in the NE Competencies (WHO, 2016:14), NEs are expected to demonstrate a considerate attitude and behaviour to facilitate learning.

Being considerate during student engagement is regarded as an attribute of benevolence (Uusiautti & Maata, 2013:398). Thus it is important to contemplate the effects of compassion on learning and teaching. Mikkonen *et al.* (2015:675) claim that educators' compassion towards students and their learning is likely to yield a constructive learning experience, i.e. motivation in learning, better learning outcomes, inspiration to learn, and a positive learning experience. Furthermore, a caring attitude creates a learning environment that is characterised by altruistic behaviour, i.e. stress reduction, improved communication, and positive student-educator relationship development.

The importance of nursing students' general wellbeing cannot be overly emphasised. In a profession that is emotionally, physically, and psychologically demanding because of its caring nature, the researcher believes that being empathetic towards students encourages retention, and facilitates nursing students imitating this positive attitude towards their peers, seniors, and patients (Froneman *et al.*, 2016:7). Students with personal problems could benefit significantly from an educator's selfless attitude. While the educators' empathy towards students enables professional education and presents potential strength-based learning, Mikkonen *et al.* (2015:678) state that it can impede the learning of nursing principles, i.e. decreased quality of professional care and challenges students to remain true to their personal principles. Even so, the reality of uninvolved educators exists and such actuality cannot be ignored. Clark (2018:34,38) reports on findings where educators were perceived as uncaring, i.e. failing to give students regular individualised attention or not bothering to assist students faced with challenges. Educators who display an uncaring attitude are considered to impede learning, and this has

undesirable effects on students' quality of life. However, Mikkonen *et al.* (2015:676) warn that educators' inconsiderate behaviour could impact negatively on students' quality of life, lead to discouragement and disrespect, the inability to express oneself, and a disconnect between student and educator.

Considering the effects of compassion on student development and success, Mikkonen *et al.* (2015:669) support a NE's positive attitude of extending empathy towards students. Doyle *et al.* (2014:1069) confirm that enculturating empathy is an evidence-based way of enhancing compassionate care in health organisations generally. Sheehan *et al.* (2013:457) maintain that NEs are ideally positioned to foster and build upon a student's natural empathy, and therefore, it is their duty to nurture empathy among their students. It is possible that this particular participant's empathetic behaviour could engender empathy among the students, who are also able to be empathetic towards others.

Some SLs referred to their educators' thoughtfulness, to the extent that they helped them resolve their personal problems, and supported them to succeed in their studies in order to contribute to society at large.

"Educators in our campus have the element of humanity. They solve our personal problems, whether social or psychological. They are like our parents" (09/SL/C1).

Just like other students, nursing trainees experience problems other than those relating to academic life. These difficulties could expose them to both physical and psychological distress that threatens the successful completion of their academic studies. Referring to humanity as a positive leadership factor that the students have experienced from the NEs at a particular campus is reassuring. In accordance with Watson (1999), the fundamental of the Human Caring Theory is that humans cannot be treated as objects and nor can they be disconnected from self, other, nature, and the larger group. The NEs that the SL referred to appear to uphold Watson's theory and apply it during student interaction. These educators demonstrated an attitude that acknowledges students as 'whole' human beings who cannot be separated from their own surroundings and backgrounds. The ability to behave in such a manner is considered necessary for the NE's maturation, which then encourages their altruistic behaviour towards others. Clark (2016:10) asserts that history of Watson's

transpersonal human caring moment is founded in transpersonal psychology that provides educators and nurses with a foundation upon which to shape their comprehension of the transpersonal nature of human caring consciousness. With this renewed or deeper understanding of the meaning of human caring, nurses, nursing students, and educators can be supported and motivated in their efforts to teach, learn, and experience transpersonal states (Clark, 2016:10). Knowing that students at a particular campus experience caring while being away from their homes is comforting, not only for the students, but for their families too.

The following SLs referred to NEs' attitudes and behaviour that they believe to have a positive effect on student success, and these participants viewed these engagements as 'affection'.

"Most of my educators are caring as they always provide us with the necessary information that is essential for students to succeed in their studies" (09/SL/C1).

Reference to the continuous availability of the material that students require in order to thrive in their studies is inspiring (Ahea *et al.*, 2016:39). This participant's statement reiterates other participants' statements that indicate that students' academic support is a life-giving experience. It is also inspiring to note how NEs' actions are aligned to improved student success, as it is a fundamental for most HEIs (Moore 2018:109). Sithole (2017:2) affirms that in order for the students to succeed and to have better self-esteem, educators have a duty to create an environment that demonstrates care towards students. Availing important information to students seems to have contributed to student success. Although not clearly specified, it is deduced that the participant referred to additional information in the form of learning materials, shared either verbally or physically with the students to improve their understanding of the mandatory content. Walking the extra mile to assist students to realise their goals resonates as being kind-hearted.

One SL made the following statement:

"Our lecturers care about the students as they very patient with us, and try their best to all the students at all times. They are available and understand students are not all the same, hence they make means to come to students' level. This made

me realise that they want the students to succeed and become good professional practitioners who can contribute positively to the health of the society” (01/SL/C1).

This participant’s experiences emerged as caring, and are supported by Dahri *et al.* (2018:1) who propose that a healthy lecturer-student relationship is essential for enhanced student learning and success. Therefore, it is vital for lecturers to improve their ability to empathise with students to improve their learning and ultimately produce good human beings. Underpinning the participant’s statement, Kordi *et al.* (2012:1251) conclude that several factors contribute to develop a caring relationship with students. These include the willingness to: give attention to student goals and/or to consider the students’ needs; create a positive environment by displaying a supportive and helpful attitude; spend plenty of time with students and design activities for them; and explain confusing and ambiguous points patiently to students.

In this regard, one specific NE also experienced caring behaviour from college managers.

“Our college management is caring and supportive towards me and the students. Whenever a student has a challenge and presents them to any of them, they are able to give positive advice on how to handle the matter” (26/NE/C1).

Paillé *et al.* (2013:684) reiterates what the participant’s statement, asserting that when employees feel supported by their seniors, they are more likely to show attachment and trust, thus, limiting the employees’ propensity to display passive behaviour and decreasing their desire to leave the institution. Louis *et al.* (2016:311-312) emphasise the significance of caring academic leadership for the success and well-being of both educators and students. These authors assert that caring leadership has an indirect relationship to student achievement through student academic support.

iii. Commitment

The reaction of various participants with regard to discovery of the appreciated leadership strengths at the college revealed a sense of commitment among them and other leaders. Two NEs indicated how positive they felt as a result of their devotion to their work. One NE felt obliged to show dedication, attributing such attitude to wanting to see students succeed in their studies, in life in general, and the nation advancing in terms of health.

“I am a committed person who wants to see students succeed in life and academically so. Also I feel it’s an obligation as a social activist to see our country move forward in terms of health issues” (01/NE/C2).

Student success appears to be every educator’s dream, not only because it is used as basis for performance, but also due to the fulfilment and job satisfaction that arises out of such positive attitude. Academic staff’s dedication towards students’ academic performance has been an area of intense interest in the past few decades. Altun (2017:54) identifies four facets of educator commitment that include commitment to teaching, students, schools, and professions. The participant reported on NE’s devotion to students, and that is supported by Mustapha and Sadiq (2016:65) who cite devotion as a strong determinant of students’ academic performance. Altun (2017:53) further claims that educators who are committed to their students have positive engagement with them. Thus, educators’ commitment to students was conceptualised as their contribution to or duty in realising student success (Xiao & Wilkins, 2015:105; Bibiso *et al.*, 2017:75)

Another NE mentioned commitment in terms of reporting for duty at the appropriate time, being punctual, and striving to meet all target dates.

“For being committed and always coming to work on scheduled days and times and always trying to meet all the deadlines.” (29/NE/C1)

Because tuition at this particular college is realised through physical contact, educators ought to be in attendance at the appointed time. The participant’s commitment to education indicates their level of engagement (Guixia *et al.*, 2019:100-101), and this positive attitude is perceived as benefitting the students and educators

to perform optimally. Mustapha and Sadiq (2016:65) posit that educators who are strongly committed to their duties have a substantially enhanced teaching ability than those with less commitment to education.

Being devoted to the school is another aspect of commitment that was raised as a participant's leadership strength, as well as a leadership strength of others. In appreciating being satisfied with their leadership, the NE indicated commitment to the institution's mission and vision.

"Being committed to the mission and vision of the school and making sure that we achieve our strategic goals" (10/NE/C2).

It is unsurprising that one of the participant's attributes was commitment to the college's mandate. Individuals who are part of and have longevity in the institution, aspire to strive in the institution, and believe in organisational targets and values, are regarded as committed educators (Zehir *et al.*, 2012:209). Furthermore, these authors assert that organisational commitment is a significant aspect that influences performance. Talib and Mitra (2017:49) and Chib (2019:478) confirm that organisational commitment is related to employee retention. Being able to retain employees could be attributed to the notion that organisational commitment increases individuals' sense of involvement and belonging (Zehir *et al.*, 2012:207). Low organisational commitment contributes to employee turnover (Sow, 2015:86), which has costly consequences for employers (Surji, 2013:52).

This participant did not elaborate on their reasons for feeling positive about being committed to student success. However, there could be few possible explanations for their organisational commitment. Due to this study's focus, i.e. leadership in HE, it was worth exploring the role of leadership in employees' commitment. The participant who appreciated being committed to the college did not specifically attribute such sentiment to the principals' attitude or behaviour, however there are leadership styles that are associated with organisational commitment. With transformational leadership being one of the preferred approaches in HE, leaders deliberately advance their members into leaders, display a behaviour that prompt trust, adopt selfless perspectives to foster commitment and influence, and model commitment to the institution's mission and purpose (Nanjundeswaraswamy &

Swamy, 2014:57). Therefore, it could be presumed that institutional leaders exerted influence that resulted in the NEs' reported institutional commitment, enabling the organisation to reach its mission and vision.

As a leadership strength of others, another NE referred generally to their managers' commitment to their job and the organisational mandate.

“Commitment, our management team is one team that is committed to their job and the institution. They want to see our college progressing and not become stagnant” (05/SL/C3).

Similar to the participant that was proud of their dedication to the institution's strategic targets, it appears that even the college managers were considered committed to their jobs. Their attitude was interpreted as the leadership quality of wanting to see their institution grow and move forward. Having learnt the beneficial effects of organisational commitment, management's dedication to their duties and the college is an important aspect in realising the college navigating its challenges. As previously indicated, organisational commitment not only results in retaining employees but influencing performance (Zehir *et al.*, 2012:207; Talib & Mitra, 2017:49; Chib, 2019:478).

One NE (02/SL/C2) was specific in sharing the HAD's sense of dedication. This participant said that the HAD was committed and responded timeously to tasks.

“With my HAD being committed to her work, whenever I submit something that she needs to work on, I know that she will not delay to give me a response. Even with moderation of students' assessment, I will get post moderation feedback on time because she understands that students don't like to wait long for feedback after they had written an assessment. She is like my role model and her commitment to work gives me strength” (11/NE/C2).

The HAD's attitude to respond timeously to any assignment or task, i.e. moderation, was valued by one of the NEs. The participant considered the HAD's approach as her commitment to her work.

iv. Results orientation

The participants' descriptions of their moments of pride regarding their leadership roles, as well as the leadership role of others, revealed that certain college leaders were results-driven and always endeavoured to achieve positive consequences in any situation.

Two SLs were amongst the participants who cited achievement of positive results as life-giving. While one SL was pleased to achieve what they had planned for the student body, another SL felt alive after having achieved favourable resolutions regarding a matter that involved both students and management.

“As a SL in a higher education institution, I felt proud for achieving all the things that were in our itinerary even though there were some challenges and for being the first campus to successfully host the intercampus games” (10/SL/C1).

When we achieved a peaceful resolution to a particular issue. We united and supported each other as student body and achieved positive results regarding the matter because of the leadership skills demonstrated by the student council and college management” (02/SL/C2).

Every team sets goals and strives to realise them. If successful in the targets being set, success is likely to realise both personal satisfaction and motivation to increase performance. SLs who feel good for attaining something positive is vital for the college and for the profession as well. Similar to the academic space, the healthcare sector needs leaders who are results-driven. Results-oriented leadership influences outcomes and links leadership traits to preferred consequences (De Lacerda, 2015:146). Lumbasi *et al.* (2016:118) promote results-based leadership as an approach that impacts positively on performance. Surji (2015:156,161) adds that effective leaders show great leadership characteristics and achieve results. This supports a SL's perspective about reaching a particular milestone as a result of proficiencies that they demonstrated in the student council.

The participant felt engaged when they achieved their goals, however, they hinted there were challenges despite the success. Although results-driven leadership is associated with greater performance, Dias and Borges (2017:108) point out that

leaders experience difficulty in directing human capital potential to achieve organisational goals and results. Because student leadership's plans involve students, getting students to actively participate in or support planned activities can be challenging. Thus, SLs should be commended for triumphing in spite of such challenges.

Three NEs stated that the students' good academic performance was their best leadership experience.

"Always when students achieve good marks and they are able to maintain a good academic record" (01/NE/C2).

"This happened when I received the final results of the second year bridging results in 2010. The pass rate in 2010 was 100%. I learned previously the results were 50% or less, and it was before I arrived at this campus" (10/NE/C2).

"When I started teaching Ethos and Professional Practice at this institution, was the most feared subject at fourth year. I obtained 100% pass rate, and before I arrived the failure rate was high" (09/NE/C2).

The participants' perspectives reiterate the importance of the success of students who are committed to their work, and they all wanted their students to prosper. All three participants indicated that prior to assuming a teaching role at the college, the performance of students in modules was below the expected level. However, results improved and the participants were proud of their accomplishments. Students' desired performance has personal and professional prospects for educators. Achieving a high pass rate is fulfilling, and could advance one job-wise. In terms of fulfilment, the researcher believes that intrinsic motivation and job satisfaction are, to an extent, driven by contentment. Cristescu *et al.* (2013:63) confirms that work fulfilment is a fundamental aspect that promotes employee satisfaction. Dias (2017:106) claims that an individual's results are used as a tool in the career promotion system. Using students' performance as a motivation for advancement is a reality in HEIs. Although student pass rate is not the only indicator considered, it is important. The three participants' achievement of positive results support their positive view of their effect on students' improved performance.

v. Teamwork

Two participants appreciated working with fellow SLs and college management as a team to achieve objectives and resolve problems.

“Working closely together with other SLs and college management as the secretary of the student council made me feel alive. Every member of the student representative council became actively involved, working as a team to accomplish the structure’s goals” (09/SL/C3).

The participant’s reference to engaging moments characterised by team cohesion are echoed by the phrase “unity is the power”, which asserts that if people are united in their efforts, they are more likely to achieve their goals. Nafei (2015:54) refers to team cohesiveness in terms of a group that is inclined to stick together and stand united in their quest to realise their objectives. Nwizia *et al.* (2020:32) deem group cohesiveness as the link that unifies the group. Both descriptions allude to ‘togetherness’ as a common factor that typifies team cohesion. Researchers connect optimal performance with a high level of group cohesion among members. In their studies, Banwo *et al.*, (2015:146) and Nafei (2015:54) discovered that strong group cohesion is related to good team performance, and claim that group cohesiveness significantly relates to organisational effectiveness. The results of a similar study established a relationship between group cohesiveness and organisational effectiveness (Nwizia *et al.*, 2020:32). Banwo *et al.* (2015:146) also support the SLs’ viewpoint that team cohesiveness plays an integral role in the organisational growth, making it more likely that they would be successful.

The following SL also referred to team cohesion as a leadership strength through which the student committee could collaborate to resolve the issues they encounter. This participant was grateful that even though their group comprised different individuals, they respected each other and performed optimally.

“From my view, we work as a team that is willing to resolve the issues as a unit. What makes me proud is that within our team we respect each other; members perform their duties as expected by their supervisors, take responsibility and accountability for their actions.... There is unity in everything we do” (04/SL/C1).

Organisations periodically encounter problems that need to be addressed effectively to avoid severe implications arising out of such issues. The results of managing such concerns depend on the establishment's attitude in tackling its challenges. At this particular nursing college, a student council adopted a team approach to deal with challenges. Such an attitude in problem-solving could be attributed to the adage that "two heads are better than one", which basically encourages individuals to function as a team to achieve resolutions. Fapohunda (2013:1) supports cooperation where teams approach problem-solving jointly. The ability to cooperate and solve problems is seen as team effectiveness (Helmi *et al.*, 2016:2407). Burke (2011:88) endorses the participant's appreciation of a team attitude in dealing with concerns. This author indicates that groups, as opposed to single individuals, have additional information and resources to draw on due to their diverse backgrounds and experiences, and the group's ability to stimulate creativity.

With regard to the students, Burke (2011:88) asserts that when these individuals engage in group problem-solving, they are more committed to the solution and are better satisfied with their participation in the group. This is advantageous for colleges and universities, particularly the HEIs where management collaborates with student structures to resolve organisational issues. The same participant further valued mutual respect in their team that performed as expected. In accordance with Fapohunda's (2013:7) suggestion to cooperate effectively, teams need to understand team dynamics and group processes, as well as their roles and responsibilities as team members to collaborate effectively at an interpersonal level. To see young student nurse leaders upholding respect is reassuring and holds good prospects for the profession. The mutual respect amongst the members' facilitated effective performance of duties is key to achieving team effectiveness. Effectively interacting as a team and executing their responsibilities as SLs is perceived as maturity and the ability to lead students and address their challenges in today's volatile HE environment.

c. Summary of leadership competencies

The discussion of leadership competencies emerging from the participants' most engaging institutional leadership experiences indicate how some college members showed the necessary leadership skills, knowledge, attitudes, and behaviour, and these are indicated in Table 4.3.

Table 4.3 Leadership competencies that emerged as appreciated leadership strengths at a South African public nursing college

Categories	Subthemes	Theme
• Active involvement of others in institutional matters • Assertiveness • Attentiveness • Conflict management • Problem-solving	1. Knowledge and skills	Leadership Competencies
• Acknowledgment and recognition • Caring • Commitment • Results orientation • Teamwork	2. Attitudes and behaviour	

Based on the ideal leadership deemed suitable for HEIs, competent leaders are what these organisations require to sustain their existence. As previously indicated, the college's obligation is to educate and train nurses who are competent enough to render quality and safe healthcare. With appropriate knowledge, skills and attitudes, it is likely that the institution's mandate is likely to be realised amidst the challenges that exist.

4.2.1.3 Reflection on the findings of the AI's Discovering phase and the emergence of a central theme

The findings of the AI's Discovering phase revealed two themes and subthemes that emerged from participants' viewpoints. Transformational leadership approaches, i.e. supportive, motivational, and empowering leadership, as well as leadership competencies, i.e. knowledge, skills, attitudes, and behaviour were revealed as the college's appreciated leadership strengths. A central theme emerged from the themes and subthemes evident in the AI's Discovering phase, Vaismoradi *et al.*

(2016:107) state that a central theme or story line emerges during the finalisation of a theme development, and is a narration developed by researchers as a written commentary; it explains and links various themes, and answers the study question. A narration includes a central theme that provides a general view on the studied phenomenon. Leadership effectiveness is the coherent and plausible story line developed during the AI's Discovering phase. The participants' stances regarding the appreciated leadership strengths, together with literature integrated into these viewpoints, referred to transformational and competent leaders as those individuals likely to attain organisational effectiveness. Louw *et al.* (2017:1) established a strong relationship between transformational leadership competencies and leadership effectiveness.

Central theme: Leadership effectiveness

Leadership effectiveness is considered a leader's ability to exercise personal influence, skills, knowledge, and abilities to accomplish expected shared goals or objectives in a way that is personally satisfying to all involved (Cooper *et al.*, 2012:1). Leadership effectiveness is critical to organisational performance and survival, and to be effective, organisational leaders must possess the right competencies (Muriithi *et al.*, 2018:1). Weaver (2015:79) affirms leadership effectiveness as the constructive impact that effective leaders have on their subordinates' results. Due to its influential nature, leadership effectiveness is viewed as a multifaceted aspect that comprises numerous elements and several organisational contingencies, as well as various personal and interpersonal behaviours (Cooper *et al.*, 2012:1). Similarly, De Lacerda (2015:iii) describes leadership effectiveness as a multidimensional construct encompassing four facets: traits; skills; behaviour; and processes. Emanating from the literature on leadership effectiveness, the attributes of leadership effectiveness are summarised in Figure 4.8 for the convenience of the reader. These traits echo most of what the participants offered as appreciated leadership strengths during AI session, and are supporting the emergence of leadership effectiveness as a central theme from the interpretation of the AI's discovering phase data.

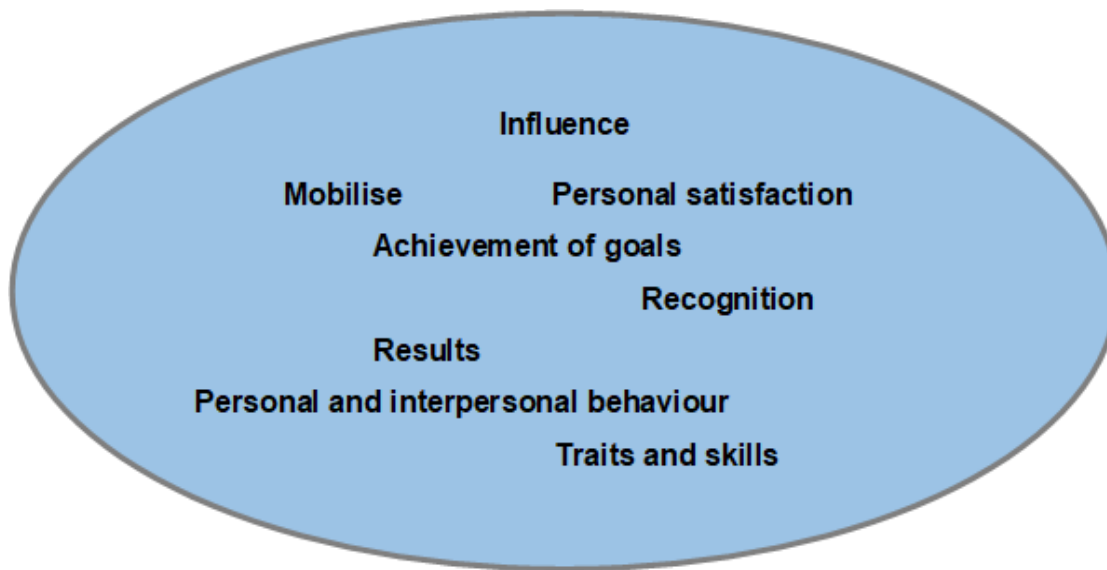


Figure 4.8 Features of leadership effectiveness
Compiled from Cicero *et al.* (2010:411), Cooper *et al.* (2012:1), Lacerda (2015:iii), Weaver (2015:79) and Muriithi *et al.* (2018:1).

Characteristics of leadership effectiveness were evidenced in participants' descriptions of their most engaging experiences regarding leadership and these features implied leadership effectiveness as an appreciated leadership strength at the NEI. Influence and mobilisation to achieve goals, fulfilment and recognition, being results-driven, and demonstrating appropriate traits, skills, and behaviour are briefly what the participants described as factors contributing to the college's success. The AI's Discovering phase yielded significant outcomes that were integrated with findings from the other phases to develop a framework to strengthen leadership at a South African public nursing college. Once the appreciated institutional leadership strengths were established, the AI's Dreaming phase followed. This specific AI phase gave participants the opportunity to express their wishes regarding future college leadership. Discussions on the AI's Dreaming phase follows in Part B of the AI's findings.

APPRECIATIVE INQUIRY FINDINGS

PART B

DREAMING – ENVISIONING A PREFERRED FUTURE



4.2.2 Dreaming Phase

In this phase, the emphasis is on what the participants envisioned as possible future milestones for the college, as highlighted in Figure 4.9.

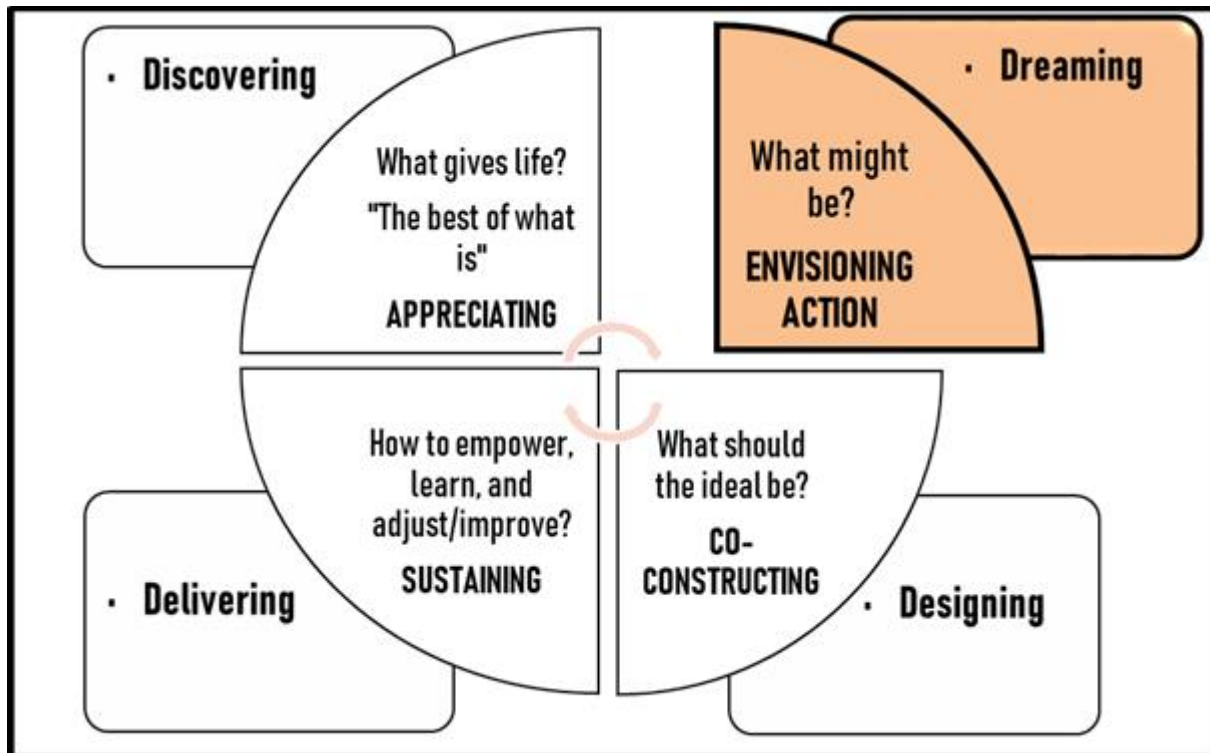


Figure 4.9 AI's 4D phases with an emphasis on the Dreaming phase
Adapted from Shuayb, *et al.* (2009:4) and Whitney *et al.* (2019:164).

Once the participants actively engaged on establishing the appreciated institutional leadership strengths, it was necessary for them to envision what they perceived as enablers of the institution to navigate its challenges. In AI language this phase is known as the Dreaming Phase (Shuayb *et al.*, 2009:7-11; Clossey *et al.*, 2011:259).

The following questions were presented to prompt participants to share their visions:

- What is the most extraordinary thing you want to see happening five years from now that will enable the college to navigate its challenges?
- What is the most extraordinary thing you would want to see college leadership achieve that will enable the institution to navigate its challenges?

From the data collected during the AI's Dreaming phase, i.e. the participants' aspirations, six themes with subthemes emerged, and these are summarised in Table 4.4.

Table 4.4 Perceived enablers for the college to navigate its challenges

Categories	Subthemes	Themes
Simulation facilities	a. Infrastructure	1. Resources
Computer laboratories and a functional library		
Sports facilities		
A dedicated well-equipped office for the SRC		
IT, including systems and Wi-Fi connectivity		
Filling vacancies timeously to counteract staff shortages and curb the practice of long-term employment in vacant positions	b. Human Resources	
Adequate staff provision		
Recruiting lecturers who are subject heads		
HR keeping abreast with new professional developments		
Leadership skills development	a. Leadership development	2. Leadership development and competencies
Leadership knowledge acquisition		
Continuous institutional leadership empowerment		
Teamwork and cohesiveness	b. Knowledge, skills and abilities	
Leading by example		
Communication		
Monitoring and evaluation		
Student empowerment		
Results and achievements		
Effective decision-making		
Effective planning		
Ability to influence		

Further study assistance	a. Support for professional development	3. Academic support
Resource provisions. i.e. student mentors	b. Student support	
Accountability	a. Ethical leadership	4. Governance
Honesty and integrity		
Transparency		
Fairness		
Handling departmental budget	b. Institutional autonomy	
Less interference by the politicians		
Separation of the college from DoH		
Learn innovative educational strategies	a. Innovative teaching	5. Innovation and application of technology in teaching and learning
Using technology to facilitate learning	b. Technology use for learning and teaching purposes	
Capacity-building for research to stimulate creative and critical thinking		6. Research
Empowerment to conduct research for evidence-based practice		
Conduct research to acquire the necessary information		

Similar to the findings in the AI's Discovering phase, the emerging themes and subthemes are discussed with support of participants' verbatim statements that are boxed and highlighted with colour. The same coding pattern used previously to validate participants' direct statements as described in Section 4.2.1 applies. The participants' dreams are triangulated with literature to enrich data and to broaden the participants' inputs.

4.2.2.1 *Theme 1: Resources*

A number of participants indicated that they required resources to facilitate execution of their roles and responsibilities effectively, and felt that this would help the college to navigate its challenges.

“To have all the necessary resources required for learning and teaching” (22/NE/C1).

“To acquire essential resources that will facilitate nurses’ education” (26/NE/C1).

“We need resources [at the] institution that will enable us to live our dream” (04/NE/C2).

“To challenge authorities, i.e. Department of Health to address [the] shortage of resources that impedes quality education” (18/NE/C3).

“We should have more resources that will enable to meet expectations and properly align with other HEIs” (05/HAD/C1).

“[The] provincial office must ensure that we have enough educational resources” (10/NE/C2).

“To be able as a manager to advocate for more resources” (04/HAD/C1).

Higher education institutions play a significant role in the society and should be provided with sufficient resources to respond positively to current educational demands. Adedeji and Campbell (2013:2) and Zafar *et al.* (2019:2644) refer to the significance of HEIs in developing human resources that actually contribute towards economic and social growth. However, without sufficient academic resources, HEIs cannot achieve their objectives. To provide the world with the appropriate and necessary manpower, Usman (2016:27) and Zafar *et al.* (2019:2646) propose providing adequate educational resources to facilitate improved teaching quality. Participants’ requests for additional resources imply unavailable or inadequate resources at the college. Even with the colleges’ resource deficits, there could still be a positive connotation to this dilemma. Balzer (2020:330) adds that resource challenges stimulate creativity that generates ground-breaking results, and this inhibits employee professional development and growth. This author’s sentiments reiterate the necessity to convert challenges into opportunities, which HEIs desperately need to implement to ensure institutional survival.

It is important to note that participants perceive resource availability to be essential in creating favourable learning environments.

“Create conducive learning environment by means of laboratories and resource centres” (19/NE/C1).

“Conducive leaning environment created by the necessary resources, i.e. Wi-Fi and internet connectivity and auditoriums” (05/SL/C3).

“We need ample resources, both human and infrastructure, i.e. better classrooms that are conducive for learning” (03/NE/C2).

“Transformation of the school’s infrastructure to be conducive to learning relevant for 21st century that will help students to critical thinking skills that they will use to transform health care services” (12/NE/C3).

A higher learning institution’s milieu can improve teaching quality in many ways, and creating an environment that is conducive to learning is one such ways. Belaine (2017:696) asserts that quality of education is dependent on HEIs’ learning environment. To create a complete physical, social, and educational setting conducive to learning, academic resources influence learning processes (United Nations Educational, Scientific & Cultural Organization, 2012:12). Among other strategies that result in HEIs being conducive to learning, Belaine (2017:699) supports effective teaching practices that emphasise independent learning. Independent learning resonates with self-directed learning, which is considered indispensable in HE. The resources perceived as the enablers of an environment conducive to learning include laboratories, resource centres, and internet connectivity. It is assumed that access to resources empowers students to work independently, i.e. self-directedness and not exclusively relying on what is delivered in an instructional setting for knowledge and skills acquisition—this is viewed as an academically conducive environment.

Participants mentioned adequate infrastructure and human resources as the specific assets that a college needs to navigate their challenges.

a. Subtheme 1: Infrastructure

Participants mentioned simulation facilities, physical space, sports fields, and information and communication technology resources as essential. The following participants expressed a need for quality, effective, and well-organised simulation amenities.

“We need [a] simulation room with enough supplies and a dedicated simulation facilitator for the practical work” (01/SR/C2).

“I would like to successfully implement high fidelity simulation, and in order for me to do that, the school should supply a simulation laboratory that operates effectively” (05/NE/C2).

“Our school should be able to motivate for simulation facilities” (10/SL/C1).

“We wish to have quality simulation rooms” (10/SL/C1).

Simulation has long been adopted worldwide as a nursing education strategy, and as a result, extensive exploration of measures to improve simulation and its benefits has been conducted (Choi *et al.*, 2017:23; D’Souza, 2017:340). Nursing education is practice-oriented, with the emphasis on the acquisition of theoretical knowledge and psychomotor skills (Eyikara & Baykara, 2017:2; Günay & Kılınç, 2018:82). Clinical education acts as a facilitator of integration of theoretical knowledge into practical knowledge in real-life situations, and helps nursing students to develop both problem-solving and decision-making skills (Kim *et al.*, 2016:1; Spies, 2016:7; Eyikara & Baykara, 2017:4). During simulation, a range of activities, including application of patient simulators, devices, lifelike virtual settings, real life-threatening circumstances and role-playing, are implemented to develop students’ valuable non-technical skills and to practice atypical emergency situations (Kim *et al.*, 2016:1; Spies, 2016:3; Choi *et al.*, 2017:25). D’Souza *et al.* (2013:345) and Spies (2016:13,47) add other other simulation benefits, namely, immersion in learning activities, deep engagement, and suspension of disbelief.

One specific NE mentioned that proper simulation facilities are necessary to conduct high-fidelity simulation. Martins *et al.* (2013:1) recommend that health professionals’ education and training institutions use simulation of contextually-appropriate fidelity levels, i.e. high fidelity methods in locations with proper resources and lower fidelity methods in resource-limited settings. Fidelity signifies the degree to which the real world is emulated (Gallagher & Henn, 2014:130). D’Souza *et al.* (2017:340) assert that high-fidelity simulation contributes to learning experiences, knowledge retention, and skill attainment. Furthermore, a high-fidelity model of simulation advances the quality of learning, organisation of care, teamwork, advances clinical decision-

making, and cultivates and develops cognitive, psychomotor, and behavioural skills for inter-professional collaborative practice (D'Souza *et al.*, 2017:340).

Simulation is used in South African colleges and universities for students to acquire communication, higher cognitive thinking, decision-making, and problem-solving skills (Botma, 2014:1-2; Jacobs & Venter, 2017:107; Thurling, 2017:12,35). Realising the significant role of simulation in developing nurses' competency, the participants' requirements for simulation facilities are justifiable, as it is evident that providing a simulation infrastructure would enable the college to improve its clinical education and produce highly skilled nurses.

Additionally, two SLs stated that a functional office for the SRC was necessary. One of the two participants motivated that having a dedicated office would enable the student leadership to improve in their role and facilitate improved communication.

“As SLs we need a dedicated functional office that is fully equipped with internet connectivity and telecommunication. This will enhance communication between campuses and motivate us to become better leaders” (02/SL/C2).

“To have a dedicated SRC office” (10/SL/C1).

Although the two SLs alluded to the need for an office, it appears as if their request runs deeper. On contemplation, the researcher sensed the SLs' need for recognition, and that the two participants felt that having an office would validate their roles and the importance of their student leadership at the college. Of course, any leadership structure needs a space from which to operate. In the universities for example, student councils have a dedicated space and other resources that enable efficient management of students' affairs. Exploration of student governance at a South African HEI revealed that students need resources to govern, i.e. a budget, space in which to work, and administrative support (Khan, 2011:207). This author asserts that even though the SLs' time spent in an office is limited, supporting them with resources can increase their efficacy. Trowler (2013:92) also support providing resources to SLs to enable their participation as equals in institutional governance.

Another resource that other participants consider a significant milestone necessary for the college to achieve and meet its demands is a functional library.

“I wish we could have a 24-hour working library” (10/SL/C1).
“We need [a] library that operates for 24 hours” (10/SL/C1).
“Access to [a] modern library” (16/NE/C3).
“To upgrade the library to improve student literature search” (17/NE/C3).

A library is considered the heart of HEIs (Chaudhari, 2018:7616). Afolabi (2014) offers the perspective about the library being “the nerve centre of academic activities” in HEIs. These sentiments about a library being the core of HE activities, imply that no HEI can survive without a fully stocked and functional library. Dr. S.R. Ranganathan in Arjun *et al.* (2010:7) describes libraries as follows: “Libraries are no more store houses, they are rich springs from which knowledge flows out to irrigate field of education and culture.”

Cultivation as an act of growing something or improving its growth, i.e. crops in agricultural terms, is also applicable in the field of education where students’ curious minds ought to be stimulated and enriched in pursuit of knowledge. Hence, libraries should not be operated as a storage room for books to collect dust, but rather a powerful academic tool. Libraries are perceived to be a second classroom for students, due to their extremely important position and function in quality education (Yang, 2011:195; Suleiman *et al.*, 2018). Several authors report that academic libraries contribute to student learning and success in multiple ways (Kot & Jones, 2015:583; Brown, 2017:1; Soria *et al.*, 2017). Brown (2017:1) describes how libraries contribute to students’ success, stating that their benefits include the following: library tuition offered to students to enhance their studying capabilities; increased student success; enhanced student learning, yielding higher grades; academic confidence for students and retention; general education outcomes related to tuition on information literacy; and student learning boosted by library research consultations.

Perspectives on the importance of academic library services in terms of student success offers a rationale for existence of functional libraries in HEIs, and therefore providing libraries as envisaged by the participants could improve students’ academic performance, contributing to the overall institutional success.

In addition to the other infrastructural resources considered necessary for the college to meet its demands, a few SLs and two NEs suggested Wi-Fi connectivity. One of

the participants specified that functioning IT services would enable education that appeals to students (18/NE/C1).

“I wish we could get a computer laboratory with free Wi-Fi connectivity” (10/SL/C1).

“We need a computer laboratory” (10/SL/C1).

“I would like our institution to have virtual classes that would appeal to the current students’ generation” (18/NE/C1).

“The school needs to acquire Wi-Fi for students for academic purposes” (01/SL/C2).

“Availability of technology e.g. Wi-Fi would enable online teaching and assessments and online availability of students’ results” (29/NE/C1).

“We need IT systems for the online application and registration of students as well as for the students to access their results online” (09/NE/C2).

Higher education institutions in the 21st century advocate for technology use in teaching more than ever, especially when COVID-19 swept across the world. The viewpoints on IT as an educational necessity at the college are supported by Saravanakumar (2018:717) and Raja and Nagasubramani (2018:33) who believe that new IT of Internet and multimedia have transformed education. Saravanakumar (2018:717) asserts that IT has essentially reformed practices and processes of almost all types of educational institutions providing quality education. Kamal and Banu (2010:1) predicted that future trends in the internet and multimedia would impact and modify traditional educational approaches and widen dissemination of knowledge and information.

The influence of IT on academia is real and in evidence. An equitable portion of university budgets is usually allocated to the IT infrastructure. Because HEIs prepare students for a global world, as mentioned earlier in Section 2.3.1, the application of IT in academia is accepted. Raja and Nagasubramani (2018:34) describe the role of IT in education, as part of curriculum, is considered an educational delivery method, as complementing tuition, and as an instrument to improve the whole learning process. In HE, IT is used in addition to learning, namely for student administration and assessment. As an administrative tool, IT replaced the tedious processes that the universities and colleges executed manually. Some HEIs are now able to execute

online recruitment and prospective students can apply and register online. Although written examination and tests still form a major component of student assessment, some progress has been made towards online assessments, especially for the distance learning institutions.

The need for IT in education proved real in the recent Covid-19 pandemic. Higher educational institutions, mostly universities, had to immediately switch to remote learning, necessitating the availability of IT devices and internet connectivity. Unfortunately for RSA's public colleges this could not be realised due to resource constraints. It was challenging for all HEIs, not just because of resource shortages, such as poor internet connectivity, but also to student and educators' digital illiteracy. Nevertheless, universities somehow navigated the challenges with relative ease. Teaching and assessment continued remotely using IT to complete the semester successfully.

Considering that IT is a vital element in effective tuition and student empowerment in terms of surviving the graduation demands, and in terms of how it has enabled some HEIs to continue with business in the midst of a crisis, it is clear that the power of IT in HE can no longer be underestimated. Similar to how IT could improve the quality of education (Kundu *et al.*, 2020:228), it is assumed that adequate IT infrastructure could achieve the same for the specific college.

In addition, a SL stated that the college needed to provide sports facilities to promote student and educator mental health and wellbeing.

“My ambition is for students to be provided with adequate sports facilities. The reason for that is that nursing students don't have enough time to socialise and participation in sports can afford them the opportunity. Taking part in sports will help students and educators to deal with psychological challenges and help to improve the attitudes of students towards patients due to psychological pressure” (09/SL/C1).

Issues of mental health were a recurrent theme in this study. Support for the students' mental welfare was identified as a leadership strength at college, and some participants reported on their engagement in activities that promoted students'

psychological health. Support of students' psychological health is widely supported due to its recognised benefits, i.e. prevention of mental disorders such as depression leading to the poor academic performance, student dropout, and suicide. Depression impacts intensely on quality of life for millions of people globally, including students (Mei *et al.*, 2020:1). Effects of depression can be severe and thus it is important to prevent or manage depression as a mental condition. Physical activity is supported as a preventative strategy for mental health ailments (Lee *et al.*, 2016:1). Physical activity is one strategy that improves and maintains health and well-being in general (Oluyinka & Endozo 2019:3161; Malm *et al.*, 2019:4). Physical exercise has substantial effects on alleviating mental illnesses, and these include depressive manifestations, anxiety, and stress-related ailments (Agudelo, *et al.* 2014:33).

The SL's suggestion regarding the availability of facilities as an enhancer of students and educator's psychological robustness is affirmed by Lee *et al.*'s (2016:7) study that confirms an association between sports facility availability and physical activity. These authors claim that it is essential to making sports facilities available to create an environment that is conducive to physical activity, or devising a programme that enhances physical activity. Inaccessibility to and the lack of adequate sports facilities are considered a barrier to people engaging in physical activity (Hashim, 2012:201). Madhushani (2015:14,31) asserts that providing sport and recreation is rewarding to students and the institution, hence the HEIs should invest in suitable sport equipment and facilities.

b. Subtheme 2: Human Resources

Numerous participants alluded to the college employing appropriate manpower to meet its academic demands. Appropriate in a sense that sufficient employees have the necessary skills to impart appropriate knowledge to students.

Participants' views pertaining to the necessity of additional staff included filling vacancies to ensure the educator: student ratio norm, and providing a sufficient workforce to meet educational obligations.

“The college must be capacitated with funds to fill vacant posts so that there is adequate number of lecturers for the number of students, i.e. ideal lecture student ratio” (10/NE/C2).

“We should be afforded sufficient human resources in order to fulfil our roles” (24/NE/C1).

“We need to sufficient human resources” (03/NE/C2).

‘The institution should be able to counteract human resource challenges by providing more staff’ (18/NE/C1).

“There is a need for a revised organogram that will address human resource shortages as this will assist us to meet the expectations and align to higher education” (05/HAD/C1).

As the key resource in HEIs, academic staff plays a vital role in accomplishing institutional goals. At university NEIs, the educators’ multifaceted role encompasses obligations of learning and teaching, research, and CE. Nursing college educators’ roles differ slightly, but mainly focus on tuition. It is suggested that the move to HE redefines college educators’ roles. Selesho and Naile (2014:295) emphasise that HEIs need sufficient academic staff to function effectively and to address the shortage of educators, which continues to be critical in changing prospects of knowledge formation and learning. Academic staff shortages contribute to higher workloads and its resultant stress could negatively influence employee performance (Alfagira *et al.*, 2017:843). The negative effects of the staff shortages, i.e. overwork and stress, support one of the NE’s aspirations for sufficient manpower to facilitate equal and acceptable workload. However, it is not only academics that are important for organisational effectiveness, support staff also play an integral part in educational establishments’ operations. Graham (2012:439) states that support staff are among HEIs’ most valuable assets, as they “hold much of the systemic knowledge, intellectual capital, and necessary to ensure the functioning of the HEI”. In reality, support staff are like the oil that the keep the wheels of a wagon (HEIs) lubricated at all times so that it can move forward to reach its destination (institutional success).

Regarding human resources issues, two SLs expressed the necessity of educators who are subject experts.

“And to get lecturers that are more experienced and have a background about the subject that they facilitate, and should be trained in subjects” (01/SL/C2).

“We must be given lecturers who master certain subject and have the knowledge” (05/SL/C3).

These two SLs’ statements are interpreted as the need for educators with teaching competencies. Key teaching elements as described by Mudavanhu (2015:98) include subject matter and pedagogical knowledge, theoretical foundations of education, and teaching practice. Of these teaching components, subject expertise was specifically referred to as an element fundamental for institutional survival. The SLs’ wish for educators with the required subject knowledge are best echoed in the following quotation: “...a teacher cannot be teaching chemistry when he does not understand the basic concepts of the subject” (Pring, 2000:24).

Reporting on students’ HE expectations and perceptions, Kandiko and Mawer (2013:11) state that students require staff to be qualified and knowledgeable about their subject, considering these qualities as a solution to what they describe as “bad teaching”, i.e. not knowing the course material and reading from slides. The participants’ request for educators who are subject experts could be interpreted as the need to address some form of ineffective teaching that exists at the college. Casey’s (2010:64) study findings reveal that educators need an extensive knowledge base to teach a specific topic, implying that it is vital for educators to know the how and why of concepts to meet the demands of teaching.

Currently in RSA, remuneration of nursing college educators according to the Occupational Specific Dispensation (OSD) structure favours candidates with substantial educational experience rather than clinical experience. This remuneration condition makes it difficult to attract nurses with broad clinical experience into nursing academia. The researcher has observed that the majority of experienced NEs are already at peak of their careers and some of them are currently preparing for retirement. This situation leaves the colleges with little choice but to recruit and employ young educators with limited clinical experience, and those who are willing to start at the bottom of payment scales, appreciating the opportunity to be in a setting that they consider an improvement to the demanding patient care environments. Until

this practice is reconsidered, it is unlikely that two participants' request will be realised.

One NE raised an issue about vacant posts, expressing a wish that vacant posts would be filled promptly to avoid problems that arise out of vacant positions.

"Whenever there is a vacancy for a management position, it should be filled as soon as possible to prevent people from acting [in] a vacant post for a very long time. This will eliminate problems that emanate from people who act [in] posts who are not willing to assume the responsibility that comes with the position" (24/NE/C1).

A delay in filling of vacant positions contributes to a human resource shortages in various organisations, particularly in the public sector. Reddy *et al.* (2018:31) report that persistence and/or duration of vacancies over time is considered a signal of occupational shortage. Many factors could be attributed as to why government institutions take long to recruit suitable candidates for vacancies. Letsoalo and Mkhonza (2017:4) referred to candidate accessibility and excellence, non-competitive remuneration in the public service sector, recent turnover in the same position, and tedious recruitment processes as some possible reasons. The NE's wish for such a process to be expedited is considered imperative in preventing staff shortages associated with high workloads and work-related stress that could negatively affect performance. In her years of employment in the public sector the researcher has observed professionals acting in vacant positions as a common practice. Although these individuals are often accorded the powers associated with the post they are filling, it has been observed that often the acting candidates lack the necessary confidence to take decisions, especially in senior positions. The inability to exercise the vested authority normally delays processes and eventually causes dissatisfaction and frustration among other employees.

An additional human resource issue concerns an HAD who had hoped for career development as a strategy to stay up to date with the current trends.

"Keeping abreast with new developments through provision of development opportunities for educators" (04/HAD/C1).

Tlali (2019:108) supports that it is critical for HEIs to transform and strive for quality learning and teaching in an increasingly competitive HE milieu. The world is evolving and thus HEIs cannot remain stagnant, teaching old information and practices. In nursing, educators are expected to maintain current knowledge, theory, and practical skills, based on the best available evidence, up-to-date nursing content, and related subjects to help students prepare for contemporary nursing practice (SANC, 2018; WHO; 2016:13; SAQA, 2020). This HAD's desire for professional development of educators is encouraged by the WHO (2016:20) that advocates developing educator competencies to improve nursing education, i.e. continuing professional development to attain the required level of expertise. University NEIs make a significant investment in educators' professional development through a variety of academic staff development opportunities, including a staff development department, opportunities for postgraduate study, and supporting attendance at conferences and workshops. Based on the HAD's view it could be assumed that such a practice is not necessarily the case at the nursing colleges, specifically the college under study. The HAD's ambition is viewed as a measure that would ensure transfer of up-to-date knowledge and skills, and would greatly influence the provision of quality and evidence-based healthcare (Manley *et al.*, 2018:134).

4.2.2.2 *Theme 2: Leadership development and competencies*

In sharing their wishes, a group of participants said that they wanted to gain more information on leadership, and to receive appropriate knowledge and skills from the college leadership.

a. Subtheme 1: Leadership skills training

Although two SLs did state it implicitly, their standpoints indicate that they wanted leadership training to be capacitated to deal with institutional challenges, probably those concerning students.

"I would like to learn as much as possible about leadership and acquire the necessary skills that would enable me to intervene and tackle challenges" (06/SL/C1).

“To gain more knowledge about leadership characteristics that will enable me to navigate our institutional challenges and be able to transfer this knowledge to the emerging leaders. Also, with knowledge gained I will be able to formulate strategies to tackle certain problems” (08/SL/C1).

Mozhgan *et al.* (2011:1616) view student leadership development as necessary in today's society, and emphasised that preparation of SLs to have a positive impact on society managed by wise leaders. Leadership development focuses on leadership's social aspects, including issues such as relational awareness and skills, team enhancement activities, and the processes involved in achieving dedication to vision and strategy (Carbery & Garavan, 2012:388). Kapur (2019) states that apart from educational institutions' primary goal of imparting knowledge to students, it is necessary for these establishments to develop student leadership skills. Such capabilities would enable students to lead and guide others in the right direction, impart the qualities of diligence and thoroughness, and help them to distinguish between what is right and wrong (Kapur, 2019). Mozhgan *et al.* (2011:1616) support this view and refer to student leadership development as an important educational establishment duty.

Higher education institutions have long adopted student leadership as a strategy to manage and represent student affairs in institutional management. However, despite involving SLs in student affairs management, HEIs still experience protest action arising out of students' dissatisfaction. Muthoni *et al.*'s (2018:107) study established that HEIs in Kenya had not fully enabled SLs to perform their leadership tasks well. Consequently, these authors recommend regular leadership training for SLs during their term of office to equip them with the necessary leadership competencies to promote SLs' effectiveness in enhancing institutional stability, harmony, and governance that is acceptable to all. Although the above perspectives are from a different context, they could also apply to the South African context and support the two participants' desire to be trained in leadership so as to manage student matters effectively.

One NE added that training college leaders to empower them to function efficiently is required.

“More training and continuously empowering leaders with information for them to function effectively” (20/NE/C1).

Institutional leadership development is considered key in improving learning and teaching in HE, thus the call for HEIs to develop processes that support and continue leadership training (Hofmeyer *et al.*, 2015:181). Sustainable leadership development is positively associated with acquiring leadership competencies (Markovic & Ljajic, 2017:1011). It is believed that leadership effectiveness, i.e. leaders who demonstrate the required knowledge and skills, promote organisational effectiveness (De Lacerda, 2015:358). This supports the NE’s aspiration for CPD of college leaders.

b. Subtheme 2: Knowledge, skills, and attitudes

Although some participants reported knowledge, skills, and attitudes as appreciated leadership strengths during the AI’s Discovering phase, apparently some participants still view leadership competency as an element worth insisting upon in order for the college to respond appropriately to its demands. Some participants believe that knowledgeable and skilled leaders play a significant role in dealing with institutional challenges. The participants’ described necessary competencies include teamwork and cohesiveness, leading by example, communication, M&E, student empowerment, results and achievements, effective decision-making, planning, and the ability to influence others.

i. Teamwork and cohesiveness

Although teamwork was identified and detailed as an appreciated institutional leadership strength in Section 4.2.1.2, numerous participants indicated teamwork as necessary to achieve the organisational effectiveness required by the college to navigate its challenges.

“Foster effective teamwork whereby every individual has responsibilities that they fulfil and take serious[ly]. If that is to be achieved, the whole team would become strong and effective, just like a puzzle that come[s] together to paint a nicer picture” (05/SL/C3).

“Teamwork among colleagues will make our work bearable and manageable. We should, as a team, be able to share valuable information with one another and collectively discuss approaches to strengthen our teaching, and even assist each other with postgraduate studies, e.g. PhD” (16/NE/C3).

“Collaborate with others as [a] team to ensure success of the institution” (13/NE/C3).

“Teamwork - the leaders should strive to foster teamwork among, not only [...] the lecturers, but also themselves” (16/NE/C3).

“Promote team responsibility where each one will do what is expected of them” (26/NE/C1)

“Working together and being committed to teamwork. Tackling problems together and not exclud[ing] certain people” (02/HAD/C3).

“Teamwork, because I think it is lacking among leaders. The institution will benefit from that” (03/HAD/C3).

“Teamwork is important especially between students and management. Working well together will ensure that students’ matters are effectively dealt with without them having to embark on a strike” (07/SL/C1).

Perspectives on teamwork as previously discussed in the AI’s Discovering phase, demonstrated how institutions could benefit from teamwork. Referring to HE specifically, Bravo *et al.* (2017:1153) add that teamwork and cohesiveness in terms of cooperation and collaborative behaviour is associated with perceived learning, satisfaction with teamwork, and excellence. The authors’ viewpoints validate the participants’ desire for teamwork as a major factor that could position the college to respond positively to its challenges.

ii. Leading by example

Two NEs stated that they wished that college leaders could ‘walk the walk’ and ‘talk the talk’ so that other members could follow in their steps.

“Leading by example might also encourage others to reach the same dream and apply it in our daily practice” (02/NE/C2).

“Practicing what they preach. Leading by example” (13/NE/C3).

A general definition of leadership requires that leaders influence others to achieve a specific common goal. It is inferred that in order for the college managers to inspire other college members, be it employees or students, to execute whatever roles and responsibilities to ensure institutional success, they need to be role models. The two NEs' views find support in Thatcher (2012:5), who maintains that people are influenced by example, whether good or bad, and examples set by any leader has an effect on an establishment's long-term success. Importance and effectiveness of leading by example is well recognised in existing scholarship (Yaffe & Kark, 2011:806; Drouvelis & Nosenzo, 2013:414; Dannenberg, 2015:71). Qiu *et al.* (2018) established that leading by example has positive effects on followers' cooperation at both group level and individual level. Yaffe and Kark (2011:823) supports that leading by example promotes well-functioning teams in the absence of contractual relationships and hierarchical power.

iii. Communication

A few participants voiced communication as being key in enabling the college to respond well to its demands.

"Having communication strategies so that we can effectively reach each other" (23/NE/C1).

"Effective communication that will enable [the] school to function well" (06/NE/C2).

"Good communication to curb problems before they even arise" (14/NE/C3).

"There should be open communication, especially with the higher authority, thus problems will be resolved faster" (02/SL/C2).

Communication in the workplace is critical to create and sustain quality working relationships, especially when people belonging to different social and professional backgrounds join to achieve the same objectives (Adu-Oppong & Agyin-Birikorang, 2014:208). Various authors associate effective communication with improved workers' performance, productivity, and commitment (Adu-Oppong & Agyin-Birikorang, 2014:208; Femi, 2014:75; Bucăța & Rizescu, 2017:49). Creating a positive work environment that promotes open and clear communication has desirable effects on work culture and employees' productivity (Adu-Oppong & Agyin-Birikorang, 2014:208; Chakraborty & Ganguly, 2018; Huston, 2020:31). Beneficial

results of a sound practice environment include job satisfaction, fewer conflicts, formation of relationships, open communication, and proper resource utilisation (Adu-Oppong & Agyin-Birikorang, 2014:209). Therefore, the three NEs' position seems justifiable considering the desirable effects of effective communication in workplaces, as observed in the discussion above.

Furthermore, in terms of effective communication, a SL stated that being allowed to communicate with those at the top of institutional hierarchy would assist in finding solutions more rapidly.

“There should be open communication especially with the higher authority, thus problems will be resolved faster” (02/SL/C2).

Communicating through the correct channels has always been practiced in nursing. Staff members in the lower ranks of the organisational structure were not permitted to communicate with the head of nursing “matron” directly without having gone through the many levels of institutional hierarchy, irrespective of the issue’s severity. This principle is inducted in nurses right from inception. It is apparent that the same principle still applies in nursing education, which is unsurprising as educators at NEIs are first nurses and then educators. The college under discussion has three campuses, and it is therefore assumed that the participant’s viewpoint might be based on student leadership having to go through campus management to raise matters rather than having direct contact with the college principal or levels above, i.e. the PDoH’s nursing education office. Widhiastuti (2012:185) confirms the participant’s desire for direct communication with top management, stating that members’ issues cannot be expedited, and also, even if problems that require resolution exist, there would be a delay in their resolution due to formal communication barriers. All these problems emanate from hierarchical communication inherent in the organisational structure.

iv. Monitoring and evaluation

The HAD at one of the college campuses cited the need for a system to effectually track organisational performance.

“Effective monitoring and evaluation system with regard and learning, so that we are able to track performance, identify problems on time, and handle them effectively” (04/HAD/C1).

Microsoft Corporation (2015:4) and Kabonga (2018:3) regard M&E as paramount for swift problem detection and institution of measures to remedy problems timeously. In HEIs, M&E is assessed by student and staff satisfaction surveys, peer reviews, and employees’ performance evaluations (Niyivuga *et al.*, 2019:1). Similar to the participant’s desire for effective M&E to track performance and identify problems, the diverse forms of M&E implemented at HEIs, as stated above, have been observed to be effective. The strategies have been effective in detecting challenges, informing management decisions, and improving productivity at some HEIs, thus endorsing the participant’s aspiration for M&E to enable the college to navigate its challenges effectively.

v. Student empowerment

Three NEs considered student empowerment necessary for the college to overcome its difficulties. These participants observed developing students’ self-directedness and empowering them to achieve their goals as an important factor.

“To teach students accountability and responsibility so that they develop self-directness, and for them to achieve that we must provide them with necessary skills” (19/NE/C1).

“To be an empowering type of a leader and guide students towards goal achievement without dominating them” (11/NE/C2).

“I’d like to see our leaders empower students so to become better people in the future” (06/SL/C1).

Carpenter and Pease (2013:38) assert that students should take greater accountability for their learning to achieve understanding and obtain transferable abilities they can use throughout their lives. These authors challenge educators to execute the curriculum and teaching in a manner so that attention is paid to teaching those skills that permit students to take ownership of their learning, i.e. self-management, cooperation, and academic mind-sets. Kapur (2019) describes self-

directedness as enabling students to take more responsibility for their decisions related to their learning. Din *et al.* (2016:219) also support developing self-directedness in students, attributing it to enhancing students' quality of life. In terms of empowerment of goal attainment, Sewagegn and Diale (2019:31,36) affirm that HEIs are expected to deliver skilled, problem-solving, and proficient graduates, hence the imperative to empower students with teaching that contributes to their confidence, competence, and self-esteem, enabling them to achieve their goals and to handle life's demands. It is evident that empowered and self-directed students are likely to succeed in their endeavours, thus legitimising the three participants' desires for student empowerment, perceiving this aspect critical for the college to survive its challenges.

vi. Results and achievements

Four participants, two HADs and two NEs, described how they wanted to see result achievement as something that could aid the college to cope with its demands.

"My dream is to see myself as being an expert in the implementation of the balance score card in our institution to improve quality, comprehensive performance within the institution that will minimise the risk and help [them] to meet the departmental goals" (01/HAD/C2).

"Independent and a well function[ing] academic planning unit that support[s] learning and teaching to produce competent, professional general nurses and achieve the vision and mission of the school" (01/HAD/C3).

"Improved pass rate for all subjects and programmes because that will earn us more acknowledgement and [produce] more competent professionals" (07/NE/C2).

"Centre of excellence—for the institution to produce the best quality nurses" (14/NE/C3).

Results-oriented target-setting and effective team leadership has become a tool for organisational effectiveness in the 21st century. Results-oriented target-setting and effective team leadership benefits many organisations if managed and nurtured properly. In this era of globalisation result-oriented target-setting is necessary (Amah *et al.*, 2013:47). During the AI's Discovering phase results-orientation also emerged and was associated with positive leadership at the college. The participants'

appreciation of leadership that they viewed as results-oriented is supported by various researchers who attribute organisational performance to results-oriented behaviour. The participants' aspiration for results-oriented leadership was again affirmed during AI's Dreaming phase as an extraordinary element capable of enabling the college to meet its demands, specifically, producing sufficient and competent nurses to render safe, quality healthcare services.

vii. Effective decision-making

Four participants indicated the necessity for college leaders to make effective decisions by being consistent and including the participants in such processes.

"Our leaders should be consistent in [the] decision-making and implementation of such decisions. Our leaders need to consult us before deciding on what to do if it affects us" (09/SL/C1).

"Involve staff in decision-making more often, especially in matters that have a detrimental effect in running [...] the school (participative management)" (04/HAD/C1).

"Management should always be open to others' opinions and inputs" (07/SL/C1).

"Participative management that will encourage the staff to take ownership of the decisions taken" (08/NE/C2).

Involving others in institutional governance is deemed quintessential in many organisations. Kezar and Holcombe (2017:4) opine that in order to prosper during challenges, institutions should employ practices that prioritise cooperation, collective leadership, and decision-making. These processes will ensure that others' perspectives are considered and decisions are not given to a single group but are collaboratively taken (Kezar & Holcombe, 2017:5). In educational settings, participative decision-making is considered a way of aligning organisational vision and educators' performance, highlighting that educators are more likely to commit to the vision of an institution if allowed to participate in the decision-making (Saputra *et al.*, 2015:29). Subsequently, employees' performance and that of educational institutions is likely to improve. Furthermore, implementing participatory decision-making impacts significantly on employee commitment, resulting in them wanting to remain in the institution and contribute to goal achievement (Zin & Talet, 2016:145).

Effects of participative decision-making on organisational performance seems positive and reinforces participants' viewpoints on collaborative decision-making as an aspect that could enable the college to navigate its challenges.

viii. Effective planning

The following participants expressed their desire to see sound planning executed at their institution as believe it could assist in its effective response to challenges.

“Management must be good planners so that they enable to staff to work effectively” (11/NE/C2).

“To have [a] clear institutional plan with time frames and targets. Ensure that all the partners contribute constant[ly] to the plan” (15/NE/C3).

All organisations should consider planning as an important management role to realise their goals. Alipour *et al.* (2013:36) emphasises the advantages of effective planning for institutions, i.e. enhancement of the spirit of teamwork that leads to developing institutional efficiency, and accomplishing organisational goals. Of the two NEs that alluded to the need for effective planning, one specifically mentioned that planning should be carried out to enable good employee performance. Olusanya *et al.* (2012:31) support the participant's notion with the results of a study that links effective planning to employee performance and organisational productivity.

Goldman and Salem (2015:9) and Onen (2016:42) echo what the participant suggested about the involvement of all stakeholders when formulating institutional plans, stating that HEIs need to intensify participation and capacitate planners and implementers when institutional planning is undertaken. These authors believe that in order for real change to occur, educators must support and commit to implementing strategic plans, hence it is important that they are consulted when such activities are carried out.

ix. Ability to influence others

One of the SLs went beyond the college's parameters and envisioned a change in staff's attitudes at facilities where students are normally placed for WIL. This participant stated failure to address students' negative experiences relating to WIL could only exacerbate the nursing shortage situation.

“To be able to influence attitudes of staff at different hospitals because unpleasant attitudes disable students achieving outcomes during WIL placements. It saddens me [to] receive complaints to that effect. Students become frustrated and [are] reluctant to go for WIL where staff behave unpleasantly towards them and that can affect patient care” (03/SL/C3).

Work-integrated learning is a major NE component that exposes students to various clinical environments to apply their learned theory to practice. Through this practice, students’ psychomotor skills are developed to become competent and safe practitioners. Nurses at the clinical services play a vital role in ensuring that nursing students acquire the necessary competencies. However, clinical learning environments can make or break students, hence the SL’s desire to see change in professionals’ attitudes, which according to the participant influences students’ clinical learning experience negatively. Hao and Yazdanifard (2015:1) and Surji (2015:156) assert that leadership is the power or the manner through which an individual influences or changes the thoughts, attitudes, values, beliefs, and behaviour of others. An individual with strong leadership abilities will unconsciously change another’s values, beliefs, behaviour, and attitudes (Reese, 2017). This supports the SLs’ need for leadership development so as to acquire skills necessary to influence their present and future environments.

4.2.2.3 *Theme 3: Academic support*

In terms of academic support, particular participants stated that they wished to see staff experience further professional development and students being educationally assisted.

a. Subtheme 1: Support for professional development

One of the NEs perceived the issue of funding for staff development as important for the college to meet with its demands.

“If the institution could assist educators to study further. My dream is to achieve a master’s in nursing education, but there is no financial support, i.e. bursaries and financial aid” (01/NE/C2).

Unlike university NEIs, public colleges rely heavily on provincial health departments for funding. The South African Department of Planning, Monitoring, and Evaluation (2018:3) have mandated strategic choices among competing priorities and limited resources to better optimise the budget as key in driving the National Development Plan. This illustrates how dire resource shortages are in the country. The public nursing colleges face similar challenges with other government entities. Due to competition with health service delivery for available resources, government colleges do not have enough funding to fund employees' professional development. The lack of financial support for educators' professional development as alluded to by the participant is concerning. Celik (2017:131) agrees that professional development is an important part of the teaching profession, such that educators should continue to develop their field knowledge and teaching skills so as to impact students' success positively. Support for professional development is also reinforced by Chabaya (2015:71-72) who advocates making opportunities available for professional development both on- and off-campus as an enabling institutional factor. To sustain educators' competencies, it is apparent that the participant's dream is of significant value to the college in striving to respond effectively to its demands. University NEIs engage in other activities to generate extra funds, e.g. research, avenues for a third stream income, and a reasonable portion of these monies are used for staff development (Ntshoe & de Villiers, 2013:71; van Jaarsveldt & Joubert, 2018:87). Perhaps with the migration of nursing colleges to HE, their funding models will be revised and maybe, just like university NEIs, colleges could engage in research activities to generate additional funds that could be used for staff development.

b. Subtheme 2: Student support

Two of the SLs stated that the institution should support students that are struggling academically, i.e. provide extra classes.

"The college to have needed resources for the development of students e.g. mentors for students who are [not performing well academically]" (04/SL/C3).
 "Lecturers to conduct extra classes to help students that struggle with modules" (03/SL/C2).

Student support was detailed during the AI's Discovering phase, i.e. appreciation of the appreciated leadership strengths (four NEs reported that they used other strategies like extra classes and SI to improve the students' performance). In the AI's Dreaming phase, one SL stated that student assistance to perform well is necessary for the college to meet its demands. The participant's standpoint could be interpreted as a call for all educators, as opposed to a few, to offer academic support to students. Their request could also imply the request for a more formal approach by implementing a mentorship programme. As indicated during the AI's Discovering phase, academic support improves students' chances of performing well in their studies (Naidoo & Paideya, 2015:1; Walker, 2016:82), and this perspective legitimises the participant's aspiration for additional student academic support.

4.2.2.4 *Theme 4: Governance*

The emerged institutional governance with its two subthemes, i.e. ethical leadership and institutional autonomy, are the desired realities specified by various participants in order to enable the college to navigate its challenges.

a. Subtheme 1: Ethical leadership

Ahmad *et al.* (2017:10) state that the role of ethical leadership is vital for organisations, as leadership without ethics and integrity could be destructive, both for institutional stakeholders and the public. Ethical leadership is considered the process through which a leader influences group activities toward institutional goal achievement (Den Hartog & Belschak, 2012:35; Al-sharafi & Rajiani, 2013). The traits personified by ethical leaders are honesty, trustworthiness, responsibility, reliability, courage, fairness, authenticity, integrity, openness to input, respect, principles in decision-making, and concern for others (Engelbrecht *et al.*, 2017:369; Singo, 2018:37; Kapur, 2018b). Some participants want to see certain ethical leadership traits in their college leaders, and such qualities are honest, integrity, transparency, fairness, and accountability. The participants' wishes are corroborated by various authors who assert that current business milieus are changing rapidly and require leaders who consistently make ethical decisions and operate as ethical leaders to encourage, sustain, and uphold ethical behaviour in their followers (Khokhar & Zia-

ur-Rehman, 2017:322; Cho, *et al.*, 2018). In this study, ethical leadership is described in terms of accountability, honesty, integrity, transparency, and fairness.

i. Accountability

The following participant stated that the institution should take accountability for decisions taken, whether good or bad.

“I would love the college to negotiate its own challenges by being able to take accountability for whatever decisions taken, even though these decisions whether they have negatively or positively impacted progress of the institution” (13/NE/C3).

Being accountable means being responsible for decisions made, actions taken, and tasks accomplished (Biddinger, n.d.; Lowe, 2013:47). As the key element of leadership, accountability fosters trust, improves performance, promotes ownership, and inspires confidence (Biddinger, n.d.). Ghanem and Castelli (2019:1) affirm that accountability is one of the factors that has a positive effect on ethical leadership in organisations.

Cismas *et al.* (2016:112) view effective leadership as the ability to accept responsibility for mistakes or incorrect decisions, and this supports the participant’s notion that accountability is an element that is vital for the college to survive its challenges.

ii. Honesty and integrity

A group of educators from the same campus said that honesty and integrity are the two values that the college ought to adopt in its endeavour to meet its demands. These participants considered that being honest and having integrity would improve the college’s image and ensure high standards of practice.

“Honesty and integrity because it is ethically correct and needed to [achieve] higher standards of practice” (05/NE/C2).

“Integrity of lecturers and students while developing even more competent nurses and midwives” (07/NE/C2).

“Leading with honesty and integrity. This will improve the institution of the image” (08/NE/C2).

“I would like be the best version of myself regarding integrity, and also see no corruption or dishonesty, honesty is a must for elimination of unethical practice” (02/NE/C2).

“There should be honesty in their leadership” (09/NE/C2).

Ethical behaviour is often described by words such as integrity and honesty, which are often not clearly distinguished in literature, and tend to be applied interchangeably (Zhu *et al.*, 2015:82; Scholl *et al.*, 2016:1). Pillay (2014:27) state that South African citizens are becoming increasingly cognisant of immoral practices in public administration, resulting in public distrust, and examples of unethical leadership behaviour and practices in public services include corruption, bribery, and fraud. The participants’ envisioned ethical leadership is supported by Pillay (2014:27), who indicates that it is necessary to address the inconsistency between preferred and actual levels of ethics and integrity, particularly among public sector leaders. A leader who is honest with and about himself or herself, and with others, inspires trust that encourages followers to take responsibility for their own work and actions. Van Dyk (2016:110) emphasises that fostering trusting relationships in nursing education is significant to produce competent professional nurses, endorsing the participants’ aspiration for honesty and integrity at the college, both of which are typically associated with trust.

iii. Transparency

Three NEs asserted that transparency is essential regarding college matters, specifically in terms of resource allocation.

“Transparency so that that everybody knows what is happening in the college” (06/NE/C2).

“There should be transparency in everything or any matters being addressed” (30/NE/C1).

“Transparency pertaining to resource allocation (financial material and human resources)” (18/NE/C1).

Transparent leaders proactively share relevant information during interactions with their constituencies, they are open to giving and receiving feedback, and honestly

admit to their personal feelings, emotions, strengths, and weaknesses (Han *et al.*, 2016:335). These authors study's findings indicate that leaders' transparent conduct is positively associated with workers' psychological safety, which in turn influence employees' ability to direct attention and to foster creativity. Kiehne (2017) asserts that transparency is key to promoting a culture of trust between leaders and the employees, and during an era of transformation, leaders ensure that followers perceive them as being transparent in all communications within the workplace. Smith *et al.* (2013:1) support the participants' views on resource allocation, stating that effective resource allocation be realised through social processes that are inclusive, open, transparent, and fair.

iv. Fairness

In terms of equality, two of the NEs stated that they wanted to see institutional management acting fairly and treating the three college campuses with consistent fairness.

"There campuses are to be treated the same. Information [should] reach all of us in time and to follow correct channels" (24/NE/C1).
"Lead the three campuses the same" (21/NE/C1).

Similar to other ethical leadership traits like accountability, honesty, integrity, and transparency, fairness in leadership is related to building trust in co-workers. (Seppälä, *et al.*, 2012:5). Getnet *et al.* (2014:179) state that organisational justice is associated with job satisfaction and organisational commitment. Being content with what one actually does for a living and committing to the organisational vision together with trust in the institution are key to retaining intellectual capital and maintaining organisational effectiveness. These three important elements are attributed to fairness in leadership, thus supporting the participants who seek to experience fair leadership at the college.

Other participants added to the need for equality by hoping for a fair resource allocation across the three college campuses.

"All three campuses should be developed and capacitated the same, never mind [if they are] in urban or rural area[s]" (19/NE/C1).

“Resources should be spread equally in order to attain [the] same standard of education in all campuses. It matters not whether a campus is located [a] rural or urban area” (26/NE/C1).

“Allocation of resources must be fair and consistent across all campuses” (05/HAD/C1).

The participants’ requests for fair resource allocation among the three campuses are supported by Ogbeifun (2011:126) who reported on findings that revealed that the divisions of a particular HEI were not equally committed to realising the HEI’s goals. In accordance with Ogbeifun (2011:132), the identified gap could be bridged by resourcing the divisions equally in terms of staff, competency, and funding. The college under study has three campuses situated in different geographical areas, but the college has one vision, that all three campuses strive to achieve. Although the above-mentioned author refers to divisions in his findings, these results are found to be applicable in this study, and are supported by the participant, particularly in terms of the implication that fair resourcing of the three campuses is likely to realise dedication to the institutional goals in all three campuses equally, which is considered vital for the college to navigate its challenges.

b. Subtheme 2: Institutional autonomy

As a response to what they consider to be extraordinary measures that the college should seek to achieve to meet its demands, four NEs indicated that the institution needed independence from government, specifically the PDoH as the custodian of nursing education. Participants said that the college should have the freedom to manage its budget, engage in fundraising, and to recruit as required.

“To have been given a chance to handle their own budget and not to rely on the corporate office” (01/NE/C2).

“To be allowed a chance to indicate what they want to do with their budget” (01/NE/C2).

“Less interference by politicians into the affairs of the college because they do not know the requirement of the structures regulating nursing education. They want us to take a large number of students despite the shortage of clinical learning

placement areas, especially for midwifery where the college students, university nursing and medical students, together with paramedic students have to conduct birth deliveries” (17/NE/C3).

“Complete separation of the college from the Department of Health. The separation will help when it comes to asking for sponsors and buying of teaching material, as the students will be a priority, and not in the Department of health, where priority is patient care” (17/NE/C3).

“Keep away from the politics. Should not allow politicians to dictate term for them. They are knowledgeable and know the best” (19/NE/C1).

Some distinctive elements of transformation in an HE system in the 21st century is substantial reduction of government control of HEIs, increased independence, and autonomy for HEIs to be responsible for the results of their activities (Rayevnyeva *et al.*, 2018:75). Institutional autonomy is defined as the HEIs’ ability to prepare and execute their own policies and priorities for teaching and research, as well as other aspects that contribute to achieving their mission (Bergan *et al.*, 2016:3). Øgård (2018:25) describes institutional autonomy as the degree to which HEIs can govern themselves, which is essential for HEIs to make effective decisions that concern academic work, standards, management, related undertakings consistent with systems of public accountability, especially for those HEIs that enjoy state funding, and respect for academic freedom and human rights. Institutional self-government incorporates the autonomy of teaching and research, and financial, organisational, and staffing autonomy (Bergan *et al.*, 2016:3; Rayevnyeva *et al.*, 2018:77).

Apparently, the aforementioned indicators of autonomy are not always in evidence at the college, as the participants suggested that the institution should be afforded independence, which they perceived to be an element that would enable the institution to navigate their challenges. Currently, the institution has limited autonomy and is largely governed by the PDoH, on which it is entirely reliant for resources. Relying on the government for survival poses major challenges for the college, i.e. significant control and interference as indicated by one of the participants. Also, because most of the funding, if not all, emanates from the state, budgeting and expenditure processes are greatly influenced by the funder.

The participants' wishes for institutional autonomy find validation in the acknowledged benefits of HEIs' self-governance. Bergan *et al.* (2016:3) assert that institutional autonomy facilitates methodically sound academic practices and fosters an open academic culture of debate and investigation. Rayevnyeva *et al.* (2018:75) add to the benefits of academic independence, stating that institutional autonomy would ensure HEIs independence in terms of its internal intellectual life, would guarantee liberal management principles, and encourage innovative development in the HEI. Further, institutional autonomy increases the HEIs competitiveness and attracts both graduates and employers (Rayevnyeva *et al.*, 2018:75).

4.2.2.5 *Theme 5: Innovation and application of technology in teaching and learning*

Being innovative and applying technology in learning and teaching emerged as a theme as some participants stated they wished to be empowered through the application of creative tuition methods and technology in teaching.

a. Subtheme 1: Innovative teaching

The following participant wished to acquire more knowledge in terms of innovative teaching methods, as they believed that learning more about creative teaching approaches would assist the college to survive its challenges.

“To learn more about innovative teaching strategies because as educators we are obliged to change from traditional teaching method[s], this need[s] to change” (01/NE/C2).

During the AI's Discovering phase, other NEs stated that they used unusual teaching methods, which they viewed as a positive contribution to academic success. Discussions regarding applying innovative strategies indicated support, especially in nursing education. Many advocate for creative teaching, such that competent NEs are challenged to plan a variety of academic activities that foster creativity and innovation in nursing practice and the health-care environment (Rodrigues *et al.*, 2016:386; WHO, 2016:11; Adibelli & Boyaci: 2018:735). The specified benefits of innovative teaching that were mentioned during the AI's Discovering phase include

the potential to improve education (Jayalaxmi, 2016:250) and to motivate and stimulate a spirit of learning and enthusiasm among students. Evidently HEIs, including NEIs, operate in a global, competitive environment, which means that it cannot be business as usual. To remain relevant and survive demands placed on educational institutions, e.g. quality teaching, it seems as if the participant's aspiration alludes to what needs to be accomplished.

b. Subtheme 2: Use of technology for learning and teaching purposes

Numerous participants alluded to using technology in educating students as paramount for the college to meet its demands.

"To be able to use technology because most of the students are more advanced than me" (03/NE/C2).

"Be able to facilitate tuition with the use of technologically e.g. [the] use of ICAM to reach students of the same level, in all campuses at the same time" (08/NE/C2).

"Implementation of advanced teaching methods using technology to move along with the times, e.g. E-learning methods and use of E-books" (10/NE/C2).

"High technological innovation regarding simulation as a teaching strategy in line with the 4th industrial revolution. This stimulates critical thinking" (14/NE/C3).

Because of the rapid advancements in IT, the educational field has had to adapt and develop the new learning approaches and teaching processes. One of these methodologies is referred to as blended learning, which is the integration of face-to-face and online instruction (Dziuban *et al.*, 2018:1) into traditional teaching methods. In support of this strategy, Eryilmaz (2015:254) established that blended learning environments has positive effects on students, and provides an important experience for their future life. Furthermore, educational practices designed within blended environments are useful to the students in terms of contentment, learning, attention, and motivation.

It is encouraging to see that the IT infrastructure that some participants refer to as necessary for the college to respond appropriately to its challenges, would definitely be put to use and not become a white elephant, as suggested by particular NEs. Olelewe and Amaka (2011) assert that effective teaching involves engaging different technologies, i.e. computer, internet, and multimedia resources to facilitate and

support the learning process, and these tools present new challenges and opportunities for the staff and the students to convert information into relevant knowledge that a student can understand, retain, and pass on to others in an environment that is conducive to learning. The reality of applied technology in HE as a current trend became obvious recently during the Covid-19 pandemic, where HEIs had to migrate from the usual physical teaching platforms to online or remote learning. Some students and educators found it challenging to adapt to the new 'normal' due to a lack of technological skills, and they had to be supported significantly. The significance of acquiring IT skills and applying it in teaching is echoed by another NE who appreciated an opportunity to have been sent for IT training.

4.2.2.6 *Theme 6: Research*

In terms of research being sought after by three educators, these participants said that they need to be capacitated to conduct research to generate knowledge based on the evidence gathered. One of the participant's said that being enabled to engage in research would facilitate their search for knowledge, truth, and wisdom, and stimulate creative, critical, and analytical thinking.

"Knowledge is power and so we need the capacity for research to be conducted that will help us to search for knowledge, the truth, and wisdom. Research will also enable us to be creative and become critical and analytical thinkers who can think on their own feet and think out of the box" (04/NE/C2).

"Empowered teaching staff to conduct research that will produce evidence-based knowledge" (22/NE/C1).

"Do more research to acquire more information" (20/NE/C1).

The participants' views on the desire to be empowered to conduct research—an aspect they perceive significant for the college to respond to its demands—are widely supported. Evidence-based practice is a directive for NEs to enable nursing students to base their practice on the best possible evidence available (Satu *et al.*, 2013:631; Fiset *et al.*, 2017:534). Stevens (2013) and Horntvedt *et al.* (2018) state that it is mandatory for educators to employ teaching approaches founded on evidence and best practices if nurses are required to execute evidence-based interventions for the

attainment of quality and safe patient care. Yurumezoglu and Isbir (2019:1) refer to calls for evidence-based nursing education, and also support the notion that NEs should adopt teaching strategies based on evidence so that effective learning can be achieved. Among other things through which EBP could be achieved, is a conscious application of various knowledge sources, including published research (Straus *et al.*, 2011; Melnyk *et al.*, 2012:410). Research is an essential aspect in education and other sectors. Kapur (2018f) asserts that research is the quest for knowledge and focuses on enhancing quality through scientific and systematic discovery of solutions to problems. Dacles *et al.* (2016:44) emphasise that research is a major role of HEIs and therefore educators should not only be cognisant of its role, but must participate actively in generating knowledge. The participant's aspiration for capacitation to conduct research in order to obtain the necessary knowledge and wisdom, is supported by Maxwell (2008:4), who states that scholastic inquiry is dedicated to gaining knowledge. This author asserts that the primary objective of academic research is to gain knowledge and then use it to solve problems, however, educational inquiry should also seek and promote wisdom, i.e. the ability to comprehend what is of value in life for oneself and others. Seeber *et al.* (2015) adds that research activity is an indicator of a person's creative potential and the manifestation of intellectual development and the acquired practical skills.

One participant's desire to be empowered to conduct research resonates with the concept that is common in HE, i.e. "scholarship of learning and teaching" (Divan *et al.*, 2017:17). These authors affirm that the "scholarship of learning and teaching" results in developing effective educational approaches that lead to the improved quality of student learning. This means that educators should be able to conduct research on their own teaching to identify gaps and appraise and sustain good pedagogical practices.

4.2.2.7 *Summary of findings of the AI's Dreaming phase*

This part deliberated on what the participants consider to be the most essential elements necessary for the college to navigate its challenges. The discussion focused on resources, leadership competencies and the development thereof, academic support, institutional governance, innovation and application of IT in teaching and research, as the issues that the participants alluded to during the AI's

Dreaming phase. Although the participants' aspirations could imply the existence of gaps that need to be addressed by the college, this study's affirmative approach views the participants' recommendations positively, hence the following quotation is perceived to be supportive of the participants' ability to dream about the future.

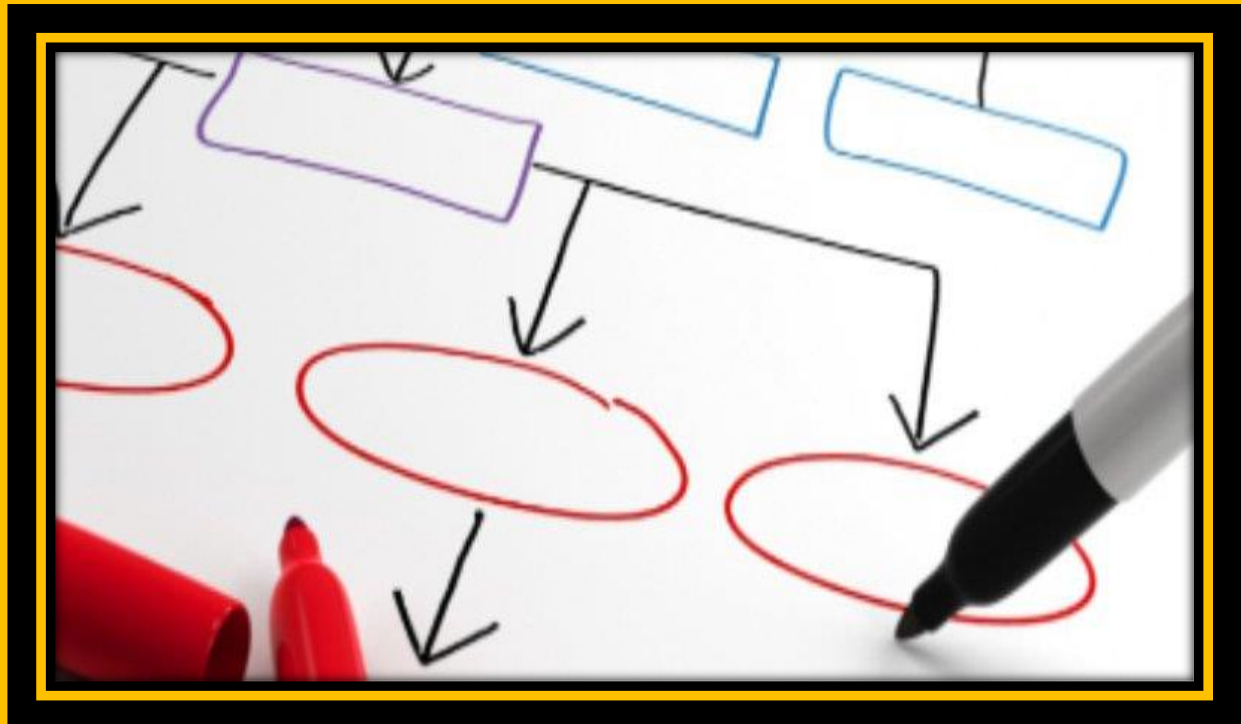
“Good Leaders are ‘aspiring’. Noble leaders have high ambitions and goals as they thrive to achieve with an enormous desire” (Surji, 2015:156).

The participants' inputs regarding what they hoped to see the college achieve to navigate its difficulties were equally considered in developing a framework to strengthen college leadership.

APPRECIATIVE INQUIRY FINDINGS

PART C

DESIGNING – WHAT SHOULD THE IDEAL BE?



4.2.3 Designing Phase

In this phase, the focus is on what participants consider to be the “ideal” scenario in order for the college to navigate its challenges and are highlighted in Figure 4.10.

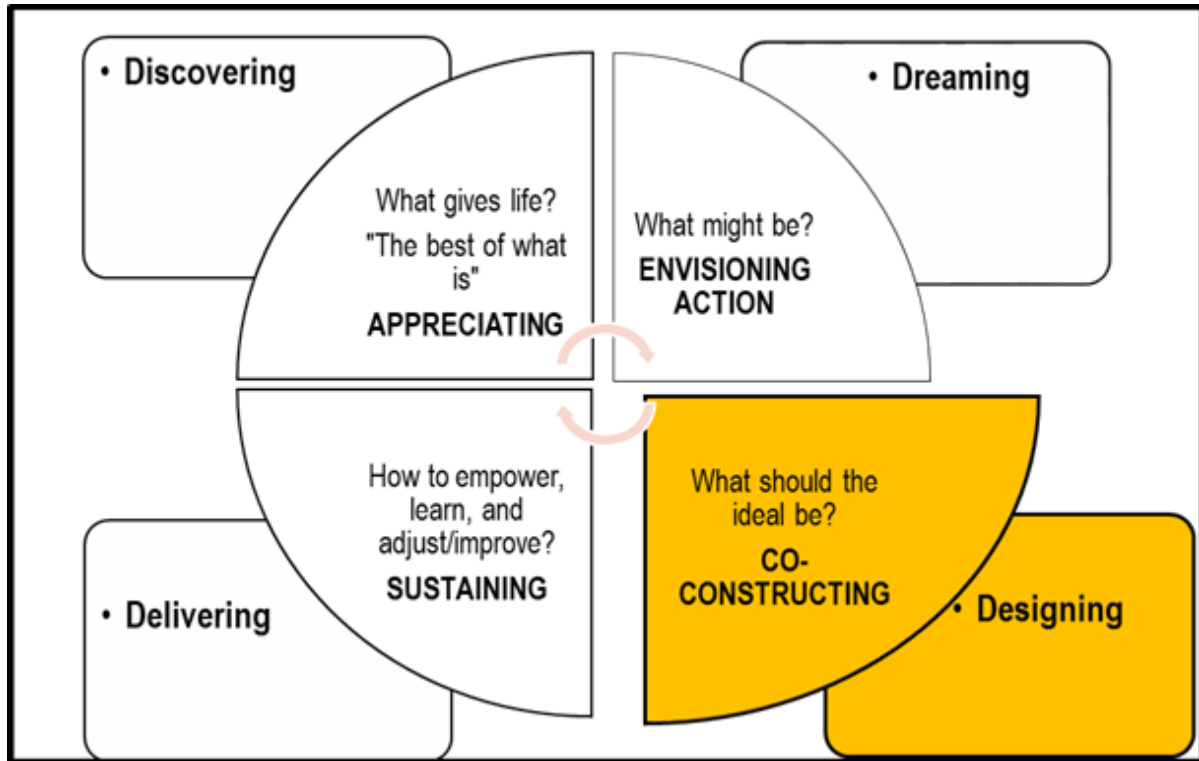


Figure 4.10 AI's 4D phases with an emphasis on the Designing phase
Adapted from Shuayb *et al.* (2009:4) and Whitney *et al.* (2019:164).

The AI's Designing phase is characterised by a set of challenging statements that describe an ideal organisation, or “what it ought to be”. In line with the study's purpose, i.e. development of a framework to strengthen leadership, participants engaged in a collaborative exercise to create a compelling vision of the future – one that carries forward the very best of the past, but also inspires and challenges the status quo (Whitney & Trosten-Bloom, 2010:38).

Once the participants had shared their perspectives regarding their best leadership experiences, i.e. appreciated leadership strengths, and had communicated their hopes for college leadership, attention shifted to using a framework to strengthen institutional leadership. The participants actively engaged in a mind-mapping exercise. Referring to their own statements, the participants were prompted to identify a concept that represented what they had shared during both the Discovering and Dreaming phases of the AI process. For example, if a participant shared a moment

regarding a time when they had motivated someone, they would write 'motivation'. Similarly, if a participant had mentioned allocation of resources as an aspect that would help the college to navigate its challenges, then 'resources' would be the concept. These concepts were written on different coloured piece of papers. To avoid duplication and to ensure that all ideas were considered equally for inclusion in the anticipated framework, participants were requested to share their thoughts with the rest of the group to establish whether or not their sentiments were shared by other group members. The identified concepts were then pasted on a flip chart to form a mind map (Collage 4.1), which included bold propositions that could be considered as a preliminary framework for the AI's Designing phase.



Image 4.1 A collage compiled from moments captured during AI's Designing phase

Once the data from the AI's Discovering, Dreaming, and Delivering phases were coded, compared, and integrated into categories, themes, and subthemes, a preliminary framework was developed to strengthen leadership at a public nursing

college, in line with the study purpose outlined in Section 1.4. The researcher drew on the participants' discoveries and dreams to compose a range of bold concepts that portray an ideal future, i.e. effective college leadership. The participants' desired reality was organised in the form of a framework and this is presented in Chapter 6.

APPRECIATIVE INQUIRY FINDINGS

PART D

DELIVERING – SUSTAINING A CO-CREATED REALITY



4.2.4 Delivering Phase

Following the AI's Designing phase, the AI's Delivering phase presented a series of inspired actions that the participants felt supported what the ideal should be, i.e. how to empower, adjust, or improve (Whitney & Trosten-Bloom, 2010:9).

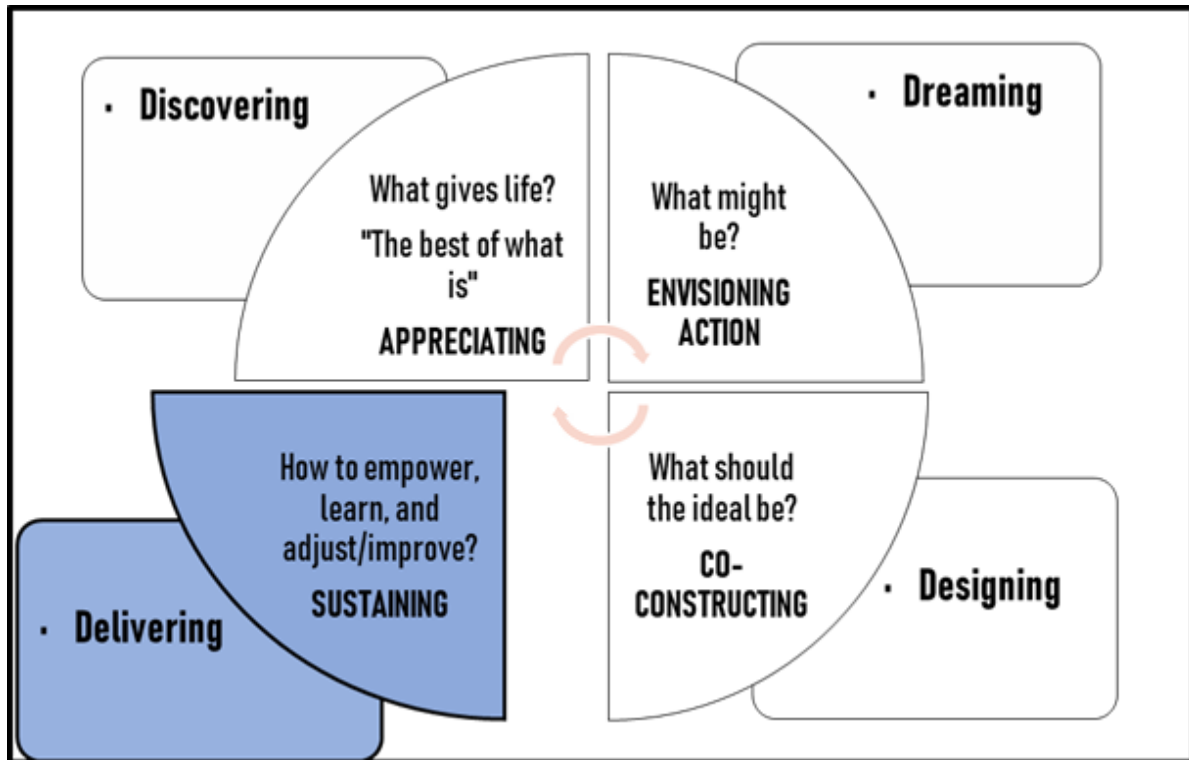


Figure 4.11 AI's 4D phases with an emphasis on the Delivering phase
Adapted from Shuayb *et al.* (2009:4) and Whitney *et al.* (2019:164).

In the delivering phase, the entire group focused on action planning and shared what they considered to be vital in realising their bold propositions (Shuayb *et al.*, 2009:3; Macpherson, 2015:11). The participants' responses were guided by the following question:

"Identify those elements that you deem vital to sustain effective leadership at your institution, i.e. what it is that you think needs to happen to realise the ideal picture painted during the dreaming phase?"

During the dreaming phase, numerous participants recommended adequate resource allocation, i.e. infrastructure and human resources, and the necessary leadership competencies as the extraordinary factors regarded as imperative for the

college to navigate its challenges. To realise these wishes, sufficient financial resources and staff training and development emerged as imperative and these are presented in Table 4.4. These two themes are supported by participants' verbatim statements that appear in text boxes shaded in blue for ease of reference of the reader. To add to the richness of data and to acquire a deeper understanding of the participants' inputs, relevant literature was integrated for triangulation purposes.

Table 4.5 AI's Delivering Phase findings

Categories	Themes
Providing adequate budget for infrastructure, i.e. equipment, simulation facilities	1. Financial resources
Ensuring sufficient finances for IT and library services	
Providing funds for student academic support, e.g. mentorship programmes	
Providing funding for sports facilities	
Providing adequate finances to employ staff, including IT technicians	
Providing additional funding for CPD	
Facilitating capacity building	2. Training and development
Facilitating staff's attendance of developmental training sessions	
Providing IT training opportunities for staff	
Developing staff in terms of teaching methods and strategies	
Including leadership as a curriculum module to enhance student leadership	
Providing leadership training for staff	
Providing management and procurement training	

4.2.4.1 Theme 1 Financial resources

Several participants specified funding for infrastructure and staff development as an element they regarded as essential to reach their potential.

In terms of infrastructure, certain participants felt that the college needed adequate finances to facilitate improvement, acquire facilities, and procure equipment required to provide quality nursing education.

“A financial boost to the school budget, as some of the necessary equipment is expensive” (02/SL/C2).

“The higher level authorities need to fund the simulation room that is needed by the students [for] their practical work” (01/SL/C2).

“Advanced simulation rooms and equipment” (20/NE/C1).

“More resources in terms of money should be allocated for procurement of equipment” (03/NE/C2).

“To have an advanced equipment that we need to teach our students” (21/NE/C1).

The participants who referred to funding as a crucial element for the college to survive its challenges were explicit in insisting that the institution allocate more funds to procure necessary equipment and simulation facilities. Many HE stakeholders, and those who have an interest in the post-school education and training sector, agree with the participants, and support adequate funding for academic infrastructure development. Whilst developing academic competencies, HEIs should simultaneously be capacitated in terms of academic infrastructure and equipment for effective learning and teaching and the production of high quality graduates (Musa & Ahmad, 2012:472; Teferra, 2013:22). Badat (2010:19) promotes funding as being key to infrastructure development, hence proposing exploring the extent to which such funds could be innovatively leveraged to afford more financial backing for HEIs.

As the main funder of tertiary education at both colleges and universities in the RSA, the Strategic Plan 2020-2025 (DoHET, 2020:2) stipulates that infrastructure development must improve to enhance the quality of post-schooling education and training, thus echoing participants’ sentiments. The participants’ views regarding the college requiring funding for equipment and simulation facilities are taken seriously

in terms of how these required resources could contribute to quality nurse education and training.

As indicated during the discussion in the AI's Dreaming phase, simulation plays an essential role in developing nurses' psychomotor skills (Section 4.2.2.1). The reality is that the simulation facilities and equipment required to execute teaching practical skills prior to patient engagement in the real setting has a serious cost impact for NEIs, hence the demand for funding. The call for and striving to create authentic and meaningful simulation experiences for the students, particularly providing advanced technology puts more pressure on the NEIs, and thus validates the participants' views. Another NEI in close proximity to the college under study received external funding that was used to establish a sophisticated simulation laboratory where nursing students can practise their skills on simulated patients that mimic the reactions of real human beings (The Atlantic Philanthropies, 2014:11). It is hoped that the college could collaborate with the neighbouring NEI for benchmarking purposes, and this would require funding. It is hoped that in seeking external funding from other parties without relying solely on the overstretched government subsidies, they would be able to collaborate with the neighbouring NEI.

Adequate budgets were again requested in order to enable the college to ensure provision of functional library services and the required IT infrastructure.

"Higher authority level to fund the implementation of a fully equipped library with at least 2 librarians and it should have Wi-Fi and should be open 24/7" (01/SL/C2).

"Budget (money to buy computers and to build computer laboratories" (09/NE/C2).

"Internet connections for students to access information" (09/NE/C2).

"Resources like computer, laptop and tablet to be able to design different methods of teaching" (11/NE/C2).

"Improved technology and conducive infrastructure through adequate financial support" (12/NE/C3).

"Provision of enough budget for the institution that prioritises the availability of the required technology" (15/NE/C3).

The issue of IT services emerged during the AI's Dreaming phase when the participants suggested what the college needed to achieve to respond to its

demands. It is now affirmed as a critical element to sustain effective institutional leadership. The discussions on the role played by IT services in institutional and student success renders these facilities non-negotiable.

It appears as if the very same core funding that the DoHET (2012:43) perceived as essential for academic infrastructure includes laboratories, IT systems, and libraries. These facilities are regarded vital to support quality education and create high-quality HEIs. It is undisputed that IT is a vital element in participating in a globalised world, as well as being an obligatory infrastructural component for effective education delivery, especially in the post-schooling sector.

In the RSA, it is necessary to ensure that this infrastructure is spread fairly to all post schooling students. Presently, access is grossly disproportionate, making it impractical for distance education, and for other HE providers to fully reach their potential (DoHET, 2012:58). The participants' input regarding the funding necessary for IT infrastructure, and the current situation of highly challenged IT services, especially in the South African colleges, challenges the DoHET's source funding to ensure that a comprehensive, enabling IT infrastructure is put in place for all post-schooling providers (DoHET, 2012:59).

A SL also suggested that funds be made available for student academic support.

“Working together with the management in bringing about changes in the lives of the students, even asking for the intervention of the DoH to fund student academic support programmes, e.g. appointment of student mentors” (04/SL/C2).

The importance of students' academic support has been outlined as a strategy that could improve student success. Although specific participants appreciated academic support as a leadership strength at the college, one of the SLs considered funding as critical in implementing formal student academic support programmes. Unlike this public nursing college and others that may apparently be in need of funding for a formal academic support system, i.e. mentoring as suggested by the participant, university nursing departments have different experiences. These establishments enjoy benefits that are experienced by most universities. The RSA's CHE established that to improve student learning and counteract the high drop-out and attrition rates

at universities, the DoHET reserves a considerable amount of finance for academic support and development (Mashiya, 2016). Even though these funds are indeed used for the purpose of student support, i.e. employment of SI facilitators, student mentors, etc., the universities' support and development interventions have succeeded in improving student learning, while others have not been that effective (Mashiya, 2016). Now that public nursing colleges are transitioning to HE, there is hope that SLs' input will become a reality as the institutions would be supported and be expected to have formalised student academic development programmes aligned to the CHE's requirements.

Another SL supported making adequate financial resources at the college as something that would ensure accessibility of the desired sports facilities.

"My dream is that we should have proper and safe sports facilities. To achieve this, we need funding. I think the Department of Health should provide us with finances for this purpose" (09/SL/C1).

Participant (08/SL/C1) appreciated recreation as an important aspect of learning, considering this to be a leadership strength of the college with regard to empowering leadership. A fellow SL (09/SL/C1) offered recreation as an important milestone that the college leadership needs to achieve. This SL again emphasised the importance of funding to acquire sports facilities to enhance physical activity, which has been attributed to students' mental health, an aspect that is vital in student success. Kampf and Teske (2013:87), Scott (2014:76), and Cvijetinovic (2017:4) support that notion that campus recreation programmes are effective in constructively impacting student retention for those who participate. These authors assert that improved student retention at HEIs is vital and eventually has a definite influence on government funding and the allocation of resources. Therefore, engaging students and promoting facilities and programmes offered through campus recreation is important for HEIs. Furthermore, Scott (2014:77) endorses the notion that funds be budgeted for campus recreation, even if it is only a small amount, adding that a return on such an investment would be seen in higher retention rates of students participating in campus recreation programmes. Mgulwa and Young (2014:18) also reported on findings that reiterated the lack of support for student development, because funding

was predominantly allocated to academic development and little, if any funding, allocated to developing campus recreation for all students.

Although the presented results are only applicable in a specific context, they do suggest that campus recreation should be funded as it nurtures physical, emotional, and social development, boosting acquisition of lifelong skills and attitudes (Mgulwa & Young, 2014:15; Kiss, 2017:32).

Two NEs suggested adequate and comfortable student accommodation as an element to sustain effective college leadership.

“Creation of a conducive learning environment with the provision of the students’ residential area” (19/NE/C1).

“We need students’ residential areas that are conducive and free from hazards and overcrowding in the rooms” (21/NE/C1).

The DoHET (2012:47) maintains that student housing challenges are significant at a number of HEIs, thus making development of student residence infrastructure a priority. Furthermore, accommodation deficiencies and shortcomings result in decreased student life quality, cause social problems, and act against improved academic performance. The realities of the student accommodation challenges and their effects on HEIs’ leadership are now more complex than ever, and therefore compelling institutional leaders to think creatively about ways to respond to the need for campus lodgings. The very same massification of HE without necessary funding that was alluded to in Section 2.3.3 exacerbates the situation and leaves students with no option, but to consider alternative accommodation that is not ideal and often unsafe. Most of the South African public nursing colleges, including the college under study, have existing buildings previously used for student accommodation that could possibly be revived. Such an endeavour could be less expensive than building new facilities. The South African government allocates funds annually to improve university infrastructure and to construct new student residences. Although this might have increased in latter years, Tswai and Netswera (2013:4) state that R3 200 million was allocated in the financial year 2010/11 and 2011/12. Such a substantial amount should be augmented to accommodate the public nursing colleges, including the one suggested by the two participants. The NDoH’s Strategic Plan for Nurse Education,

Training and Practice 2012/13 – 2016/17 appealed to government to prioritise establishing an environment conducive to student learning, including providing appropriate accommodation.

While other participants referred to the necessity for physical resources, three NEs stated that additional funds should be allocated to ensure additional staff appointments, specifically IT staff.

Money to hire IT people” (29/NE/C1).

“Funding is need to have IT technicians hired specifically the college” (09/NE/C2).

“There should more finances to hire/ appoint staff to fill in vacant posts.” (10/NE/C2).

In comparison to university-based nursing departments, South African public nursing colleges are deprived. University nursing departments are served by dedicated IT units that cater for both students and staff in terms of IT requirements and challenges. Such services are appreciated and found valuable, especially by digitally challenged students and staff. The value of IT services became more prominent during the Covid-19 pandemic when universities had to switch to remote learning and teaching. Unfortunately for most of the South African public nursing colleges, including the one under study, such transition could not be completely realised due to IT infrastructure challenges, thus substantiating the participants’ statements regarding funds being a critical element if the institution is to achieve its ideal future. It is assumed that even if the college had the necessary infrastructure in place they wouldn’t function effectively without assistance from the IT trained staff. Koester (2011:35) predicted the future importance of IT by claiming that IT would play a fundamental role in HE transformation, offering unimaginable prospects and challenging unanticipated reactions. Supporting what the aforementioned author predicted almost ten years ago, Habib and Ghulam (2017:2810) maintain that IT’s role in HE is becoming increasingly important and this importance will continue to grow and develop into 21st century as something that improves classroom teaching learning process, facilitates e-learning, impacts positively on teaching, learning, and research, and prepares future generations for future lives and careers. Additionally, these authors propose that IT experts can and should be central in envisaging and shaping the future of our

colleges and universities, thus validating the participants' stances regarding the college employing IT technicians.

Although the participant did not specify the vacancies that needed to be filled, it is assumed that the NE (10/NE/C2) was referring to the posts with professional requirements, i.e. managers and educators. During AI's Dreaming phase, some participants referred to a requirement to recruit and employ educators who were subject experts. The researcher pointed to challenges associated with acquiring suitably qualified and experienced candidates into nursing education in the RSA. The difficulties experienced by the public institutions in terms of filling vacant positions are overwhelming. As a government former employee, the researcher observed that whenever vacancies took a significantly long time to be filled, in most cases the funding for such posts were diverted to another priority, and ultimately the post was removed from the institutional staff structure completely, thus exacerbating staff shortages. With NEIs struggling to find suitable candidates to fill vacancies, the indication to have funding to recruit people for vacant positions supports the above, and such problems could continue for some time until the issues associated with the implementation OSD for recruitment of NEs are attended to. The HRH Strategy for the Health Sector: 2012/13 – 2016/17 (NDoH, 2011:34) asserts that vacancies are regularly used as an indicator of shortage of health professionals in the RSA, and therefore the PDoH should prioritise filling vacancies.

Other participants also supported the HEI being allocated adequate finance to meet their challenges, claiming that additional funds should be allocated for CPD.

"More resources in terms of money should be allocated for the capacitation of staff" (03/NE/C2).

"Available training budget" (01/CH/C2).

"Budget to sponsor training" (01/HAD/C2).

"Development and empowerment of leaders through funds in skills development" (08/NE/C2). "We need finances for further development of educators to improve knowledge and skills" (07/NE/C2).

"Empowerment of lecturers by offering them bursaries in order to improve their skills in innovative teaching strategies" (01/NE/C2).

“Funding for the establishment of a skills development unit to support the college to promote effective teaching” (26/NE/C1).

“Budget to send educators for training re-E-learning” (09/NE/C2).

“Money to train lecturers and students how to use technology” (29/NE/C1).

“In order to empower people I need to be more knowledgeable have to apply for training to further my education, also need bursaries to study, i.e. studying at the university and short courses are needed also” (11/NE/C2).

“The department of health’s top management should provide us with more funding specifically for the postgraduate candidates to enable the facilitation of research in order to find answers for the current problems in South Africa” (25/NE/C1).

There were appeals for CPD in general and in specific, e.g. some participants indicated that budgets were required for staff training in order for them to improve their knowledge and skills in general. Others specified that funding was required to develop staff that would enhance educating and foster innovative teaching, and empower educators and students on the use of technology in teaching, and to engage in short learning programmes and postgraduate studies. The significance of CPD was articulated during both the AI’s Discovering and Dreaming phases, with perspectives on this matter supporting that institutions could benefit immensely from CPD in terms of enhancing their performance. Although some participants appreciated the CPD opportunities they had accessed, and others sought staff development opportunities, it is evident that CPD has financial implications for institutions. This supports the provision of financing for staff development, as it would enable the institution to realise its dream, i.e. effective leadership.

The HEIs appear to be serious about staff development, especially for academics. Wits’ Learning and Teaching Plan 2020-2024 (2019a:17) foregrounds the value of enriching academics as university educators, and support and professional staff in their teaching roles, hence, the pledge to provide staff with access to funding and other resources so as to assume projects to innovate or to enhance teaching in various ways. In exploring academic staff development in HEIs, specifically in Zimbabwe’s state universities, Chabaya (2015:241) established that poor funding contributes negatively to facilitating academic staff development, thus implying that HEIs need funding for CPD. With regard to budgets for IT in teaching training, it is

recommended that creating and funding an entity to support and prepare academics in technologies for courseware and e-content would be effective, as would offering educators the necessary instructional support (Aremu *et al.*, 2013:86).

4.2.4.2 Theme 2 Training and development

Two participants referred to capacity building in general as part of the essentials necessary to fulfil their dreams.

“There is a need for training and capacity development” (04/NE/C2).

“More training of staff” (20/NE/C1).

“Staff need to be trained, therefore there has to be the work skills development plan, and the staff should be released to attend staff development opportunities” (01/CH/C2).

Staff development emerged as empowering leadership during the AI’s Discovering phase, and was again expressed as a wish by some participants during AI’s Dreaming phase. The reappearance of CPD in the Delivering phase as an element considered critical to achieve the college’s reality, i.e. effective leadership, emphasises its importance in fostering the necessary skills and knowledge required for institutional success and survival. Positive personal and professional benefits associated with CPD justify the participants’ assertions regarding the need for sustainable staff training and development. Continued professional development is about ensuring that individuals have the opportunity to keep abreast of developments and can constantly learn and enhance their subject and professional knowledge (Moonasar & Underwood, 2018:47). Nadaf and Siddiqui (2016) and Netshifhefhe *et al.* (2016:65) assert that in an increasingly competitive HE environment, it is critical for HEIs to change and endeavour for quality learning and teaching. The question that arises out of this is, how can HEIs respond to a call for transformation and strive for excellent tuition? Having been an educator for some time and engaging with literature that is supportive of the participants’ viewpoints on CPD in this study, the answer to the question posed is crystal clear to the researcher, and the answer points to effectively implementing institutional staff development programmes. Although confronted with teaching challenges, the National University of Lesotho reportedly

acknowledged that investing in academic staff development is essential to realising quality learning (Tlali, 2019:118).

The three NEs mentioned IT usage training as key to realising their envisaged future related to the use of technology.

“To train and empower lecturers on use of technology, for teaching strategies for each campus to have IT technician to support” (08/NE/C2).

“To also be empowered a new advanced technological development” (11/NE/C2).

“Adequate and appropriate development opportunities on technical skills, i.e. advanced computer skills” (05/HAD/C1).

Moonasar and Underwood (2018:47) agree that CPD is a vital tool for staff to maintain their expertise and skills, especially with regard to the use of IT. Digital literacy is considered crucial in HE where students need to be self-directed, and therefore educators need to equip students with the necessary technological skills. Rapid developments demand educators remain familiar with the latest technology. Various applications grant students access to learning on their mobile devices, and educators should be able to utilise any means to facilitate student learning. The ability to learn across a variety of platforms makes learning more accessible to students with different learning styles and abilities.

Three NEs expressed the need for pedagogical training that they consider significant to enhancing tuition and providing academic support to students.

“Teaching, training to improve teaching strategies” (10/NE/C2).

“Further training in methods to support students of all levels” (12/NE/C3).

“Education and training of staff to apply the principle of learning and teaching” (26/NE/C1).

Effective learning and teaching happens when staff show sound comprehension and contemporary knowledge of their subject, pedagogies, and/or professional practice, and bring this to a variety of aptly-designed learning and teaching activities (Wits, 2019b). Chikari *et al.* (2015:26) corroborate CPD as a strategy used to ensure that

educators continue to advance and improve their professional practice throughout their careers.

Furthermore, CPD can help educators to familiarise themselves with new developments and to learn new strategies, techniques, and methods for teaching based on research (Mphale, 2014:76). Moonasar and Underwood (2018:47) confirm that engaging in CPD is required to keep abreast of new trends in terms of knowledge, skills, and technology so as to ensure sustained competence in their current role. Continued professional development also addresses the necessity for improving the educators' competencies to enable them to initiate and react to changes in the work setting, to meet their additional roles, and to develop personal and professional effectiveness, in addition to increasing their job satisfaction (McMillan *et al.*, 2016:151-152). Research reveals that tuition quality is one of the most important factors in elevating student achievement, and thus, for educators to be effective, they should constantly develop their knowledge and skills to implement the best educational practices (Kapur, 2018e).

Chikari *et al.* (2015:27,38) attribute lecturer performance and student achievement to CPD relating to learning and teaching practice, thus endorsing the three NEs' proposition of academic development as an element to enable the college to achieve its goals.

Leadership and management training were also indicated as aspects considered elementary in achieving what the participants hoped for.

"A proper foundation needs to be established so as to develop skills to lead and manage problems accordingly, e.g. inclusion as a leadership subject from [the first] year of study" (06/SL/C1).

"Leadership training and capacity-building through which our leaders will acquire participatory and transformational leadership skills that will enable them to improve performance of staff and bring change [to] the institution" (02/CH/C1).

"Training on leadership, which will ensure effectiveness of the institution in achieving its vision" (13/NE/C3).

"Adequate and appropriate leadership as well as management development opportunities" (05/HAD/C1).

“Training for myself and other leaders on the balance score card and management, strategic and risk management, and quality assurance” (01/HAD/C2).

Dopson *et al.* (2018:1) assert that as HE settings experience dramatic transformation across the world, HE professionals operate in more indeterminate environments, and leaders are taking increasingly multifaceted and different approaches to their leadership roles. Thus, leadership development undertakings are vital in supporting this highly complex milieu. It is argued that that leaders in formal positions should set the tone for providing staff with opportunities to develop and exercise their leadership among colleagues, students, and collaborators (Joyce & O'Boyle, 2013:77; Hofmeyer *et al.*, 2015:182,188; Kapur, 2019). These authors assert that one approach of keeping leadership at the centre of HE is to develop academic staff with leadership skills, enabling them to be both innovative and creative in the programmes they create and deliver (Joyce & O'Boyle, 2013:79).

One SL (06/SL/C1) proposed that leadership should be offered as a subject from the inception of the nurse training, citing that this would assist students to lead and solve problems effectively. The SL's idea is supported by those who believe that if leadership is included across training programmes, alumni will complete their training with specific knowledge and skills and with leadership traits for lifelong learning, thus leaving them well-positioned to cope with the swift pace of change in the 21st century (Thomson, 2012:97; Joyce & O'Boyle; 2013:79). There is also an emphasis on the need for strong leadership and management to effect the changes needed to enhance HEIs' performance (Ngcamu, 2017:1; Arif & Akram, 2018).

Similarly, institutional inefficiencies are attributed to ineffective leadership and management (Aboyassin & Abood, 2013:68; Gonfa, 2019:2). This stance is seen to be in accord with the participants' assertion that leadership and management development is a crucial factor for the college to attain strong leadership. It is possible that the participants have realised that in order to be competitive, the college must invest in leadership and management development. Herbst (2017:581) states that further professional development of HEIs' leaders and managers is necessary to strategically manage new developments and to encourage strong leadership styles that are crucial in facing the many changes in HE.

The participants' assertions about developing a balanced score card and management, strategic and risk management and quality assurance may be considered a plea for management development to ensure managerial efficiency, which is an integral part of institutional leadership. Carbery and Garavan (2012:387) assert that in the midst of major changes being experienced in the workplace, including swift technological developments, globalisation, and altering organisational structures, leaders and managers are considered to be extremely influential in terms of creating high-performing institutions. Therefore, establishments adopting proactive and organised methods for management and leadership development generally result in increased leadership capacity, and best-practice organisations are characterised by the intensity and quality of their management and leadership development interventions.

In terms of leadership and management issues, another NE suggested capacitation of managers in finance administration and supply chain management processes.

Managers to be capacitated in financial management and procurement because these are people who are hands on in managing resources" (01/NE/C2).

Shortage of financial resources is another challenge that threatens the survival of HEIs. This predicament, which was briefly stated in Section 2.3.4, is even worse in public nursing colleges that seem to be merely accommodated in the health sector budget. The participant's view could be interpreted as a proposition to ensure that the college's already limited finances are effectively utilised. Umeghalu *et al.* (2019:354) also support the need for proper financial management skills, asserting that HEIs in Nigeria, especially government-owned institutions, require strong financial resource management to improve students' prospects as well as actualising their given mandate. Just like Nigeria, RSA is another African country experiencing shrinking subsidies due to a distressed economy, therefore the authors' sentiments on the necessity of efficient financial management to attain institutional obligations are also relevant for the college.

4.2.4.3 *Summary of the findings of the AI's Delivering phase*

In summary, the details of the AI's Delivering phase revealed the participants' perspectives regarding the elements that they deem critical to sustain their desired reality, i.e. effective college leadership. The factors identified by participants emerged as financial resources as well as training and development considerations, and these have been widely validated as essential in HEIs' success and survival.

4.3 SUMMARY OF THE DISCUSSION OF THE AI FINDINGS

The first objective of the study used AI as a collaborative leadership strengthening tool, which yielded valuable results, from which significant ideas could be derived to inform a guiding philosophy to develop a framework that sought to achieve the desired reality, i.e. effective leadership at a South African public nursing college.

With these ideas in mind, the researcher turned to what experienced NELEs in the RSA had to say about the existing leadership strengths in the country's challenged and transforming nursing education system (Objective #2 of the study). The NELEs' perspectives discussed in Section 5.2 were deemed vital considering the fact that public nursing colleges do not exist in isolation but form part of the RSA's larger nursing educational context, and could therefore benefit from others' viewpoints on leadership. Also, with the experience they have in nursing education leadership, it was important to tap into their relevant skills and knowledge that could contribute significantly to developing a framework that would strengthen the college leadership, enabling the institutions to navigate 21st century challenges. The AI findings and NELEs' perspectives, which were elicited from a modified Delphi, were integrated in developing a framework to strengthen leadership at a South African public nursing college presented in Chapter 6.

Chapter 5 Findings of a Modified Delphi

5.1 INTRODUCTION

In support of the study's social constructionism paradigm in which a dialectic stance was assumed, diverse perspectives were elicited by including multiple data sources and an additional method of data collection. The findings of a modified Delphi with experienced NELEs are discussed in this chapter. In pursuit of the second objective outlined in Section 1.4, the participants' responses were prompted by the following single open-ended exploratory question:

"What are the existing leadership strengths in a challenged and transforming South African nursing education context, which you regard to be necessary and appropriate to enable South African NEIs to navigate the higher education challenges of the 21st century?"

Data from the AI were enriched by the answers these participants provided. Ten experienced South African NELEs participated in the modified Delphi. Contextual information about these participants is presented in Table 5.1.

Table 5.1 Contextual information about the participants of the modified Delphi

# of experts	Designation	Years of Experience	Registered with SANC as Nurse Administrator	Highest Academic Qualification
Expert #1	College Principal	10	Yes	B Cur (Hons)
Expert #2	College Principal	10	Yes	B Cur (Hons)
Expert #3	Head of University Nursing Department	5	Yes	PhD
Expert #4	College Principal	16	Yes	PhD
Expert #5	CEO National Nursing Education Organisation	20	Yes	PhD
Expert #6	Head of University Nursing Department	5	Yes	PhD
Expert #7	Head of University Nursing Department	10	Yes	PhD

Expert #8	College Deputy Principal	9	Yes	Masters
Expert #9	Head of University Nursing Department	10	Yes	PhD
Expert #10	Head of University Nursing Department	5	Yes	PhD

Although 10 experienced NELEs participated in the modified Delphi, some of the participants' responses, i.e. Experts #3, 8, and 9 were not included in the discussions, as they did not address the question posed appropriately, instead they offered their perspectives on future needs instead of current strengths pertaining to nursing education leadership.

5.2 DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS OF A MODIFIED DELPHI AND TRIANGULATION WITH LITERATURE

Thematic content analysis methods were used to co-code the data yielded by a modified non-consensus Delphi. The procedure of data analysis was discussed rigorously in Section 3.3.2.3. Data presented as existing leadership strengths in a challenged and transforming South African nursing education context were grouped into categories, with four themes, i.e. leadership competencies; governance, leadership, legislation, and policy; staff development; and CE emerging from these clusters of data. The emerging themes, their subthemes, and identified categories are presented in Figure 5.1.

• Subthemes and Categories

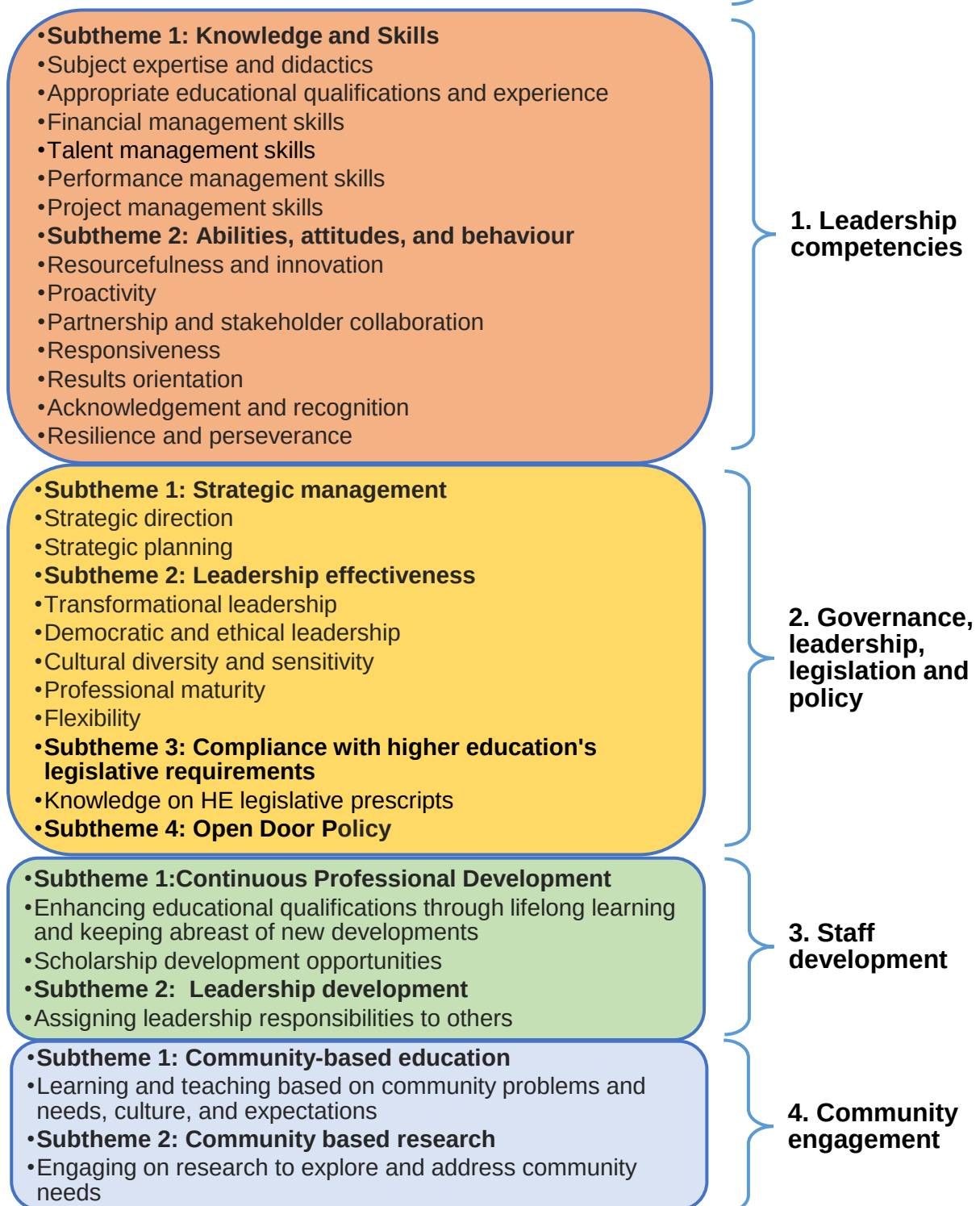


Figure 5.1 Inputs from experienced nursing education leadership experts on existing leadership strengths in a South African nursing education context

Leadership competencies, governance, and staff development also emerged during the data analysis from AI's Discovering or Dreaming phases in this study (Sections

4.2.1 & 4.2.2). This is considered as emphasising the effect of leadership competencies, governance, and staff development on the success and survival of the NEIs, particularly the NEI under study. The NELEs commented on community based education (CBE) and community based research (CBR), which culminated in the additional theme of CE,. Institutional governance as a theme emerging from the AI was enriched with the addition of leadership, legislation and policy.

The four emerging themes and their subthemes are supported by the participants' verbatim statements in blue for ease of reference for the reader. Similar to the AI's findings, the pertinent literature is incorporated into the participants' perspectives as a way of triangulation, to enhance the richness of data, and to unearth the deeper meanings of the experts' inputs.

5.2.1 Theme 1: Leadership competencies

Leadership competencies emerged as an existing leadership strength in a challenged and transforming South African nursing education context. Leadership competencies are described in terms of possessing the necessary knowledge and skills, as well as demonstrating the appropriate abilities, attitudes, and behaviour.

5.2.1.1 Subtheme 1: Knowledge and Skills

The participants contributed varying perspectives related to possessing the necessary knowledge and skills. These inputs include subject expertise and didactics, appropriate educational qualifications and experience, and relevant skills in terms of financial, talent, performance, and project management.

a. Subject expertise and didactics

In terms of existing knowledge, Experts #1 and #5 specified that educators at the NEIs do possess the necessary and relevant subject expertise and didactics related to the modules they present.

"It is a blessing that lecturers had to work in the clinical areas for a period of time before being given an opportunity of studying and acquiring nursing education as an additional qualification. When an advert goes out looking for a lecturer to come and teach for instance, Community Nursing Science, it specifies that the incumbent must

be in possession of a qualification in that subject. This simply says that this lecturer will be knowledgeable in the theory as well as the clinical/practical component of this subject” (Expert #1).

“Suitably qualified leaders with subject matter knowledge and the ability to navigate the ever-changing landscape of nursing and health education” (Expert #5).

In terms of possessing the required didactics expertise, Expert #1 stated that educating nursing students was approached in a manner that facilitates self-directed learning, and this was considered to empower students to care for patients more efficiently.

“Nowadays, the emphasis in nursing education is to be a facilitator of knowledge acquisition, instead of standing in front of the students every time and spoonfeeding them. This transformation has helped the students to look and dig for information themselves, guided by the lecturer, and in turn, when they manage patients/clients they would not impose what they think they know about their problems, but will allow the patient also to have an input on how to deal [with] their challenge or illness” (Expert #1).

Excellence and effectiveness of education depends on the teaching quality that educators provide, as the students’ learning is directly linked to their interaction with educators (DoHET, 2014:24; Ghonji *et al.*, 2015:109). Nurse researchers also state that quality nursing education depends mainly on well-trained and competent educators (Fawaz *et al.* 2018:106). Although the debate on definition of quality education is ongoing, Sokoli and Koren (2017:445) indicate that assessing education quality is complex as it comprises, among other issues, the educators’ erudition, experience, and pedagogical skills. Thus, effective teaching depends on the knowledge, skills and commitment that the educator brings to the teaching-learning process. For instance, the educators’ knowledge and abilities impact their delivery and achievement (Feiman-Nemser, 2012:10).

The role that nurses play in countries’ efforts to maintain citizens’ health globally cannot be overemphasised. López-Entrambasaguas *et al.* (2019:2) affirm that population health fundamentally impacts a country’s socio-economic progress, and properly trained nursing professionals are responsible for maintaining people’s health. Consequently, excellent nurse education and training is crucial to achieve

such goals. Mukumbang and Alindekane (2017:108) agree that NEs' education and training is structured to focus on them in the subject matter to facilitate the acquisition of instructional tools of educator and classroom management. Thus, student nurse-educators are required to acquire the competencies of knowledge of subject matter, knowledge of educational strategies, and the tools to create and sustain an effective learning environment.

The researcher draws from a framework on a teacher's professional identity to validate the participants' viewpoints (Beijaard *et al.*, 2000:751-752; Mukumbang & Alindekane, 2017:110). The model conceptualises educators' identity in respect of their subject matter strengths, pedagogy, and didactics, as the above authors believe that expertise in these competencies is central to developing teacher identity.

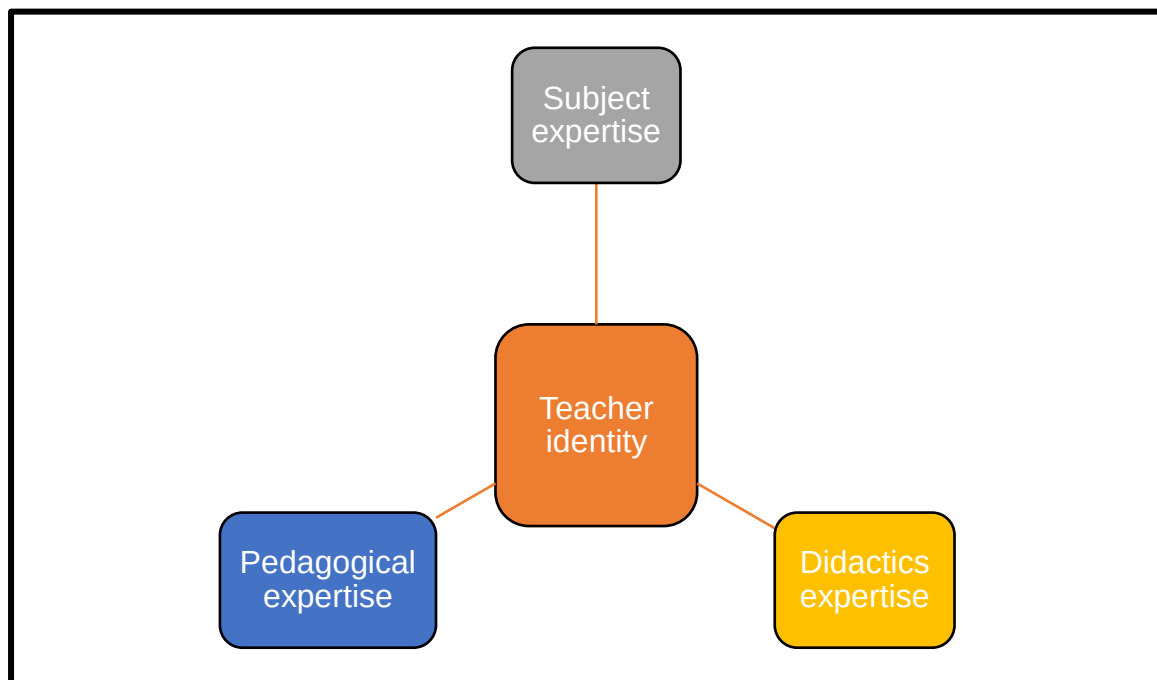


Figure 5.2 Conceptual framework on a teacher's professional identity
Adapted from Beijaard *et al.* (2000:751-752) and Mukumbang and Alindekane (2017:110).

The concepts of subject matter, pedagogy, and didactics are interconnected as they all affect teacher identity (Figure 5.2). Each of these elements has been identified as an existing leadership strength in the challenged and transforming South African nursing education context. An educator, as a subject matter expert in Beijaard's model, knows and understands the subjects being taught, has knowledge of designing the learning process, and has the ability to transform subject matter into

content (Mukumbang & Alindekane, 2017:111). Therefore, these authors confirm that a competent instructor has thorough subject matter knowledge. Ruohotie-Lyhty (2011) espouses that educators who have authority over subject matter can facilitate knowledge generation among students more effectively. In terms of didactics and pedagogy, Lindström (2011:8) proposes that educators must have the knowledge to design a learning process, while Mukumbang and Alindekane (2017:111) state that as a pedagogical expert, an educator should be able to transform subject matter into a more transmittable format to facilitate student learning.

The SANC (2020a:20) also requires NEIs to recruit nursing or midwifery educators who have the relevant subject matter expertise and ability to develop and revise their programmes. Thus, the South African nursing regulatory body supports the participants' perspectives regarding subject and didactics expertise as an existing leadership strength in a challenged and transforming South African nursing education context.

b. Appropriate educational qualifications and experience

As stated, there is an expectation that those in formal leadership positions within NEIs, i.e. principals or HADs, have the necessary qualifications to oversee the provision of nursing education.

“In the same way, the nursing education leader, i.e the subject head or principal, is expected to be in possession of at least more than two clinical qualifications, which gives him or her the upper hand in the knowledge of subject taught in the school” (Expert #1).

Expert #4 added that incumbents in NEIs have the necessary educational experience, implying that while clinical experience is crucial in nursing education, so too is education experience.

“Incumbents have experience in education and training of students at tertiary institution, i.e. nursing school, college, or university” (Expert #4).

In addition to subject matter expertise, Expert #1 indicated that possessing multiple qualifications exists in the South African nursing education context. The participant believed that this enhances knowledge acquisition, which is considered key to efficiently executing a leadership role.

“A leader in nursing education is multi-qualified, so that he/she could understand the challenges expected and experienced by the subordinates. This goes together with the experience alluded to above. Fortunately, this is the case in nursing education. For a person to be a leader, e.g. the principal, this individual must in possession of additional qualifications, more than his or her subordinates (Expert #1).

In this case, the participant specified the expectation that nurse education leaders are professionally qualified in various areas. Therefore, managers in NEIs need management knowledge and professional knowledge. In any organisation, managers are expected to exert supervision over subordinates, and in order to do this effectively, the incumbents should know what their subordinates' occupations entail. For example, an HAD heading a midwifery department ought to have an advanced qualification in that discipline, as well as qualifications in nursing management and education (SANC, 2020a:43).

Expert #4 contributed the following perspective of those in nursing education in terms of possessing a management qualification to fill formal leadership positions.

“Incumbents in this leadership position need to have a qualification in nursing administration according to SANC requirements but with the new regulation R173 the scope has been broadened whereby an incumbent who holds a general management qualification can be appointed a position of being the head of the NEI” (Expert #4).

The requirement of possessing a formal educational qualification in management is endorsed by Kapur (2018c) who asserts that in addition to student education, growth, and development, the execution of managerial functions within educational institutions is also necessary. Saah (2017) echoes the sentiment that it is vital for academic leaders to develop and apply effective management skills to ensure constant improvement. Managerial functions, i.e. planning, organising, leading, controlling, directing, and staffing should be executed appropriately (Kapur, 2018d). Management and leadership can be appreciated as distinctive but complementary systems of actions within an organisation (Leal Filho, *et al.*, 2020:2). Thus, the importance of leaders acquiring the necessary management skills is emphasised. Qualification acquisition, i.e. nursing administration or general management, as mentioned by Expert #4, serves as the preparation of prospective managers for their role to manage effectively. Watetu (2017:16) states that effective management

enhances employees' general working conditions, which in turn, improves their performance, and subsequently leads to organisational effectiveness.

Expert #1 added that the nurse education leader is not only appropriately qualified, but also has the necessary experience.

“This leader is not only multi-qualified, but she/he has been exposed to almost all the areas of patient care. Whenever there is a challenge or complaint pertaining to a specific subject, he/she able to make meaningful contribution towards a solution” (Expert #1).

Expert #4 supported Expert #1's perspective, and emphasised that nurse education leaders must have the necessary experience in nursing education.

“Incumbents have experience in education and training of students at tertiary institution, i.e. nursing school, college or university” (Expert #4).

The participants' viewpoints about nurse education leaders possessing the necessary clinical and educational experience are supported by the recruitment processes that require that prospective employees have extensive clinical and educational experience. In line with the two experts' perspectives, it is assumed that those with applicable work experience, be it in clinical nursing and/or education, are able to apply such experience in leading, training, and educating nurses. Kotur and Anbazhagan (2014:104) claim that employees who are thoroughly experienced in their respective subject fields can become leaders due to the experience they have developed during the course of their career. It is assumed that due to their acquired experience, such leaders can envision or detect work deficits, and employ strategies they have learnt or encountered during their careers to address such gaps.

c. Financial management skills

One participant implied that acquiring and applying financial management skills was an existing leadership strength within the South African nursing education context.

“Incumbents participated in the financial and budget management system for the college and [were] able work within PFMA and Treasury regulations” (Expert #4).

Financial management is a vital management function for any organisation, including HEIs. In accordance with Akpan (2016:4), financial administration forms part of internal educational governance. The South African NEIs, including the public nursing college under study, are experiencing severe shortages of financial, human and material resources (Section 2.5). To utilise their limited resources wisely, they ought to be managed properly. Umeghalu *et al.* (2019:354) concurs with the fact that strong financial resource management at HEIs is essential in improving students' learning experiences and in realising an institution's given mandate. Considering that participation in institutional financial matters and financial management skills in accordance with the legislative framework were reported as existing leadership strengths, it is assumed that such expertise would enable the South African NEIs to navigate their resource-related challenges effectively.

d. Talent management skills

The following perspective indicates the ability to identify and retain talent as an existing leadership strength in the South African nursing education context.

"Incumbents promote talent identification and retention for career pathing" (Expert #4).

In human resource management parlance, the participant's perspective is typically termed talent management, i.e. the systematic attraction, identification, development, engagement, promotion, retention, and deployment of individuals who are of a specific value to an organisation (Oladapo, 2014:24). There appears to be a positive connection between effective talent management and employee performance. Mensah (2015:544) substantiates this connection, stating that in institutions where talent management is effectively managed, employees are more committed and make substantial effort in their roles. Expert #4's reference to talent identification and retention as an existing leadership strength is considered to be an element that could address the shortcoming of having to appoint young NEs without the necessary expertise due to a failure to attract those who are knowledgeable and experienced. It is hoped that through appropriate talent management, newly recruited novice NEs can be adequately developed, and strategies formulated and implemented to retain highly skilled and experienced educators.

e. Performance management skills

In addition to existing human capital management skills, Expert #7 cited performance management of academic staff as a necessary skill.

“On an annual basis, I schedule appointments with each staff member to discuss their performance appraisal, career path, and to assess their needs regarding scholarship development” (Expert #7).

Higher education institutions are now pressurised to demonstrate their effectiveness, objectives, and ways of accomplishing these objectives. They are also expected to relate the distribution of their resources and primacies, and are expected to fulfil their social obligations. During the researcher’s involvement in HE, it appears as if everyone from prospective students to the general public, require information and evidence relating to the efficacy and necessity of HEIs, thus pressurising academic leaders to improve the quality of academic staff, as well as their training, recruitment, reward system, utilisation, and motivation, as factors regarded significant in enhancing the overall effectiveness of HEIs (Tanveer & Karim, 2018). Sherwani (2015) concur that performance management enables HEIs to enhance general performance to attain their goals, and in trying to achieve this, outcomes need to be employee satisfaction, motivation, and commitment. Due to the pressure placed on HEIs to perform and fulfil their obligations, there is more demand than ever before to implement performance management systems (Maimela, 2015:v; Tanveer & Karim, 2018).

It is reassuring that performance management is regarded to be an existing leadership strength in a challenged and transforming South African nursing education context. Nursing academia cannot afford to take for granted the mandate placed upon them by the communities that they serve, i.e. education and training of nurses, irrespective of the limited resources at their disposal. Therefore, the participant’s contribution about appraising and boosting staff performance is reassuring, especially considering that such actions could lead to commitment and contributes towards their enthusiasm and gratification.

f. Project management skills

In addition to possessing the relevant skills, the same participant added project management skills as another existing leadership strength in the South African nursing education context.

“In 2009, our school received a grant of R16 million from Atlantic Philanthropies, aimed at a project to transform nursing scholarship in selected South African universities. The UNEDSA project officially kicked off on 1 April 2009 and was concluded on 31 March 2013. Initially, my predecessor was the project leader and I was a sub-project leader. After her retirement at the end of 2010, I became responsible for the project for the remaining two years. As [the] management team, we had to overcome our own fears. The whole time it was just go, go, go! It was like white-water rafting: we had to cope with the turbulence, sometimes struggled to stay on board to show self-control and stay calm, work as team, and to work at an unbelievable pace, but the satisfaction and delight now that it is nearing the end, now that we are getting ashore safely – that is an indescribable reward. We were the only training school that completed the project successfully within the designated time frame. This was an amazing project of teamwork and perseverance” (Expert #7).

The participant’s input that emerged as leadership competencies, i.e. possessing project management skills, finds support in Ahmed *et al.* (2013:44) who state that the necessary leadership competencies and characteristics guarantee positive completion of projects as a result of correct decisions taken at the right time and engaging right people in the right places. Coleman and Bourne (2018:2) corroborate the significance of leadership competencies in project management by claiming that project leaders should have certain skills, behaviour, knowledge, and values to deliver major, complex projects successfully.

As specified during the AI’s Delivering phase, certain participants indicated financial resources as one element vital to sustain effective college leadership (Section 4.2.4.1). Such stances implied financial challenges at the institution. However, in this case a certain NEI’s academic staff demonstrated project leadership competencies by seizing a development opportunity, i.e. grant allocation, to successfully embark on a project that immensely benefitted the school and students, thus improving the delivery of nursing education.

In summary of subtheme 1, the participants' attest to the necessity of having the appropriate knowledge and skills, i.e. subject and didactics expertise, appropriate educational qualifications and experience, financial, talent, performance and project management skills. In other words, it is crucial for nurse education leaders to have educational expertise and qualifications as well as the relevant managerial skills to be effective.

5.2.1.2 *Subtheme 2: Abilities, attitudes, and behaviour*

Demonstration of the required abilities, attitudes, and behaviour deemed essential for nursing education was also identified as an existing leadership strength in a challenged and transforming South African nursing education context. Within this subtheme, resourcefulness and innovation, proactivity, responsiveness, results-orientation, acknowledgement and recognition, and resilience and perseverance are evident.

a. Resourcefulness and innovation

Experts #1 and 4 alluded to the nurse education leaders' abilities to provide the necessary resources required by the NEIs to achieve their goals and mandates.

"The leaders in nursing education are very resourceful people in that they are not office-bound. Firstly, they make it a point that there are resources available for assisting the lecturers/facilitators do their work. For instance, they make sure that the equipment, like teaching aids, are in a good functioning order, by visiting classrooms and listen[ing] to the needs presented to them" (Expert #1).

"Incumbents strengthen performance by providing resources for all employees, i.e. lecturers, administrative, and support staff" (Expert #4).

These two expert viewpoints demonstrate how some leaders at certain NEIs have been able to provide the necessary resources to staff, thus enabling them work as expected. Usman (2016:27) confirms the two experts' positions, stating that in an educational system, part of the fundamental requirements that should be implemented to attain educational goal and objectives is adequate resource provision. In their study, Lateef and Mhlongo (2019:20) suggest delivering adequate educational resources to NEs as a positive working condition that allows them to

employ learning and teaching methods that facilitate learning. Although the above authors' study took place in Nigeria, its findings emphasise the importance of educational resource availability, thus validating the two experts' claim of resource provision as an existing leadership strength within the context of the study. The researcher emphasises that educational resources could never be enough to meet South African communities' needs, especially if the challenges related to HE massification and shrinking educational subsidies are not adequately addressed (Sections 2.3.3 & 2.3.4). Nevertheless, the nursing education leaders' endeavours to acquire and provide employees with the most needed resources is seen in a positive light.

Adding to resourcefulness as an existing leadership strength, another expert referred to the applying resources to the area of students' well-being, i.e. student support.

"We can never talk of nursing education without taking into consideration the nursing students. The utilisation of resources, including human resources, is in the hands of the leader. The student population in NEIs is a microcosm of the youth within society, and as such, the challenges faced by the South African youth are the challenges they will [bring to the institutions]. Some of the challenges include being breadwinners, heading families, alcohol and substance abuse, ill-discipline, as well as other psychosocial challenges. The ability to harness resources for student support (student counsellors, social workers, and psychologists) rests on the leadership, and effective utilisation of these support systems improves the chances of producing a better professional nurse" (Expert #2).

Similar to the expert participant's input, Getachew (2019:53) affirms that expectations and vicissitudes in educational institutions and communities, teenage suicide, substance abuse, as well as sexual experimentation, are just a few examples of the challenges that young people face daily. The psychosocial wellbeing of students has been repeatedly alluded to in this study as a factor deemed critical for student success. This significant matter emerged during both the AI's Discovering and Dreaming phases with the emphasis placed on student support and the implementation of recreational activities as elements considered crucial to students' mental health (Sections 4.2.1 & 4.2.2).

In an African context, student support is widely acknowledged as an element that contributes to student success. Kamunyu *et al.* (2016:142) add that transition to university life can be stressful for students, hence most universities in Kenya offer social support to students in the form of counselling, financial assistance, and health and academic support. The benefits associated with support for students' mental health validates the expert participant's allusion to the provision of resources to ensure student wellbeing as an existing leadership strength in the South African nursing education context. Biasi *et al.* (2017:253) and Thuryrajah *et al.* (2017:1) report that interventions such as counselling improve students' academic achievement. Expert #2's view finds support in Darling-Hammond *et al.* (2020:99) who emphasise necessary educational resource provision. These authors maintain that educational support by means of resources facilitates healthy development, responds to student needs, and addresses learning barriers such as trauma and hardship experiences.

As far as innovation is concerned, two NELEs mentioned creativity as an existing leadership strength. Expert #1 mentioned the use of technology that led to effective communication amongst colleagues.

"The college members use social media to the benefit of staff members and everybody, for instance WhatsApp groups are established for different layers of management to ease communication amongst themselves. Through these media, issues are handled with speed, and superfluous complaints are prevented (Expert #1).

Effective internal communication is integral to any organisation (Jakubiec, 2019), hence, it is necessary to implement communication strategies that ensure that every member is kept updated about an establishment's affairs. Verma (2013) and Luthra (2015:6) support effective communication as an important skill of an efficient and a successful leader or manager. The use of Whatsapp Messenger for communication is a strategy that assisted the college in addressing issues timeously, and avoiding unnecessary grievances. Jakubiec (2019) supports the NEI's approach by indicating the importance of choosing suitable communication channels and developing a specific information flow in the management system to prevent decreased work quality and performance. O'Dell (2020) also indicates a faster response time to

problems as a benefit of effective internal communication. The college's adopted communication practice is now a culture for many organisations, especially recently when institutions could not hold face-to-face meetings due to COVID-19 pandemic social distancing regulations that mandated individuals to maintain a minimum distance of at least two metres between each other (Dunnick, 2020:907). Institutional leaders continued to communicate important occupational matters electronically. Many organisations were able to keep their members informed on new developments, thus reducing the pandemic-related stress and anxiety. Rajala (2011:2,28) states that functional internal communication is positively linked to organisational success, as it motivates people who would subsequently perform well in their jobs and contribute to organisational success.

The participant said that "Whatsapp Messenger" was used to benefit staff and the different layers of management. Student groups could also benefit from group messaging systems, which has facilitated nursing students raising their concerns relating to tuition or WIL. Nurse educators timeously respond directly on matters raised by students using the same communication mode, adding to students' positive learning experiences.

Continuing with innovation, Expert # 7 relayed how external funding provided to their school facilitated establishing an institution for CPD that continues to generate a third stream income, and through which many health professional have received additional training (Van Jaarsveldt & Joubert, 2018:90-91).

"Initially, as sub-project leader of the UNEDSA project (2009-2010), I oversaw the establishment of the Academy for Continuing Nursing Education. Short learning programmes were presented not only in Bloemfontein, but also in Cape Town, Johannesburg, Witbank, Welkom, Ballito, Kimberley, and Kathu. One thousand six-hundred and twenty registered nurses [have] enrolled for short learning programmes since 2013, and 125 programmes were presented. Today, the Academy is self-sustaining through the income that is generated by the programmes offered. The profit is used to ensure sustainability of the infrastructure in the Teaching and Learning facility, to pay incentives to staff members for research output, and to support scholarship development of academic staff and postgraduate students" (Expert #7)

Decreased public funding for HE alluded to in Section 2.3.4 has challenged those in charge of HEIs to consider other means of raising funds to support operational expenses, to sustain themselves, and to help them to meet their expectations (Ntshoe & de Villiers, 2013:81; Ahmad *et al.*, 2015:194). In the HE context, all the income derived from sources other than public subsidies and student payments for education or lodging is commonly termed ‘third stream income’ (Regal, 2013). Ntshoe and de Villiers (2013:71) aver that HEIs have been compelled to grow their funding base through philanthropic funding and academic entrepreneurship that often involves funding partnerships between universities and the private sector. The NEI referred to by Expert #7 innovatively implemented short learning programmes (SLPs) as a strategy to generate a third stream income for the school. This innovative strategy is supported by Van Jaarsveldt and Joubert (2018:87), who established that SLPs generated a steady third stream income. It is encouraging to see how funds generated from SLPs contributed to the NEI’s sustainability. Ahmad *et al.* (2015:194) and Crowther (2018:238) support the importance of extra income generated by academic staff in developing and sustaining their educational institutions. Not only did the implemented SLPs contribute to the school’s financial standing, it also improved the trained nurses’ skills, which is key to healthcare service delivery Van Jaarsveldt & Joubert, 2018:87).

b. Proactivity

Expert #7 referred to an instance when their school responded to a challenge they faced, a situation that could have seriously impacted the institution’s survival.

“The Minister of Health did not approve the Regulations for all the postgraduate specialist qualifications. Therefore, there would be no intake of post-basic students in 2020. We would lose +350 post basic students in 2020 and that would pose a real threat for the School of Nursing. As a pro-active measure we spread the message that 2019 would be the last year to enrol for the existing legacy qualifications. We did a marketing roadshow in the Northern Cape and visited the local clinical platform. In addition, we placed special messages in this regard on the web page of the School of Nursing. We have received 663 applications for 2019. Thus, changing a threat into an opportunity” (Expert #7).

Wu and Wang (2011:300) maintain that the present environmental challenges are pressurising for leaders, placing an expectation on them to reach beyond the focus of main tasks and provide direction in the course of constructing and implementing undefined tasks that are potentially valuable for themselves, their team, and entire organisation. Leaders responsible for operations in complicated work settings, proactively engage in ways that create shared value among the institution and the society in which it operates (Ganson, 2013:2). These sentiments resonate with what HEIs' leaders currently face. The serious demands brought by the constantly changing HE landscape have completely pushed them out of what is typically referred to as a "comfort zone". In confronting these demands, leaders ought to be more proactive in thinking, planning, and executing strategies to overcome a precarious environment and make the necessary changes, without losing their focus on primary tasks (Wu & Wang, 2011:300; Setiawati, 2016:151). Being proactive in the face of unpredicted and adaptive change is an essential leadership strategy (Brodie, 2019:26; Mrig & Sanaghan (2017:13).

The institution referred to by the Expert #7 was reported to have engaged proactively in a robust recruitment drive in response to the impending change that would negatively affect NEIs nationally. Such development implied that no NEI would enrol students in the following academic year, and this would have had serious financial repercussions on these establishments. It is apparent that the measures the specific NEI implemented worked in their favour (to an extent), as they converted what they considered a threat to the survival of their institution into an opportunity.

c. Partnership and stakeholder collaboration

The following participants viewed a good working relationship between nursing education leaders and other national key stakeholders to be another existing leadership strength.

"Nursing education is not done in silos, it is imperative that leaders in NEIs have a good relation with their partners. Who are these partners? These are the staff members where learners are placed for their practice, e.g. hospitals, clinics, crèches, schools, etc. I have already alluded to the fact learners must be exposed to all areas which accommodate patients, and clients, thus it is very important for the leader to

build teams together with members of these areas, so that student nurses are taken care of when placed at clinical learning environments, i.e. being guided, supported, and supervised as well” (Expert #1).

“Discussions around envisaged changes in nursing education have been going on for ages, and part of the delay was the inability to speak with one voice, due to the fact that nursing education has many stakeholders, each pursuing their own interests and advancing their course, which was not aligned to others’ in the same field. This situation has been identified as a challenge and through various platforms. These entities are coming together and discussing the way forward in nursing education. If one takes the example of issues pertaining to the new nursing qualifications, there was constant support from various bodies and the CNO’s office established links with a university, as well as with the SANC, CHE, and DoHET to provide support towards making this change a reality. Strategic partnerships are with political principals as well, thus involving them in the crafting of the future of the nursing profession” (Expert #2).

“{The] incumbent collaborates and networks with other principals in sharing best practices” (Expert #4).

Educational partnership is now a common practice in HE. HEIs have started academic collaboration and partnership with other institutions for the purposes of resource sharing, curriculum innovation, and reputation improvement. (Chou, 2012:84; Pillay *et al.*, 2014:539). Direko and Davhana-Maselesele (2017:2) attest to the synergy created by interdependence and the pooling of expertise, resources, and individual contributions. Such collaborative efforts address the intricate challenges and changes in healthcare and education effectively, subsequently increasing output. Similar to Expert #1’s perspectives, several authors suggest that the 21st-century nursing profession faces challenges that require partnership between academic and service units (Bivin & Reddemma, 2014:3; Bvumbwe, 2016:314; Sadeghnezhad *et al.*, 2018:78). Adding to this notion, Perkins (2014:iii) believes that creating and sustaining academic practice partnerships is an approach that effectively responds to the healthcare system’s profound challenges. Apparently, such partnerships have important benefits for nursing profession and healthcare consumers and practitioners. Bvumbwe (2016:314) reports that academic-practice alliances espouse shared goal development for the healthcare system. Another mutual benefit of

academic-service partnership is the development of educational capacity to overcome the shortage of educators (Breslin *et al.*, 2011:e36; Beal, 2012:3) and educational resource limitations (Breslin *et al.*, 2011:e35). In line with Cole (2015:22), NEIs could use skilled staff as mentors to educate students in the service environment.

Employing preceptors at healthcare services to supervise students' clinical learning is a current national practice that has been realised through active collaborations with healthcare service institutions. The importance of academic-service collaboration for the benefit of students could further be supported by repeating statements in the AI's Dreaming phase. A student leader expressed the desire to influence circumstances in terms of the students' WIL (Section 4.2.2.2). Seemingly, the participant's desire was motivated by isolated instances in which students would otherwise have experienced WIL negatively. Such challenges could definitely be addressed through partnership and stakeholder collaboration. Academic-service partnerships contribute to staff development in line with the service needs via continuing education that is executed through the joint efforts of NEIs and service partners (Marsiello & Criscitelli, 2014:44).

In terms of strategic partnerships with politicians, one relevant collaborative example is the establishment of a Ministerial Task Team in 2011, a team that was tasked to develop a Strategy for Nurse Education, Training, and Practice (NDoH, 2013:4-5). At this time, practitioners felt that the profession was heading in the right direction due to collaboration with those who had powers and privileges, i.e. the South African Ministry of Health, to effect change for local nurses. Although not all goals were accomplished, a few milestones embedded in the developed strategy were reached.

Expert #4 indicated that collaboration between NEIs facilitated the sharing of best practices. The participant's view on the importance of networking and collaboration with the other stakeholders in HE is best supported by a report that promotes collaboration between the institutions to expand educational opportunities and share the best practices and expertise (Armstrong, 2015:34). The findings of a study conducted by Direko and Davhana-Maselesele (2017:3) suggest that through NEIs' effective collaboration, the quality of nursing education can be maximised. All the above perspectives on educational affiliations validate the participant's contribution

on partnerships and stakeholder collaboration as an existing leadership strength in a challenged and transforming South African nursing education context.

d. Responsiveness

A turbulent environment such as HE requires HEIs' leaders who are able to take instant responsive actions that permit them to explore and learn about what works under new situations and employ these insights to adapt their operations to obtain a better fit with the changing conditions (Andersen *et al.* 2019:2).

The following expert view emerged as leadership competencies in terms of behaving in a manner that responds to the current trends and developments in the profession, i.e. interprofessional education, the digital era, and applying technology in nursing education.

“Currently, institutions are not only gearing themselves for the new qualifications, but also looking at global trends and buying into them, for example interprofessional education and the use of technology in strengthening teaching and learning” (Expert #5).

Being responsive to the challenges faced by HEIs is deemed necessary for these institutions to survive their demands. The discussions in Section 2.3 regarding the challenges threatening HEIs' existence, indicated a need for institutional leadership to appropriately respond in order to survive and succeed in their mandates. Wu and Wang (2011:299) propose that to prosper in progressively uncertain operating milieus, a work conduct that promotes responsiveness to environmental challenges is crucial.

Expert #5's input regarding IPE is reiterated in the Lancet Report that emphasises the many malfunctions in the South African HPE, and they suggest specific instructional and institutional modifications that are mandatory to ensure that future healthcare professionals are 'fit-for-purpose' (Volmink, 2018:1). Abu-Rish *et al.* (2012:444) also emphasise the pressing need to redesign HPE and integrate IPE and a systems approach into students' education and training. Interprofessional education and collaborative practice are recommended as important facilitators for healthcare transformation – with the belief that a transformative collaborative learning

approach at undergraduate level will enhance teamwork across professional boundaries in future practice (Reeves *et al.*, 2013:16; Butler, 2016:36,125). Volmink (2018:2) supports IPE, stating that professional 'tribalism' is perceived as a significant obstacle against effective healthcare delivery.

In addition to engaging with other healthcare professionals through IPE, increasing digital proficiency was also identified as a leadership strength. This is especially important when considering the 4th Industrial Revolution as one of the challenges of the 21st century (Gleason, 2018:5; Penprase, 2018:217; Oke & Fernandes, 2020:2).

“The existing leadership that is necessary and appropriate to navigate HE challenges is getting ready for the new digital age” (Expert #6).

“Challenges of the 21st Century can never be referred to without mentioning the advancements in technology. Nursing students, like other youth, are technologically-savvy, more than those who are supposed to facilitate their education, and the gap is even bigger with those in leadership. This creates a problem of not being able to reach students, and thus not having an effective communication system though this discrepancy is gradually diminishing. The leaders of today are to a large extent aware of the technology gap and are catching up with technology, using it to improve communication, and to be more effective” (Expert #2).

The employment of technology in education is widely advocated, both nationally and internationally. The same participant that alluded to IPE, also stated that the South African nursing education sector responded to the call to integrate IT into nurse education and training. The expert's view is reaffirmed by the positive effects associated with application of IT in education, i.e. student contentment, learning, attention, and motivation as an important experience for their future life (Eryilmaz, 2015:254).

e. Results orientation

“Incumbent improves the throughput of graduates by ensuring that teaching and learning is facilitated in manner that promotes progression than demotion” (Expert #4).

The current national healthcare demands obligate NEIs to educate and train sufficient nurses to meet the country's healthcare demands. From Expert #4's perspective, it appears as if the call to produce nurses has been well received amid the challenges faced by the South African NEIs. Ensuring that students are taught to improve their success is in line with De Lacerda (2015:146), who claims that results-oriented leadership consistently impacts on outcomes and connects leadership qualities to preferred consequences. Results-orientation leadership also emerged as a leadership competency during AI's Discovering phase, therefore justifying the value of results-oriented leaders in nursing education.

f. Acknowledgement and recognition

With regard to the acknowledgment and recognition of staff, a participant shared the following:

“Celebration of every success ... serves as encouragement for greater success. We advertise every significant achievement of our staff members on our LCD screen in the foyer of the building, on the webpage of the School of Nursing, and announce all successes at staff meetings” (Expert #7).

Acknowledging staff achievements has a definite influence on organisational performance and effectiveness. Particularly in educational settings, Öqvist and Malmströmb (2017:155) affirm that motivation is the effort and inner state that revitalises educational activities, expedites learning, and directs behaviour towards attaining academic aspirations. The practice described by Expert #7 that emerged as a leadership competencies is viewed as an attempt to inspire institutional members to continue working towards accomplishments that will advance their personal and professional development, which is crucial for organisational performance. Some participants also appreciated acknowledgement and recognition during the AI's Discovering phase in this study (Section 4.2.1.2), substantiating this behaviour as an existing leadership strength.

g. Resilience and perseverance

The following expression indicates resilience and perseverance during the current challenges faced by nursing education as existing leadership strengths in a challenged and transforming South African nursing education context.

“Resilience to persevere in less than optimal environment, e.g. dealing with current challenges of [the] nursing education climate” (Expert #6).

Considering the complexities facing nursing education globally, it is acknowledged that NEIs require leaders with sound abilities, attitudes, and behaviour to navigate these industry and institutional demands. Southwick *et al.* (2017:315) affirm that organisations with proficiencies to regain balance after exposure to unfavourable events and/or to grow in a risky landscape, not only to survive but also to flourish in an environment characterised by change and volatility. Moreover, resilient establishments have leaders who exhibit continual support of mission of institutions and encourage a higher forbearance for uncertainty and persistence when confronted with threats (Southwick *et al.*, 2017:315). With nursing education in need of competent leadership, the presence of resilience and perseverance as a collective leadership strength in a challenged and transforming South African nursing education context is never more relevant than it is now.

In summary of subtheme 2, the specific experts offered viewpoints regarding the existence of the abilities, attitudes and behaviour, which they consider to be a leadership strength within a South African nursing education context. The participants mentioned resourcefulness and innovation, proactivity, partnership and stakeholder collaboration, responsiveness, results orientation, acknowledgement and recognition, and resilience and perseverance. In a nutshell, achieving educational effectiveness was attributed to nurse education leaders being able to take the initiative and who possess self-motivation and purpose to meet their obligations.

5.2.1.3 Reflection on leadership competencies

As an emergent theme, leadership competencies are widely supported as critical for the endurance of HEIs. While deliberating on the findings, the possession of appropriate leadership competencies indicated the effect that these could have on

the quality of HE, effective governance of HEIs, resource management, and ensuring the necessary staff support to realise optimal student performance. Furthermore, the HE context is regarded as one of the most challenging environments, and therefore the reported ability to be innovative, adapt, and aptly respond to such challenges corroborates the need for leadership competencies in HE. As described in Section 2.5, it is evident that HEIs will be able to navigate challenges they face effectively through competent leadership. The researcher shares this conviction and concurs that competent leaders are critical in the survival of HEIs, particularly NEIs, as they steer these institutions in the desired direction.

5.2.2 Theme 2: Governance, leadership, legislation, and policy

Governance, leadership, legislation, and policy emerged as another existing leadership strength in a challenged and transforming South African nursing education context. This emerging theme was adopted as a recommendation in the National Strategic Plan for Nurse Education, Training, and Practice 2012/2013-2016/17 (NDoH, 2013:12). Although this strategic plan is currently being updated, the researcher is hopeful that these issues will once again be included in the upcoming strategy, as they are considered vital to nursing education, both globally and locally.

In the context of this study, strategic management, leadership effectiveness, compliance with HE's legislative requirements, and an 'open door' policy emerged as Theme 2's subthemes.

5.2.2.1 Subtheme 1: Strategic management

In respect of strategic management, the existence of a clear strategic direction and strategic planning in South African nursing education were discussed.

a. Strategic direction

Expert #2 referred to establishing the office of the CNO as an achievement for the South African nursing profession, as this specific strategic direction has been needed for a significantly long time, particularly in addressing gaps experienced by the nursing education fraternity.

“The nursing profession has, for decades, been excluded [from] strategic decisions at a political level, as there was no representation by nurses. The establishment of the office of Chief Nursing Officer marked a milestone towards having nurses to take control of their own profession and to determine its future. The changing nursing education landscape has a massive impact on nursing qualifications, leadership, finances, infrastructure, and other resources, and the involvement of the CNO’s office in supporting Public Nursing Colleges provided, and continues to be a crucial political link towards the realisation of nursing qualifications being in the main frame of the higher education system. Through the CNO’s office there is a link, and thus better communication with higher authorities, which provides a platform for raising issues inclusive of concerns and challenges” (Expert #2).

Expert # 2 alluded to the political marginalisation of nursing. Prior to the establishment of the CNO’s office, nursing education in the RSA was overseen by the various provincial health departments. This arrangement led to the fragmentation of nurse education and training with substantial inequities between the provinces. In an attempt to address this predicament, the profession took a new direction with inception of the National Strategic Plan for Nurse Education, Training, and Practice 2012/2013-2016/17. This strategic document gave direction for South African nursing education to address its challenges.

Essentially, all professions need strategic direction to fulfil their mandate. In its Global Strategic Directions for Nursing and Midwifery Development 2016-2020, the WHO (2016:14) asserts that a competent, well-supported, and motivated nursing and midwifery workforce can provide quality, equitable health services, and contribute to the wellbeing of individuals, families, and communities. As a directive to achieve the aforementioned, the WHO (2016:10) upholds the necessity of ensuring quality nursing and midwifery education, and it provides parameters within which such a requirement might be achieved. With a clear strategic direction for the country’s NE that the participant referred to, it is believed that the profession could achieve a unified system for the education and training of South African nurses to produce quality and competent nurses. The office of the CNO provided the most needed strategic direction and facilitates nurses’ direct access to the office of the Ministry of Health, thus including nurses who were previously marginalised.

Adding to a perspective on strategic leadership, another participant stated the following in terms of nursing regulation in the country.

“A regulatory framework which directs the development of nursing programmes. This is critical in terms of guiding curriculum content as well as programme requirements for each category of nurse, as well as other criteria following the SANC and CHE specifications” (Expert #5).

The participant’s statement was a reminder that for many years the education and training of nurses in the South African nursing colleges was regulated solely by the SANC, without being aligned to the National Qualifications Framework (Section 1.1). For the past few years, progress has been made towards positioning these colleges in HE in accordance with the prescripts of the Constitution of the RSA (1996) and the HE Act (1997), as amended (Direko & Davhana-Maselesele, 2017). This milestone was widely accepted and appreciated by the numerous key stakeholders, and hence considered by Expert # 5 as an existing leadership strength in a challenged and transforming South African nursing education context. Including all NEIs in the HE sector, will put them on par with other HEIs in terms of benefits and opportunities, while being subjected to the same educational quality standards. The country’s vision of a unified HE system is being realised.

b. Strategic planning

With regard to strategic management, the following view on strategic planning was shared:

“I arranged several workshops with the Management Committee to compile/revise the strategic plan, and to monitor the implementation thereof” (Expert #7).

As a systematic process for creating the future of HEIs, strategic planning focusing on improving the quality of education, intensifying research and scholarly outputs, and fostering community collaborations, is important for HEIs’ to achieve success (Nataraja & Bright, 2018:1). These authors support strategic planning as it allows for the analysis of a current condition and a forecast of the future. Albon *et al.* (2016:207) affirm that strategic planning in HEIs is usually positioned as vital for forthcoming directions, offering a coherent basis for decision-making, determining priorities, and

enhancing institutional performance. Adding to the perspectives on strategic planning, Schram (2014:14) asserts that HEIs should plan strategically to grow and prosper in a competitive environment.

Furthermore, strategic planning is key for effective resource allocation of any organisation, including HEIs (Nataraja & Bright, 2018:1). Therefore, with the NEIs' encountered resource constraints, it seems likely that these institutions would be in a better position to establish their priorities through strategic planning, to which they would apply their limited resources in order to attain their organisational objectives. The participant also stated that their school's strategic planning was a collaborative event, and this sentiment is in line with Delprino's (2013:25) suggestion that a strategic plan must be created in collaboration with educators, support staff, and students. In terms of monitoring of the strategic plan the participant referred to, Ndzoyiya (2019:73) reports that through an M&E process it is possible to detect gaps in a system and devise means resolve issues that have arisen.

With strategic management having being indicated as an existing leadership strength, the provision of strategic direction and strategic planning were deemed critical elements in South African nursing education and training. The perspectives regarding these issues suggest that through critical guidance and proper preparation, the country's existing nursing education gaps could be filled and disparities among NEIs could be corrected. Furthermore, in realising the vision of a unified HE system, strategising has been a catalyst for NEIs in meeting requirements set by CHE and SANC.

5.2.2.2 *Subtheme 2: Leadership effectiveness*

As far as leadership effectiveness is concerned, the participants' viewpoints indicated effective leadership practices, i.e. transformational, democratic, and ethical leadership, as well as the necessary leadership attributes, including professional maturity, cultural diversity and sensitivity, as well as flexibility.

a. Transformational leadership

The following expert statement indicates how nursing leaders have moved from a traditional hierarchical leadership style to transformational leadership.

“The style of leadership has also improved drastically, moving from a previously authoritative, top-down approach to transformational leadership, which embraces the ever-changing environment and encourages the involvement of subordinates in working towards the attainment of a common goal” (Expert #2).

Collaborative approaches to leadership has been proven effective in successfully reaching organisational objectives (Section 2.6.3).

b. Democratic and ethical leadership

Expert #6 asserts that there are ethical and democratic leaders in the South African nursing education context.

“Ethical leadership, i.e. moral and value-based leadership skills as well as democratic consultative leadership style [are] the existing leadership strengths that are necessary and appropriate to navigate HE challenges” (Expert #6).

Transformational, democratic, and ethical leadership are some of approaches deemed necessary for HEIs to navigate challenges of 21st century. This transformational leadership emerged as an appreciated leadership strength during the AI’s Discovering phase (Section 4.2.1). Furthermore, some participants valued the fact that they were involved and consulted regarding institutional matters (Section 4.2.1.2), and this is viewed as democratic leadership. Some participants requested ethical leadership during the AI’s Dreaming phase (Section 4.2.2.4). The communication of these leadership approaches by both Expert #2 and Expert #6 reiterates the importance of these aspects at HEIs. Organisational effectiveness and performance is associated with transformational leadership (Carter *et al.*, 2013), ethical leadership (Ahmad *et al.*, 2017:10), and democratic leadership (Dike & Madubueze, 2019:129), therefore validating these three leadership approaches as existing leadership strengths in a challenged and transforming South African nursing education context.

c. Professional maturity

In terms of leadership traits, one expert referred to professional maturity being observed in nursing education leadership.

“With nursing education, from the lecturer to the HAD, to the principal, all of them are mature, considering the professional journey they undertook before joining the educational institution. They have gained such a lot of experience in terms of their relations with people, be it colleagues, patients, or community they serve. The leaders in nursing education have really transversed all spheres of life of an individual, from the healthy to the illness situation, and this is the foundation that leads one to be able to tackle any situation, no matter how difficult it may be” (Expert #1)

Altun *et al.* (2017:1616) support the participant’s statement by claiming that a leader’s victory is not only dependent on the leadership style, but also on the team members’ maturity level. In their study, Oladi *et al.* (2019:174) conclude that the increased level of maturity of employees improves organisational productivity and performance. Mahdavi *et al.* (2013:122) adds that although professional maturity could have positive consequences for an organisation, it is expected that institutional success leads to personal success, which is considered vital for organisational growth. The existence of mature key role players, i.e. educators and managers, in nursing education creates a positive impression, especially considering that such an essential leadership trait could contribute to the performance of the NEIs.

a. Cultural diversity and sensitivity

With regard to cultural diversity, Experts #1 and 6 specified that cultural diversity and cultural sensitivity is in evidence in a challenged and transforming South African nursing education context.

“One other strength of leaders in nursing education is their understanding of cultural diversity of their learners as well the consumers of the healthcare services. The fact that during their training they were exposed to students of different cultures and races, as well as community members with different cultures, they became empowered to appropriately deal with the needs of the students and the healthcare clients. There is no ‘one size fits all approach’ in terms of how and what to deliver to the students and clients/patients” (Expert #1)

“The existing cultural sensitivity to participate and work with a diverse student and patient population is the leadership strength necessary and appropriate to navigate HE challenges” (Expert #6)

Culturally diverse nursing students encounter numerous difficulties during their educational experience, such as the lack of family support, social isolation, discrimination, and inadequate financial academic support (Degazon & Mancha, 2012:6). These authors further indicate that while improving cultural diversity is an acknowledged need by nursing leaders, efforts to address challenges the culturally diverse students face have been unsuccessful. Acquah *et al.* (2015:219) concur that increasing diversity shifts the landscape for educators who must adapt to these changes, each within their unique contexts. The implication is that countries that hitherto considered diversity issues to be low on the agenda, and that did not have to worry about achievement gaps, now have to confront these issues as the demographic transformation of student populations continues (Acquah *et al.*, 2015:220). South African NEIs are not excluded from challenges relating to the culturally diverse nursing student community, and therefore the participants' stances regarding cultural diversity of nursing educators is considered an affirmation that matters relating to cultural diversity within the NEIs needs to be handled effectively. This leadership trait is viewed as critical for HEIs to respond to globalisation and internationalisation trends that require inter-connectivity between countries with significant diversity (Lumby & Foskett, 2016:101).

d. Flexibility

Expert #6 mentioned flexibility in terms of being able to adapt to changes in HE as a leadership strength.

“Another existing leadership strength that is necessary and appropriate to navigate HE challenges of the 21st century is the flexibility to adapt to the changing HE requirements and needs” (Expert #6).

The participant's stance is corroborated by Collie and Martin (2016:28) who claim that a defining characteristic of education as an occupation is that it involves

innovation, transformation, and uncertainty on a daily basis, and being able to react successfully to such changes is known as adaptability. According to Vaari (2015:3), flexibility is the fundamental of effective leadership through which leaders exercise flexibility in striving to influence other people for the organisation's benefit, thus making flexibility a key factor in enabling leaders to function effectively in various situations. Arrieta and Ancho (2020:91) corroborate that leadership requires adaptability and flexibility that enable leaders to adapt their styles to changing circumstances.

The global nursing education environment is characterised by challenges that increasingly exerts pressure on various stakeholders. As discussed in Section 2.4, adaptation to these demands is vital. Expert #6's perspective is a significantly relevant contribution in this study, as it speaks to the transformation and challenges facing the South African nursing education, which were introduced at the beginning of the study (Section 1.1). The explored theoretical perspectives on leadership in HE indicated that in order to survive these difficulties, HEIs needed to adapt for the sake of survival.

The views on leadership effectiveness consequently demonstrated effective leadership practices, i.e. transformational, democratic, and ethical leadership, as well as the sought after leadership attributes such as professional maturity, cultural diversity and sensitivity, and flexibility. Thus, leadership effectiveness requires decentralisation of self, as a manifestation of professional maturity, to embrace diversity and enable collaboration to meet communal goals.

5.2.2.3 *Subtheme 3: Compliance with HE's legislative requirements*

Legislation emerged as a subtheme in this study when a participant attested to the improvement of skills relating to the legislative framework that governs South African HE.

“Incumbents improving their knowledge on the legislative framework of Higher Education Act and National Qualification Framework Act” (Expert #4)

During the discussion of the strategic direction that was indicated in this study as an existing leadership strength, the researcher specifically referred to nursing colleges being repositioned to fit into the country's HE system (Sections 1.1 & 5.2.2.1).

Higher Education in the RSA and other countries is highly regulated to ensure institutional quality and integrity. The CHE has certain that roles that it fulfils as an independent statutory body provided for by Section 4 of the Hr Education Act 101 of 1997 as amended, as well as the Quality Council for HE in terms of the National Qualification Framework Act 67 of 2008 as amended,. These roles include promoting quality assurance in HE, reviewing HEIs' QA mechanisms, and accrediting HE programmes. All South African public and private HEIs, including NEIs, are mandated to adhere to these statutory laws in providing educational programmes. From the participant's stance, the researcher concluded that being knowledgeable would empower NEIs to comply with the constitutional requirements, thus enabling these institutions to continue with nurse education and training.

Most of the public nursing colleges struggled to obtain accreditation from the CHE due to the council's robust processes. The process was not as tedious for university nursing departments as it was for the colleges because these NEIs were already educating and training students according to the South African HE legislative requirements. Although the participant suggested incumbents sharpening their knowledge on the South African HE legislation, emphasis is placed on the importance of compliance with the relevant legal prescripts. Hence, this aspect was not discussed as a leadership competency in terms of having the necessary knowledge and skills in Section 5.2.1.1. Assuming that if people know the country's HE legislations it would be easier for them to adhere to and to meet the required

education and training standards, this identified leadership strength is considered crucial for the survival of nursing in the RSA.

In short, the viewpoint on compliance with HE legislation demonstrated that the leaders in nursing education were acquainting themselves with the applicable legal HE prescripts, perceiving this aspect as necessary and appropriate to enable South African NEIs to navigate HE 21st century challenges.

5.2.2.4 *Subtheme 4: Open Door Policy*

Loisulie (2019:164) asserts the corporate communication strategy of the manager leaving the door open to encourage transparency and openness for staff, could be applied in governance of HEIs.

Expert# 7 indicated that she practiced an open door policy to facilitate staff approaching her office when they encounter challenges.

“I advocate for an open-door policy and appreciate the fact that staff members discuss problems/issues with me” (Expert #7).

This expert’s sentiment finds support in Loisulie (2019:164), who considers an open door policy as a practice that facilitates the person in charge availing themselves at all times to anyone who wishes to engage or communicate their concerns.

Effective open communication is an integral element of any organisation, and some participants during the AI’s Dreaming phase (Section 4.2.2.2) considered it to be important for the college to navigate its challenges. As part of organisational communication strategy, an open door policy is considered to contribute to a positive work environment in that it promotes open and clear communication that could have desirable effects on work culture and employee productivity (Adu-Oppong & Agyin-Birikorang, 2014:208; Chakraborty & Ganguly, 2018). Just like any other institutions, both educators and support staff members occasionally encounter problems, i.e. personal and professional issues, making them vulnerable to physical and psychological ailments that may adversely affect the quality of their work life, and subsequently their performance. Adopting a communication policy that promotes a work culture where staff members can approach their manager with their problems

or any other business for that matter is crucial. Perhaps, it is relevant to mention here that, similar to students' psychological wellbeing, employees' mental health issues should also be a priority. Poalses and Bezuidenhout (2018:169) contend that HEIs' ability to function effectively depends on staff members' committed endeavours. However, these authors assert that occupational demands and challenging work could become stressful, followed by a burnt-out and disengaged workforce. Effective communication practices such as an open door policy are considered platforms through which those with difficulties in the workplace can be timeously identified and be resolved.

In a nutshell, the participant's comment on the open door policy was supported by literature and demonstrates the significance of institutional managers availing themselves to employees at all times. This practice proved beneficial in creating a positive work environment that could result in increased employee productivity.

5.2.2.5 *Reflection on governance, leadership, legislation, and policy*

The modified Delphi participants, as opposed to those who participated in the AI, elaborated on issues of governance, leadership, legislation, and policy. This could possibly be attributed to the expertise and experience acquired in the particular leadership positions these participants held. Their deliberations on governance, leadership, legislation, and policy demonstrated strategic direction and planning, transformational, ethical, and democratic leadership, knowledge of HE's legislation and policies, as well as an open door policy as ways of achieving educational effectiveness.

5.2.3 Theme 3: Staff development

Staff development also emerged as an existing leadership strength in a challenged and transforming South African nursing education context. Concerning this theme, numerous participants indicated that there were opportunities for CPD, to establish research niche areas, and leadership development.

5.2.3.1 *Subtheme 1: Continuous Professional Development*

Continuous professional development was mentioned as an existing leadership strength in terms of enhancing professional knowledge and skills, staying up-to-date with industry-related knowledge, and skills, and developing scholarship through capacitation to conduct and supervise postgraduate research as well as developing research focus areas.

- a. Enhancing educational qualifications through lifelong learning and keeping abreast of new developments

In relation to CPD, Experts #2 and #4 reported that NEs continuously developed and maintained their professional skills and also kept abreast with new developments.

“The nurse educators have embraced the need to improve their own qualifications and the importance of life-long learning. Previously it was deemed adequate for nurse educators in nursing colleges to only have a nursing education diploma and to have a PhD was unheard of. Nurse educators are currently taking it upon themselves to improve their qualifications, and the benefits are significant, as we now not only have educators who interact with students to offer content, but we now have educators who confidently venture into interactive, technology-based education, thus improving the quality of nursing education. One definitely has to acknowledge the challenge of the ageing population of educators nationwide (myself included), and this implies that there are those who will still stick to the old ways of doing things, but generally the future is promising, and with time the quality of nursing education can only improve” (Expert #2).

Another participant added to the benefits of CPD with the following statement.

“Incumbent keeps abreast with the innovations and transformation within the nursing education landscape” (Expert #4).

As mental health issues have repeatedly surfaced in this study, so too has CPD, which was mentioned as an important aspect in HE, and NE. Continued professional development emerged as an empowering leadership strength during the AI’s Discovering phase, and it was also mentioned as something sought after by a particular participant during the AI’s Dreaming phase. (Sections 4.2.1.2 & 4.2.2.3)

During the AI's Delivering phase, CPD arose as an element considered vital for the college to sustain effective leadership (Section 4.2.4.2).

The researcher is of the opinion that the participants' sentiments regarding CPD are valid and justified. It is evident that the constantly changing HE environment requires individuals to remain up to date with contemporary trends in order to respond to them appropriately (Labour Relations Act 66 of 1995; SANC, 2020a:43). Especially, in health sciences profession where new knowledge, methods, and approaches are continuously discovered and rapidly developed. Hence, healthcare professionals, including NEs, are expected to engage in CPD so that they keep abreast of new professional developments.

As one of the parameters to ensure quality nursing and midwifery education, the WHO (2016:13) expect educators to have the necessary knowledge in terms of evidence-based and up-to-date nursing content and industry-related subjects. Sokoli and Koren (2017:446) assert that educators are liable for enhancing students' lives and mentalities, and therefore they should have the most advanced and informed level of education so as not to mislead students. These authors further affirm that theories and best practices change frequently, and without continuous subject information updates, the educators would not be informed about the most practical theories and best practices currently in use, and could therefore disseminate incorrect information. Similarly, CPD is considered a channel through which academics continue to advance and improve their professional practice throughout their careers by staying current with new developments, and learning new strategies, techniques, and methods for teaching based on research (Chikari *et al.*, 2015:29).

b. Scholarship development opportunities

Experts #10 and #7 were specific in terms of CPD by stating that they had developed novice educators in research areas so that they were able to mentor postgraduate students.

"We take newly recruited young academics to research writing retreats and workshops so that they [can] develop their research skills and also, so that they [can] supervise students through their research studies" (Expert #10)

“Several research workshops were offered locally to staff and postgraduate students to promote the development of a research culture in the School of Nursing and to improve research outputs. Investing in scholarship development was money well spent” (Expert #7).

Research supervision is an important academic function, especially at universities where research plays a significant role in these institution’s growth, i.e. in the application of EBP as well income generation. The higher the number of postgraduate students that successfully complete their studies, the higher the subsidy allocation the institution will receive. Engaging in activities that promote research skills’ development among novice academics, as reported by Expert #10 is admirable, considering the fact that nursing education requires young scholars to take over from an ageing and retiring NE population, and set trends in the South African nursing sector. Ahmad *et al.* (2015:194) assert that the various factors leading to funding inadequacies has resulted in HEIs seeking additional income to support their expenses. In accordance with these authors, research that academics engage in to earn an additional income is vital for the HEI’s development and sustainability. Oliver *et al.* (2013:6) concur that HEIs must be transformed to be more research-driven and to generate additional income for their own use, while simultaneously advancing the economy.

The following experts spoke about CPD in terms of resources, i.e. time to study, scholarship opportunities, and funding they offered to the employees so that they could advance their knowledge and skills.

“Incumbent advocate[s] the lecturing staff to advance their educational career by providing study leave, study tours, attendance of conferences, and encouraging [them] to write articles and [make] poster[s] for presentation at conferences or peer-reviewed journals” (Expert #4).

“I invest in the development and training of staff. I allocated R400 000.00 annually for staff development and constantly seek to create opportunities for staff members and support them. Academic staff members are granted opportunities to attend capacity-building workshops, conferences, and more, according to their research needs. It brought about change in attitudes towards research responsibilities and output. The

determination and confidence of academics who were part of this development process has increased in leaps and bounds” (Expert #7).

From the two experts’ perspectives stated above it is apparent that despite financial challenges reported by HEIs generally, the university’s nursing departments with limited subsidies are still able to send the staff members for professional development. This achievement could be attributed to extra revenue earned from research or third stream income for the purposes of scholarship development. Unfortunately for the South African public nursing colleges this is not the case, hence, some participants’ request for CPD funding participants, as stated during the AI’s Delivering phase. Perhaps with the transition to HE, the South African public nursing colleges could be capacitated and empowered to participate in income-generating activities that generates money that could be used for several purposes, including CPD. Jehanzeb and Bashir (2013:244) aver that many establishments invest a lot of money on CPD to ensure that employees remain competitive and successful. Nda and Fard (2013:92) claim that 21st century institutions will be successful if they learn and adapt to changes faster than their competitors. Hence, organisations devote significant funds and time on education to aid their employees learning of job-related competencies.

Furthermore, CPD increases employees’ expertise and work quality, aiding them to be more dedicated in realising institutional intents, and in turn improving their organisational efficiency (Nda & Fard; 2013:92; Nassazi, 2013:2; Vinesh, 2014:213). Various standpoints about CPD being beneficial for institutions, validate the actions of those engaged in CPD and those who facilitate CPD for others as an important aspect for the survival of organisations, thus justifying the participants’ views on CPD being an existing leadership strength in a challenged and transforming South African nursing education context.

Another participant referred to staff development in terms of providing opportunities to academic staff members to develop their own research focus areas.

“I gave two staff members the opportunity to establish their own research niche area in the School. Over the past seven years a solid foundation has been laid for these

two niche areas, and various funding grants were received. Twenty-three master's and four PhD students have graduated in these niche areas" (Expert #7).

Empowerment was one of the leadership strengths valued by some participants during the AI's Discovering phase (Section 4.2.1.1), attributing such leadership behaviour to success of the NEI, which essentially promotes empowering leadership as a factor contributing to organisational performance and effectiveness. Empowering leadership influences team cooperation and creative behaviour through psychological enablement and affective commitment (Chen et al., 2011:543; Özarallı, 2015:366). Furthermore, occupational team members who have greater levels of psychological empowerment and affective commitment are likely to be motivated to engage in behaviour that makes a positive contribution to their team and organisation (Chen et al., 2011:543).

The comments on CPD allude to the opportunities that staff members are constantly presented with for professional enhancement. These prospects have been associated with optimal staff performance and subsequent improvement in nursing education quality. Furthermore, empowering staff members to develop their own research niche areas is another staff development opportunity referred to as an existing leadership strength that could strengthen EBP and quality healthcare service delivery.

5.2.3.2 *Subtheme 2: Leadership development*

Additional perspectives on staff development demonstrated how some participants embarked on initiatives that developed others' leadership knowledge and skills, and these endeavours emerged as leadership competencies in this study.

The following experts mentioned how they strived to create opportunities for staff members to participate in educational leadership and management roles within the institution so that they could develop the skills necessary to influence and supervise others to work towards goal attainment.

"I have changed the organogram of the School of Nursing to allow senior staff to take responsibility for different portfolios to ensure capacity development in leadership and management" (Expert #7).

“Incumbent establishes champions that will oversee the various disciplines in nursing, i.e. general, psychiatry, midwifery, community, specialisations whereby teaching and learning is executed” (Expert #4)

Effective leadership is widely advocated for, especially in HE milieus that change radically, and in situations where professionals operate in more uncertain environments, and leaders take increasingly complex and diverse approaches to their leadership roles (Dopson *et al.*, 2018:218). The deliberations on the leadership required by HEIs in responding appropriately to the demands of the 21st century were supportive of the fact that leadership competencies are key in educational institutions. Now, the question asked is: How could these establishments better acquire the necessary leadership knowledge and skills? The need for leadership development is gradually becoming apparent, and a growing number of HEIs are dedicating increasing attention to formal and informal leadership development (Gmelch & Buller, 2015:5-6; Ruben *et al.*, 2018:243). Albertyn and Frick (2016:11) support leadership development, claiming that such an undertaking should focus on enhancing skills that will result in responsiveness to existing macro and micro environmental challenges in any given setting. Allowing others to engage in leading NEIs, as indicated by the two participants, will provide employees with the leadership skills required to steer an organisation in the right direction. They may also apply these skills in future should they occupy formal leadership positions. The importance of leadership development was also alluded to during the AI’s Dreaming phase as sustaining effective leadership at a specific public nursing college (Section 4.2.2).

The following perspectives continue to endorse leadership development as an existing leadership strength in a challenged and transforming South African nursing education context. The participant highlighted that novice academics’ leadership knowledge and skills were developed, preparing them for future leadership roles when older leaders retire.

“New academics are involved in various committees in the university so that they [can] gain leadership skills, because if we don’t involve [them] they might think that being in academia is only about teaching and learning, and that is not the case” (Expert #10)

“At our NEI we recruit young academics to take over when the older nurses retire. We make [sure] that everyone is involved in the activities of the department, we allocate everyone to lead a certain aspect of the departmental activities, allocating everyone to lead a certain aspect so that they [are] able to develop their leadership skills. We always make sure that these individuals are empowered in terms of being sent for leadership workshops, i.e. performance management system training, which is one aspect of leadership, so that they know how to manage performance in an academic institution” (Expert #10).

This participant’s sentiments on developing young academics’ leadership skills for future leadership positions is endorsed by Arrieta (2020:91), who suggests preparing future leaders to be relevant and responsive to the demands of their times. Nick *et al.* (2012:8) add that one trait of a true leader is being an excellent mentor to develop future leaders. Such mentorship forms part of succession planning, which is important for the sustainability of HEIs. Various authors draw attention to situations where leaders are assigned to a position for which they have not been prepared, which could have disastrous repercussions for organisations (Gmelch & Buller, 2015:2; Jooste *et al.*, 2018:1). Therefore, confirming the participant’s input about leadership development of novice academics being an existing leadership strength within the context of the study.

The discussions on leadership development as an existing leadership strength support the fact that the future of South African nursing education is reliant on the development of future academic leaders. It is evident that those involved in developing novice nurse academics’ leadership skills are concerned about who will take over the baton when older nurse academics retire. Through this development by means of mentoring, the future nurse academic leaders could easily succeed their predecessors, and ensure sustainability of NEIs amidst 21st century challenges.

5.2.3.3 *Reflection on staff development*

Within a transformational leadership context, CPD enables staff to engage fully in collaborative leadership positions. Perspectives on staff development attest to what participants describe as ongoing development of staff’s professional and leadership skills. Having the necessary, updated professional competencies and enhanced leadership skills is generally considered a determinant of organisational effectiveness

and performance. It is believed that performance is likely to improve by enhancing employees' knowledge and skills, thus enhancing institutional productivity. Additionally, scholarship development maintains focus on EBP that contributes to safe and quality healthcare services. The existence of staff development, as reported by the participants, holds many possibilities for these institutions to navigate their challenges.

5.2.4 Theme 4: Community engagement

An additional theme that emerged from the nurse education leadership experts' inputs was CE. Teaching and learning, research and CE forms part of HE's three functions (UFS, 2020). Community engagement has long been adopted internationally and locally as an appropriate and pertinent HEI obligation. Ogunsanya and Govender (2019:51) assert that CE has become a key component in HEIs that are complexly connected to the traditional academic roles of teaching and research. Furthermore, collaboration with the relevant external stakeholders that tackle key socio-economic and developmental challenges in society is of strategic significance to many HEIs (Ogunsanya & Govender, 2019:51).

The Centre for Disease Control (CDC) (2011:3) offered a working definition of CE as "the process of working collaboratively with and through groups of people affiliated by a geographic proximity, special interest, or similar situations; to address issues affecting the well-being of others". It is considered to be a powerful way for bringing about environmental and behavioural changes to improve a community's health. It often involves partnerships and coalitions that aid in mobilising resources and influences systems, changes partner relationships, and serves as a catalyst for changing policies, programmes, and practices (CDC, 2011:3). In addition, Jacob *et al.* (2015:1) consider CE in HE as resulting in sustainable links, collaborations, communication media, and activities between HEIs and communities at local, national, regional, and international levels. These authors propose that collaborative activities between communities and HE may be formal or informal, and include developing relationships, collaboration initiatives, business ventures, co-sponsored meetings, conferences, sports events, research projects, and many, many other activities.

As a result, the RSA also had to appropriately respond to these trends. The White Paper on Education of 1997 called on South African universities to demonstrate social responsibility and their fidelity to the common good by using their knowledge-based expertise and infrastructure in responding to regional and national community needs (Department of Education, 1997). In addition to the abovementioned strategic document is the White Paper for Post-School Education and Training of 2014 that stipulates the necessity for a post-school education and training system that is responsive to the needs of individual citizens, employers in both public and private sectors, and broader societal and developmental objectives (DoHET, 2014:3). With the placement of these expectations on HEIs, adopting CE as an important aspect of HE is validated.

Having been part of HEIs since their inception, university nursing departments have engaged in CE initiatives as mandated. Sibiya *et al.* (2013:1) confirm that CE is prioritised in university nursing schools, and aims to promote and develop social responsibility and awareness amongst students on the role of CE in social and economic development through service programmes. Within a unified HE system all NEIs would be in a position to employ their scholarly expertise to make a difference in the lives of their community members.

Experts # 1 and #10 offered responses that referred to CE. The contributions related to nursing education being community-oriented and the sector's ability in to engage in research that seeks to improve communities' health status.

5.2.4.1 *Subtheme 1: Community based education*

Expert #1 specified that nurse education and training was implemented in a manner that facilitated active interaction with communities in order to establish their needs and care for them accordingly.

“Compared to other courses where learners depend on what is taught in class by the lecturers, with nursing education the learners make continuous contact with the community, and this gives them the opportunity to properly assess the needs of the communities, understand their problems, cultural preferences, and their expectations from the health professionals. This system prepares future professionals to take

cognisance of all the above matters about the people they serve, so that they take ownership of their health” (Expert #1).

With the changes evident in the South African healthcare system, traditional content-driven education had to be substituted with a community-oriented approach, and this challenged the NE’s custodians to rethink their position so as to remain relevant and appropriate. Mtshali and Gwele (2015:55) attest that CBE became the medium through which healthcare students and educators were prepared with the comprehensive knowledge, competencies, and attitudes required to respond to the healthcare needs of the South African population. These authors claim that nurse educators were challenged to adopt learning and teaching approaches that were aligned to national health policies and healthcare system reforms. In support of adopting the CBE approach, Marjorie and Hargate (2019:1) report on the key recommendation for transforming nursing education for the future, i.e. educating nurses to work with diverse people in community milieus.

An example of healthcare reform is Primary Healthcare (PHC) re-engineering. The WHO (2008:64) called for the re-engineering of PHC to realise universal health coverage, and indeed several countries, including the RSA, responded with PHC-oriented policies. In light of these developments, it is vital for nursing education programmes to respond to national health policies (Baglin & Rugg, 2010:144; Kaye *et al.*, 2011:7) as they are mandated and compelled to educate and train nurses that are able to perform across all levels of the healthcare system (Farsi *et al.*, 2010). Many suitable practical placement environments for WIL form part of preparing responsive nursing students (Farzi *et al.*, 2010:15; Foli *et al.*, 2014:80-81). It is through such placements that students are able to apply their acquired knowledge (Rivière, *et al.*, 2019:796). Appropriate settings should encompass traditional settings, e.g. hospitals and non-traditional environments, such as communities, patients’ homes, and hospital-linked outreach services. This is current practice in the South African nursing education, and therefore supports the aforementioned authors’ sentiments.

Community based education as a teaching strategy that considers communities’ needs and preferences has been endorsed to improve the health status of the most needy and vulnerable citizens. Including community aspects in nursing education and

allowing students to engage with communities as measures seeking to promote communities' health status is considered responsive to progressive international and national health policies. In this way, both students and communities benefit from a reciprocal educational relationship.

5.2.4.2 *Subtheme 2: Community based research*

With regard to embarking on community based research (CBR), Expert #10 stated that new educators were equipped to engage in rigorous research and apply their skills and teach in CE initiatives to benefit communities.

“The new academics are developed in terms of community engagement aspects whereby we conduct research pertaining to [a] community, and then return to the community when we have the results to give them a report and make them aware of the findings. This enables the lecturers to integrate what they are doing into community engagement, and if there are any interventions needed, they go back to the community and implement them” (Expert #10).

Community based research is one of the specific practices universities implement as CE (Esau, 2015:69; Ross & Stoecker, 2017:7). Community based research is considered a partnership approach to research that equitably involves diverse partners in the research process, and it enables them to contribute, improves a shared understanding, and integrates knowledge gained with interventions and policy change (Israel & Rowe, 2015). Within the framework of social transformation at HEIs, social accountability and responsiveness to development challenges is important, and are achievable through research in close co-operation with communities and the service sector, including HEIs, within the spirit of reciprocity (University of Limpopo, 2020:8). Through social accountability, the health science schools are obliged to direct their education, research, and service activities towards addressing the priority health concerns of the community, region, and/or nation they are mandated to serve (Kline *et al.*, 2018:81). The growing demands that are constrained by finite resources raise concerns about the sustainability of health systems, and perhaps these could be addressed by responding appropriately to obligations in terms of CBR (WHO, 2007; National Health Service England, 2017). Community based research plays a major role in ensuring that healthcare is sustainable, effective, efficient, safe, and

appropriate (Jull *et al.*, 2017:2). With these benefits of CBR in mind, CE programmes at HEIs would likely benefit these establishments and vulnerable and needy communities.

The deliberations on CBR indicate the significance of this important aspect of CE, through which both HEIs and communities could benefit immensely from collaborative research partnerships. Communities' health status could improve as could the HEIs' research outputs, and this is regarded as a mutually beneficial relationship necessary for HE sustainability.

5.2.4.3 *Reflection on community engagement*

As previously indicated, CE is one of HE's most important functions. Engagement with local communities is likely to minimise a combination of academic, socio-political, and economic challenges that have resulted in a turbulent South African HE landscape (Bhagwan, 2017:171). This author asserts that through CE, discovery, learning, and innovation could be exploited and nurtured so that HE could become further entrenched in society and considered a partner concerned about society's wellbeing.

Both CBE and CBR are considered methods to ensure that community needs are identified and addressed in a manner that is suitable and relevant. In this way the service sector would base their interventions on evidence that has been produced in mutual relationships with the communities, rather than assumptions.

5.3 SUMMARY OF THE DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS OF A MODIFIED DELPHI

Four main themes emerged from what various NELEs perceived to be the existing leadership strengths at the time of data collection. Their perspectives enriched the data collected during the AI by adding existing leadership strengths relating to leadership competencies, governance, leadership, legislation and policy, staff development, as well as CE. The subthemes that formed part of Theme 1 were knowledge, skills, and abilities, attitudes, and behaviour. In terms of Theme 2, strategic management, leadership effectiveness, compliance with HE's legislative

requirements, and an open door policy were considered to be existing leadership strengths. Continued professional development and leadership development emerged as Theme 3's subthemes. Within Theme 4, CBE and CBR were introduced. The literature integrated into the experts' views affirmed the applicability of the experts' inputs. Therefore the elements considered to be necessary were found to be appropriate in enabling South African NEIs to navigate the 21st century HE challenges.

Chapter 6 A Framework to Strengthen Leadership at a South African Public Nursing College

6.1 INTRODUCTION

The impetus of this study was informed by the serious challenges that a specific South African public nursing college was facing, including transitioning to HE. The institutional leadership was challenged to help the college to respond appropriately to its demands to effectively navigate the transition to HE. In making a contribution to existing knowledge, the researcher endeavoured to construct a framework to strengthen leadership at this particular college. Authenticity of the framework, which is believed to be engrained in the participants' perspectives, was achieved by inductively building the themes based on the researcher's interpretation of the data. Therefore the framework should be viewed as an inter-subjective platform, from which the participants' distinct perspectives on leadership strengthening were elicited and considered.

As a socially constructed reality, and an original contribution of the study, a framework to strengthen leadership at a specific South African public nursing college was developed in accordance with the research purpose. More specifically, by synthesising the separately analysed AI findings and a modified Delphi, the study's third objective as described in Section 1.4, was achieved. The framework was then presented to various college key stakeholders for validation in accordance with the fourth study objective conveyed in Section 1.4.

6.2 DEVELOPMENT OF A FRAMEWORK TO STRENGTHEN LEADERSHIP AT A SOUTH AFRICAN PUBLIC NURSING COLLEGE

In contributing to knowledge presented in this research, the researcher used inductive reasoning to develop the framework (Trafford & Leshem, 2008:49; Creswell & Creswell, 2018:35). Guided by social constructionism, the researcher used qualitative methods in his quest to strengthen leadership at a particular public nursing college in South Africa. Social interaction with the participants created knowledge,

and various groups were involved to incorporate multiple realities concerning leadership strengths in this context. In this way, the researcher assumed a dialectic stance.

Data sets emanating from three AI sessions and a modified Delphi were analysed separately by means of a thematic content analysis, and involved an iterative process of meaning making. The findings from the AI and modified Delphi are summarised in Table 6.1 according to the identified themes and subthemes to show the origin of these descriptions and to authenticate that the elements incorporated into the framework represent the participants' views. Similar aspects are colour-coded for ease of reference.

Table 6.1 Integration of the findings from the AI and the modified Delphi

AI findings			Modified Delphi findings	
AI phases	Themes	Subthemes	Themes	Subthemes
Discovering phase	<i>Transformational leadership approaches</i>	<i>Supportive, empowering, and motivational leadership</i>	<i>Leadership competencies</i>	<i>Knowledge and Skills</i>
	<i>Leadership competencies</i>	<i>Knowledge and skills</i>		<i>Abilities, attitudes, and behaviour</i>
		<i>Attitudes and behaviour</i>	<i>Governance, leadership, legislation, and policy</i>	<i>Strategic management</i>
Dreaming phase	<i>Resources</i>	<i>Infrastructure</i>		<i>Leadership effectiveness</i>
		<i>Human resources</i>		<i>Compliance with HE's legislative requirements</i>
	<i>Leadership development and competencies</i>	<i>Leadership skills training</i>		<i>Open door policy</i>
		<i>Knowledge, skills, and abilities</i>	<i>Staff development</i>	<i>CPD</i>
	<i>Academic support</i>	<i>Support for professional development</i>		<i>Leadership development</i>
		<i>Student support</i>	<i>Community engagement</i>	<i>CBE</i>
	<i>Governance</i>	<i>Ethical leadership</i>		<i>CBR</i>
		<i>Institutional autonomy</i>		
	<i>Innovation and application of technology in learning and teaching</i>	<i>Innovative teaching</i>		
		<i>Technology use for learning and teaching purposes</i>		
Delivering phase	<i>Research</i>			
	<i>Financial resources</i>			
	<i>Training and development</i>			

The different themes and subthemes presented in Table 6.1 were integrated to form components deemed relevant and critical for inclusion in the framework for leadership strengthening at the particular college (refer to Table 6.2 for a visual representation of the integrated themes and subthemes that formed the framework's components).

Table 6.2 Framework Components

	Components	Subthemes
Foundational	Transformational leadership	Supportive, empowering, and motivational leadership
	Leadership competency	Knowledge and skills
		Abilities, attitudes and behaviour
	Capacity development	
	Resources	Financial, infrastructure, human
Supportive	Academic support	Innovative teaching, professional and student support
	Staff development	CPD, leadership development
	Technology	
Overarching	Innovation and application of technology in teaching	Use of technology for learning and teaching purposes
	Research	
	Community engagement	CBE and CBR
Overarching	Governance, legislation, leadership, and policy	Institutional autonomy, strategic management
		Compliance with HE's legislative requirements
		Ethical leadership, leadership effectiveness
		Open door policy

The components were organised into levels, i.e. those deemed to be foundational, supportive, and overarching in leadership strengthening.

6.2.1 The first level of the framework that is considered to be foundational in leadership strengthening

Transformational leadership, leadership competency, and capacity development are the three elements considered to be the basis for providing institutional leadership with the overall stability required to steer the college in the right direction, thus enabling the college leadership to respond effectively to demands and survive the transition to HE.

6.2.1.1 *Transformational leadership*

Transformational leadership as an approach considered essential in leadership strengthening was described in terms of supportive, empowering, and motivational leadership that emerged as the participants' appreciated leadership strengths. These three leadership approaches, as discussed in Section 4.2.1.1, have respectively been associated with positive organisational outcomes.

Through supportive leadership, focusing on the followers' wellbeing and considering their needs, preferences, and satisfaction, could assist them to achieve their individual goals, thus contributing to institutional success. In terms of empowering leadership, leaders are likely to exert a positive influence by supporting their members' personal and professional development and inspiring them to imitate leadership's positive behaviour. As far as motivational leadership is concerned, inspiring both students and staff appears to have desirable effects on leading in terms of both student success and organisational effectiveness. The positive impact of the three leadership approaches on institutional efficiency is likely to be associated with transformational leadership.

Effectiveness and efficiency in HE is usually attributed to transformational leadership where leaders bring about the desired beneficial change in persons and societal systems, focusing on enhancing institutional qualities, dimensions, and efficiency. For this reason, transformational leadership is widely advocated for and deemed appropriate for HEIs, specifically in an era where it is deemed significant, relevant, and impacts HEIs' survival and success (Section 2.6.1). Thus it is unsurprising that this leadership approach is considered a foundational component of a college's leadership strengthening.

Nurtjahjani *et al.* (2020:95) confirm transformational leadership as a basis of HE, emphasising that successful learning in HEIs needs transformational leaders. These leaders are expected to transform these institutions into institutions that effect anticipated change in terms of quality education (Lerra, 2015:174). Employee engagement, collaboration, and cohesion are associated with transformational leadership, and Fischer (2017:124) asserts that similar positive effects could be experienced if transformational leadership is employed as a guiding framework for NE.

Analogous to deliberations on transformational leadership, the expressed benefits associated with transformational leadership refer to aspects relating to students and employees (Sections 2.6.1 & 4.2.1.1). Students and staff, both academic and non-academic, are some of the key stakeholders in HE, and therefore issues such as quality education, student success, and employee engagement require competent leaders who are able to prioritise these aspects.

The researcher believes that emergent transformational leadership approaches, i.e. supportive, empowering, and motivational leadership should be embraced and sustained as something to enhance followers' productivity and subsequently improve organisational performance.

6.2.1.2 *Leadership competency*

The various perspectives offered in literature regarding leadership in HE indicate that HEIs require competent leaders to direct these institutions to successfully accomplishing their obligations (Section 1.1). In general, HEIs are expected to equip people with essential knowledge and skills, enabling them to engage in entrepreneurial activities and participate in the job market, thus contributing to local and global economies (Fulgence, 2015:3; Pardo-Garcia & Barac, 2020:3). Possession of relevant knowledge, skills, and demonstration of appropriate attitudes and behaviours were reported as appreciated leadership strengths at the college, and some participants attributed the positive staff and student outcomes to leadership competency.

The experts consulted also attested to leadership competency as an existing leadership strength in the RSA; thus validating the significance of these in NE. Mrig and Sanaghan (2017:3) and Kurniady *et al.* (2020:111) propose that HE leaders ought to have the competencies necessary to meet the current educational demands as described in Section 1.1. These leaders are expected to provide astute, effective, and prolific answers to the variety of difficulties and challenges currently confronted, achieving this in partnership with the people they lead (Kurniady *et al.*, 2020:110). Incorporating leadership competencies into the developed framework seeks to highlight how significant it is for the college leadership to demonstrate and sustain the necessary and desired competencies while simultaneously responding to challenges and navigating the transition to HE.

6.2.1.3 *Capacity development*

Capacity development was considered an important aspect in terms of CPD, leadership development, and resource availability, i.e. human, material, and financial. Many authors promote capacity development as initiatives aimed at enhancing individual and organisational performance, declaring this an important and non-negotiable aspect.

Okorafor *et al.* (2012:18) consider capacity development to be a process of advancing and strengthening skills, instincts, abilities, processes, and resources required to survive, adapt, and prosper in the fast-changing technological world. Similarly, Oviawe *et al.* (2017:59) describe capacity development as efforts geared towards improving an individual's level of knowledge, skills, and attitude to enhance their proficiency in a given task or job, and to establish resources necessary to achieving goals. Power *et al.* (2015:34) relate capacity development to policy, infrastructure, and academic support systems, i.e. IT, library, quality assurance, and raising research capacity. These authors' sentiments affirm the participants' stances regarding capacity development, and most importantly, they validate capacity development as the basis for leadership strengthening.

South African public nursing colleges have typically experienced serious shortcomings regarding capacity development due to the reasons briefly explained in the discussion of the findings. However, it is hoped that transitioning to HE will better place these institutions financially, as they would no longer have to compete with the public healthcare service delivery sector for funding. This would enable institutions to access the necessary resources, academic support, and staff development to fulfil their purpose.

6.2.2 The second level of the framework considered supportive of leadership strengthening

Technology, research, and CE emerged as themes supporting leadership strengthening. These three components resonate with the three functions of teaching and learning, research, and CE, all of which are considered essential to realise HEIs' mission (Section 5.2.4).

6.2.2.1 Technology

The participants considered the use of technology in teaching to be an essential component in assisting the college to navigate its challenges. When integrating the participants' perspectives with literature consulted, it was clear that without the proper IT infrastructure, i.e. relevant devices, internet connectivity, and the skills required to utilise these facilities, HEIs would become irrelevant and struggle to appropriately respond to current HE demands.

Integration of technology in HE increased due to the 4IR, where HEIs are expected to rise to the challenge of making learning accessible to a rapidly increasing number of students (Section 5.2.1.2). Various authors assert that IT has become an integral part of today's teaching learning process, and its importance will continue to grow and develop in years to come (Habib & Ghulam, 2017:2810; Ratheeswari *et al.*, 2018:45). This was found to be especially true due to restrictions imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic.

There are many benefits associated with the application of IT in education, and the effective use of IT can inspire students, make lectures dynamic and thought-provoking, and restore educator enthusiasm as they acquire new skills and techniques (Habib & Ghulam, 2017:2810). Furthermore, using IT in education improves classroom teaching and the learning process, facilitates e-learning, and embraces and applies IT in education, positively affecting teaching, learning, and research (Coopasami *et al.*, 2017:301; Habib *et al.*, 2017:2810; Ratheeswari, 2018:45). Most importantly, Pujari *et al.* (2020:117) consider the application and use of IT in education to enhance the learning environment as well as preparing the next generation for future lives and careers.

The described benefits of employment IT in teaching endorses technology as a supportive element in the framework. It is believed that through adequate access to and application of technology, the college would remain relevant and competitive, both nationally and internationally, and that it will provide the educational needs of both the existing and future generations.

6.2.2.2 *Research*

Research emerged as an existing leadership strength and as an aspect that certain participants consider crucial for the college to navigate its challenges. In addition to the other two pillars of HE, i.e. learning and teaching and CE, research is also deemed an integral part of HE (DoE, 1997; Wilson, 2013:1).

The deliberations on this key pillar of HE demonstrates how important it is for HEIs to foster and promote EBP. There are valid reasons why research is considered important in HE, among them the necessity to improve an institution's image and status, to add to its knowledge base, to discover new methods of doing things, and to solve problems encountered in practice (Mafenya, 2014:436). In health sciences specifically it is vital to translate research evidence into practice to enhance the quality of healthcare services.

As previously indicated, the South African public nursing colleges, unlike the university nursing departments, have not actively engaged in research as expected. It is hoped that with the transition to HE, the South African public nursing colleges, including the one under study, will become actively involved in the research community in order to remain relevant, close educational gaps, and provide evidence-based nursing education and practice.

Most importantly, it is assumed that active participation in research activities will generate new information and enable the college to generate research-related revenue and attract funding based on their research outputs. From such a financial boost, the required capacity development mentioned by various study participants could become a reality.

6.2.2.3 *Community engagement*

The significance of CE, as an essential function of HE, has acquired substantial momentum (Wilson, 2013:1; Preece, 2016:208), and has emerged as an existing leadership strength, and two experts referred to CBE and research conducted as addressing certain community health ailments. Additionally, literature supports the existence of good relations between HEIs and communities.

Jadhav and Suhalka (2016:22) assert that HE cannot be enhanced without active engagement in communities, and consider such engagement as a reciprocal process during which partners strengthen one another. In the RSA particularly, Shawa (2020:105) proposes that CE needs to be revitalised and aligned to the HEIs' teaching and research roles. Furthermore, while it is accepted that CE should involve collaborative knowledge production, it should also include the holistic human development capable of dealing with social disparities.

Due to the fact that CE did not emerge during any of the AI phases, it is assumed that including CE into a developed framework would alert the college to this important HE aspect. Fostering active CE is considered crucial in enabling the college as it provides an outcome that benefits the community and meets HE's expectations.

6.2.3 The third level of the framework considered to be the overarching element in leadership strengthening

Governance, legislation, leadership, and policy as aspects considered priorities in the South African nursing education (NDoH, 2013:12), were included in the framework to promote institutional governance and leadership on an ongoing basis. This component of the framework is seen as something that could safeguard the college from any possible challenges that would render it ineffective in executing its mandate. Constituted of ethical leadership, institutional autonomy, strategic management, leadership effectiveness, compliance with HE's legislative requirements, and an open door policy, this component is significant for institutional performance and success.

Within this theme, it is evident that ethical leaders who possess certain attributes, i.e. honesty, integrity, fairness and others are significant in a dynamic HE environment (Section 4.2.2.4). To survive their current demands, HEIs require the highest level of

integrity and efficiency. With regard to autonomy, HEIs must be given the necessary independence in order to access state funding and academic freedom while being held publically accountable (Section 4.2.2.4). In terms of strategic management, a clear strategic direction and plan was considered one strategy through which the South African nursing profession could tackle its challenges and plan strategically to grow and prosper in a competitive environment (Section 5.2.2.1). As far as leadership effectiveness is concerned, certain leadership approaches (transformational, ethical, and democratic) and leadership attributes have been proven beneficial in complex environments such as HE (Section 5.2.2.2). Compliance with HE's legal prescripts is an important aspect for HEIs to observe to continue offering quality education (Section 5.2.2.3). Being open and transparent and available is considered an open door policy, a principle proven to positively affect work culture and employee productivity (Section 5.2.2.4).

It is assumed that by paying necessary attention to issues of governance, leadership, legislation, and an open door policy, the public nursing college under study will manage to navigate its demands and its transition to HE. While doing so to create a positive work setting and optimising its members' performance, the college would be better positioned to fulfil its obligation, i.e. educating and training competent nurses who can render safe and quality nursing care. Thus, these views validate including governance, legislation, leadership, and policy in a framework to strengthen leadership at a South African public nursing college.

6.3 CONSTRUCTION OF THE FRAMEWORK

In designing this study's framework, the researcher resorted to a neo-classical style of architecture often observed in educational buildings around the world (RIBA, 2017). More particularly, the Doric style derived from Greek architecture provided the basic structural items that correlated with the framework's identified components. These single room buildings are typically characterised by solid foundational structures, pillars, or columns and a triangular roof or pediment (Zimmer Lederberg, 2018). The interior or cella often contains representative images (Britannica, 2021).

A structure of this nature is considered sufficiently robust to sustain the college while navigating its challenges. All the concepts applied in the framework are described in terms of three important structural elements, i.e.:

- i. the foundation as the basis of effective leadership;
- ii. three columns as the supporters of effective leadership; and
- iii. a pediment as the overarching element of effective leadership.

These three structural elements offer this particular college the necessary strength against any issues that could jeopardise the institution's efforts to deliver its mandate, i.e. education and training of competent nurses who are able to deliver quality and safe nursing care.

The components identified and discussed in the previous section were constructed into the framework according to their designated roles of being foundational, supportive, or overarching. Refer to Figure 6.1 for a visual presentation of the framework to strengthen leadership at a South African public nursing college. The choice of colours applied in the framework carries no specific significance, except for its consistency with the colours used in the study's visuals.

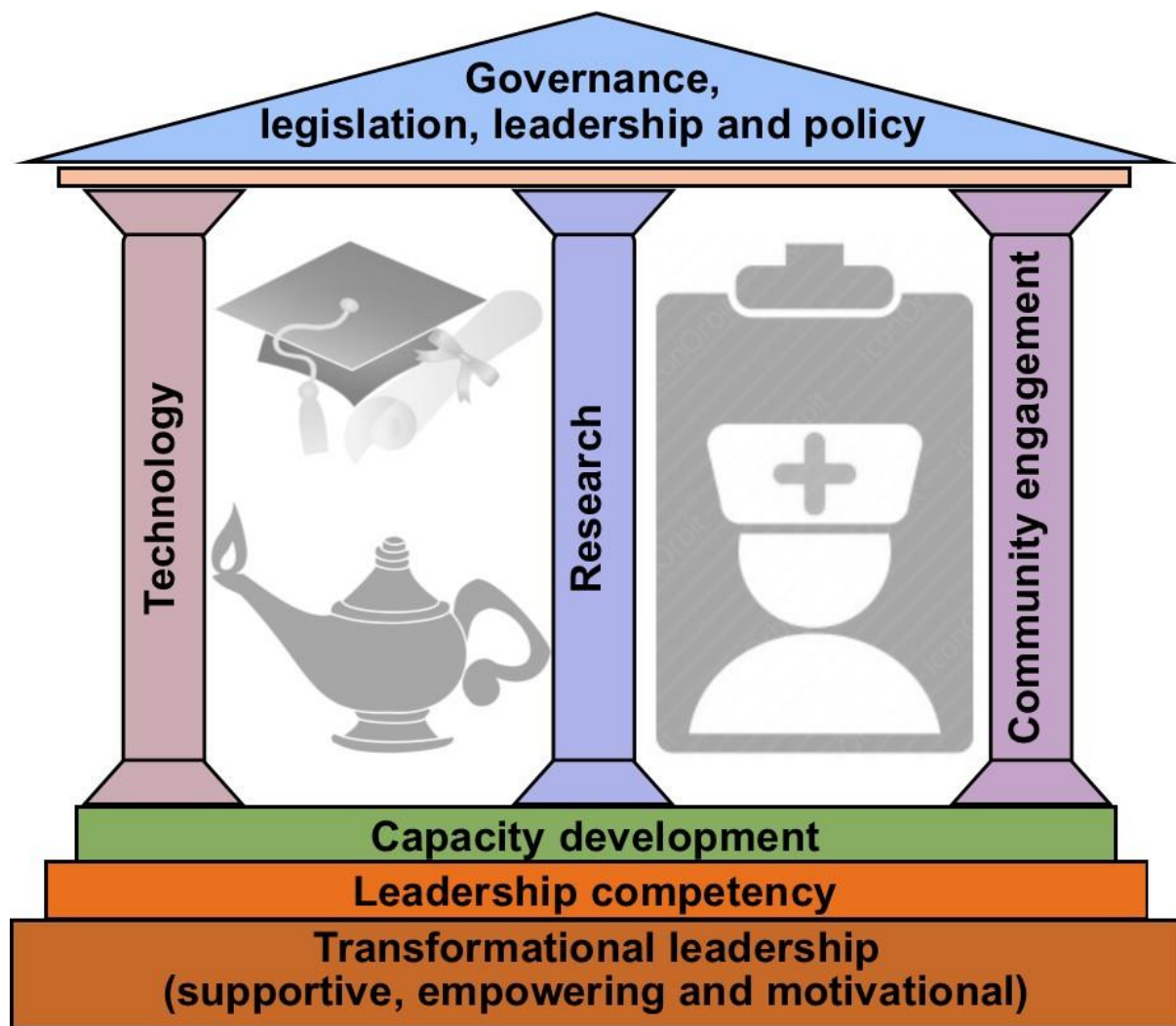


Figure 6.1 A framework to strengthen leadership at a South African public nursing college

Transformational leadership and leadership competency form the foundation and lower levels, also known as the structure's stereobate (or supporting platform). Capacity development, as the top level that extends to form the structures base, or stylobate, forms the foundation for the three columns of technology, research, and CE. As overarching components, governance, legislation, leadership, and policy are positioned as the framework's pediment. In the cella, the interior, the nursing profession and nursing education's symbols – the lamp, mortarboard with certificate, and nursing clipboard – draw attention to the framework's actual core.

6.4 FRAMEWORK VALIDATION

The process of validating the framework to strengthen leadership at a South African public nursing college commenced immediately after the framework development was concluded. Through the validation, the researcher could determine whether or not the framework represented the co-constructed reality, i.e. leadership strengthening as per the participants' perspectives. Therefore, the framework validation was not merely strategy for member checking, but rather a means to elicit the stakeholders' views on whether or not they found the framework to be reasonable, understandable, and useful. Guidelines to validate the framework were compiled in accordance with those suggested by Savin-Baden and Major (2013:466-467) [Annexure P]. The compilation was refined in consultation with the research supervisor. The disseminated information package comprised background information, the summarised findings of both the AI and modified Delphi, the developed framework with an accompanying narrative description, and a set of questions presented in a table format and designed to elicit validation.

As per prior agreement, a meeting was held with the college principal to present the developed framework, and logistic arrangements were made for the validation process. Due to COVID-19 social distancing regulations, a group session could not be held and therefore not all pertinent persons were engaged in a discussion as anticipated. Because the majority of the SLs, NEs, and college managers could not be reached physically, the validation guide was transmitted electronically to all stakeholders via the CHs.

6.4.1 Contextual Information of the Key Stakeholders Participating in the Framework Validation

A group of stakeholders who participated in the framework validation comprised 17 members, i.e. two CHs, seven HADs, four NEs, and four SLs.

Table 6.3 Contextual information about stakeholders involved in the framework validation

Campus 1	Campus 2	Campus 3
One CH	One CH	
Two HADs	One HAD	Four HADs
	Three NEs	One NE
Three SLs	One SL	
Total = 6	Total = 6	Total = 5

There was equal representation from all three campuses, and each of the categories of participants from the AI participated in the validation. Therefore the researcher considers there to have been maximum variation in participation.

6.4.2 Feedback on the framework validation

The feedback on the framework validation and the researcher's address of the stakeholders' comments is presented in Table 6.4. An example of the stakeholders' feedback on the validation of the framework is presented in Annexure Q. Percentages provided in the table hereunder quantifies the participants' responses, validating whether they agree or disagree or were unsure as to whether or not the presented framework met the described criterion. The researcher's reflections on and responses to the stakeholders' comments are indicated in blue in the text.

Table 6.4 Feedback from various key stakeholders from a South African NEI regarding the validation of the developed framework

1. Is the framework reasonable in terms of the following?	Yes	No	Any other response	Comments
Do the interpretations provide a good overview of the situations?	94%	6%		<i>"It was not difficult to interpret the framework" (01/CH/C1).</i> <i>"As one goes through the interpretations one understands and sees the situation in their minds" (01/HAD/C1).</i> <i>"The interpretations highlighted the strengths of the existing structures, and areas that should be strengthened by the NEI to promote effective leadership" (02/HAD/C1).</i> <i>"Technology was identified as something to be used by the college to survive demands of the 21st century, and therefore this should be expatiated with regard to Fourth Industrial Revolution" (02/NE/C2).</i> <i>This comment was offered with a negative response, and since technology was indicated as a supportive component of the framework, the participant's meaning is unclear.</i>
Is there a sense that what is being argued is plausible, reasonable, and worthy of being included?	100%			<i>"Including what is being argued will help take the school to the desirable level in terms of leadership, especially in the face of the changes that are taking place in the health sector, which have a direct impact on the curriculum and the product of nurse training" (01/NE/C3).</i> <i>"It is worth of being included as it will boost the morale of leadership and give quality leadership" (01/CH/C1).</i> <i>"Very much worthy and plausible, more especially that the NEIs are aligned to HE stream. The DoH has not tried to move and inch in the support of the alignment with regard to strengthening the NEIs' infrastructure and human resource[s]" (01/HAD/C1).</i> <i>"Categories, subthemes, and themes developed from the analysis of the data collected from the NEI are relevant and strongly address the needs of the NEI, considering the fact that the NEI has been accredited a</i>

				higher education institution a year ago and still needs to ensure that the existing leadership, including human and material resources, approaches to teaching and learning, among others, are in line with the CHE criteria" (02/HAD/C1).
Do the interpretations appear to help explain and represent participants' views and voices?	100%			"The explanation on the interpretations appears to be the view of participant, however the focus group was held more than 12 months ago" (03/HAD/C3) "Yes, it appears to help to explain the participants' views and in more simple illustrative ways" (01/CH/C1). "Many if not all of the interpretations help to explain the participant's views and voices. One wishes that this model could be forwarded to the NDoH so that the voices of Nurse Educators could be heard, and redressing be looked into" (01/HAD/C1). "The views and voices of participants were well interpreted, as each input/statement from participants [was] recorded and consolidated" (02/CH/C2). "Categories that emerged from the data collected clearly describe participants' views" (02/HAD/C1).
Do the interpretations appear to reflect the participants' perspectives and the context in which they live or work?	100%			"The explanation on the interpretations appears to be the view of participant, however the focus group was held more than 12 months ago" (03/HAD/C3). "When looking at [the] paragraph under [the] delivery phase, the interpretations reflect exactly the perspectives of the participants and the context in which they work" (01/HAD/C1). "The interpretations reflect the perspectives of the participants, and to a greater extent, the context in which they work" (02/HAD/C1).
Do the stories seem logical and coherent?	94%	6%		"The stories seem logic [al] and [make] a lot of sense" (01/CH/C1). "The story first identifies the challenges' experience, followed by mitigating factors, how challenges are going to be resolved, and who should be involved; therefore, this seems to be a perfect narration of the logic[al] story" (01/HAD/C1).

				• “Very [...] coherent and logical” (02/CH/C2). • The story first identified and categorised factors that promote effective leadership in the NEIs, and further classified them into sub-themes and themes, [and] thereafter described what should be done to strengthen and promote effective leadership in the delivery phase, followed by the design of the framework and the description thereof (02/HAD/C1). • “Theme 1 and 2 are different; on one page, Theme 1 is entitled “Transformational leadership approaches”, whereas on the other page [it] is [entitled] “Resources” (04/HAD/C3). <i>Response/Action: This is an astute observation, indicating that the participant engaged closely with the framework. Different themes and subthemes emerged from the three AI phases (Discovering, Dreaming and Delivering), hence the difference. This would have been clearer during engagement when study findings were discussed, and if it had been possible to engage in a discussion with the participants.</i>
• Are there different explanations or negative cases that would suggest that the interpretations are not credible?		100%		• “The explanations and interpretations are credible and they can offer quality and better leadership” (01/CH/C1). • “There are no different explanations or negative cases. The interpretations are credible and beyond credible (01/SL/C1). • “The explanations are convincingly plausible, thus no other cases [...] suggest [that] the offered interpretations [are] not credible” (02/SL/C1). • “Well explained” (03/SL/C1).
2. Does the framework lead to understanding?	Yes	No		Comments
• Do the interpretations move beyond analysis to illuminating meaning?	81%	19%		• “It is assumed with the data presentation of participants followed by the interpretation of the researcher, that it will be clear” (03/HAD/C3). • “The interpretations move beyond analysis and give a lot of meaning and are workable” (01/CH/C1). • “Framework is easy to be interpreted and understood as depicted from top to bottom” (02/CH/C2).

				<i>Response/Action: The three participants who responded negatively did not offer explanations in the comments section. In light of the favourable comments it is assumed that deeper engagement with the findings could possibly provide more meaning.</i>
Do the interpretations clarify and build upon what participants have said through the interpretation of sub-text?	100%			<i>“Yes, the interpretations were built upon what the participants have said through the interpretation of themes and subthemes, e.g. leadership competency, governance, and research” (01/CH/C1).</i> <i>“Categories, subthemes, and themes identified emerged from raw data collected from the participants” (01/HAD/C1).</i>
3. Is the framework useful?	Yes	No		Comments
Is the interpretation described at a suitable level for the intended audience?	94%	6%		<i>“Yes, the interpretation is described at a suitable level for the intended audience” (01/CH/C1).</i> <i>“I believe that all the nursing managers and nurse educators understand the interpretations very well. Hopefully the managers at the DoH also understand the interpretations” (01/HAD/C1).</i> <i>“The interpretation is well described, using simple language that is well understood by nurse educators at different levels, including managers outside the NE field” (02/HAD/C1).</i> <i>“The descriptions of some of the themes and pillars should be explicitly explained. There is some sort of lacking in that aspect (02/NE/C2).”</i>
Will the reader be able to assess the accuracy of the proposition?	91%	9%		<i>“Yes, the framework has been presented in a very simple and understandable way” (01/CH/C1).</i> <i>“The proposal is simple, relevant, and clear, and therefore the reader should be able to gauge the accuracy of the proposition” (01/HAD/C1)</i> <i>“The proposed framework is simple, relevant, and clear, and therefore the reader should be able to gauge its accuracy. How about including a few details on community engagement, to enable those who were not part to understand better on how to strengthen this area?” (02/HAD/C1).</i>

				• “Attend to tables so that there is a logical flow of information” (04/HAD/C3). <i>Response/action: The suggestion is welcomed although the tables served as background information only. It appears as if this participant found it difficult to translate the information provided to the framework. Each AI phase has its own data, hence the differences in the provided tables, i.e. themes and subthemes and this aspect will become clearer as one engages with the study in its entirety.</i>
• Will the interpretations clarify the meaning of their object to the intended reader?	91%	9%		• “The reader will be able to get the meaning and the objective of the framework” (01/CH/C1). • “To a larger extent, yes. The tool is really good at showing some details of data in a narrative way” (01/HAD/C1). • “Themes should be numbered consistently and not change” (04/HAD/C3) <i>Response/action: The same participant made a similar comment in the previous question, which confirms there may have been difficulty in connecting findings in the different AI phases. Different numbering of the findings in the tables is due to the various AI phases as well as the modified Delphi findings. This is clearer when one engages more thoroughly with the entire study.</i>

The various key stakeholders' overall feedback regarding the framework validation suggests that the framework developed to strengthen leadership at a South African public nursing college is reasonable, leads to understanding, and is useful. Therefore the participants' comments are considered to validate the developed framework as a reality for leadership strengthening at the college to effectively respond to its demands, including the transition to HE.

No major comment proposed any change/s to the framework presented for validation. A few technical issues were encountered in terms of background information as one participant had difficulty in connecting the summarised findings with the information in the framework.

A disadvantage imposed by the COVID-19 restrictions was that the participants could not engage in a meaningful face-to-face discussion and ask questions to clarify concerns or questions. However, the framework was developed for the college with their participation, and is therefore not considered to be stagnant or fixed, but may be adjusted as necessary during implementation. In accordance with Trafford and Leshem (2008:50), the researcher is consequently able to present this contextualised framework as "a modest contribution to knowledge that is reasonable and can be defended."

6.5 SUMMARY

In this penultimate chapter, the development and validation of the framework to strengthen leadership at a particular South African public nursing college was presented. In achieving the last two objectives, the purpose of the study was accomplished. The developed framework offers transformational leadership approaches, leadership competency, capacity development, technology, research, CE, governance, legislation, leadership, and policy as the elements necessary to strengthen the college's leadership, enabling this institution to navigate its challenges and become an HEI of the 21st century. A critical reflection on the research process follows in the following and final chapter.

Chapter 7 Conclusions, Implications, and Limitations

7.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents a critical reflection on the research process and outcome. As stated in Chapter 1, NEIs are tasked with the responsibility of educating and training competent nurses and midwives who can render safe and quality healthcare. As a result, more expectations and demands have been placed on these institutions to respond appropriately in order to meet societal healthcare demands. While striving to meet their obligations, NEIs globally face a myriad of challenges, which challenge the institutional leadership to adapt and respond appropriately to demands that threaten the existence and sustainability of their establishments.

A significant milestone in the South African context involved the transition of the public nursing colleges to HE in accordance with the provisions of the HE Act 101 of 1997 as amended. The set expectations added to the need for effective leadership that would enable these establishments to suitably transition to the envisioned unified HE system. The literature on leadership, particularly within the context of the study, widely supports the notion that HEIs, and NEIs in particular, need leaders who exert the influence necessary for NEIs to effectively navigate the challenges of the 21st century.

A specific South African public nursing college is not exempt from these demands. With strong and effective leadership being key to the survival of NEIs, it was imperative to explore how leadership at the college under study could be strengthened, and consequently, leadership strengthening became the research's core topic. A positive, rather than a problem-based, stance was considered affirming to facilitate and effect a positive change.

As a reminder to the reader, the research process is briefly summarised and the study outcome is presented. Following critical reflection, the final part of the chapter discusses the implications and limitations of the study. The perceived contribution of the study to the field of HE, particularly nursing education is also presented for consideration.

7.2 SYNOPSIS OF THE RESEARCH PROCESS

Prior to this research, no studies on nursing education leadership strengthening had been conducted in South Africa, thus indicating a knowledge gap in this area. Furthermore, having served on the senate of a specific public nursing college, the researcher observed the contextual gap in this regard. As a result the following research question emerged:

How can leadership at a South African public nursing college be strengthened?

To answer this question, the study sought to develop a framework to strengthen leadership at the college, by executing the four objectives of the study related in Section 1.4.

A qualitative, explorative, descriptive, contextual, and collaborative study design rooted in a social constructionism paradigm was considered most appropriate to address the research question (Section 1.3). Within the boundaries of the selected research approach, both AI and a modified Delphi were employed to yield the data needed to achieve the study's purpose (Table 4.1; Figure 5.1). The AI sessions were held to facilitate collaborative leadership strengthening at the three college campuses. A total number of 48 members participated in the AI sessions i.e. DP, CHs, HADs, NEs, and SLs who met the inclusion criteria (Table 4.1).

Supplementary to the AI, a modified Delphi requiring no statistical consensus was conducted with 10 experienced South African NE leadership experts. The perspectives offered by the experts represented what they perceived to be existing leadership strengths within South African NE at the time of data collection. These strengths were deemed necessary and appropriate to enable South African NEIs to navigate the HE challenges of the 21st century. A thematic content analysis was conducted, providing a more structured approach to managing various data sources (Figure 3.2). The separately analysed data sets were integrated to form a coherent picture. A framework was constructed from the emerging themes and subthemes, and was validated by a number of various college stakeholders.

7.3 STUDY OUTCOME

Based on the study's theoretical and empirical findings, a number of factual, interpretative, and conceptual conclusions could be drawn and these are presented in Figure 7.1. As suggested by Trafford and Leshem (2008:170), a study's synergy is demonstrated by showing the connections between the various phases of the research process. These connections are emphasised in the use of similar colours.

The research's conceptual phase is illustrated on the right side of Figure 7.1, whilst the empirical phase is presented at the bottom and on the left. Moving clockwise around the figure demonstrates that the research statement was derived from the research issue. Having formulated a research question, which was believed to be clear and capable of being answered, theoretical perspectives regarding leadership within the context of this research were gleaned from the consulted literature. In this inductive study, the research process led to theory-building and therefore a conceptual framework did not serve as the point of departure, but rather as the research's end product.

An illustration of the iterative relationship between the fieldwork and research design acknowledges how the simultaneous data collection and analysis influenced each other throughout the research duration. The data collected from the AI sessions and a modified Delphi enabled the generation of factual, interpretive, and conceptual conclusions. These conclusions led to "a modest, reasonable and defensible claim for a contribution to knowledge that closes the gap in knowledge" (Trafford & Leshem, 2008:171). The contribution to knowledge relates specifically to the original research issue and its boundaries, thus closing the circle of the research.

In the research conclusion phase, new knowledge gaps emerged and avenues for future research were indicated, thus broadening the research issue. In completing the circle, as described by Trafford and Leshem (2008:141), new insights developed and new cycles of research emerged.

7.4 FACTUAL CONCLUSIONS

Factual conclusions are based on the evidence that emerged from the data (Trafford & Leshem, 2008:140). In this research, a number of perspectives were offered through both the AI and a modified Delphi. For discovery of new knowledge, data from the AI and modified Delphi, as well as the framework's validation feedback, were found to be foundational in the strengthening of college leadership.

7.4.1 Appreciative Inquiry findings

As discussed in Chapter 4, the data from the AI sessions held at the three college campuses were individually analysed and then combined. The categories were organised according to three of the AI phases, i.e. discovering, dreaming, and delivering.

As part of the Discovering phase, the participants' appreciated leadership strengths included academic and non-academic support, management support, empowerment of students, staff development, and student and staff motivation (Table 4.1). Demonstration of necessary leadership knowledge and skills and the required attitudes and behaviours also formed part of the appreciated leadership strengths (Figure 4.7). The appreciated leadership competencies comprised the active involvement of others, assertiveness, attentiveness, conflict management, problem-solving, acknowledgement and recognition, as well as caring, commitment, results orientation, and teamwork.

Secondly, the AI data offered inputs pertaining to the participants' dreams as far as future leadership milestones are concerned during the Dreaming phase. Facilities, i.e. simulation, library, computer laboratory, sports, SLs' office, IT, as well as an adequate and suitable workforce formed part of the participants' stances. Moreover, the necessity to develop the necessary leadership competencies was mentioned, i.e. developing

leadership skills, acquiring additional leadership knowledge, and continuous institutional leadership empowerment. Furthermore, certain participants indicated the necessity of college leadership demonstrating necessary leadership knowledge, skills, and abilities. Some competencies mentioned include teamwork and cohesiveness, being exemplary, communication, M&E, student empowerment, results and achievements, effective decision-making, effective planning, and the ability to influence. In offering perspectives of the desired leadership achievements, other participants referred to assistance in continuing studies and providing necessary resources for academic support. Additional college leadership aspects involved accountability, honesty and integrity, transparency, fairness, autonomous budget handling, less interference by politicians, and separating the college from the DoH. Lastly, the participants expressed a desire to learn innovative educational strategies, employ technology to facilitate learning, to develop the capacity to conduct research to stimulate creative and critical thinking, and to acquire the much needed information for EBP.

During the Delivering phase, the AI participants shared various inputs pertaining to the elements they deemed vital to the sustenance of effective leadership at their institution. According to their viewpoints, an adequate infrastructure budget, sufficient IT and library service funds, and student academic support and sports facilities' allocations, a sufficient budget to employ staff, including IT technicians, and additional funding for CPD were required. Additionally, the participants referred to capacity-building, i.e. staff development through IT training, teaching strategies, leadership, financial management and procurement, and including leadership as a curriculum module, as necessary to enhance student leadership.

7.4.2 Modified Delphi findings

The second data set that emerged from the perspectives of experienced nurse education leadership experts in the RSA, provided insight into what they perceived to be existing leaderships strengths at the time of data collection. This information, which the experts deemed necessary and appropriate to enable South African NEIs to navigate HE challenges of the 21st century, formed the basis for leadership strengthening. The offered

leadership strengths were subject expertise and didactics, appropriate educational qualifications and experience, financial, talent, performance, and project management skills. In addition to these competencies, resourcefulness and innovation, proactivity, partnership and stakeholder collaboration, responsiveness, results orientation, acknowledgement and recognition, resilience, and perseverance were acknowledged. Furthermore, the experts also referred to strategic direction and planning, transformational, democratic, and ethical leadership, cultural diversity and sensitivity, professional maturity, flexibility, knowledge on HE legislative prescripts, and an open door policy.

7.5 INTERPRETATIVE CONCLUSIONS

While interpreting, analysing, and discussing the findings of the AI and modified Delphi, several themes with subthemes and a central theme emerged with regard to the research question (Table 6.1). The interpretative conclusions were reached by means of an iterative process of data analysis and inductive reasoning inherent in qualitative research (Trafford & Leshem, 2008:172). This complex process of meaning-making through critical reflection on the data, with the integration of literature, required a meta-cognitive level of thinking.

7.5.1 Appreciative Inquiry findings

Themes emerging from the AI's Discovering phase were transformational leadership approaches, i.e. supportive, empowering, and motivational leadership, as well as leadership competencies consisting of knowledge, skills, attitudes, and behaviour. As the emerging appreciated leadership strengths, both transformational leadership approaches and leadership competencies, which together emerged as the central theme, i.e. leadership effectiveness, are associated with institutional effectiveness and performance. Therefore, it is important that these appreciated leadership strengths be sustained as something that will enable the college under study to navigate its challenges.

As far as the Dreaming phase is concerned, six themes with subthemes emerged. The first two themes include resources in the form of infrastructure and human resources, as

well as leadership development and competency, i.e. leadership skills development and the required knowledge, skills, and abilities. Additional themes were academic support, including support for professional development and student support as well as governance, i.e. ethical leadership and institutional autonomy. The remaining themes comprised innovation and IT application in teaching, i.e. innovative teaching and use of IT for educational purposes and research. The emerging themes and subthemes from the Dreaming phase revealed a perception that there was still much that needed to be achieved to enable the college to navigate its challenges. This perception validates the necessity for effective leadership at the college, through which it is assumed that the necessary milestones mentioned by participants could be achieved.

Regarding the Delivering phase, the elements that the participants deemed vital to sustain effective leadership at their college were financial resources and training and development. Significant as they are, funding and staff development opportunities are limited at South African public nursing colleges, and this is putting more pressure on the specific college's authorities to rise to the challenge to provide these elements. Financial resources, training, and development emerged as the fundamentals vital to sustaining effective leadership at the college under study, and have been widely proposed as necessary for NEIs to survive and achieve sustainability.

7.5.2 Modified Delphi findings

With regard to the data obtained from a modified Delphi, four themes with subthemes emerged. Leadership competencies, i.e. knowledge and skills as well as abilities, attitudes, and behaviour were proposed as the existing leadership strengths within a challenged and transforming South African nursing education context. Indeed, organisational performance, endurance, and sustainability are mostly associated with competent leadership (Sections 4.2.1.2 & 5.2.1).

The second theme was concerned with governance, leadership, legislation, and policy, with the subthemes being strategic management, leadership effectiveness, compliance

with HE's legislative requirements and an open door policy. The third theme was staff development and included CPD and leadership development.

Finally, the fourth theme was CE, which includes CBE and CBR. Apparently, these aspects play a significant role in the HEIs' effectiveness and are crucial for their survival (Sections 5.2.4.1 & 5.2.4.2). In order to respond appropriately to its demands, a particular NEI requires strong and effective leadership. Good governance, adherence to HE regulations, constructive institutional policies, professional and leadership competency development, and CE initiatives are therefore considered the enabling factors in this regard.

7.6 CONCEPTUAL CONCLUSIONS

After having engaged in a vigorous research process and continuously striving to link the selected research paradigm, design, and methods, a framework to strengthen leadership at a South African public nursing college was constructed and validated (Sections 6.2 & 6.4). The interpretative conclusions, i.e. the integration of the themes and subthemes emerging from the AI and modified Delphi resulted in the development of an anticipated framework. This framework represents seven main concepts that are considered crucial for leadership-strengthening at the South African public nursing college under study. Presented in a Doric structure (Figure 6.1) and organised in functional levels, the framework's components comprise: transformational leadership, leadership competency, and capacity development (foundational); technology, research, and CE (supportive); and governance, legislation, leadership and policy (overarching) (Table 6.2).

7.6.1 Transformational leadership

Based on the findings from both the AI's Discovering phase and the modified Delphi, transformational leadership was the approach widely advocated for within the NEI environment. Thus this component formed the basis of the framework. As an aspect considered foundational to leadership strengthening in this study, transformational leadership has been associated with positive staff and student outcomes, as well as

organisational performance and effectiveness (Sections 4.2.1.1 & 5.2.2.2). Due to its vibrant nature, transformational leadership, as opposed to other leadership approaches that take away so much from followers, creates an environment that fosters inspiration and motivation. Freedom of expression and potential for growth are among the important aspects that could be forfeited with other leadership styles. Therefore, it is proposed that with supportive, empowering, and motivational leadership being an existing leadership strength at the college, the college members are likely to feel empowered in their endeavours to succeed in their work. Through such leadership, employee engagement is likely to be enhanced, resulting in higher levels of loyalty and retention of staff, amongst others.

7.6.2 Leadership competency

Building on the foundation of transformational leadership, leaders need to be competent to deliver quality outcomes and facilitate institutional effectiveness. Being led by leaders with relevant knowledge and the necessary skills, abilities, attitudes, and behaviour is vital for the HEIs' survival (Sections 4.2.1.2; 5.2.1.1 & 5.2.1.2). Similar to transformational leadership, leadership competency is considered the basis for college leadership-strengthening through which this NEI could utilise its existing leadership competencies as well as those suggested by the experts in dealing with the complexities of HE environment. Therefore it is imperative that those in leadership positions afford others opportunities to develop competencies necessary for optimal individual and organisational performance.

7.6.3 Capacity development

The last foundational component, which formed the basis of the framework, is capacity development. In the midst of being confronted with many challenges that could be considered a threat to the survival of HEIs, including NEIs, it became evident that these institutions required the necessary resources, i.e. infrastructure human, and financial (Sections 4.2.2.1 & 4.2.4.1). Additional to these components are staff and student development (Sections 4.2.2.2; 4.2.4.2 & 5.2.3.1) and professional and student support

(Section 4.2.2.3). By providing the necessary resources and implementing the necessary support and development strategies for both staff and students the potential for enhancing individual performance with consequent institutional efficiency is realised.

7.6.4 Technology

As an important tool in executing all the HE functions, i.e. teaching and learning, research and CE, technology is considered a supportive component in strengthening the college leadership. As a vital education system element brought on by the 4IR, IT and the incorporation of e-learning has become indispensable in HEIs' survival, especially with the COVID-19 pandemic. The participants mentioned adequate IT infrastructure as they wished to see technology being used for learning and teaching purposes (Section 4.2.2.5), and they also considered IT as something that could sustain effective leadership at the college. Technology in education is considered to be at the forefront of every HEI's teaching and learning strategy. Accomplishing the college under study's reality of leadership-strengthening through access to vital IT facilities could unleash significant potential for this institution and place it on par with other HEIs.

7.6.5 Research

In dealing with the ever-changing dynamics of the HE milieu, research has been an enabling factor for HEIs to generate useful evidence that could be used to respond to some of the complexities encountered by these institutions and their partners (Section 4.2.2.6; 5.2.4.2). As a result, in addition to technology, research is considered as a supportive element of leadership strengthening at the college. Engaging in research holds many opportunities for the college and the entire nursing profession. Not only would the college be able to conduct research that could generate an extra income, but also the evidence produced could positively influence the quality of nursing care and ensure positive patient outcomes.

7.6.6 Community engagement

The third component regarded as supportive in the college's leadership-strengthening is CE. As an important function of HE, CE is seen as a mandate for HEIs. Working closely with the communities they serve, reciprocal relationships in which all the partners benefit are expected. Higher education institutions could learn from the communities while they mobilise their resources to empower the communities, either by conducting research necessary to address community problems or by employing educational strategies that consider the communities' needs (Sections 5.2.4.1 & 5.2.4.2). Thus it is important for this institution to establish mutual partnerships with its communities in the province in which it is situated. It is assumed that through such CE initiatives the college under study could be well-placed to fulfil its social responsibility while engaging with the community as a relevant platform for learning and teaching and research activities. Simultaneously, communities could gain from service delivery as an output of collaborative partnerships. Through CBR, the communities' voiced needs generate the best available evidence through which their lives can be improved.

7.6.7 Governance, leadership, legislation, and policy

This overarching component of the framework directs and sustains NEIs, without which these institutions are likely to be dysfunctional. The discussions concerning this component emphasised matters relating to governance, leadership, legislation, and policy as vital for educational effectiveness (Sections 4.2.2.4 & 5.2.2). Through this component, deemed to be central to leadership strengthening, the nursing college under study could be afforded the necessary independence enjoyed by other HEIs. The legislative prescripts and policy ground the organisation and protect it from any external factors that are likely to threaten their existence. Having policies that foster growth and a positive institutional climate as well as functioning within the legal boundaries of HE is thus significant. It is anticipated that by observing all the important issues related to governance, leadership, legislation, and policy, the college will be able to tackle its challenges and effectively navigate its transition to HE.

7.7 CONTRIBUTION TO KNOWLEDGE

To close a particular knowledge gap, a framework to strengthen leadership at a South African public nursing college was developed and validated, thus making a claim for a contextual contribution to knowledge. Through specific research that involved members of a particular college and the country's experienced NELEs, new knowledge was socially constructed.

College participants actively engaged in the three AI sessions, through which the leadership-strengthening data was yielded. It was assumed that by following a strengths-based approach AI could significantly benefit the college leadership. Rather than concentrating on the weaknesses or deviations and endeavouring to address these, the college could benefit from using the AI strategy to address its own challenges to ensure survival and sustainability.

Moreover, interviewing experienced South African NELEs substantially enriched the AI data, with similar themes emerging from both data sets. The contributions from a national perspective confirm the contextual evidence that arose in the AI, but also offer the possibility of applicability to wider contexts.

As a contribution to knowledge, the researcher assimilated and synthesised the participants' viewpoints and triangulated these with the relevant literature in order to arrive at new understandings. The AI data and the experts' inputs formed the basis for the framework development. Thus the framework to strengthen leadership at a South African public nursing college is presented as a modest contribution that is plausible and can be defended through the rigour of the research approach and methodology (Trafford & Leshem, 2008:141).

To continue the collaborative relationship that the researcher established with the college during the course of the research, the college Senate will be provided with a concise research report and a complete thesis will be shared with the college to facilitate strategic discussions concerning implementation of the validated framework.

As a requirement accompanying the permission granted by the PDoH to conduct the study at the college, a research report will be submitted to the provincial health research committee for possible inclusion into policy. By doing so, it is hoped that through concerted efforts, the framework will become a reality and be implemented, placing the college in a better position to navigate its challenges effectively and transit into HE successfully.

The developed framework will also be shared with the office of the South African CNO for consideration during nursing education planning in the country. Most of the South African public nursing colleges currently operate in similar contexts, and therefore disseminating the framework across common platforms, i.e. the Nursing Education Association (NEA) and College Principals and Academic Staff South Africa (CPASSA). Although this was a contextual study, some nursing colleges could derive lessons from this framework and employ it as a benchmark to improve their situations.

Various academic platforms will be accessed to disseminate the study's findings. Appreciative inquiry, nursing education, and leadership and management journals and conferences could provide relevant readership and audiences for this research.

7.8 STUDY IMPLICATIONS

The conclusions drawn from the research findings could have various implications for role players. It is assumed that the framework could promote EBP. The framework could serve as the best available evidence on which the college leadership could base their strategic decisions when planning to provide quality NE within the HE sector. This research evidence has implications for both NE and future research.

7.8.1 Implications for the Nursing Education Institutions

When permission to conduct study was granted, the understanding was that the collaboratively developed framework would be implemented at the college for leadership strengthening. Upon completion of this thesis, a concise research report will be provided to the college senate. A follow-up engagement session will be scheduled with leaders for strategic discussions regarding implementation of the framework. If not feasible, the researcher will work closely with the college principal to discuss implementation of the framework. Continuous framework development through implementation, reflection, and adaptation is vital.

To implement framework components that require involvement with other role players, i.e. capacity development, technology, research, this NEI would have to enter into rigorous negotiations with stakeholders such as the PDoH, as it is currently the main funder of the college's mandate. This research report and the framework provide research evidence as the point of departure for these negotiations.

In terms of transitioning to HE, achieving this milestone requires strategic preparation that lies within the components of governance, leadership, legislation, and policy. Effecting such a transition is a step towards institutional autonomy.

7.8.2 Implications for future research

The necessity for continued research related to implementing a framework to strengthen institutional leadership is crucial for a South African public nursing college while

navigating challenges and transitioning to HE. As the framework is considered to be adjustable rather than static, it is expected that future research will form the basis for the continuous development of the framework through implementation, reflection, and adaptation. The framework components already provide points of departure for future research, e.g. devising strategies to implement e-learning, identifying avenues for third stream income, establishing a research culture, exploring sustainable CE, etc. Ultimately, evaluating the framework implementation could also provide future research opportunities.

Thick descriptions of the research process and findings serve as the basis for this study being replicated in other contexts. Furthermore, the benefit of a strengths-based approach is that it facilitates organisational change in a non-threatening manner, thus encouraging participation of all the stakeholders. Having conducted AI sessions with the college, the researcher attests to the positive energy generated by taking a collaborative stance to discover that which participants considered most important, and therefore a strengths-based approach is recommended.

7.9 STUDY LIMITATIONS

While acknowledging the study's accomplishments, certain limitations also have to be taken into account. Challenges experienced during the research process as well as extraneous circumstances imposed restraints that may have negatively impacted on the study's outcome.

Some of the responses noted in the AI workbooks were brief. More elaborate descriptions would have provided more clarity and depth.

A high number (approximately 30) of those deemed to be experienced South African NELEs were invited to participate in a modified Delphi, but only 10 experts responded. The majority of them are heads of university nursing departments. Although the modified Delphi was conducted from a national point of view, the South African NEIs, i.e. university nursing departments and nursing colleges have been operating differently in terms of governance, curriculums, resources, etc. Therefore, it would have added value to hear

the voices of more the nursing colleges leadership experts. Furthermore, failure to receive input from governmental nursing education leaders and private training institutions is considered as a serious study limitation. Where a Delphi method specifically seeks statistical consensus, such a low response is considered insufficient to reach certain conclusions. However, due to the qualitative nature of the modified Delphi that was conducted, the generated rich data substantially deepened the AI findings.

Due to COVID-19 regulations, framework validation could not be conducted via face-to-face meetings as anticipated. As a result, the participants could not engage in a meaningful discussion nor could they pose questions for clarification purposes. Hence, some participants experienced difficulties in responding to the information provided in the framework. However, it is hoped that engaging with the study in totality would address this limitation. Nevertheless, the synergy generated amongst the stakeholders during the AI could not be continued by means of a face-to-face validation session.

7.10 CONCLUDING REMARKS

In reflection, it is possible to conclude that this study managed to respond to the stated research question and simultaneously make a contextual contribution to knowledge. In response to how leadership at a South African public nursing college could be strengthened. A framework to this effect was developed and validated. Based on the study findings and conclusions, it is fair to claim that the leadership-strengthening aspects offered by the framework are now better understood. By providing information on leadership strengthening, this study addressed the knowledge gap identified in Sections 1.1 and 1.2.

Although modest, this study's findings have implications for the South African nursing education context, especially in terms of adopting the framework and implementing it for the purposes of leadership strengthening at a specific NEI. If this research were to translate into policy within the specific province, it could inform further research and policy development in other provinces.

Lastly, it is hoped that as a knowledge contribution, this study will enable the college to successfully navigate its challenges and transition into HE. In doing so, the college could continue to deliver on its mandate to provide quality NE and training. It is accepted that quality education produces competent nurses who render safe and excellent nursing and midwifery care and are able to meet societal health demands (WHO, 2016:10,14). Consequently, the country's vision of a "Long and Healthy Life for All South Africans could be realised".

7.11 CRITICAL REFLECTION OF THE RESEARCH JOURNEY

The researcher engaged in critical reflection throughout the research process, as well as retrospectively in terms of the scholastic journey that he undertook to complete a PhD. His reflections are shared hereunder in the first person.

"Although I knew that I wanted to pursue PhD studies immediately after graduating with a Master's degree, commencing the research was not easy. I therefore attended a Doctoral degree programme, thinking it would help to order my thoughts, however, after this programme I still wasn't able to consolidate thoughts and ideas. When I approached a potential promoter and brainstormed ideas, I realised that I would have to read extensively on my topic of interest for a period of at least six months. Eventually my journey commenced, and during long and fruitful engagements with my supervisor, the study was conceptualised around the topic of leadership while adopting a strengths-based approach. After going back and forth, thinking and rethinking, and asking myself lots of questions, my pre-PhD proposal was ready for critique. The study was then approved for implementation.

Engaging in the AI sessions at the three college campuses was a most rewarding experience. Observing the positive effects that affirming questions could have on people to actively share what they cared about most, was the most valuable research experience. Involving NELEs deepened the study as it offered rich perspectives regarding the country's existing leadership strengths. Obtaining data from these experts was challenging due to the extended timeframe in terms of feedback. This delay taught

perseverance and patience, and the wait was worthwhile, considering the rich data that deepened the AI findings.

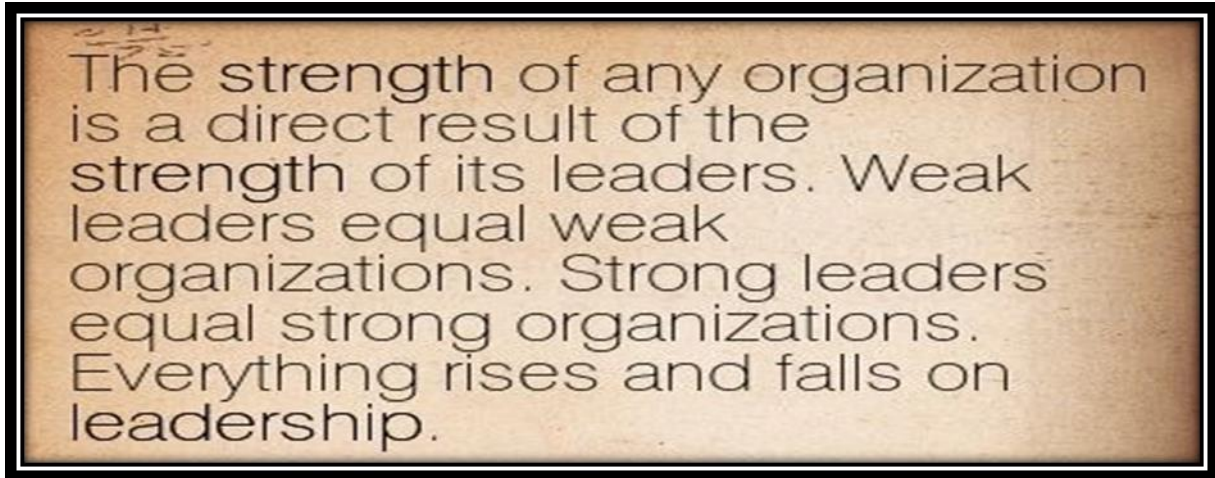
The data analysis brought home to me the term “academic stamina” as my concentration span was extremely tested during co-coding the study’s massive data. Thereafter came the thesis writing, which seemed to last for a long time, and challenged me to remain focused within the paradigm of the study, and to use language appropriate for social constructionism. Such scholarly expectations were initially an immense struggle, but I ultimately managed.

While still besieged by the nitty-gritties of literature triangulation, and being instructed to perfect my academic writing skills, the COVID-19 pandemic hit and new strategies had to be implemented. Being supervised via a remote platform became the norm, and this resulted in many challenging experiences. Although I sometimes experienced emotional challenges, attending to never-ending corrections and comments was cognitively stimulating and developed my resilience. Arriving at the study outcome, i.e. developing the framework, was the highlight of the journey and the most exciting moment. Seeing the framework take shape was the realisation of my goal, even though its validation was negatively affected by the restrictions imposed by the pandemic, i.e. social distancing. Neither the participants nor I could meaningfully engage for purposes of the framework validation and this could have had a serious impact on the study outcome, but technology came to the rescue.

Approaching the end of journey, I felt relief at regaining my freedom, and experienced the joy of liberation from complicated terms such as ‘dialectic stances’, ‘doctorateness’, and ‘iterative’, and most importantly, free from the strict grammatical checks. However, questions such as ‘what if?’, ‘did I cover that?’, or ‘did I miss something?’ emerged. I assume this is what makes a PhD journey a unique and rewarding one.

Although I can positively declare that it was worthwhile for the sake of my personal growth and professional development, my PhD journey could be in a nutshell captured as:

“The arduous journey that at times seemed to have had no ending but a blurred horizon with faint rays of hope communicating the distant possibilities” (Ally, 2017:262).



Source: Maxwell (2010:3)

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Annexures

Annexure A – Ethics Clearance

UNIVERSITY OF THE
FREE STATE
UNIVERSITEIT VAN DIE
VRYSTAAT
YUNIVESITHI YA
FREISTATA



UFS·UV
HEALTH SCIENCES
GESONDHEIDSWETENSAPPE

Health Sciences Research Ethics Committee

31-Aug-2018

Dear Mr Lebuile Mogakwe

Ethics Clearance: A framework to strengthen leadership at a South African Public Nursing College

Principal Investigator: Mr Lebuile Mogakwe

Department: School of Nursing Department (Bloemfontein Campus)

APPLICATION APPROVED

Please ensure that you read the whole document

With reference to your application for ethical clearance with the Faculty of Health Sciences, I am pleased to inform you on behalf of the Health Sciences Research Ethics Committee that you have been granted ethical clearance for your project.

Your ethical clearance number, to be used in all correspondence is: UFS-HSD2018/0617/2509

The ethical clearance number is valid for research conducted for one year from issuance. Should you require more time to complete this research, please apply for an extension.

We request that any changes that may take place during the course of your research project be submitted to the HSREC for approval to ensure we are kept up to date with your progress and any ethical implications that may arise. This includes any serious adverse events and/or termination of the study.

A progress report should be submitted within one year of approval, and annually for long term studies. A final report should be submitted at the completion of the study.

The HSREC functions in compliance with, but not limited to, the following documents and guidelines: The SA National Health Act No. 61 of 2003; Ethics in Health Research: Principles, Structures and Processes (2015); SA GCP(2006); Declaration of Helsinki; The Belmont Report; The US Office of Human Research Protections 45 CFR 461 (for non-exempt research with human participants conducted or supported by the US Department of Health and Human Services- (HHS), 21 CFR 50, 21 CFR 56; CIOMS; ICH-GCP-E6 Sections 1-4; The International Conference on Harmonization and Technical Requirements for Registration of Pharmaceuticals for Human Use (ICH Tripartite), Guidelines of the SA Medicines Control Council as well as Laws and Regulations with regard to the Control of Medicines, Constitution of the HSREC of the Faculty of Health Sciences.

For any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact HSREC Administration: 051-4017794/5 or email EthicsFHS@ufs.ac.za.

Thank you for submitting this proposal for ethical clearance and we wish you every success with your research.

Yours Sincerely

Dr. SM Le Grange

Chair : Health Sciences Research Ethics Committee

Health Sciences Research Ethics Committee

Office of the Dean: Health Sciences

T: +27 (0)51 401 7795/7794 | E: ethicsfhs@ufs.ac.za

IRB 00006240; REC 230408-011; IORG0005187; FWA00012784

Block D, Dean's Division, Room D104 | P.O. Box/Posbus 339 (Internal Post Box G40) | Bloemfontein 9300 | South Africa

www.ufs.ac.za



Annexure B – Permission to conduct the study



health

Department of
Health
FREE STATE PROVINCE

14 August 2018

Mr. L Mogakwe
School of Nursing
UFS

Dear Mr. L Mogakwe

Subject: A framework to strengthen leadership at a South African Public Nursing College.

- Please ensure that you read the whole document, Permission is hereby granted for the above – mentioned research on the following conditions:
- Participation in the study must be voluntary.
- A written consent by each participant must be obtained.
- Serious Adverse events to be reported to the Free State department of health and/ or termination of the study
- Ascertain that your data collection exercise neither interferes with the day to day running of the Free State School of Nursing (Southern, Northern and Eastern Campus) nor the performance of duties by the respondents or health care workers.
- Confidentiality of information will be ensured and please do not obtain information regarding the identity of the participants.
- **Research results and a complete report should be made available to the Free State Department of Health on completion of the study (a hard copy plus a soft copy).**
- Progress report must be presented not later than one year after approval of the project to the Ethics Committee of the University of Free State and to Free State Department of Health.
- Any amendments, extension or other modifications to the protocol or investigators must be submitted to the Ethics Committee of the Free State and to Free State Department of Health.
- **Conditions stated in your Ethical Approval letter should be adhered to and a final copy of the Ethics Clearance Certificate should be submitted to sebecelats@fshealth.gov.za or lithekom@fshealth.gov.za before you commence with the study**
- No financial liability will be placed on the Free State Department of Health
- Please discuss your study with the institution manager/CEOs on commencement for logistical arrangements
- Department of Health to be fully indemnified from any harm that participants and staff experiences in the study
- Researchers will be required to enter in to a formal agreement with the Free State department of health regulating and formalizing the research relationship (document will follow)
- You are encouraged to present your study findings/results at the Free State Provincial health research day

Trust you find the above in order.
Kind Regards

Dr D Motau

HEAD: HEALTH

Date: 20/8/18

Annexure C – Approval to conduct the pilot study

UNIVERSITY OF THE
FREE STATE
UNIVERSITEIT VAN DIE
VRYSTAAT
YUNIVESITHI YA
FREISTATA



Office of the Vice-Rector: Research and Internationalisation
Kantoor van die Viserektor: Navorsing en Internasionalisering

29-Aug-2018

Dear Applicant

UFS AUTHORITIES APPROVAL

Research Project Title:

A framework to strengthen leadership at a South African Public Nursing College

This letter serves as confirmation that your request to collect data from students and/or staff members at the University of the Free State for your research project has been approved **provided that you also have ethical clearance for the research from the ethics committee at the University of the Free State.**

Please make sure that you also obtain your ethics clearance letter containing your reference number from the ethics committee after you have received this letter before you conduct your research.

Kind Regards



**PROF RC WITTHUHN
VICE-RECTOR: RESEARCH & INTERNATIONALISATION
CHAIR: SENATE RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE**

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Annexure D – A request to enter the research site for the collection of data

To: The College Principal and Campus Heads

RE: REQUEST TO ENTER THE NEI FOR RESEARCH DATA COLLECTION PURPOSES

I, Lebuile John Mogakwe, a PhD student at the School of Nursing, University of the Free State hereby wish to request to commence with the data collection at the three campuses of your institution. The study is titled: “A framework to strengthen leadership at a South African Public Nursing College.” One of this study’s objectives is to utilise an Appreciative Inquiry process for collaborative leadership strengthening at the nursing college. AI searches for the best in people and their institutions. As a research methodology, it enables participants to discover their positive core strengths and to initiate practical steps to reach their goals.

I am inviting all the nurse educators and the nurse education leaders, including the principal, deputy principals, and head of departments, as well student leaders to participate in the AI sessions. AI sessions are in the form of a workshop and last approximately 4-5 hours. Separate sessions will be conducted at each campus, at times that are suitable for each campus. The staff participants should have been with the institution for at least five years and student representatives should at least be in their third year of study.

Health Sciences Research Ethics Committee at the University of the Free State has granted an ethical clearance for the study and the PDoH’s authorities have granted a permission to conduct the study. There are no known risks associated with the research. The framework that will be developed from this study is anticipated to enable leadership at the nursing college to navigate challenges within the transforming South African nursing education system. Participation is voluntary, and non-participation will involve no penalty or loss of benefits to which the participants are otherwise entitled; participants may discontinue partaking at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which they are otherwise entitled.

Under no circumstances, will participants be expected to pay for any expense that is related to the research. **Efforts will be made to keep personal information confidential.** If you have any further questions, please feel free to contact Mr. L.J. Mogakwe (071 8684463). You may also contact the Secretariat of the Faculty Health Sciences Research Ethics Committee of the University of the Free State at telephone number (051) 401 7795/7794 if you have questions about the research.

Yours faithfully,
MR. L.J. MOGAKWE

Annexure E – Invitation to participate in the AI sessions

Dear Principal/Vice Principal/Campus Head/HAD/Nurse Educator/Student Leader

I, Lebuile John Mogakwe, a PhD student at the University of the Free State kindly invite you to participate in the research titled: “A framework to strengthen leadership at a South African Public Nursing College”. The University of the Free State Health Sciences Research Ethics Committee and the PDoH’s authorities have approved the study, which will be supervised by Dr. D.E. Van Jaarsveldt.

One of the research objectives is employ Appreciative Inquiry process for collaborative leadership strengthening at South African public nursing college. To attain this objective, I am inviting you to participate in the AI sessions. AI as an organisational development tool searches for the best in people and their institutions, enabling them to discover their positive core strengths and to initiate practical steps to reach their goals. The AI sessions will be conducted per campus, at the most convenient times and these may last up to four or five hours. The AI methodology will be explained prior to the interviews, which will be facilitated by the experienced AI expert. The staff members need to have been with the institution for at least five years to participate while student leaders should at least be in the third year of studies.

There are no known risks associated with this study; instead, the framework that will be developed from this study is anticipated to enable the leadership at the public nursing college under study to navigate the challenges and transformation facing South African nursing education system. Participation is voluntary, and non-participation will involve no penalty or loss of benefits to which the participants are otherwise entitled; participants may discontinue partaking at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which they are otherwise entitled. Under no circumstances, participants shall be expected to pay for any expense that is related to the research. **Efforts will be made to keep personal information confidential.** If you have any questions about the study or about participating in this study, please feel free contact Mr. L.J. Mogakwe (071 8684463). You may also contact the Secretariat of the Health Sciences Research Ethics Committee of the University of the Free State at telephone number (051) 401 7795/7794 if you have questions about the research.

Yours faithfully,

Mr. L.J. Mogakwe
PhD Nursing Student (2001101944)

A FRAMEWORK TO STRENGTHEN LEADERSHIP AT A SOUTH AFRICAN PUBLIC NURSING COLLEGE

Researcher: Lebuile John Mogakwe

Facilitator: Karen Venter

**Focusing on the current leadership strengths to design
future leadership: nursing education context**



Affirmative Topic:

**“Appreciative Inquiry as a collaborative tool in strengthening leadership at a
South African public nursing college**

DISCOVERY OF THE EXISTING LEADERSHIP STRENGTHS



Thank you for taking part in an exciting process. The questions being asked are called **Appreciative Questions**. You will be asking one another questions about moments you observed or had the best possible experience of nursing education leadership. Often we try to ask about things that are not working well - the problems – so that we can fix them. In this case, however, we will be trying to ask about things that are working well – the successes – so that more of these can be done.

Try to think, remember and tell your team member about the positive things that you have seen, heard, experienced or imagined:

- in your role as a leader
- about/from your leader

SUGGESTED TIME LIMIT



- 1.1 Share an experience about the time when you as a [Principal/Vice Principal/Campus Head/Head of Academic Department/Nurse Educator/Student Representative] felt positive, most alive, engaged, or proud of your role as a leader at your institution.

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- 1.2 What was it about your leadership that led to this positive experience?"

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- 1.3 Share an experience about the time when you as a [Principal/Vice Principal/Campus Head/Head of Academic Department/Nurse Educator/Student Representative] felt positive, most alive, engaged, or proud of the leader(s) at your institution.

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1.4 *What was it about their leadership that led to this positive experience?"*

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DREAM – ENVISIONING THE PREFERRED FUTURE



Nursing education, as part of higher education, is both globally and locally facing major challenges that are requiring strong and effective institutional leadership. The predicament is widely published. In South Africa, the nature, procedures and execution of revised nursing programmes present immense challenges for nursing education leadership. These challenges together with the imminent transition, threaten the country's responsiveness to its societal changes, population health needs and expectations. Unresponsiveness could also jeopardise the country's position as an affiliate of the World Health Organisation, which expects participating nations to ensure a well-performing health workforce that caters for its population's needs and demands.

This situation requires leadership that identifies strategies and tactics to ensure that the Nursing Education Institutions are Higher Education Institutions of the 21st Century.

2.1 *In five years from now, what is the most extraordinary thing (leadership related) that you as a leader would have liked to achieve that could enable your institution to navigate its own challenges?*

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- 2.2 *What are the most extraordinary things (leadership related) that you would like to see the leaders execute that could enable your institution to navigate its own challenges and those brought by transformation.*
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DESIGN – WHAT SHOULD BE THE IDEAL?



Leadership strengthening – provocative proposition

MIND MAPPING EXERCISE

- 3.1 *Each participant to identify **ONE** existing leadership strength they identified during the discovery phase and share with the entire group*
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- 3.2 *Each participant to identify the ideal leadership strength they identified during the dream phase and share with the entire group.*

DELIVERY – SUSTAINING



- 4.1 *Identify those elements that you deem vital to sustain effective and/or strong leadership at your institution (in other words what needs to happen in order to realise the ideal picture you painted during the dream phase).*

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Conclusion

Thank you for your time and your valuable inputs into the study.

Based on the study findings, a framework to strengthen leadership at your institution will be developed and presented to the key stakeholders for validation.

Annexure G – AI sessions schedule

A schedule for:

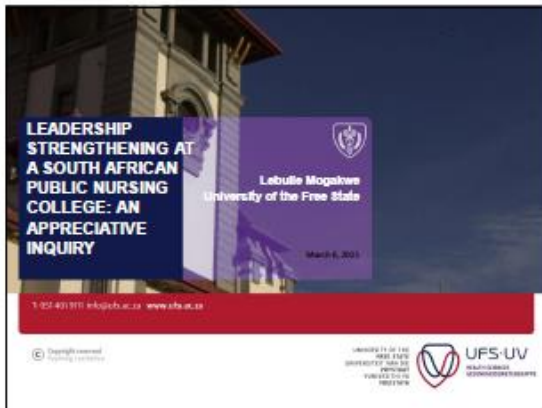
An **Appreciative Inquiry** session for the research titled: **A framework to strengthen leadership at a South African Public Nursing College**

8 February 2019 at Campus 1

Researcher: **Lebuile Mogakwe**

09:00 – 09:10	Ice-breaker
09:10 – 09:20	Opening remarks
09:30 – 10:00	Introduction to AI
10:00 – 10:20	Refreshments
10:20 – 11:20	Discovery phase
11:20 – 12:20	Dream phase
12:20 – 13:20	Design phase
13:20 – 14:20	Delivery phase
14:20 – 14:30	Closing remarks
	
	

Annexure H – Appreciative Inquiry interviews' orientation



• WHAT IS APPRECIATIVE INQUIRY (AI)?
 Answer from positive psychology to problem-based management
 Developed by Dr David Cooperrider, Case Western University, USA –industrial psychology (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005)

• Appreciate:- Valuing, the art of recognizing the best in people, affirming past strengths, successes, what gives life

• Inquiry:- The act of exploration and discovery. To ask questions, to be open to seeing new potentials and possibilities

ap-pre-ci-ate
 - Recognize the full worth of
 - Be grateful for (something).

UFS UV

WHAT IS AI? (cont....)

- Cooperative co-evolutionary search for the best in people, organizations and world around them
- Systematic discovery of what gives life
- Asking unconditionally positive questions
- Uses positive to find solutions to perform better

Appreciative Inquiry
 From Fixed to Deliberate
 From Fixed to Deliberate
 From Fixed to Deliberate

UFS UV

POSITIVE CORE
 Human systems grow in the direction what they persistently ask questions about
 (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005)

- Includes:
- Achievements, product strengths
- Core competencies
- Social capital
- Collective spirit
- Lived values

UFS UV

PROBLEM-SOLVING VS APPRECIATIVE INQUIRY

Problem solving

- Felt need
- Identification of problem
- Analysis of causes
- Analysis and possible solutions
- Action planning (treatment)
- Basic assumption: an organization is a problem to be solved

Appreciative Inquiry

- Appreciating and valuing the best of what is
- Envisioning what might be
- Dialoguing what should be
- Basic assumption: an organization is a mystery to be embraced

UFS UV

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

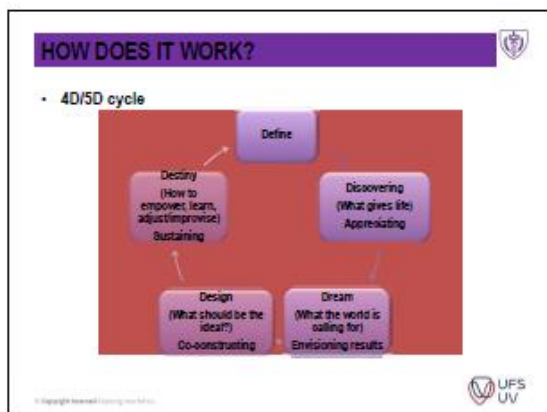
Social Constructionism

Appreciative inquiry principles

Appreciative inquiry assumptions

Constructivist	Simultaneity	Poetic	Anticipatory	Positive
Something exists	Focus becomes reality	Reality creates its meaning	Asking questions influence	Language creates reality
				Value differences

UFS UV



USES FOR AI

- Organizational development
- Action research
- Philosophy
- Intervention

"Sometimes you need to look at Life from a different perspective."

UFS UV

IN THE MIDST OF CHALLENGES FACING HIGHER EDUCATION IN SOUTH AFRICA INCLUDING NE - USING AI TO STRENGTHEN LEADERSHIP AT A SOUTH AFRICAN PUBLIC NURSING COLLEGE

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IN THE MIDST OF TRANSFORMATION FACING NURSING EDUCATION IN SOUTH AFRICA - USING AI TO STRENGTHEN LEADERSHIP AT A SOUTH AFRICAN PUBLIC NURSING COLLEGE

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END PRODUCT OF THE AI SESSIONS – DATA OBTAINED WILL BE INTEGRATED INTO A FRAMEWORK (PRODUCT OF THE STUDY)

UFS UV

Thank You Dankie

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Annexure I – Invitation for participation in the modified Delphi

INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE IN A STUDY ENTITLED:

“A framework to strengthen leadership at a South African public nursing college”

Sir/Madam

I, Lebuile John Mogakwe, am conducting research for the purposes of the development of a framework to strengthen leadership at a South African public nursing college. One of the study's objectives is to explore and describe existing leadership strengths in a challenged and transforming RSA's nursing education system. To attain this objective, I am inviting you as an experienced nursing education leadership expert to participate in a modified Delphi.

There are no known risks associated with this study; instead, the framework that will be developed from this study is anticipated to enable leadership at a particular public nursing college to navigate their challenges and the transition they are faced with. Participation is voluntary and you may discontinue participation at any time without penalty.

Under no circumstances, shall you be expected to cover any expense that is related to the research. Efforts will be made to keep personal information confidential. If you have any questions about the study or about participating in this study, please feel free contact Mr. L.J. Mogakwe (0718684463). You may also contact the Secretariat of the Health Sciences Research Ethics Committee of the University of the Free State at telephone number (051) 401 7795/7794 if you have questions about your rights as a research participant.

Yours faithfully,

Mr. L.J. Mogakwe

PhD Nursing Student (2001101944)

Annexure J – The modified Delphi data collection form

Dear Participant

Should you agree and consent to participate in this study, kindly respond to the following question below:

“What are the existing leadership strengths in a challenged and transforming South African nursing education context, which you regard to be necessary and appropriate to enable South African NEIs to navigate the higher education challenges of the 21st century?”

Please respond to this question above as earnestly and comprehensively as possible. Evidence that is inclusive of examples, illustrations, and real life scenarios to support the responses will be highly appreciated.

The column below permits one to respond to the question above, save the response and send it electronically. However, it is also acceptable to the respond to the above question manually, post the response or scan and e-mail it to the researcher.

Kindly also provide the following information to be included as evidence for the modified Delphi findings:

- Registration with SANC as a nurse administrator: Yes, or No
- No of years of experience in nursing education leadership:
- Position held (HAD/Principal/Director, etc.):
- Highest Educational qualification:

Thank you once again for your valuable input in this study.

Annexure K – Informed consent form

You have been asked to participate in a research titled:

“A framework to strengthen leadership at a South African public nursing college”

You have been informed about the study by

You may contact Mr. Lebuile John Mogakwe at 0718684463 any time if you have questions about the research.

You may contact the Secretariat of the Health Sciences Research Ethics Committee, UFS at telephone number (051) 401 7794/5 if you have questions about your rights as a research subject.

Your participation in this research is voluntary, and you will not be penalised if you choose not to participate or decide to terminate participation.

If you agree to participate, you will be required to sign this consent form.

The nature of the research with the title stated above has been fully explained to me. I understand what my involvement in this research means and I therefore voluntarily agree to participate.

Signature of Participant

Date

Annexure L – Electronic AI data sheet (example)

	01/SR/NC	02/SR/NC
1.1.	When I was able to connect with other students to empower and encourage them to learn, as I believe that education is their future.	First and second- working BNS classes after school. Used skeletons other strategies- results benefits and self-benefits- awareness level of understanding. Improved results- help the students to use pictures and other methods- to study BNS- improvement wanted in passing test.
1.2	Knowing that I was helping other students without expecting to gain any reward made me feel good about myself.	Helping someone: impact positively on academic performance. Positive experience - ability of expression and personally satisfied.
1.3	Patience of lecturers with students, whereby they at all times try to reach to all the students. They are available and understand students are not all the same, hence they make means to come to students' level .This made me realizes that the lecturers want the students to succeed and become good professional practitioners who can contribute positively to the health of the society.	In 2017- CNT exam failed students united to address the issue and SRC students worked together to resolve the problem. Appreciation, the management way of handling the problem- students concerned were given opportunity to re-write the paper. Peaceful resolution to the matter. Unity support of student body. Achievement positive results regarding the matter. Leadership skills demonstrated by SRC and school management.
1.4	Punctuality – learning can begin early and on time. Self-discipline – the conduct that I display to the student serves as an motivation specially neophytes or new students. Lecturers display professionalism and are always punctual in class and prepare for their lessons.	Positive character- influence people positively Communication skills. Understanding of different social knowledgement. Patient- can take time to help someone. Unity and costiveness.
2.1	To come back as a professional somebody whether an educator or manager and assist the exiting team by joining them in upgrading the level of education here e.g. getting fundraising from different sponsors who will sponsor this institution with some resources needed for the education here, like simulation room with enough supplies that are needed by the students for their practical work and should be in working condition and have facilitators of such equipment. Should also assist the school in acquiring Wi-Fi for student for academic purpose.	Would like to see a situation where student leaders are granted the opportunity to have a functional office, fully equipped with the necessary facilities. Including free internet and a free telephone wire. This will enhance communication with others and motivate students to be better leaders hence research wanted leadership.
2.2	To be more active and stand up for the things that would enable the students or things that will make students education be much easier for students. And to get lecturers that are more experienced and have a background about the subject that they facilitate, and should be trained in subjects.	There should be more open channels at communication to areas of higher authority, thus problem will be resolved faster.
4.1	For the head of the institution to be able to influence the authorities in higher levels to fund the simulation room that students need for their practical and implementation of a fully equipped library with at least 2 librarians and it should have Wi-Fi and should be open 24/7.	Continued effective communication between all parties involved. A financial boost to the school budget as some of the necessary equipment is expensive. Intensive- methods of raising funds Effective planning for and management of allocated resources.

Annexure M – Some of the categories identified during AI data analysis

Discovering Phase				
Participants Codes	1.1 The time when one felt positive, most alive, engaged or proud of their role as leaders	1.2 What led to the positive experience	1.3 The time when one felt positive, most alive, engaged or proud of their leaders	1.4 What led to the positive experience
01/SR/NC	Ability to empower	Decentralisation of self – helping others	Educator competencies – emotional intelligence (EI) Accessible and available lecturers Competencies - Punctuality - Self-discipline - Role modelling Educators' professionalism	Educator competencies - Positive attitude - Professional practice - Positive contribution to society
02/SR/NC	Tutoring others – leading to improved results, increased understanding of self and others and empowerment to use different study methods	Helping others to improve their academic performance Personal satisfaction in ability to express self	Collaborative problem solving Management support Inspirational Interpersonal skills – communication Considerate Inclusivity Patience	Competencies - Conflict management - Unity - Support - Leadership skills Unity Cohesiveness
03/SR/SC	Ability to empower others - on personal level – physical or mental health - on academic level	Interpersonal skills development - patience - faith in others - counselling skills Interpersonal skills communication	Academic support for theory and practice	Strictness in feedbacks Trustworthiness Empathy
04/SR/SC	Decentralising self Mediator	Interpersonal skills - EI Problem based conflict management Assertiveness Confidence	Acknowledgment as mediators Recognised position in the college structure Attentiveness	Competencies - Teamwork - Role modelling - Mutual respect - Meeting expectations

				- Responsibility & accountability
05/SR/SC	Decentralising self Mediator – settling disputes	Personal growth EI in leadership	Attentiveness Accessibility of the HAD – responding to grievances	Team work Continuous professional development of the educators
06/SR/EC	Mediator - Problem solving - Consensus in mass meetings - Revising constitution in collaboration with leaders from other campuses	Goal achievement – delivering Gaining trust of other students	Academic support for theory and practice The principal's leadership	Situational leadership Competencies - EI - Mentoring
07/SR/EC	Availing self for leadership Elected as president of SRC Discovered personal leadership skills Mediator Hosting functions	EI - Teamwork - Positive attitude - Calmness - Being observant - Pos. conflict management	Acknowledgement from management and educators Meeting expectations/goal achievement – peers Financial management Accountability	Management support Empowerment - induction Acknowledgement
08/SR/EC	Empowering Provision of physical resources Motivation of others – to maintain their health Goal achievement Overcoming the challenges	Participative management Leading by example	Trust in student leadership – inclusion in leadership responsibilities Open door for consultation Skills development	Competencies - Participative management - Mentorship
09/SR/EC	Mediator Team work	Fulfilling role (SRC) Mediator leading to positive outcomes in students dispute	Unconditional support from educators: social and academic Regulatory advices regarding academic problems Campus head's leadership skills	Competencies: Leadership skills - Listening - Assertiveness Person centred problem solving skills Ubuntu
10/SR/EC	Empowering: - goal achievement - overcoming challenges - Innovative – event coordination leading to improved health	Teamwork Positive outlook Consulting	Excellence in executing tasks Support from management	Competencies: Positive attitude Open communication (transparency) Constructive criticism Support

Dreaming Phase and Delivering Phase			
Participants Codes	2.1 Leadership related extraordinary things that one would want to achieve that would enable the institution to navigate its own challenges	2.2 Leadership related extraordinary things that one's leaders need to execute to enable the institution to navigate its own challenges	4.1 Elements deemed vital to sustain effective or strong leadership
01/SR/NC	- Funding from donors to improve the infrastructure - Simulation facilities - Internet connectivity	- Advocacy role for student's needs - Recruitment of subjects experts	- More influence on others - Funding for infrastructure development
02/SR/NC	- Infrastructure - space for effective functioning – SRC office - Leadership related research activities	- Open communication - Access to higher management echelons	- Effective communication - Effective resources management - Funding through fund raising and increased budget
03/SR/SC	- Ability to influence people's attitude to change	- Extra academic support for students	- Support from clinical settings' supervisors
04/SR/SC	- Additional student academic support – mentoring - Academic breaks/holidays for students	- Infrastructure - Adaptation to new policies or programmes	- Adequate funding government - Collaboration with management
05/SR/SC	- Increased standard of education and training - Motivation - Teamwork - Recognition of SRC by management	- Learning infrastructure development - Recruitment of subject experts	- Adaptation to change - Continuous professional development - Benchmarking from other HEIs
06/SR/EC	- Acquire more leadership skills and competencies – leadership development	Leadership development and empowerment to become advocates	- Leadership development
07/SR/EC	- Proactivity in dealing with students' issues	- Open door policy - Participative management - Compassion	- Accountability for wrong doing

	- Effective and efficient resources management - Unity		- Motivational workshops - Empowerment programmes - Learning resources - Equipped and knowledgeable educators - Vibrant and vigilant students - Compliance with the set rules - Sharing of tasks assigned to particular individuals
08/SR/EC	- Become more knowledgeable about leadership (leadership development)	Create a conducive space for new initiatives	- Shared vision - Integrity - Assertiveness
09/SR/EC	- Healthy coping mechanisms for students	Teamwork Appreciation of others Effective decision making Consultation	- Proper infrastructure - Final resources - Stakeholders collaboration/consultation
10/SR/EC	- Space to function - Empowerment of students – choosing the leadership - Intercampus collaboration - Facilities	- Infrastructure - Funding	- Resources allocation (financial and others) – equitable - Proper infrastructure development

Annexure N – Electronic modified Delphi sheet (example)

1. A regulatory framework which directs the development of nursing programmes. This is critical in terms of guiding curriculum content as well as programme requirements for each category of nurse, as well as other criteria following the SANC and CHE specifications.

2. Suitably qualified leaders with subject matter knowledge and the ability to navigate the ever- changing landscape of nursing and health education. Currently, institutions are not only gearing themselves for the new qualifications, but also looking at global trends and buying into them, for example interprofessional education and the use of technology in strengthening teaching and learning.

Details:

Registration with SANC as a nurse administrator: Yes or No - Yes

No of years of experience in nursing education leadership: >20 yrs

Position held (HOD/Principal/Director, etc.): CEO (current)

Highest Educational qualification: PhD

Annexure O – Some of the categories identified during the modified Delphi

Expert #1	Expert #2	Expert #4	Expert #5
Professional maturity Subject expertise and didactics Community oriented approach/engagement Competency (knowledgeable) Cultural competence Resourcefulness and innovation Partnership and stakeholder collaboration/relations	Strategic leadership/direction [Governance, leadership, legislation and policy] Partnerships and stakeholder collaborations/relations Transformational leadership Collaborative consultative forums/platforms Continuous Professional Development – digital competence	Partnership and stakeholder collaboration/relations Financial management HE requirements [Governance, leadership, legislation and policy] Personnel empowerment Goal oriented – increased student success Partnerships and stakeholder collaborations Competence - People management, HR issues Resourcefulness Continuous Professional Development	Strategic leadership/direction [Governance, leadership, legislation and policy] Competency
Expert #6	Expert #7	Expert #10	
Leadership attributes (flexibility, resilience, passion) Cultural sensitivity Ethical leadership [Governance, leadership, legislation and policy] Partnership and stakeholder collaboration/relations Responsiveness – to 4 th IR	Proactivity M&E of the strategic plan Open communication Performance management Staff acknowledgement Open door policy Involvement of others in leadership/management Staff development – Continuous Professional Development Financial management Innovation to generate more funds Personnel empowerment Project management skills	Community engagement Community based research Continuous Professional Development	

Annexure P – Framework Validation Guide

Criteria for validation of the framework to strengthen leadership at a South African Public Nursing College (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013:466-467).

4. Is the framework reasonable in terms of the following?	Yes	No	Comment
• Do the interpretations provide a good overview of the situations?			
• Is there a sense that what is being argued is plausible, reasonable, and worthy of being included?			
• Do the interpretations appear to help to explain and represent participants' views and voices?			
• Do the interpretations appear to reflect the perspectives of the participants and the context in which they live or work?			
• Do the stories seem logical and coherent?			
• Are there different explanations or negative cases that would suggest that the interpretations are not credible?			

5. Does the framework lead to understanding?	Yes	No	Comment
• Do the interpretations move beyond analysis to illuminating meaning?			
• Have complex forces at play such as power, difference and culture been acknowledged?			
• Do the interpretations clarify and build upon what participants have said through the interpretation of sub-text?			
6. Is the framework useful?	Yes	No	Comment
• Is the interpretation described at a suitable level for the intended audience			
• Will the reader be able to gauge the accuracy of the proposition?			
• Will the interpretations clarify the meaning of their object to the intended reader?			

Annexure Q – Example of the stakeholders’ feedback on the validation of the framework

Is the framework reasonable in terms of the following?	Yes	No	Comment
Do the interpretations provide a good overview of the situations?	X		The interpretations highlighted the strength of the existing structures, and areas that should be strengthened by the NEI, to promote effective leadership
Is there a sense that what is being argued is plausible, reasonable, and worthy of being included?	X		Categories, sub- themes and themes developed from the analysis of the data collected from the NEI are relevant and strongly address the needs of the NEI, considering the fact that the NEI has been accredited a higher education institution a year ago and still needs to ensure that the existing leadership, including human and material resources, approaches to teaching and learning, among others, are in line with the CHE criteria.
Do the interpretations appear to help to explain and represent participants’ views and voices?	X		Categories that emerged from the data collected clearly describe participants’ views
Do the interpretations appear to reflect the perspectives of the participants and the context in which they live or work?	X		As indicated above, the interpretations reflect the perspectives of the participants, and to a greater extent, the context in which they work. Current situation: Inclusion of leadership as module in the curriculum to enhance student leadership- the new curriculum has managing and leading a unit as a module.
Do the stories seem logical and coherent?	X		The story first identified and categorized factors that promote effective leadership in the NEIs and further classified them into sub- themes and themes. Thereafter described what should be done to strengthen and

			promote effective leadership in the delivery phase, followed by the design of the framework and the description thereof.
Are there different explanations or negative cases that would suggest that the interpretations are not credible?	X		The interpretations are based on the data collected from the participants and therefore are credible
Does the framework lead to understanding?	Yes	No	Comment
Do the interpretations move beyond analysis to illuminating meaning?	X		
Have complex forces at play such as power, difference and culture been acknowledged?	X		Less interference by politicians has been highlighted as one of the factors that should be included in strengthening effective leadership. A conducive teaching and learning environment (including students from different cultural backgrounds) can partly address culture, if you accept the input made in table 1 under motivation of students.
Do the interpretations clarify and build upon what participants have said through the interpretation of sub-text?	X		Categories, subthemes and themes identified emerged from raw data collected from the participants.
Is the framework useful?	Yes	No	Comment
Is the interpretation described at a suitable level for the intended audience	X		The interpretation is well described, using simple language that is well understood by Nurse educators at different levels, including managers outside the Nursing Education field.

Will the reader be able to gauge the accuracy of the proposition?	X		The proposed framework simple, relevant and clear and therefore the reader should be able to gauge its accuracy. How about including a few details on community engagement, to enable those who were not part to understand better on how to strengthen this area.
Will the interpretations clarify the meaning of their object to the intended reader?	X		Refer to the comment above

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23 February 2021

To Whom It May Concern:

CERTIFICATE OF EDITING: Lebuile John Mogakwe

I hereby confirm that I am a qualified and experienced editor and I performed a thorough language edit of **Lebuile John Mogakwe** doctoral thesis “**A Framework to Strengthen Leadership at a South African Public Nursing College**” in February 2021. This thesis is to be submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the Doctoral Degree in Nursing in the School of Nursing in the Faculty of Health Sciences at the University of the Free State.

I have not had final sight of the final article accepting or rejecting suggested language and grammar changes, which is usual.

Yours sincerely

M. I. MORRIS

Isabella Morris

M.A. (Wits)

Professional Memberships:

SAPEN

ANFASA